

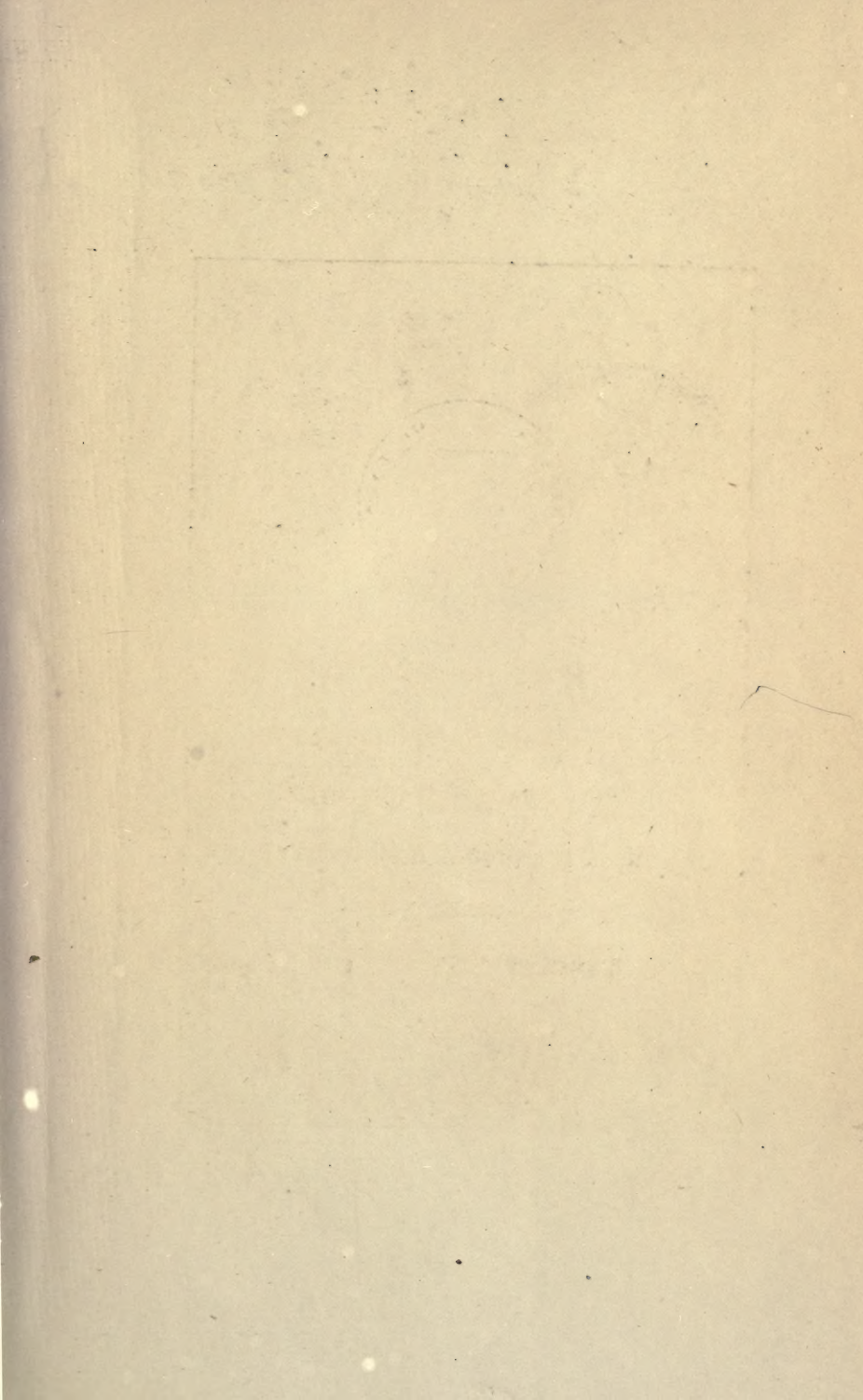
THE RUSSELLS OF  
BIRMINGHAM  
IN THE FRENCH REVOLUTION  
AND IN AMERICA  
1791-1814





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**THE RUSSELLS OF BIRMINGHAM**









WILLIAM RUSSELL (1740-1818)

*from a water colour.*



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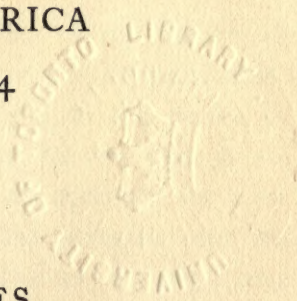
# THE RUSSELLS OF BIRMINGHAM

IN THE FRENCH REVOLUTION  
AND IN AMERICA

1791-1814

BY

S. H. JEYES



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON  
GEORGE ALLEN & COMPANY, LTD.

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## PREFATORY NOTE

It had always been the intention of my father to allow these family diaries and letters to be published. In order, however, to present them to the public in a connected and interesting form, he felt that it required some one not only with an aptitude for condensing the mass of material and bringing out its salient points, but possessing also an accurate and wide knowledge of the history of the period. No suitable opportunity presented itself until his friend Mr. S. H. Jeyes expressed his willingness to undertake the work.

Mr Jeyes had completed the book before his lamented death, with the exception of two short passages on pages 14-18 and 117-119, which, based on matter prepared by him, have been added in accordance with his wishes, expressed when illness compelled him to resign his work. These additions, also the final revision of the text and the correction of the proofs, have been sympathetically carried out by his friend Mr. David Hannay, to whom our grateful thanks are due.

T. H. RUSSELL.

LONDON, *August* 30, 1911.





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# RUSSELL MEMOIRS

## INTRODUCTION

IF an excuse were required for adding another volume to the recent stream of memoirs relating to the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century it might be found in the intrinsic interest of adventures here described at first hand. But there is another justification. The ground covered in these authentic contemporary jottings, if not absolutely unbroken, is comparatively novel. Most of the lately published reminiscences deal with great folks; the sayings, doings, and feelings of persons distinguished in society, politics, or literature. In dozens of these posthumous confidences we have been taken behind the scenes of famous events, notorious controversies, and memorable scandals. Courtiers and gallants, statesmen and plotters, leaders of fashion and chartered demireps cross the pages, and we are privileged, so we fancy, to overhear their conversations, and read their secret thoughts. Nothing can be more delightful than thus to mix at one's ease with the ghosts of the illustrious, gratifying one's taste for good company and appetite for gossip, while all the time one affects to be studying the sources of history. Incidentally one may compare the verified tattle of three

generations ago with the dark hints and whispered rumours about the ladies and gentlemen who figure in modern society journals. It is a veritable branch of comparative mythology.

No such entertainment or edification is provided in these annals of a middle-class family who neither sought adventures nor made history. Against their will, almost without their knowledge, these prosperous, cultivated, inconspicuous persons were thrust from the humdrum routine of a sheltered life and caught in the vortex of international strife. Their journals and correspondence, casually composed and accidentally preserved, show us how the vicissitudes of war and peace affected a class of English people who have been given little space in the printed records of a momentous age. On the Russells of Birmingham was visited the wrath of a nation panic-stricken at the excesses of a foreign Revolution. They were Radicals, Nonconformists, and sympathisers with what they regarded as a cosmopolitan effort for the emancipation of the human race. Overtly the head of the family had done nothing to offend his neighbours' opinion beyond being one of Dr. Priestley's staunchest and most generous supporters, and though that scientific divine was known, alike in religion and politics, to favour the new ideas, he enjoyed amongst educated persons all over the world a distinguished and perhaps exaggerated reputation both as theologian and chemist. To the perfunctory tolerance of these times it seems almost unaccountable that friendship with Joseph Priestley should have entailed not merely social excommunication but active persecution. In the mildly



heterodox circle at Birmingham of which he was the centre nothing was said or thought more outrageous than what passed with Fox and his party as common-places of debate, or than the epigrams exchanged between Lady Holland and her pet philosophers at Holland House. But it was one thing "daring to be a Daniel" in London society, where the Tory lions were likely to meet their match; another, to celebrate the Fall of the Bastille and defy the local big-wigs in a provincial town already noted for the vigour of its public spirit.

The irony of the Russells' destiny was that, driven, literally, by fire from their home, and seeking refuge in more enlightened foreign countries, they underwent, at French hands, treatment more painful than they had suffered in England, and when, after an exhausting odyssey by sea and land, they reached an American haven, they gained little relief from the narrowness of thought and religious intolerance to which, when they sailed from their native shores, they believed they had bidden a long farewell.

The account here given of the hardships inflicted on an elderly traveller and his girl daughters after the American vessel on which they were sailing had been overhauled by a French privateer reflects no special discredit on their captors and gaolers. It was not characteristic of the times to make provision for the comfort of prisoners of war. Possibly it would be unwise on this point for an Englishman to challenge comparison with the arrangements made for French guests on a British man-of-war. Of malicious inhumanity in the treatment of the Russells we find in

these diaries no suggestion—simply there was neglect, with almost incredible ignorance of sanitary conditions. Individual Republican officers showed the utmost kindness and thoughtful courtesy—nevertheless, the wretched captives were nearly done to death. We are also given some glimpses of the efforts made by kindly outsiders, chiefly Americans, to mitigate the rigours of confinement. The quite inexcusable prolongation of the Russells' imprisonment on board was but part and parcel of the comprehensive incompetence displayed in Paris by the Committee of Public Safety. There had been no time to elaborate a system, and without a system the French official, then as now, is a lost soul.

As to the feelings with which the elder Russell viewed the inner working, when he saw it at close quarters, of the two young Republics of the Old and the New Worlds there is no evidence in these pages. Those of his letters which have been preserved relate in the main to matters of private business. But his daughters, who had started on their travels with enthusiasm for everything Republican, found their zeal cooling after a few weeks' residence in Paris. They witnessed some of the so-called trials of public offenders, and were within an ace of being present at an execution. With the disorders, sufferings, and discontent in Paris and in the country they had become personally familiar, and, though they did their best, as loyal Radicals, to shut their eyes to abominations practised in the name of liberty, they were too candid, on quitting Paris and saying good-bye to their dear captivating General Miranda, not to confess to their disillusion.

Disappointment in France, however, did not dull their expectations of happiness in America. When first they were settled in the beautiful Valley of the Connecticut, and for a long time afterwards, Martha and Mary Russell congratulated themselves on being partners in a primitive yet not unprogressive community, where the charms of a bountiful nature were enhanced by the pleasures of a rational society. They were happy, they felt, in having at last made good their escape from the vices and prejudices of a sophisticated feudalism. How they came to change their sentiments does not quite unmistakably appear. Their young brother Thomas had all along been something of a John Bull, and hardly tried, worthy lad, to accommodate himself to new conditions. Radical and Rationalist, Gilbert Wakefield's favourite and admiring pupil, he had nevertheless brought with him a stock of old-fashioned British prejudices. No such charge can be urged against the sisters, who, under the most severe tests, on board ship as well as in Paris, had displayed a remarkable talent for "getting on with people," and contemplated the new Republic with feelings of affectionate veneration. At Middletown, however, after a fairly good start, they seem to have broken down. Very soon they either found themselves avoided by their neighbours or of their own choice withdrew from social intercourse. Martha's marriage with an English suitor was for some time kept secret from the neighbours, probably because the Russells did not wish to entertain people for whom they had but slight regard, or because they feared that an English marriage would be locally unpopular. Here it should be pointed



out that the inability revealed by these willing young settlers to fit themselves into the social life of the American States was by this time a common experience amongst English people who had hoped in the New World to find a sort of realised Heaven. In the letters from Gilbert Wakefield (a typical British Radical, who suffered in person for the intemperance of his opinions) addressed to young Thomas Russell we come upon some unreasonably bitter references to the conditions of American life. Dr. Priestley himself, though a considerable personage in Philadelphia, and duly honoured by distinguished citizens, in private letters expressed himself somewhat harshly about the social behaviour and moral standard of the people about him in Northumberland. Evidence of the like kind is plentiful in such books as Henry Bradshaw Fearon's *Sketches of America*—a series of reports expressly prepared for a group of English families who had wished to "ascertain whether any and what part of the United States would be suitable for their residence." The intending emigrants are warned that a "cold uniform bigotry" pervades all American sects in regard to religion. Again, though any industrious man could earn a living, the place is "not a political Elysium." Mechanics and labourers would do well, but there was no room for men of letters or artists. Shopkeepers might do as well as in London, but not better. A good deal is said about American speculativeness in business, and this complaint is often coupled, by Priestley and the Russells, with a charge of prevailing dishonesty. These ethical generalisations which the wise traveller never expresses, which a prudent settler

in a new land lives to banish from his mind, and which a genuine citizen of the world knows to be delusive, were passed freely from hand to hand, and helped, no doubt, to breed mutual suspicion and generate misunderstandings. It was a long time before the British and the Americans even began to understand each other, and at the time of the eighteenth century the sense of reciprocal repugnance was the stronger, because in essentials the two nations were identical. Each expected the other to be exactly like itself, and every difference on either side was made ground of offence. Curiously enough, the hostility seems to have been at its sharpest between those Englishmen who sympathised with the Republican ideal and those Americans who professed themselves eager to welcome refugees from a land groaning under priestcraft and aristocratic oppression. On this, as on many other neglected or comparatively unexplored passages in the social life of the two peoples a hundred years ago, these homely memoranda throw informing and interesting sidelights. Nothing here quoted was written with a view to publication. The widest audience contemplated by the Russell girls, by James Skey, the Englishman who married first one and then the other, or by their brother, was the little circle of relatives and friends at Birmingham or in Gloucestershire. In a formal and full-dress generation we are presented in these pages to a little group of candid, observant, shrewd, if slightly prejudiced young people writing down, in confidential *deshabille*, what they saw and thought, or thought they saw.

## CHAPTER I

### RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL INTOLERANCE AT THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The Russell family in Birmingham—Intimate relations with Dr. Priestley—His unpopularity explained—Theological heresies and the High Church party—His devout frame of mind—Letter to Martha Russell—William Russell's close alliance with Priestley—Their sympathy with the French Revolution—Proposed celebration of the capture of the Bastille—Rumours of vengeance on the Radical Dissenters—Slackness of the Birmingham authorities—The banquet undisturbed—An ominous gathering—Beginning of the riots.

WILLIAM RUSSELL of Birmingham, whose remarkable adventures at the turn of the eighteenth century, in England, France, and America, as well as on the high seas, are set out in the diaries and family papers that form the substance of this book, was a gentleman of ample means, irreproachable character, and wide intellectual sympathies. By circumstances as by nature he seemed to be marked out for a career of civic usefulness, and perhaps of public distinction. He was a liberal subscriber to such causes as the abolition of slavery, promoted various philanthropic agencies at home, and was on intimate terms with many distinguished Englishmen. Chief amongst them were Dr. Joseph Priestley, the famous chemist and divine, and the erratic genius, Gilbert Wakefield, scholar and pamphleteer, to whom he entrusted the training of his son Thomas Russell. In a few words, he was a



broad-minded, public-spirited, if perhaps somewhat viewy man—a local personage who should have stood well with all his neighbours. But within a few years this prosperous and, to all appearances, easy-going citizen had his house burned almost over his head, was driven out of his native country by social ostracism, made prisoner of war and nearly done to death by officers of a Government and people to whom he had looked as vindicators of human liberty, established a new home in the young American Republic, gave it up, and on returning to Europe found himself threatened with prosecution for treasonable correspondence with the King's enemies.

Of all these troubles the origin was his friendship with Dr. Joseph Priestley, a man whose solid and enduring work as a pioneer in chemical science was, in his lifetime, somewhat overshadowed by polemical labours in theology and politics. It has been the fashion amongst his admirers to speak of him as a peculiarly gentle and inoffensive divine. In point of fact, one has but to glance along the titles of his books and pamphlets, or read a few pages of his argument, in order to understand the exasperation of his adversaries. When he is not dealing them hard knocks in the old-fashioned style, he is tormenting them with a sort of Socratic ingenuity. The occasional quietness of his exposition was itself an affront, as though he were a kindly pedagogue seeking to instruct a class of rather dull pupils, while the irony of which he made frequent use was equally efficacious and irritating. As well might one have expected Kingsley to appreciate Newman's exquisite urbanity in

making mincemeat of Broad Church theology as ask Priestley's opponents to relish the tone and temper of his attacks on the High Church doctrine of their day. The Roman cardinal and the Unitarian minister were comparable in the simplicity, charm, and purity of their private lives, as in their power of inspiring all who knew them with deep personal affection. Intellectually, however, they were hard and even ruthless. In controversy their assumption of sweet reasonableness was but their blameless way of employing dum-dum bullets in warfare against persons whom they regarded as little better than savages.

During the happy and intellectually prolific time which Priestley spent at Birmingham, enjoying the public support and private friendship of William Russell, he produced his *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*. The sufficiently adventurous promise of the title-page was well borne out by the contents of the volume. Not only did it shock the susceptibilities of High Church people<sup>1</sup> in England: it was repudiated by Calvinists and Lutherans abroad. At Dordrecht (as Sir Edward Thorpe reminds us in his pleasant memoir of Priestley published in 1906) it was burned in public by the common executioner. This inflammatory treatise Priestley followed up presently with a *History of Early Opinion concerning Jesus Christ* and a series of pamphlets in defence of Unitarian doctrine. At the end of the eighteenth century, it should be remembered, the average believer in Christianity, especially in this country, recognised

<sup>1</sup> They must not be considered ecclesiastical ancestors of the present High Church Anglicans.

no great difference between a Unitarian and a Deist—or between a Deist and a Atheist. Priestley himself and the Unitarians for whom he spoke claimed the name of Christians, warmly denounced the errors of Deism, and, indeed, clung to many articles of faith discarded by the New Theology of our own times, but the depth and breadth of their creed did not count with ordinary orthodox men and women. In a rough-and-ready, intolerant way they banned all heretics together, and looked upon Priestley as a peculiarly mischievous ringleader.

This confusion of thought was played upon, no doubt, by some High Church controversialists who knew better. They had conceived a special animus against Priestley and his associates at Birmingham because, not content with waging a war of books and pamphlets against the Establishment, the local Nonconformists set up a rivalry with the Church of England in the matter of Sunday-schools. Priestley delivered a sermon in 1789 on behalf of the New Meeting School, and took an active part in the teaching. Russell, meantime, as Priestley's letters show, was a substantial and open-handed supporter of the militant Nonconformist divine. In addition to solid sums of money which he contributed from his own purse or raised amongst members of the congregation, he placed his horses and carriages regularly at the minister's disposal, and in the general work of Unitarian organisation in Birmingham was his right-hand man and something more. The value of Russell's services is warmly recognised by Priestley's autobiography and in his correspondence (as collected in



1832 by J. T. Rutt). Writing from Leeds in October 1790, during a temporary absence from Birmingham, he regrets that a friend and fellow-minister whom he is visiting, though possessing as much zeal as himself, "has no Mr. Russell to second, or rather to lead him, as I have." This letter is addressed to the Martha Russell, William Russell's daughter, much of whose work will appear in the following chapters, and expresses his condolence with her on the loss of her mother, killed in a carriage accident :—

"Your affecting letter, which I could not read without many tears, abundantly repays me for any pains I may have taken to instil Christian principles into the minds of the young persons of the congregation, as it shows that in some at least it has had its full effect. It also proves to myself that Christianity is not a mere speculation, but of the greatest practical use on the most serious and trying occasions. I find it so myself now as well as at other times. As to death, I have habitually considered it as no great evil, except in particular circumstances, and in your case there is much to alleviate your sorrow; and in the midst of judgment we should not forget our mercies.

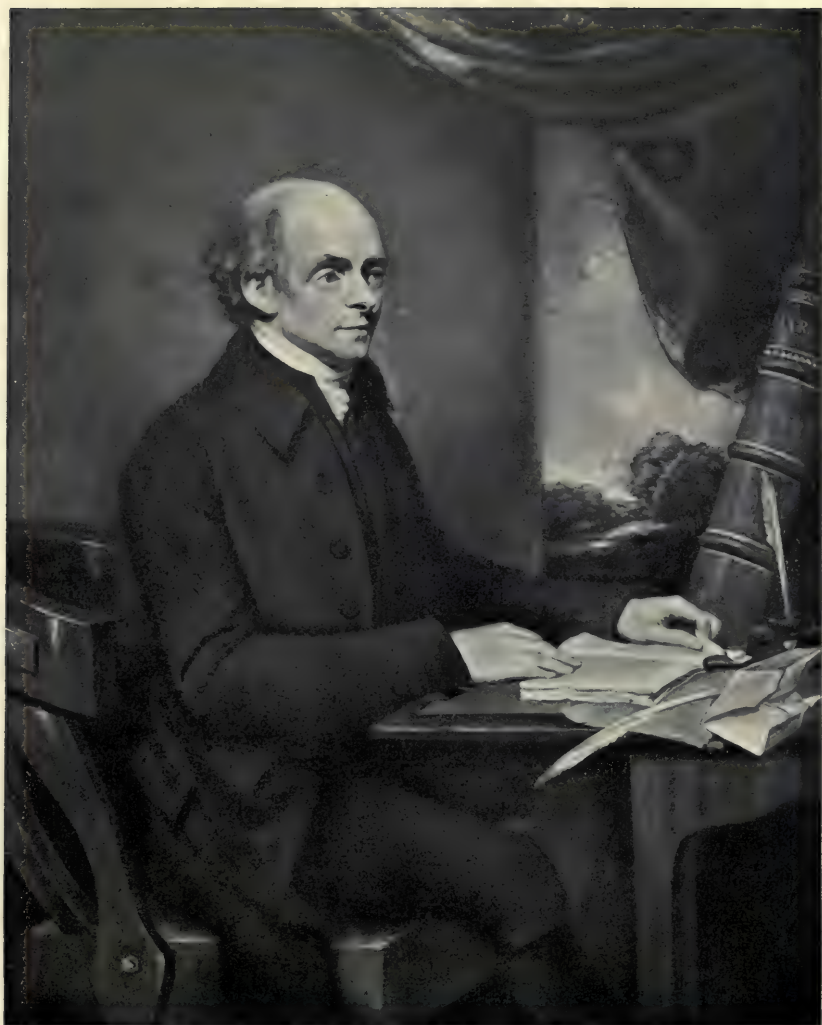
"My wife, who desires to be most kindly remembered to you, is but poorly, but better than she has been. However, we hope to arrive at Fairhill on Friday. With my earnest prayers for the best interests of all the family, and my most affectionate respects to your father and sister (to whom, indeed, I consider myself as writing not less than to yourself), I am, &c., &c."

These passages, with many others in Priestley's private letters, might of course be cited to prove that his theological heresies were consistent with what used to be called a devout Christian spirit; but the purpose for which they have here been quoted is to establish the closeness of the tie between the minister and his chief lay supporter. Elsewhere it appears that Priestley assisted, informally perhaps, in the education of Martha and Mary Russell, and possibly it may have been due to his teaching that the elder sister acquired her quite remarkable quality of simple and orderly narration, together with a tendency, not always resisted, towards stilted language and sentimental platitudes.

Hereafter it will appear how confidently Priestley relied, in time of trouble, upon Russell's advice and assistance. For the present it is enough to have shown that, in the mind of their neighbours and enemies, it would be impossible to hit one man without also striking at the other. If Priestley were to be prosecuted, Russell could not be spared. Perhaps it may be thought that the reasons already explained sufficiently account for the virulent prejudice which had been aroused against men like Priestley, Russell, and other leaders of the little body of earnest, enlightened, and possibly somewhat supercilious reformers who had pitted themselves, as it were, against the prevailing sentiment of the place. But it should be added that the agitation against the Unitarians of Birmingham was not in origin purely theological. Largely, if not predominantly, it was political. Though there is no logical or necessary connection between

latitudinarianism in religion and progressivism in politics, at the time of the French Revolution it had been rendered impracticable, in any European country, to distinguish the two movements. People who took up the one adopted the other, and those who hated either impartially detested both.

[Gilbert Wakefield was a man who bore a decided likeness to Priestley. Their intellectual interests were not the same, for Wakefield was mainly a critic and a classical scholar. But in type and method they were alike. Joseph de Maistre, the great Savoyard Ultramontane—or we may even say Tory—publicist, when speaking (with overflowing rancour) of Hume makes a curious remark on the “cruelty of the syllogism.” This was his figurative way of explaining that the reasoner who attacks the cherished beliefs of simple-minded people can inflict as much pain and humiliation as if he struck a blow with a whip. In private life Wakefield was a good friend, husband, and father, but it is allowed that his pen was “dipped in gall” when he took part in controversy. And unfortunately he did not confine himself to debating questions of classical scholarship with Porson, who was eminently capable of giving him the counter-check quarrelsome. He had a brilliant career at school at Nottingham and Kingston, and then at Jesus College, Cambridge. He was a Fellow of the college, had been Second Wrangler in 1776 (though he found algebra “odious beyond conception”), and Chancellor’s Medallist. It was natural enough, but it was none the less unfortunate for him, that he began by an ill-judged entry into the Church with innocent views on a college living.



GILBERT WAKEFIELD

*After the painting by W. ARTAND*





He did not go beyond taking deacon's orders, for so soon as he applied his mind to the study of theology he found himself quite unable to accept the orthodox creed. He inevitably fell away from the Church, but not from theology—which meant that he became a dissenter, holding Unitarian or Arian views, therefore an assailant of the Established Church, and therefore, as was then inevitable, no friend to the established political order. The morning of a battle, or the stress of a siege, are not opportune moments for revising the articles of war. Wakefield was regarded as a mutineer when he professed only to be a candid critic.

Of course he held his country responsible for the war with France. Every writer of authority, from Herbert Marsh, afterwards Bishop of Llandaff and of Peterborough, whose *Politics of Great Britain and France* appeared in 1799, down to M. A. Sorel, whose *Europe et la Révolution Française* was recently concluded, agree that the struggle was forced on us by the action of the French parties, Jacobins and Girondins alike, for each hoped that war would enable it to destroy the other. Englishmen knew the truth, and were not unnaturally angry with dissidents such as Wakefield. When in 1798 he published a controversial pamphlet, in which he declared that the poor would lose nothing by a French invasion, he was naturally tried for a seditious publication. His imprisonment in Dorchester Jail, where he was allowed to see his friends and left free to work, was a very gentle martyrdom, if we compare it to the savage treatment of "aristocrats" and priests, who would not submit to the civil constitution of the Church, in France.

His correspondence with William Russell is rich in outspoken statements of his political views as well as of his religious sentiments, and he was equally outspoken in his letters to Thomas Russell, who had for a time been his pupil—for Wakefield took refuge in keeping a school when he had shut himself out by his heterodoxy from all other professions. On the 13th August 1793, we find him writing as follows to Thomas Russell, then in Madrid :—

“The gross stupidity of the Spaniards is certainly a sufficient ground for sceptical speculations ; and yet a knowledge of the conduct of Englishmen blessed by more knowledge and light and more liberty, is no less a subject for national admiration. We see here a set of people who fancy themselves to possess a reformed religion, and although that religion principally consists in useful and benevolent actions, joining in prayers to the Supreme Being to assist them out of His infinite mercy in murdering His image—their own fellow-creatures—with whom they have not the least reason to interfere, and with whose conduct at home they cannot make out the smallest privilege thus to concern themselves. I defy any absurdities of the Catholics to transcend this, numerous and prodigious as they may be. Many other singularities might be exemplified in our countrymen, which would advance them very far to a level with these infatuated sons of slavery and superstition ; but the villains at the post-office, the subordinate agents of greater villains, must be some restraint even upon one who fears them less and despises them more than any calculation can specify.”

This is a pretty explicit statement of Wakefield's point of view. It is characteristic of him and his whole party, that he always holds the enemies of France exclusively responsible for the bloodshed. By a natural process he is led to rejoice in their defeat, and of course in the defeat of his own country. In the month after he had written the passage quoted above, he penned this wholesale condemnation :—

“It is truly dreadful to see such havoc of the human species to gratify the infatuation of a set of unprincipled governors, whose guilt rises to a magnitude of enormity beyond all calculation. I look upon the death of every Frenchman that is killed in battle by the invading armies to be as absolute murder as was ever committed ; and in the eye of God and reason will be estimated accordingly. The chief actors will rue their conduct a hundred-fold, or I am greatly mistaken ; and I suppose they begin to repent heartily of their abomination by this time, at least those of our own country.

“Certainly on such grand emergencies we should not acquiesce in a bare discharge of stipulated duty, but should attempt great enterprises ; otherwise I am inclined to think that Custine was severely dealt with, and that some of the French leaders are not governed by such sentiments of humanity and disinterestedness as become their station, but our means of forming a judgment are few and defective.

“Biron and one or two have not yet been brought to their trial, and I hope no guilt will appear. I most cordially abhor the shedding of blood, and would not



have a drop spilled scarcely on any supposable occasion: and the horror with which I reflect on the conduct of our king and ministers in this view, who ought to know better than to act so vile a part, is beyond all power of language to express; but murderous instincts are so incompatible with every affection of humanity and every principle of religion, with every feeling essential to the grand intention of the creature, the happiness of the world—that such minds will surely undergo a long and painful purgatory before they will be qualified for the society of Godlike spirits.”

It is amusing to compare Wakefield's hesitating criticism of the French with his hearty condemnation of his own king and ministers. His letters serve a purpose he certainly never contemplated. They show how great was the measure of freedom allowed in England in those days of “tyranny.” Though he constantly referred to the risk that his letters would be opened by the police, he had plainly no fear of serious danger. If a Frenchman or any other continental malcontent had written with equal freedom he would have run a very grave hazard of a worse fate than mild imprisonment in Dorchester Jail, after fair and open trial.]

It would not be unfair to describe the Birmingham riots in 1791 as a mean and dirty back-wash of the year 1789 in Paris. The relation was direct. In a good many English towns the advanced persons had resolved to celebrate the fourteenth of July of two years before as a date marking the emancipation of

mankind and the commencement of a new cosmopolitan era. As a feat of arms (so the late Captain D. Bingham well showed) the capture of the Bastille was contemptible : as an act of State, it was all but useless. On the other hand, as a Revolutionary advertisement it was a huge success. Naturally it was seized upon by foreign sympathisers as a symbol of Liberty, while the party of Law and Order, as represented by street-corner politicians, was driven to fury by the mere mention of that ridiculously exaggerated event. Some days before the proposed demonstration on the part of the Birmingham Radicals, it became known that the roughs on the other side meant mischief. Inflammatory hand-bills had been circulated in the town, misrepresenting the purpose of the Radical banquet, and the promoters thought it necessary to counteract them by means of an explanation printed in a local newspaper. They declared their "entire disapprobation of the hand-bills and their ignorance of the authorship." Sensible themselves of the advantages of a free government, they rejoiced in the extension of liberty to their neighbours, at the same time avowing, in "the most explicit manner, their firm attachment to the Constitution of their own country, as vested in the Three Estates of the King, Lords, and Commons. Surely no free-born Englishman can refrain from exulting in this addition to the general mass of human happiness. It is the cause of *Humanity*, it is the cause of the People."

Apart from the fact that the Sovereign is not an Estate of the Realm, this avowal of constitutional principles was not altogether sincere. Some, at least,

of the signatories were in theory Republican. Still, it was all that could be expected—and a good deal more—from men who were being threatened with lawless persecution because they claimed the right to form and express their reasoned convictions upon the great questions of the day. The authorities were legally bound to protect them, and, after this formal declaration, had no excuse for neglecting the duty. But while we are not obliged to believe, with Priestley and some of his friends, that certain justices of the peace were in secret league with the rioters, or that leading clergymen instigated the disorder, it is certain, though Russell himself had a seat on the local bench, that the magistrates omitted to take such precaution as the conveners of the banquet might fairly have required. On the morning of July 14th, so it appears from a statement contributed by W. Russell to a Birmingham newspaper, rumours were still current that violence was contemplated. It was, therefore, decided to postpone the celebration. A notice to that effect was despatched to the printer, but, before a proof had been returned, the keeper of the hotel where the dinner was to have been held protested against its being countermanded. He was sure that no danger need be apprehended if the gentlemen would break up early. Mr. Badley's opinion was, unhappily, accepted. "Accordingly, there was a meeting of eighty-one gentlemen, inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood, at the great room in the hotel, where they dined and passed the afternoon with that social, temperate, and benevolent festivity which the consideration of the great event that has diffused liberty



and happiness among a large portion of the human race inspired."

The room was decorated, Russell mentions, with three elegant pieces of emblematic sculpture. The central object was a finely executed medallion of his Majesty, encircled with a glory, on each side of which was an alabaster obelisk, one exhibiting Gallic Liberty breaking the bands of Despotism, and the other representing British Liberty in its present enjoyment. The chair was taken by a truly respectable gentleman belonging to the Church of England, Mr. Keir, and other members of "that profession," we read, were present. "Nor was any single sentiment uttered, or, I believe, conceived, that would hurt the feelings of any one friend to liberty and good government under the happy Constitution we are blessed with in this kingdom."

Although a mob had begun to assemble outside the hotel before this Feast of Reason had come to its end, the company were permitted to take their departure in peace. It was not till two hours later that the organisers of the riot gave the signal to their chief confederates. At the cry of "Church and King" all the windows in the front of the hotel were suddenly broken with stones—just to hearten up the mob. This done, a march was made to the New Meeting-house, the place where Priestley used to preach. Quickly the building was broken into, gutted, and set on fire. Next came the turn of the Old Meeting-house, which was treated in the same manner. But the ignominious story can hardly be better told than by Martha Russell, who has already been mentioned



as Priestley's correspondent. This is the only important document here printed which has previously seen the light. It was contributed to the *Christian Reformer*, May 1835, having been composed in 1794, when Martha Russell was upon her way to America and while the matter was fresh in her memory. Probably from what we shall learn of her methodical diary-keeping, it was then compiled from notes taken at the very time of the events to which it relates. Anyhow, it has become the *locus classicus* for a disgraceful episode which in its time did more harm to the cause of Church and King than all the theorising subtleties of latitudinarian divines, all the arguments of philosophic Radicals, all the mistakes of a perverse because unimaginative sovereign and maladroit or prejudiced statesmen.

## CHAPTER II

### A PERSONAL HISTORY OF THE BIRMINGHAM RIOTS

Attack on the New Meeting-house—Total destruction—Similar fate of the Old Meeting-house—The mob in possession—Flight of the Priestleys—William Russell confronts the rioters—Return to Showell Green—Priestley's house burnt down—Martha Russell's reflections—Savage hunt for Priestley—William Russell again faces the mob—Flight of the Russell girls—Help of poor neighbours—An unfriendly acquaintance—Magistrates indifferent—Russell's house destroyed by fire—Advance by the mob—Further retreat of the Russell girls—Adventures on the road—Rioters on horseback—Father's anxiety—A farm-house dormitory—Drive to London—Maidenhead Thicket—A drunken post-boy—Refuge in the Adelphi—Return to the ruined home.

FROM Martha Russell's account of the events preceding the destruction of her father's house at Showell Green, it appears that it was his advice that prevented Priestley from attending the French Revolution banquet. On its apparently peaceful termination, he had called upon the Doctor to exchange congratulations, and then came on, with a few other friends of liberty, to take tea with his family. There they all inspected a conservatory which had that day been finished.

“How delighted we were with its appearance and the prospect of the interesting and gratifying amusement it would afford us, upon which we hoped to enter on the following morning, little suspecting what

the morning would bring forth. As we were at supper, W. T., our footman, came in with a countenance as pale as ashes, and told my father a messenger was just arrived to inform him that a mob had collected and set fire to the New Meeting-house, and were then employed in destroying the Old Meeting-house also, and they declared their intention to come from thence to Dr. Priestley's house and then to ours—and that no magistrates appeared or could be found to disperse them. Consternation and alarm now filled our minds. My father ordered his horse, intending to go and meet the mob, and search out the justices to quell it. Whilst he was loading his pocket-pistols to carry with him, a chaise drove up to the door, with Dr. and Mrs. Priestley and Mr. S. Ryland. The latter had taken alarm, and, procuring a chaise, had hurried the Dr. and Mrs. Priestley away from their house, fearing the mob would be there immediately."

William Russell was implored not to face an ungovernable concourse of people. The magistrates would certainly be set in action by friends in Birmingham. He would listen to no remonstrance, however, and declared "he would be his own master that night." His daughters Martha and Mary could distinctly hear the shouting of the rioters, and paced up and down on the foot-road in a dreadful state of suspense. Presently, like practical and plucky young women, they slipped away, and without alarming Mrs. Priestley, packed up the plate in trunks, and sent it to a neighbour's house.

In about three hours their father returned. He had gone to Priestley's house and instructed the son William to remove the manuscripts most likely to be valuable. Afterwards Russell had ridden on to Digbeth, where he met the mob. There he also came upon many of his friends, who begged him to return, telling him of the threats uttered against him.

“At length, one of them, I believe Mr. J. F., suddenly turned his horse, and, giving him a cut with his whip, the press was so great, and the spirit of the horse so roused, my father found himself obliged in a manner to return. Arriving at Dr. Priestley's gate before the mob, he stationed himself within-side till the mob came up and then addressed them, endeavouring to induce them, by fair words and money, to desist and return home. At first they seemed a little pacified and inclined to listen, till one more loud than the rest, and who had the appearance of a ring-leader, cried out, ‘Don't take a sixpence of his money; in the riots of '80 in London, a man was hanged for only taking sixpence.’ They all then vociferated, ‘Stone him, stone him!’ and began to fling stones.”

Driven back, Russell rode to Showell Green, and decided that the Priestleys should be taken out of danger to the house of Mr. Hawkes, half a mile off, at Moseley. Several messages of warning were received at Showell Green, and the advice was given (and taken) that a barrel of beer should be set out on the lawn by way of pacifying or at least occupying



the rioters. The whole party then walked up to Moseley, where they distinctly heard the cries of the mob at Priestley's house—such a din as cannot be imagined. Presently “the flames burst forth and all was quiet then.”

“What were the emotions of our minds at this moment [Martha Russell exclaims] no one can imagine, unless they had beheld our countenances and heard the broken short sentences that formed all the conversation which passed among us: yet the extreme agitation of our minds did not prevent us from admiring the divine appearance of the excellent Dr. Priestley. No human being could in my opinion appear in any trial more like divine, or show a nearer resemblance to our Saviour than he did. Undaunted he heard the blows which were destroying the house and laboratory that contained all his valuable and rare apparatus and their effects, which he had made it the business of his life to collect and use. All this apparatus, together with the uses he had made of them, the laborious exertions of his whole life, were being destroyed by a set of merciless, ignorant, lawless banditti, whilst he, tranquil and serene, walked up and down the road with a firm yet gentle pace that evinced his entire self-possession, and a complete self-satisfaction and consciousness that rendered him thus firm and resigned under the unjust and cruel persecution of his enemies, and with a countenance expressing the highest devotion, turned as it were from this scene, and fixed with pure and calm resignation on Him who suffered the administration of this bitter cup.



DESTRUCTION OF DR. PRIESTLEY'S HOUSE AND LABORATORY, JULY 14, 1791



Not one hasty or impatient expression, not one look expressive of murmur or complaint, not one tear or sigh escaped him; resignation and a conscious innocence and virtue seemed to subdue all these feelings of humanity."

About four o'clock Russell reported that the work of destruction was complete, and the mob, having waded ankle-deep in liquor, had taken their departure. The Russells then made their way to their home, thankful that it had been spared. "We all looked and felt all gratitude, but the Doctor appeared the happiest amongst us."

Presently William Russell returned with the news that the mob had re-assembled—they had sworn to find Dr. Priestley and take his life. Forthwith the Doctor and his wife got up from their bed, and with Mr. Ryland were driven to Mrs. ——'s house, near Dudley. The Russells at the same time set to work on packing their best furniture, carrying it to the custody of friends, amongst whom their former neighbours were most active in giving help. Parties of the mob were constantly coming to the gates, but persons were stationed there to appease them and send them away. The main body of rioters had gone to Mr. Ryland's house, Easy Hill, but W. Russell insisted on his daughters and son making their way at once to a neighbour's house lying about half a mile distant in a retired spot.

"As we passed across the fields we were alarmed by parties of men in their shirt sleeves, without hats ;



all half drunk ; they were breaking the boughs from the trees and hedges, shouting, laughing, swearing, and singing in a manner that seemed hideous beyond expression. After much alarm, and frequently hiding ourselves behind the hedges and trees, we at length arrived at the place of our destination. We found our good neighbour, Mrs. G——, very ready to receive us, though we had never been upon anything of a sociable footing with her. Her house was a superior sort of cottage, and here we hoped to find an asylum till the storm was over-blown."

At dinner they were joined by their father, who was disheartened at getting no reply from his friends, and especially from the magistrates in Birmingham, to whom he had made urgent appeals. He decided that his family must go farther for safety, and selected the house of an old servant (Mrs. Cox), who lived at Warstock, about five miles away. They were to start immediately on foot, while he would return to Showell Green and send the coach after them. The men-servants were staying there to take what care they might of the place, but all the females had left except the cook, who stayed to the end and "showed astonishing courage and spirit."

"Walking up the common, we passed Mr. Ander-ton's (Moseley Wake Green), a neighbour with whom we had been upon friendly terms, but who was of the Church and King party, and had refused to shelter a waggon-load of our goods in his barn, saying, he did not choose to risk his barn to save them ; thus

letting his poor illiterate neighbours outdo him in real friendship and charity. As we passed, he, with Mrs. Anderton, &c., were on the lawn, and they had the assurance to accost us and express sorrow for our trouble. We received their compliment with coolness, and pursued our way."

The carriage overtook them when they had proceeded about two miles, and William Russell with it. On arriving at Mrs. Cox's, the coachman and Mr. Cox were sent back, one to help guard at Showell Green, and the other to reconnoitre. At one o'clock in the morning the latter returned and reported that the mob had destroyed the houses of Mr. Ryland and Mr. Hutton (the historian of Birmingham), and were then at Mr. Taylor's, Bordesly Hall, where they were "committing the most inhuman depredations."

"My father now thought it right to go again himself and try if the magistrates could not by some means be persuaded to act. We did what we could to dissuade him from it, not now fearing for anything so much as his safety, and as there is no answering for the fury of a mob—and some envious, malicious spirits had, we knew, spared no pains to inflame them against my father—our apprehensions for him when absent from us were cruel, for we were well aware that his active and bold daring spirit might lead him into danger before he was sensible of it. This we represented to him, and urged him as much as we could to remain in safety with us, but all in vain; go he would, promising to return soon. We did not think of going

to bed, or even taking off our clothes through the night, though this was the second we had passed in this state. To think of sleep or quiet was impossible in our state of mind, and all about us in the same state of agitation with ourselves."

During the Friday night and Saturday morning the girls and their companions were distracted with alarming reports from terrified neighbours as to the unabated fury of the mob and by the long absence of their father. Not until two o'clock in the afternoon did he reappear. He had been in Birmingham trying to rouse the magistrates to exertion, but had been met with such indifference from them as "in the present state of things seemed almost incredible and quite unnatural."

Returning to Showell Green in the hope of defending it, he disregarded for a time the urgent entreaties of his friends and servants that he should go away. At length, however, he yielded to a private request, from a friend belonging to the other party, who begged him to depart "as he valued his life," for the fury of the mob had become ungovernable. "His countenance," records Martha Russell, "was altogether changed by the fatigue he had undergone," but he decided that it was not yet safe to rest. He would ride on to Alcester to the "White Lion," and his family were to follow him as soon as their coach should arrive.

All the afternoon the Russell girls and their companion, Miss Sarah Smith, were wandering about the grounds "listening and fearing." Often and often





RUINS OF SHOWELL GREEN

*From an engraving published in 1792*





they expressed a wish to start on foot, but they did not know the way, and were naturally afraid of a seven miles' tramp along a road "infested by a set of demons."

"About seven o'clock in the evening, we perceived a cloud of smoke arise from that quarter which almost amounted to a certainty with us to be our house in flames. Hence, we supposed, sprung the reason of the coachman's delay. Now a sort of melancholy filled our bosoms, hitherto torn by lively and different apprehensions. To contemplate the awful columns of smoke ascending from that beloved mansion where I had passed all my days in a calm, virtuous, and a happy tranquillity, where all my pleasure seemed to centre, and where alone I felt as if happiness could be tasted, pierced me to the soul: it seemed as if a dear friend were expiring before me in whom my happiness centred. My whole soul was moved and distressed, but the luxury of tears was denied: spent and exhausted, my feelings, though not violent, were acute and quiet.

"In this state we continued, looking towards the smoke, and wandering up and down the garden, till ten o'clock, till, all of a sudden, the dreadful shouts of the mob assailed our ears, and almost at the same instant two women came running as if for their lives, and quite out of breath; they begged us for God's sake to go away, for that the mob was coming—they would be there immediately. . . . In a few minutes after the alarm was given, my brother, sister, Sarah Smith, and myself set off to walk to Alcester, apparently with

as much spirit and strength as we ever had in the whole course of our lives set off upon the most agreeable walk ; hedges, ditches, and gates, nothing stopped us. All we surmounted with an agility inconceivable ; for some distance we ran as fast as possible. The continued and increased shouts of the mob strengthened us most wonderfully. At length we got into the public road, and were there soon stopped in our career by hearing a party of men on horseback galloping full speed. We stopped and hid ourselves under a hedge till they had passed, and by their conversation found that they belonged to the mob : they were in liquor, and swore dreadfully as they passed the place we were concealed in ; and we heard one of them distinctly say ‘ I know there’s a d——d Presbyterian somewhere hereabouts ; we’ll have him before morning.’ This, we had no doubt, applied to my father, and our fears for him consequently increased. They galloped on, and we came from our lurking place and continued our route ; but as these ruffians were going towards my father’s we feared they might meet him on the road, as it was possible he might return to seek for us. We had not proceeded far before these men stopped their horses, and we not perceiving it, and coming on our way, were almost upon them before we were sensible of it ; but as the moon shone uncommonly bright, and we thought it impossible but they must see us, it seemed most prudent to continue on quietly as if we did not notice them.

“ Had we left the road it might have excited suspicion ; accordingly, we passed them ; they looked hard at us, but said nothing, and presently galloped

up and repassed us, then stopped their horses till we again passed them, and this they continued to do in such a manner that each of us was alive to secret apprehension. No other person was to be seen, and no house appeared in sight : three young girls walking at that time of night, with no other protection than a boy, might find cause for apprehending insult at any time, but in our state of mind and in the present state of the country, how much must these fears be increased ! My brother and our faithful little dog was all the protection we had. We continued thus for about three miles, marching with a firm pace, but with almost a deadly silence. The moon shone uncommonly bright, the shadows it cast therefore were unusually strong, and almost every shade of a tree or bush that fell across our path startled us. The men on horseback were sometimes by our side, sometimes out of sight behind us, sometimes before ; their intentions we feared, and our situation powerfully aided our apprehensions.

“ After a little time, we now heard a horse coming after us, and were at first alarmed, but afterwards relieved by finding it was our own servant, who had gone to Cox’s, and, not finding us there, had rode on after us. He informed us of the truth of our conjectures, for that our house was burnt, and all the gardens and premises most dreadfully laid waste. Though he brought us this sad intelligence, we were all truly relieved to see him and to keep him with us as guard from these men. Shortly after we met my father in the greatest distress. His fears for us had almost distracted him ; he had set out to meet



us, and by some unlucky chance his horse had got away from him, and to get him again had taken him a long time, and almost exhausted his remaining strength. He had just caught him as we came up, and our meeting was joyful and happy, though under such sad circumstances.

“My father now sent the servant back, with orders to have our chaise sent to meet us at Stratford, as he had resolved to go straight up to London and remonstrate with Mr. Pitt on these outrageous proceedings. My father now accompanying us, we now continued our route, comparatively speaking, with pleasure, for the men had gone on before us since William joined us, and we saw nothing more of them. We now passed several houses—at the door of each the family was collected in a solemn sort of silence; they all gazed at us as we passed; not a word was spoken, except sometimes by some of them in a whisper. We held our peace, not knowing whether any we might address or put any questions to were friends or enemies. In about half an hour we met an honest and respectable farmer, a brother of one of my father’s tenants, who had heard of our being in the neighbourhood, and had set out to seek for and assist us; he accompanied us the remainder of our walk, and when we arrived at the end of seven miles, which in the afternoon we imagined it quite impossible for us to accomplish, we found ourselves sufficiently strong to walk another seven.”

On entering the inn, at which they found a good many disorderly persons assembled, the fugitives

decided that they must at once go on. Neither bed nor refreshment offered them any temptation. The girls felt they would walk twenty miles rather than stay where their father might be recognised. Luckily, when they had arrived at this heroic determination, their belated coach came up. With a pair of horses which had never before drawn a coach, and with a man on the box (a tenant of Mr. Russell's) who had never before acted as coachman, they went off to the house of a friend whom they had met at the "White Lion" (another tenant).

"We arrived safe at Mr. Greaves's, and, he not being arrived with the chaise, we took some refreshment offered us by the good lady, and at her earnest request went upstairs to get a little repose. Here a curious scene presented itself: we three ladies were shown into a room with four beds in all, but whether occupied by men or women we did not know; but the loud nasal concert, and the different notes of which it was composed, seemed to indicate both. We were amused at our situation, and felt sufficiently at ease to laugh at it. We lay down upon the bed, and our faithful little dog by the side; but the room was suffocatingly hot, and the number of persons in it made the air very oppressive: this, together with the music that assailed our ears, and a most numerous swarm of fleas, which attacked us all, keep rest and even quiet at a distance."

Presently Mr. Greaves came up with the chaise, and the Russells all got into it, being here left by Miss Sarah Smith, who went to meet her family,

staying half a mile away with some Roman Catholic friends at Cloughton. Having made their way to Stratford, the Russells started at five o'clock on Sunday morning for London. Their only further adventure was comparatively mild and almost comical. Their post-boy proved to be hopelessly intoxicated, and William Russell had to try his hand at driving. Just as they reached "that place noted for robbers," Maidenhead Thicket, they were overtaken by the mail coach. Russell, thinking it would be wise to keep pace with this public conveyance, drove pretty fast—much to the indignation of the drunken post-boy, who did not like his animals being so hard pressed, and also because he found it difficult to keep his seat.

"He clenched his fist, called and swore, but all in vain; we galloped on in fear every moment of the fellow's falling under the wheel, and also under some little expectation of robbers. Though we thought it likely we might be attacked, none of us felt at all alarmed, and had they come, such was our state of mind, I am convinced we should have met them with cheerful calmness: as for myself, I seemed fully to expect them, but did not feel as if it was anything to be alarmed at. We had some rings and other valuables about us, which we had in our haste put in our pockets; these we hid in our hat-crowns and shoes. However, we got safe through the Thicket, and when nearly arrived at Henley-on-Thames my father suffered the postillion to mount again, who by this time was pretty well sobered.



“On Monday, July 18th, about seven o'clock in the morning, we arrived at Bates's Hotel in the Adelphi, the house we were accustomed to be at in town. Mr. Bates was not up, but soon rose and came to meet us with tears in his eyes, so happy was he to meet us; he had heard reports on the disturbances, and was truly relieved to see us all safe. On sitting down here, for the first time since Thursday had we thought ourselves safe or at rest. Now we found both, and the greatest refreshment from washing off the dust and filth from our skins, and in changing our clothes. My father soon waited upon Mr. Pitt, and very soon after arriving we learned that Dr. Priestley was in town, as well as Mr. G. Russell's family, and many others of our Birmingham friends. This evening we went to bed very early, and enjoyed it in such a manner as cannot be imagined. Soon after getting to sleep we were awakened by what we thought a most terrible shouting: we jumped up, crying out the mob had followed us; we rose up and in great alarm slipped on our cloaks, and went out to see how matters were. We found the servants, who, in turns, sat up through the night; they informed us that it was as quiet as usual, and we need not be at all alarmed, for the noise we had heard was only the gardeners coming to Covent Garden Market. Thus happily relieved, and smiling at our own fears, we returned to comfortable rest.

“After staying a few days in London we returned to Birmingham—my father, sister, and self; Thomas remained there at school. Nothing material occurred upon the journey, but the sentiments I felt on



approaching dear Showell Green, and first beholding the ruin of our much-loved mansion, I shall not forget. At a distance of two or three miles we discerned the spot, and on a nearer approach descried a part of the shell of the building rearing its head, blackened by smoke, despoiled of its windows, and so defaced and demolished as scarce to leave a trace of its original form. The fine tall elms that grew at the back of the house, which shaded our nursery windows, and which I loved almost as if they were my sisters, still stood; they reared their venerable heads above these melancholy ruins, but had partaken in their fate—their fine foliage was all burnt on the side next the house, and their stems blackened by smoke. What dismal feelings filled my soul on contemplating this sad spectacle! It seemed as if I viewed the distorted and mangled corpse of a dear friend, a parent to whom I was indebted for much of my past happiness, and who could never again be restored to me. Passing on, we beheld Mr. G. Humphrey's house (now J. Bateman's, Sparkbrook), the shell complete, but despoiled of all its windows. Dr. Priestley's was as melancholy a piece of ruin as our own. Arriving at New Hall Street (G. Russell's), we met a hearty welcome from our friends there, and took up our residence under the hospitable roof of my good uncle, till my father could procure a house for us. All I saw, felt, and observed seemed like a dream, and it was a long time before I could realise what had passed."

## CHAPTER III

### RUSSELL'S AND PRIESTLEY'S EMIGRATION

Three days of mob-law—Inaction of authorities—Charges against ministers and local magistrates—King George's letter—Detestation of French Revolution and French nation—Intolerance in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries—Russell's agitation for justice—Appeal to Pitt—Priestley's relations with Whig leaders—Unpopularity of Radical Dissenters general and increasing—Priestley's encouragement of Russell—The appeal to the public—His confidence shaken—England no place for his sons—Russell leaves Birmingham—Decides to emigrate to America.

FROM Thursday afternoon to Sunday evening, as we have seen, the town and neighbourhood of Birmingham had been abandoned to the mercy of a drunken and destructive mob. No serious attempt was made by the authorities to put down the disorder. A body of constables had indeed been got together to rescue Mr. Ryland's house at Easy Hill, but they were driven back with heavy loss. The victorious wreckers, however, did not all escape unpunished. A number of them were caught by the collapse of a burning roof; many were badly injured, and ten perished in the ruins. But more than three days had been allowed to pass before the military were brought up. On the arrival of three troops of dragoons the rioters saw that their game was up and quickly dispersed. What could be done on the Sunday night might as easily have been done on the previous Friday—nor

has any satisfactory explanation been given of the official delay. In these circumstances it was natural for Priestley and his friends to suspect complicity in the very highest quarters, and if they went beyond the proved facts, they might in justification point to the astonishing letter which the King addressed to Dundas, the Secretary of State, in approval of troops having been sent to Birmingham. "Though I cannot but feel the better pleased that Priestley is the sufferer for the doctrines he and his party have instilled, and that the people see them in their true light, yet I cannot approve of their having employed such atrocious means of showing their disapproval."

In order to understand the ferocity with which Priestley and his associates were pursued, and the condonation extended by respectable persons to this persecution, we must look beyond the heresy of his religious opinions and his pamphleteering way with Madan and other High Church leaders in Birmingham. Nor will the peculiar animosity be explained by the special energy and exceptional talent displayed, amongst the Nonconformists of the day, by the Unitarian section in pressing for repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. A large part of the mischief was, of course, due to *odium theologicum*. Political animus also has to be allowed for. But in justice to the men, whether educated organisers or ignorant agents of persecution, it should be borne in mind that average English people of the time looked upon friends of the French Revolution as enemies of their own country. That memorable uprising was neither represented by its friends nor regarded by its enemies



as a merely national movement. In purpose and effect it was cosmopolitan. The Constituent Assembly, in proclaiming the Rights of Man, was asserting the rights of all men and attacking the authority of every established Government. The Revolutionists, as Seignobos has succinctly observed, "were not content to reorganise France according to the principles of 1789; they wished also to revolutionise Europe, to destroy abuses, and to establish the reign of justice and equity." Briefly, the movement was international and universally upsetting. To the ordinary Englishman's mind, therefore, it was anti-English, and the men in England who supported it were looked on as little better than traitors to their country. Burke's *Reflections*, published in 1790, had been a powerful agent in working up English feeling against the Revolution, and against all who sympathised with its objects or condoned its methods.

During the previous hundred years England and France had been engaged in almost incessant warfare—from 1689 to 1697 (League of Augsburg); from 1702 to 1713 (Spanish Succession); from 1740 to 1748 (Austrian Succession); from 1756 to 1763 (the Seven Years' War), and from 1778 to 1783 (American Independence). For their expulsion from Canada the French had taken a bitter and effective revenge when they intervened in the quarrel between the British American Colonies and the King's Government. Compelled at the same time to fight France and Spain, and to protect Ireland against occupation, the British Parliament, disgusted alike with the King's perversity and his Ministers' bungling, disheartened



by the incapacity of some generals and the difficulties confronting others, insisted upon peace being made with the American Congress. Although few sensible men have ever supposed that the Colonial system, as practised in the eighteenth century, could have stood the strain of many more years' usage, the readjustment might have been pacific, and the separation, if separation there must be, should have been rendered honourable to both parties. In England there were plenty of reasonable and influential politicians who would gracefully have yielded all the legitimate demands of the Colonists. Infinite mischief was done by the hot-heads on both sides. They counteracted the influence of statesmen such as Chatham and Washington, who would have rejoiced in the opportunity of escaping a sort of civil war. This happy solution was finally excluded when Franklin and Vergennes formed their momentous compact. For the ignominious termination in 1783 of a war equally wanton and unpopular, Englishmen in 1791 could hardly have forgotten that they had to thank the French nation.

Nor did it require any remarkable gift of prescience to understand that war on a great scale would soon be recommenced between England and France. Whigs of the Holland House circle and abstract thinkers like Priestley and his friends might cherish hopes of a lasting peace with the "hereditary foe." But, distinguished as many of the Whig leaders were for parliamentary eloquence and literary talents, they seem at this period to have lost touch with national sentiment. They failed to discern—what a statesman of

comparatively limited intellect such as the younger Pitt grasped as by instinct—that it would soon be incumbent on England to fight the French Revolution, with all that it embodied, in defence of the national liberty. In a word, France was the enemy, and friends of France, so the popular argument ran, were enemies of England. This of course does not justify, but it helps to explain, the brutal and blackguardly conduct of the roughs who broke loose in 1791 at Birmingham, and accounts in some degree for the negligence of the authorities, who, if they had chosen, might at the outset have put down the trouble before it had become unmanageable. They had received ample warning, but perhaps, like the King, they thought it would do no harm to let the Radical and Dissenting dogs get a sharp lesson.

Before we raise our hands in righteous deprecation of our grandfathers' misbehaviour let us ask ourselves whether our own practice is much superior. Are there no recent instances of authority standing by with folded arms while an unpopular person has the "place made too hot to hold him"? In one respect, no doubt, "we may boast ourselves to be greatly better than our fathers." If the object of loud condemnation is well known in the country at large—if he is a prominent member of Parliament, for instance—he may reckon upon being given police protection when he chooses (at Birmingham or elsewhere) to proclaim his political heresies. On the other hand, should a number of humbler recusants, such as miners not enrolled in a federation, be visited with tokens of trade unionist disapproval, it has not been remarked

that the local authorities were either vigilant to prevent outrage or quick to punish it. Before we pass judgment upon the intoxicated rioters and craven magistrates of Birmingham in 1791 let us then be sure that our modern code of tolerance is more strictly enforced.

It was not, however, likely that two men such as Priestley and Russell would sit down quietly under gross maltreatment. Whatever might be their political opinions, or their views on foreign affairs, they were thoroughly English in their love of personal liberty, and neither regard for the Court nor fear of Ministers would deter them from standing up for their rights. Moreover, they could make themselves heard. The one, besides being a militant Dissenter, was a philosopher of universally recognised attainments: the other had an ample fortune, powerful friends in London, and a stout heart of his own. The man who had twice ridden out alone to face an angry mob would not easily be restrained from seeking redress in the courts of law. From Priestley's letters we see that Russell conducted, largely at his own expense, a thorough inquiry, as the result of which it appears that solid, if not adequate, compensation was eventually obtained. The sum of £26,961, of which Priestley received £2542, was raised by a rate on the Hundred—about half the estimated damage to property. In August, at the Warwick Assizes, two of the more conspicuous rioters were put on trial, found guilty, and sentenced to death.

Meantime, Priestley, by no means a child in worldly affairs, had been entering into relations with Fox and Sheridan, who professed great zeal to take up his



cause. He dined with Sheridan, who gave him a message from Fox. Clearly, they meant to use him against Pitt. "They conceive," Priestley writes to Russell on July 29, "that the encouragement given by the Court to the High Church party was intended to crush Mr. Fox and those who took our part, and to intimidate both them and us." Priestley and Russell, however, did not mean to be made Whig catspaws. "I cannot think that there is much in this, and I am very unwilling to connect our cause with any political party, as, upon the face of it, it is evidently of a purely religious nature. I, therefore, differ from most of our friends here, and wish, with you, to show no distrust of Government, since our end will be answered whether they appear in earnest to redress our grievances or not. Our tribunal is our country and the world; and before this our Court, as well as ourselves, must appear, and we cannot doubt an equitable decision."

Priestley, of course, was tactically well inspired in desiring to ignore the political side of the affair and assume it to be, what on its face it was, purely religious. But in spite of his repeated assurances of confidence in an ultimate triumph the immediate conditions were discouraging. In his refuge near London he realised that "the same bad spirit" was pervading the whole kingdom. If, he writes, Dr. Price had been alive Hackney would have suffered as much as Birmingham had, nor would the College<sup>1</sup> itself have been spared. Feeling was equally bitter in Manchester, and bad

<sup>1</sup> Hackney College, of which Dr. Price was Principal, a famous centre of Nonconformist education.



accounts were received from the West of England. "It is indeed an alarming crisis that things are come to." Whatever may have been his regret, and it is frequently expressed in his letters, he felt no hesitation about severing his connection with Birmingham. Russell, on the other hand, returned to the scene of danger. "It gives me great concern," writes Priestley to him, "that so great a share of this great burden occasioned, though innocently, by myself should fall upon you (if not endanger your valuable life), while I am out of the way and can bear no part of the burden, and run no part of the risk." Meantime he was working upon his *Appeal to the Public*. As to the prudence of this treatise his friends were divided in opinion, since it was well calculated to exasperate the "shocking spirit of party" which the author lamented as increasing in Birmingham. On September 29, through Russell, he bade a sort of farewell to his work in the Midlands, wishing, at the same time, that it were possible to keep up "something like a connection with Birmingham." He did not like the idea of being driven off or abandoning a charge in which he had been so happy. A few days later he wrote that, go where he might, he would never find such a friend as Russell had been to him. "Whatever I did at Birmingham was much more yours than mine, for without you I should not have been able to do much."

Russell was working indefatigably to obtain restitution for the sufferers by the riots, a task involving no little outlay of cash besides the trouble and odium incurred. Moreover, he seems to have been

maintaining "two of the cleverest young ministers in England" in the place of Priestley, so that the evicted preacher's enemies would discover they had gained nothing by expelling him. But Russell would feel, so Priestley tells him, that the eyes of the whole country, and, in some measure, of all Europe, were upon him; that money could not be expended to better purpose; and that when the history of his conduct went down to posterity it would be to his immortal honour. He was stimulated to further activity against the Birmingham magistrates by the remark of a friend that formerly the Court hated the Dissenters, but now, if they did not prosecute the magistrates, it would despise them.

So Priestley wrote in January 1792, and seems to have believed, not being in the thick of the fight, that victory was already assured. In this sanguine opinion he was supported by the attitude of his friends in London. "All the Dissenters here that I converse with hold this language. Now is not the time to feel intimidation or despondence. Our enemies have much more cause for fear, and they will find more so every day, as new publications and free discussion will demonstrate how much they have been in the wrong. You need not fear any more riots, and the clergy of your town will be over-awed by the ability and spirit of your ministers." He flattered himself also that a great effect would be produced by his *Appeal to the Public*.

In a few months his confidence was shaken by the appointment of Dr. Madan, the leader of the High Church party in Birmingham, as Bishop of

Bristol. This, he remarks on April 25, revealed the disposition of the Court, and should be considered a signal of hostility by all Dissenters. "Time may come, and not be far distant," he adds, "when the Court may want our assistance." What precisely he meant by this expression does not appear, for, about six weeks later, he confesses that the battle had been lost. On June 12 he writes to Russell, "I see that the country is against us, and that no justice is to be had for us in it; and since our friends will not rouse themselves from their present dependency, I approve your resolution of retiring from the game for a time, though the idea of your final emigration is more than I can bear, so intimately and happily connected as we have been. I wish it could suit me to accompany you, but to that there are those who will never consent."

This is the first intimation of Russell's intention to make a new home in America—a country with which he had a family and business connection of long standing. It appears that his exertions on behalf of the Dissenters had involved him in almost intolerable unpleasantness at home. "I am concerned," writes Priestley on June 22, 1792, "to hear of the rancour with which you continue to be visited at Birmingham, where your public spirit and disinterested services have been unexampled; but in this manner has not patriotism almost always been required? We must not look for our recompense here." It is a bad look-out for a fighting man like Russell when his companion-in-arms bids him be content with spiritual comfort.



Priestley, though clinging to the hope of continuing his work and ending his days in England, had made up his mind that England was no place for his sons. One of them had been settled in Manchester and was doing well, but, after the Birmingham riots, his partner felt himself obliged to propose a separation. Deciding to go to America, the young man wished to study farming with an eminent agriculturist, but the proposal was declined. The second son became a naturalised Frenchman, but afterwards, with his elder and a younger brother, settled in America. Meantime, the father, with plentiful lack of discretion, paraded his sympathy with the Revolution. He lamented the "horrid violences committed in France, especially on my old friend and correspondent, the Duke de la Rochefoucauld." Still, he was in such close relations with some of the Revolutionists that he received with gratification—though he declined—an offer to sit in the approaching National Convention. Writing on September 21, 1792 (which he describes as the Fourth Year of Liberty), he prays that the Supreme Being may destroy the machinations of the enemies of the Revolution.

It does not appear that the sympathies of Priestley and Russell with the French movement were estranged by the atrocities of the Revolution, or even by the quasi-legal murder of the King, or by the renewal of hostilities between England and France, for in March 1793 we come upon a letter in which Priestley laments to Russell that the times were very critical, and required the united counsels of all the friends of liberty. "I fear the worst, as the Court party are



triumphant everywhere, especially on account of the repulse of the French armies and the distracted state of France, from which, indeed, everything is to be feared." The illness from which Russell was at this time suffering had apparently increased, and on April 30 he left Birmingham. "I do not wonder," says Priestley; "your merit is too great to be forgiven, and your associates unworthy of you." For some reason unexplained he declared Pitt to be tired of the war, and persisting in it only because he was overruled. But this truly remarkable piece of thought-reading did not blind Priestley to the "increasing malignancy on every side against all things Liberal." On June 17 he suggests that in the following year, 1794, he may join his sons in America, and if he should go, so he writes, Russell's daughters might count upon finding with him a home and protection. Russell himself had settled for a time in Gloucestershire, in an "agreeable situation," but was intending to go to America. Priestley thinks that he will himself be "drawn into the vortex, though not immediately." In point of fact, the two friends started within a few months of each other. Priestley sailed from London on April 8, 1794, and reached New York on June 4; Russell took ship at Falmouth on August 13, but, for reasons which will appear, did not arrive on American soil till close on the end of the same month in the following year (1795).

## CHAPTER IV

### A COACH-DRIVE TO FALMOUTH

Martha Russell's diaries—The family start in state—Visits to Berkeley Castle—Bristol—Wells Cathedral—Glastonbury Abbey—An old family friend—Exeter—A primitive inn—French prisoners of war at Bodmin—Dreary Cornwall—Arrival at Falmouth—Meeting with future companions—Captain Prebble of the *Mary*—Preparations for the voyage—An uncomfortable start.

AT this point the family story, hitherto pieced together from stray memoranda and casual references in letters, may be taken up for a time by Martha Russell. Throughout the most disconcerting experiences this admirably trained young lady hardly ever interrupted the habit of writing up her diary. With the formal though not inelegant style of the period she combined, it will be seen, a rare capacity for noting anything remarkable, and as a rule, omitting what might be uninteresting or irrelevant. Her accounts here of her journeys in three countries have been considerably abridged, because, as a faithful chronicler, she conceived herself under an obligation to describe at length many places and scenes which to this more travelled generation are tolerably familiar.

Again, she dealt somewhat particularly with matters of purely domestic importance, and often, as was inevitable, repeated herself. Perhaps it was partly due to her training under Priestley, and to her

lively concern in serious questions, that she too frequently indulged, as clever young people will, a pretty gift of moralising. If all her reflections were to be reproduced here they would give a false idea of her character, which, if perhaps a trifle prim, was charmingly accessible to laughter and amusement. A little Quakerish she may have been, but not Puritanical, while her shrewd natural intelligence was no doubt sharpened by the exciting adventures described in the previous chapter and by the subsequent period of anxiety, strife, and social persecution.

William Russell, when he started, with his daughters Martha and Mary and his son Thomas, to make himself a settlement in the New World, travelled in the style becoming a gentleman of fortune. He and his son rode on horseback, while his daughters, accompanied by men-servants and maids, sat in the family carriage. He had stood out stiffly against intolerant neighbours, and his departure was not to be that of a fugitive. On the leisurely journey from his Gloucestershire resting-place to his port of embarkation he took the opportunity of showing his young people something of the country which they intended for ever to abandon. But Martha's observations on the route from Matson<sup>1</sup> to Falmouth have here been ruthlessly abbreviated, though some of them, sufficiently quaint or acute, illustrate the manifold discomforts of travelling in England, at the end of the eighteenth century, even for persons who did not need to study economy.

<sup>1</sup> Two miles from Gloucester. Charles I. occupied Matson House during the siege of Gloucester in 1643.



“*Wednesday, July 23, 1794.*—Left Matson at half-past seven in the morning, arrived at Newport about one, where we got a very good dinner, and afterwards went to see Berkeley Castle, which has been built 464 years; the walls are from 13 to 15 feet thick. Here, after passing through a long suite of rooms, we came into a small garden, in which was a cold bath, and here to our great surprise we found ourselves on the top of the castle. So imperceptibly had we ascended by a step or two to each room, that we had not the smallest idea of being so high. Passing across this garden we entered a passage which brought us to a room detached from the other building, in which Edward the Second was murdered. The hangings of the bed and room were of very fine thick scarlet cloth finely embroidered, the curtains of the bed lined with different coloured silks in patchwork—the tester and head of carved wood. In the window lay a plaster-of-Paris head of Edward, and an iron instrument with which, tradition says, he was murdered.”

The next stop was at Bristol, which was reached at nine o'clock. But the town was so full that the party could not gain admittance either at the Bush or White Hart, and therefore were obliged to go to the White Lion, where the people, we learn, were “civil but dirty.” On Thursday the travellers went to Bath, and stopped at “Pickwick’s” (the White Stork), where they found “very good beds, &c.” Friday was spent in exploring the new part of the city. The streets they pronounced very handsome, but “owing to the



dullness of trade"—no doubt caused by the war—"all was at a stand."

On Friday evening about nine o'clock Wells was reached, and before breakfast the Cathedral was visited—"superb and grand beyond imagination and description. . . ."

"Among the finest curiosities this magnificent edifice has to boast is a clock brought from Glastonbury 400 years old. It was made by a monk, and is the largest piece of mechanism of the kind I ever heard of. It has a large dial plate within the church, the middle of which shows the age of the moon. Round are two rows of figures. The hour and minute hands are a small and large star: on the top are two rows of soldiers on horseback, which move round and pass each other. Against the wall which runs from the end of that against which is this dial, and at a good distance from it, is a small figure of a man sitting, which strikes the quarters with his heels and the hours with his hands against two bells that are suspended before him. Beside this is a still larger clock on the outside of the building, which can be heard seven miles off. All is the same piece of mechanism—we heard them both strike at once. . . ."

"The organist belonging to this Cathedral, of the name of Jenkins, is remarkably clever at instructing in singing—a pupil of his whom we heard at the new Drury Theatre in the winter, and who has a remarkable fine voice, is engaged by the proprietors of that place at £400 per annum for five years, and his brother, who is older, at £200 per annum for taking

care of him. This young man's home is Welsh ; I suppose he is about twelve years of age."

On Saturday evening, after a passing glance at Glastonbury and Bridgewater, the party came to Taunton, where they fell in with several Nonconformist friends.

"*Sunday the 27th.*—Mr. Broadhurst, a minister, called on us before breakfast, and we afterwards went to hear Mr. Toulmine preach. Before dinner a Mr. Wood called on us, who introduced himself, saying he knew my grandfather Russell, and was a great companion of his. He was eighty-two years of age, and was highly gratified with seeing my father and inquiring after his old friends, most of whom, however, were dead. He went to see my grandfather previous to his going to America, and now called upon my father on the like occasion."

At Exeter, on the 28th, the Cathedral was duly inspected and admired.

"The shops here are very good ; we made several purchases. This part of the county abounds with clothiers ; a manufactory of coarse flannel is carried on here, and some carpeting. The landlord of the London Inn is building a very good new house, which we went to see ; it has eighteen sitting rooms below-stairs and several more above. Mr. Renwick, the minister, called on us with a Mr. Shate. The latter has a son settled in America. A Mr. Davey also called, who

has a brother there, who intends going himself; likewise a Mr. G. a young man of fortune, who is going to America principally for his health. He much wished to have gone with us in the *Mary*, but we had not room."

"This county," remarks Martha Russell on her way to Crockernwell, "is the most hilly I ever was in." On Tuesday they passed through Okehampton (a borough town, though miserably poor), and reached Launceston, but the tremendous hill at the entrance "almost knocked up our poor coach horses."

"*Wednesday, 30th.*—After breakfast we left Launceston, dined at the Jamaica Inn, a small house in the middle of a common, or moor, with not a tree or house to be seen for miles. Here in the kitchen were pigs and ducks, which, with children, hardly left room to stir. The good woman had nothing in the house but a piece of pork, which in the course of an hour and a half we got boiled, and a few potatoes with some brown or rather black bread. No cheese was to be had, and the butter looked almost like lard. Their fires were of turf, which they told us was the best that could be to cook by. Indeed, I was surprised to see it burn so clear, and so soon light up. Such a very barren, dreary country as this I never before saw. The good woman took a great deal of pains to make us believe that they often had people stop there, though, in spite of all her endeavours, we remained rather incredulous. Such a poor, mean, dirty place I never before was in, and such a scarcity of everything



bespoke no great intercourse with society. No hay could we get for our horses, and nothing to drink ourselves. The malt liquor, as well as the water, was very bad. After staying about two hours we went on to Bodmin, a small, poor town, but which afforded tolerable accommodation. A number of French prisoners who were walking about the town amazed us."

Martha Russell, like most eighteenth-century people, had no relish for rugged scenery, for on the way from Bodmin she remarks that "the country still continues the most dreary I ever saw." Truro, however, she liked, as being a "neat, pretty town." She afterwards "heard" that there were some parts of Cornwall "very pleasant and fertile."

The county of Cornwall, she notes, had subscribed very strongly towards the internal defence of the country, and at Truro she saw boys about fourteen years old in regimentals. "There is a society formed of them all near of a size. They were going to exercise just as we left Truro, from whence we came through Penryn to Falmouth." This town, which struck them as "small and dirty," the party reached on Friday, 1st August. There they found a friend, Mr. W. Chambers, who was waiting to embark for Spain. Next morning they came upon Mr. Saunders, Dr. and Mr. Edwards, Mr. and Mrs. Terry, and Miss Clarkson, who were to be of their party on board the *Mary* for New York. On Tuesday they were joined by Mr. and Mrs. Huddy. In the evening they "raised a little dance, the waiter playing the violin." On



Wednesday evening they repeated the entertainment. On the following three days of the week nothing very particular happened, except that Mr. Chambers sailed for Spain.

“*Sunday*.—We all went to Meeting. Mr. Terry we found to be a Deist, fond of turning every argument for religion into ridicule; is noisy and rude whenever the subject is introduced; omits no opportunity of ridiculing religion in general, and sneering at Dissenters in particular. We begin to fear now he will not prove a very desirable companion; he seems to be a forward, upstart, bold fellow. Neither is Mrs. Terry remarkably pleasing, nor has she seen anything of the world, but appears lifted up by her mere marriage out of her station.

“Just as we were returning from Meeting in the morning a sailor accosted my father at the door of the hotel with ‘So your ship is in sight’—and very true it proved, to our no small joy. But it seemed quite astonishing that at so great a distance they could tell that it was an American vessel. Immediately the glass was applied, we saw the American flag, and therefore hoped it might prove the *Mary*, and some time after dinner we had the felicity to see her come into harbour. Dr. Edwards with the glass saw Captain Prebble and my father’s dog, which confirmed our hopes. At length we saw the boat hoisted out and Captain Prebble get in; we walked to meet him on his landing and gave him a hearty welcome. We were all much pleased with his appearance, and we all agreed that if we liked the vessel as well as we did

the captain our voyage must most likely be an agreeable one."

Monday and Tuesday were spent in packing and buying provisions for the voyage.

"*Wednesday, 13th [August].*—After tea we all went on board the *Mary*; the tide was just coming in and there was a swell of the sea; our boat was heavily loaded, and some of the party were a little alarmed, Mrs. Terry particularly. No sooner were we got on board the *Mary* than Miss Clarkson and my sister were obliged to run down into the cabin, and this with all possible expedition. Mrs. Huddy was also very soon ill, as well as Lyddy and Betsy (maid servants), for although the vessel was at anchor, the swell being heavy there was a good deal of motion. After the invalids were all gone to bed my father, brother, Mr. Terry, Mr. Saunders and I supped upon deck on a cold mutton pie we had brought with us. The evening was fine, and I, feeling quite well, really enjoyed much the novelty of the scene, and watched the moonbeams playing on the water. About eleven o'clock we went to bed, and I never slept better in my life, although through the night there was a good deal of motion.

"About seven in the morning of Thursday, the wind being fair, we weighed anchor. The morning was delightful, the sea calm, and all charmingly pleasant. Mrs. Terry and myself were the only ladies that were well enough to join the breakfast party, and Mrs. Terry after breakfast was very sick. Mr. Huddy was

also to-day one of the worst, and Mr. Terry did not escape. In short, all except my father, brother, and myself were more or less indisposed; however, at dinner they all managed to make their appearance, though for a short time only. Very soon they were all obliged to retreat again to their berths, finding that bed was far the most comfortable place. All the servants were now ill except one, so that I had very full employment in waiting upon the invalids, and had sometimes much fear lest I must also have joined the sick party.

“*Saturday, 16th.*—All continue ill; the weather fine, but the wind ahead. Had a little pig roasted for dinner, and I never relished a dinner more in my life, although it was attended with many circumstances that in almost any other situation would have taken away my appetite. But the sea air, I find, fully counteracts all necessities of this kind by creating an appetite too keen to admit of attending much to trifles. This evening the sea was rather rough, and the vessel rolled a good deal.”

On Sunday there was a great swell at sea. Mr. Terry and Martha Russell were still the only persons able to get about. By this time, perhaps, she may have hoped she was beginning to see the end of her troubles. She had not yet begun them.

## CHAPTER V

### CAPTURED BY THE FRENCH

A French frigate in sight—English travellers ordered on board—Assurances of kind treatment—Accompanied by Captain Prebble—Scene on the man-of-war—Emblems of Liberty—Singing the Marseillaise—The ladies' good humour—Close quarters on board—Vermin and suffocating heat.

NEXT morning the thoughts of the emigrants were forcibly diverted from the ordinary perils and discomforts of a long voyage in a sailing vessel.

“*Monday, 18th [August].*—This morning I lay late till 10 o'clock, having been much disturbed with the roughness of the weather during the night. Just as I was beginning to dress my brother came to tell us there was a French frigate coming up with us. I hurried on my clothes, well pleased with the thought of seeing the good Republicans, and running up on deck found nearly all our party, sick and well, assembled together, and the Frenchmen nearly alongside of us.

“I returned to prevail on Mary to come up likewise, which she did. When we got on deck we found Captain Prebble speaking to them; they hoisted at first English colours, but on seeing that ours were American took them down and ran up their own. Their questions with the trumpet were, if the vessel was American, where bound, with what lade, and



who the passengers were. After this they hoisted their little boat and came on board us. We all rejoiced to see them, and had no idea of their being come for anything but news. However, it proved otherwise; they commanded of Captain Prebble a list of his passengers and of us passports. With these none of us were provided, except Dr. Edwards, and he had only an old one, which he had secured when he went to Holland. This, with the testimonials he produced of his being an American, satisfied them for himself, Mrs. Edwards, and Miss Clarkson, who passed as his niece. With regard to the rest of us they appeared suspicious, merely from our being British and having no passport to America. By means of the speaking trumpet with their captain, Captain Prebble was ordered on board the frigate. I still had not the least suspicion that they could think of making us prisoners when our situation had been made known to their captain, which Captain Prebble—who could speak French—promised to explain.

“There was this morning a very great swell of the sea, and we wondered at the Frenchmen in the first instance for venturing on so high a sea in a small boat. Soon after Captain Prebble was got on board a fresh party of French were sent to tell us we must prepare to go on board their frigate. This order both astonished and alarmed us beyond conception: we remonstrated *most earnestly*, and as there was one among this party who could talk English we were better off. However, all we could say was of no avail. My father was ordered on board immediately, and we were desired to get ready all we wished to take. Struck with

amaze, and scarce knowing what I did, I ran down to collect what I could, for the servants were quite unable to do anything from sickness. Our beds were tied up first, and then we scrambled together a few cloaks and other little things. But so great was our hurry that we scarce knew what was taken or what it would be proper to take; fearing that if we were made prisoners all we had with us would be seized. Fortunately, among other things, we remembered our medicine-chest. All the time we were putting up our things the French officers were hurrying us and saying their Captain was angry at our staying so long.

“We were now to go ourselves in the same little boat and on the same high sea which had made us wonder at the boldness of the Frenchmen for venturing to face; and yet so agitated were our spirits at the idea of being made prisoners, and taken on board the frigate, which seemed to swarm with men, that we hardly thought of the danger, although the sea ran mountains high, and once came over on the side of the boat where I was sitting, so as to completely wet me down one side. The motion of the boat and vessel during the time that the party were getting in appeared to me to cause a good deal of danger to us who were in the boat first. However, I seemed to care for nothing, and felt now composed enough, or rather so stupefied as to be able to meet any danger.

“The young man who spoke English accompanied us, and appeared to be humane and kind: he assured us that we should be well treated, and begged we would not distress ourselves. On getting to the side

of the frigate we found we could not be hoisted up in the chair, but must climb up the sides of the vessel. This, which in almost any other circumstances we should have thought impossible, was soon overcome. I went up first, but it was literally like clambering up the side of a house. I shall never forget my feelings on finding myself at the top, with 300 dirty, filthy, ragged-looking sailors crowded on the deck to see us.

“ We were met by my father and Captain Prebble, the expression of whose countenances plainly testified the agitation of their minds and their fears for us. They led us to a seat there was in the middle of the deck ; here, when seated, the scene was beyond description novel and distressing. The doctor belonging to the vessel, who could talk English a little, came up to us and assured us, in the most urgent manner, that if we were what we said we should find ourselves among friends and brethren, and should be treated as such, and that we need fear nothing, for he would be answerable that we should receive no insult, and desired that if any one offered the least we should let him know. Several of the officers who stood round assured us of the same, both by the expression of their countenances, as well as their words ; they appeared to feel much for us.

“ Still, all this did not stifle our apprehensions ; we were on board a ship of war, with between 300 and 400 men, few of whom felt, as we supposed, any restraint from principle ; and, although the officers were well disposed, among such a number of men they, we feared, could not be answerable, and there



was no female on board till we arrived. Overwhelmed with apprehensions of what was to come, and foreboding ill from everything almost that I saw, my feelings had now almost overcome me, when Captain Prebble, seeing and feeling for our distress, kindly said he would go to France with us, in order that when we arrived in Bresthaven, where the frigate was bound, he might go himself to the American Ambassador at Paris on our behalf. This was a drop of comfort that seemed to calm my troubled breast, for till this moment I had seen no end to our imprisonment as long as the war lasted.

“ After we had been seated on the deck about half-an-hour the Captain made his appearance ; he bowed to us and we all rose and acknowledged it. His countenance was placid and prepossessing, and I augured well from his manner. The men, as may naturally be supposed, all crowded round to view us. All our invalids had lost their sickness from the fright. We were now asked to walk down into the cabin to dinner. Here was a scene novel indeed. The room was perhaps 20 feet by 18 ; along the middle was a table, covered with an oilcloth, on which stood the dinner. On one side of the table, about the middle, was a small pillar against which was a small bush to represent the Tree of Liberty, with a bunch of national ribbons under, and a small Cap of Liberty on the top. Even with the top of this pillar, and just over the centre of the table, was a circle of small swords or scimitars, I suppose about thirty or forty, put in a frame, which frame was fixed to the ceiling. Along the walls at the top and bottom



of the cabin were fixed two rows of muskets, and a large cannon on each side. Along the top and opposite to the door were the windows, under which was a broad seat with lockers. From the window to where the muskets were arranged on the sides, the walls were covered with strong network, as I afterwards found, to prevent the splinters of wood flying about in case of a ball coming through.

“Our bedding and trunks lay all in a heap on one side, and we were desired to see that all was there. After that we sat down to dinner. As soon as the company were assembled, they all sung one verse of the Marseillaise Hymn, with the chorus, and then fell to heartily—taking care, however, to help us first, and that in a very polite manner. Of the dishes we had for dinner I could make out but few. Indeed, my attention was more fixed on the company than the table. Such a set I never before saw, some with hats on, some without, others with the ‘bonnet rouge,’ all dirty and all merry, and chattering away as fast as possible. They were waited on by little boys; every officer had one, who brought him his napkin, knife, fork, spoon, and glass, and each had a bottle of wine. They did not sit at all after dinner, but drank their wine with it; the bread was excellent, and we had a very good rice pudding.

“After dinner we went on deck again, and I began to feel more comfortable from the great attention and, really I may say, tenderness of the officers. They seemed to have but one wish respecting us, and that was to assure us we should be kindly treated, and that they had not a doubt of our being liberated as

soon as our case was known; yet they said their taking us was unavoidable, for the English had, they said, lately set them an example of it, and they had orders to let no English escape them whatever. This frigate, it appeared, belonged to a squadron that had been cruising in the Channel for twenty days; the officers told us they expected to return to Brest very soon. This was grateful, for of all things, we seemed to dread most an engagement. The name of this frigate was the *Proserpine*; she carried forty guns, thirty-six pounders,<sup>1</sup> and was twenty-two years old. In the last cruise she had sprung a leak, and, but for the English prisoners on board, had been lost. Against the main-mast was the mark of a cannon ball, just under a national cockade which was fixed in the mast. They pointed out to us as a matter of exultation that it had gone so near and had not hurt it.

“One thing I heard this afternoon added much to my anxiety, which was that there was a very bad putrid fever on board, which had carried off numbers.

“At four o'clock all the boys assembled and placed themselves in ranks in the middle of the deck, where they sang the Marseillaise Hymn. They made a practice of singing it three times a day, morning, noon, and night. After supper they very earnestly pressed us to sing, and sang themselves several songs, and, though our feelings were ill-disposed to cheerfulness, yet so very pressing were they, and so desirous were we to show we wished to oblige them in return for their kindness, that somehow or other Mrs. Terry, Mary, and I managed to sing together, although

<sup>1</sup> A lady was not bound to know, but this is impossible.

none of us had ever before attempted it in company, and no one of the three knew anything at all about the matter. However, the attempt had the desired effect of pleasing them much, and the Captain as much as any of them. He afterwards gave us a song himself.

“About nine o’clock we were handed by the officers to the place where we were to sleep, the sight of which made us feel very sensibly that we were prisoners. It was at one end of the vessel, between decks, about 10 or 11 feet square, partitioned out from the other part with canvas. One part at the top was something higher than the rest, being raised with boxes, and here Mr. and Mrs. Terry lay. Our beds were spread on the floor, and Mrs. Huddy, Lyddy, Betsy, Mary, and I lay in a row; Mr. Huddy at the entrance across our feet. On one side of the canvas joined another smaller partition of the same kind, and here, on the floor likewise, slept my father and brother and Mr. Saunders. Opposite to them, upon a store of cannon balls, our men-servants laid their beds. The officers slept in small berths round our canvas, and were continually passing backwards and forwards, so that it was absolutely necessary to extinguish our light as soon as possible, though we all laid down in our clothes. The gentlemen waited on the outside till we were ready, and then giving the light to the man who had also been waiting there for it, came into the *hole* (for nothing better can I term it).

“Left to my own reflections, the feelings of my mind are not to be described. The recollection of what had passed in the course of the day—the forlorn,

sad situation in which we then were, and the fear that *all* of us might not have strength of mind and body sufficient to carry us through what was to come—almost overcame me. These reflections, added to the effects of our confinement, deprived me entirely of sleep. The vermin we encountered were inconceivable; but what was to me really worse was the great closeness of the place. With the greatest difficulty could I breathe at all, and was every now and then obliged to jump up through fear of suffocation. Apart from these circumstances the noise was enough to have prevented any one from sleeping; the creaking of the vessel was really tremendous, and the rolling of the cannon not less so. . . . On first going into the air I felt ready to faint, but soon recovered, and was refreshed by breathing it freely more than can be described.”



## CHAPTER VI

### PRISONERS OF WAR

Monotonous life—Hunting for prizes—Burning a Dutch vessel—Preparing for action—A strange sail—French sailors dancing—In view of Brest—The Land of Liberty—Martha Russell's enthusiasm—An unconquerable nation—Hopes of speedy release—Disappointment and collapse—Removed to another prison ship—Execution of Robespierre—A favourable circumstance—Guillotine at Brest—Thomas Russell's illness—Harshness of the commanding officer—Shortness of provisions and increasing appetites—French cookery—A naval spectacle—A kindly captain—His remembrances of captivity in England—William Russell's curious adventure.

NEXT morning the prisoners on board the *Proserpine* were visited by Dr. Edwards, who gave them a letter to his very particular friend, Mr. Monroe, the American Minister in Paris,<sup>1</sup> and also promised to look after their property on the *Mary*. Captain Prebble, handing over the command of his vessel to his mate, made arrangements to accompany them to France. About six o'clock in the evening, with "acheing hearts," they bade farewell to the *Mary*. But in the evening, after supper, they were again bidden to sing, "which we did all round." The fare upon the French frigate was very coarse, and persons not possessing their own knives and forks had to manage without any. Captain Prebble's spoon usually served them all. So monotonous

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards (1816) elected President of the United States, whose name was given to the famous doctrine of international usage.

was the daily life that the indefatigable diarist gave up mentioning the distinct dates. The prisoners simply rose, breakfasted, dined, and supped and went to bed at the same time and in the same manner. In fine weather they sat or walked on deck : when it was wet they played cards or read books (if any book could be found) in the cabin. But Martha and Mary Russell, like sensible, good-humoured young ladies, made the best of their plight. They taught English to the officers, who taught them French in return.

Regretfully it must be added that they began to find an unholy joy in the operations of war. The squadron consisted of five frigates besides corvettes. During the cruise, which lasted forty days, they took thirty prizes—so Martha exultingly records, having seemingly forgotten the peace principles imbibed from Dr. Priestley. It was “comparatively uninteresting,” we read, when a ship was burnt because they knew that there was nobody on board—much as though a motoring lady of our own day were to complain of a drive being dull because no chickens had been killed! Let Martha speak for herself:—

“The evening, or rather afternoon, on which we came on board, we saw a Dutch vessel sunk after they had taken out the crew and cargo. A large hole was bored in the bottom, but it was many hours before it went down: the masts were to be seen the next morning. Another day they set fire to a vessel; this was a small English sloop, and never did I see a more terrible sight. No description either of pencil or pen can equal the reality, no scene can ever be more

tremendous, though the idea of no person being on board rendered the sight comparatively uninteresting. The only diversion we had was going in chase of prizes, and this the officers enjoyed so much that it was impossible for us not to enter also into the spirit of it in a degree. The moment a signal was hoisted by the Commodore, we were all impatience to know what it meant, hoping from the first day for commands to steer for Brest, as the officers had told us their time was expired, or at least what was fixed for the cruise. The hopes of the officers constantly were for signals to go in chase; when these came they all appeared intoxicated with joy, all hands were aloft to set the sails and off we went. It really was very pleasant to sail away so fast in so large a ship. Though we never went more than 12 knots an hour, yet from her size we seemed to glide along so smoothly as rendered it delightful. . . .

“On coming up with our prize the officers, all dressed in their regimentals, buckled on swords and pistols, and boarded her. After examining her papers, the trumpets were hoisted and they informed the Captain particularly. He then gave them orders what to do. The sailors and passengers were uniformly sent on board. If a part only of the cargo was valuable, that was sent also, and the rest destroyed in the vessel. If the cargo proved a valuable one French sailors were sent on board. But the first sight of our prize was always the most trying time to us, and the first and most interesting question ‘Is she a ship of war?’ and till this was answered agitation had complete possession of our minds. Relieved from this



fear, we afterwards entered the more into the general pleasure of the moment from having felt it. On going on board the prize the officers generally privately asked us what they would bring us. We were at first content with wishing only for potatoes, there being none then on board. After having returned several times without them, and disappointed themselves much more than us, they at length returned from a Dutchman, tugging a large bag up the side of the ship. Throwing it upon the deck before us they cried 'Vive la République!' One day a vessel appeared in sight, taken for a ship-of-war by all the squadron. Preparations were now made for an engagement; every partition was taken away between decks, and nothing was to be seen but the cannon ranged on each side. The officers put on their best, loaded their pistols, buckled on their swords, and everything was in readiness. They all declared they would sink the vessel sooner than be taken—we were to have our choice of going into the hold or cockpit."

Happily the ladies were not put to this embarrassing selection. The vessel proved to be an American. For a little longer they were allowed to enjoy the more pleasant side of life on board a man-of-war. They were particularly struck with the cleverness and high spirits of the French sailors.

"One evening we were highly pleased with seeing the sailors dance. The astonishingly light manner in which they move, many in wooden shoes, was matter of surprise to us all. They appeared to be particularly



made to excel in dancing, for really I never saw any dancing master in England acquit himself better than these dirty, mean, awkward-looking fellows. The contrast between the French and English sailors, or rather peasantry (for these are all requisition men) is striking indeed. The uniform good humour of these men one to another, together with their playfulness, is amazingly pleasing all the day; the sides of the deck were filled between the cannon with different parties playing at cards, and always were they playing tricks on each other, which jokes are uniformly well received."

On August 29th, after the Russells and their English companions from the *Mary* had been prisoners of war on the *Proserpine* for eleven days, another American vessel (the *Ivor*, bound from Bristol to New York, Capt. Gooderich) was captured, and the English passengers were taken on board. The new-comers, twenty-seven in number, naturally encroached upon the scanty accommodation available for passengers. For some reason not explained by the diarist—possibly the strangers were not sufficiently open-handed—they were treated with small consideration. One gentleman was quartered in the hold, very near the oven, and fed upon bread and water, while another, taken for an aristocrat, was constantly mocked and refused leave to promenade on deck.

Meantime the fever was increasing: of the four hundred persons on board more than one hundred were sick, the ship's doctor amongst them. Another anxiety that pressed upon the emigrants was the fear

of being captured by "our enemies and countrymen." On September 2nd the *Proserpine* had a narrow escape. Off Ushant the French sighted twenty-six British sail, and had to thank the dirty weather for getting away in safety. Presently they were in view of Brest. A thick fog did not prevent the Russell family from going on deck early in the morning in order to get a peep at the coast of France, the Land of Liberty. "It had in my eyes," writes Martha Russell, "more charm than ever land held before." At noon they entered the harbour, and were impressed with the appearance of the five fine three-deckers, especially the Admiral's flag-ship, *La Montagne*, with 1200 men on board. The in-coming squadron was hailed with cries of "Vive la République!" The crews seemed as one man to be inspired in the cause for which they were engaged.

"The ardour they all felt and expressed in the cause of Liberty really astonished me, although I was prepared to find it at a high pitch. It seems the only thing for which they wished to live, and the only cause in which they wished to die. Very often have I exclaimed, 'This people will never be conquered.' At present all their religion is Liberty, and in this there sure never were greater enthusiasts. A time will, I am convinced, come, and that shortly, when the Maker of the World will be held in the highest veneration by that people whose hearts glow with such generous sentiments towards His creatures."

In this amiable and expansive frame of mind Martha Russell and her companions were making ready for

their assured release. First there was to be a thorough washing—"the extreme filth of the vessel could scarce be imagined"—and a hardly less welcome change of linen. Presently came an order to take them to another ship! This was indeed an unexpected stroke. They found about one hundred others in the same plight. A little comfort they got from the assurance of some kindly Americans, who promised to watch where they were taken to, and provide them with anything they might require. The poor ladies had fairly broken down under their disappointment, when happily they were discovered in their new prison by Captain Prebble, who undertook to fetch for them from the *Proserpine* certain things which in the hurry of changing ship they had overlooked. The accommodation in *La Belle d'Orient* proved to be much the same as on the *Proserpine*, but the personal kindness was missing. The servants fared badly, being compelled to sleep in the hold. The gentlemen were not much better treated. When the eight o'clock bell rang they were all ordered to carry down their beds! No sooner were they got down, and so crowded that literally they could not stir, than the light was put out, and they were obliged to remain all night just in the posture they were when it was extinguished. Some of the party found themselves on large casks, and the fear of slipping between them deterred them from moving, as they found by dropping things down that the cavities between the casks were very deep. "The sailors appeared to be the refuse of all nations, English, Dutch, and Portuguese, each vying with the other in noisy and opprobrious language."



Next day (September 3) the Russells were visited on board by Captain Prebble as well as by Captain Bryan, Captain Hooper, and a Mr. Wilson, who had been struck with their forlorn condition. But any hopes which they may have rested on the possession of "friends at Court" were dashed next day. Having undergone persecution in their native land on account of the French Revolution, they were now suffering from "the very people whose cause they had espoused." The American Consul at Brest was either impotent or indifferent, and it became apparent that no influence which William Russell could exercise, either personally or through his friends, would avail except in Paris itself. "It was now but a short time," Martha Russell quietly remarks, "since Robespierre had been guillotined (July 28, 1794), and the change this measure was likely to make in the Government was, we hoped, favourable for us." From the stern gallery, the lady adds, they had a view of the guillotine at Brest, which was credited with having recently dispatched twenty persons in thirty minutes.

Captain Prebble and Captain Bryan undertook to go to Paris on behalf of the Russells, though they were almost afraid to venture, as "so many murders" had lately been committed on the road by the Royalists of La Vendée.

On the following Sunday morning young Russell when he arose complained of a headache, and by evening was down with fever.

"*Monday.*—My brother had a very indifferent night, and was so ill this morning that we became seriously



alarmed for him ; we gave him James's Powder, but to be ill in such a situation was a trial I had dreaded all along for some or other of us, and to which I feared we should not be equal. Captain Bryan called to-day and brought us fruit, chocolate, sugar, butter, and biscuits. His humanity and philanthropy seemed unbounded. This evening my brother was quite delirious. All our fears increased much, and our prospects on his account appeared gloomy indeed, for they were here afraid of getting a fever on board, so that any one among the crew who was at all indisposed was sent directly to the hospital. This we dreaded most awfully. The doctor on board appeared to be as ignorant as possible, and great secrecy was therefore necessary. We continued giving him James's Powder.

“ *Thursday*.—My brother still very ill.

“ *Saturday*.—My brother something better, his fever abating.

“ *Sunday*.—Better still.

“ *Monday*.—He got on deck to walk, and though very weak was much better.

“ *Tuesday*.—My brother well, except a great degree of weakness, which we feared he would not lose for some time.”

But even the hardships on board seemed preferable to those of a prison ashore, and William Russell wrote to the Admiral begging that they might not be sent away. A sympathetic reply was received. Their unkind treatment on the *Belle d'Orient* seems to have been probably due to the officer's fear that as an ex-aristocrat he might be under Republican surveillance.

“Bold and unfeeling to a degree, he had remaining about him many traits of aristocracy. He kept us as much at a distance as possible, and on many occasions behaved with bare civility. At meals we particularly felt his unfeeling disregard of us, for he placed us on each side of him, and took care never to ask us to have anything, as well as to eye everything we got in such a manner that we could suppose nothing less than that he grudged us every bit we ate. We had thought ourselves short of provisions on board the *Proserpine*, but here we really felt ill. Every sort of provisions was extremely dear at Brest, and not only so, but nothing could be had without a *maximum*, or order from the municipality. The bread we ate was what they called Equality Bread; *very* brown, *very* hard, and *very* dry, full of grit, straw, and barley-corns, and often excessively sour. At first we were tired of eating before we were satisfied—it was so hard—but use not only reconciled us to it, but gave it a relish, and never shall I forget the astonishing *goût* with which we used to eat our breakfast.”

In spite of her French sympathies, Martha Russell did not take easily to French cookery. The dishes, she says, looked and smelt well, but on closer inspection proved to be little more than vegetables dressed in a variety of ways.

“Soup we had every day, and the beef of which it was made was always served round before any of the other dishes were touched. It was boiled to a

chip, and resembled horseflesh much more than beef. We dined in general about thirty people, and I do not think it an unfair calculation on the average to say that, one day with another, dinner and supper, we had not more than 3 or 4 lbs. of meat (with the bones) at a meal. Very seldom was it that we got any meat besides the 'bouilli.' Happily for us, we had cheese every day after dinner for the first part of the time, though towards the last that luxury failed us. As we were stinted for food our appetites seemed to increase."

Great was their rejoicing when their sour jailer, with his wife, went ashore, and his place was taken by a genial officer. He welcomed the party in his cabin and joined them in a game of whist. He was an expansive Frenchman, and told them about his private circumstances—how he had not seen his mother for thirty years, had buried his wife and seven children, and was then attached to a lady whom he would marry as soon as the war was over. In return Martha Russell listened to his fiancée's letters and worked him a cravat in the national colours.

On September 27th the Russells were transferred to another ship as a temporary abode, so they were assured, before they could be landed in Brest. But so amazing was the variety of tales which had been told them that they were beginning to despair of release.

*"Wednesday, October 1st.*—Great rejoicings at Brest on account of a victory over the Duke of York.



All the ships in the harbour were decorated with their different coloured signals; about twelve o'clock the men mounted in the rigging, and all united in one cry, 'Vive la République.' On the mast heads many boys were clinging, and the crowd of men that filled the yards, &c. was astonishing: I can compare them to nothing but a swarm of bees on each vessel. They all mounted together in the different ships, remained up about ten minutes, and then dismounted. Immediately after was seen a procession of boats decorated with flags; this proved to be the representatives going to dine on board the *Montagne*. This evening brought one of the finest sights I ever witnessed—a grand illumination of the Admiral's ship and the other three-deckers, namely the *Majestueux* and the *Révolution*, but the Admiral's ship far surpassed the others from the vast number of lamps that filled every porthole. Their blaze of light, exhibited without apparent order or device, formed a good groundwork for the lightness and elegance that shone among the rigging. All three of the masts were decorated to the top with wreaths of lamps twining round them, and from one to the other lamps were suspended in different and beautiful forms, such as festoons, &c., and none of the rigging was visible except what was illuminated. Consequently the lamps appeared to be suspended in the air, and the whole had a most beautiful effect. The evening was dark but serene, and the water perfectly smooth, so that the reflection from the lamps illuminated its surface a good way and produced a most charming appearance."



The vessel on which they were confined (the *Elizabeth*) had become a sort of home to the Russells. They had it all to themselves, and the Captain was like an affectionate father. He had spent several years in England as a prisoner of war, and cherished quite a pleasant recollection of his time there. He had several companions, French officers, and they spent their time pleasantly. He mentioned in particular a circumstance that happened at Stratford-on-Avon, where they were made amazingly happy and gay from the great civility and kindness of their landlord, at the White Lion. Here they raised a dance and invited several lasses of the town to it. A Lord, whose name the officer had forgotten, happened to be at the inn at the time with his two daughters. He heard of it, and brought them to join the dance; they were very affable, pleasing women, and the gentlemen were not a little gratified by their attendance. In the morning, on going away, the Lord, whoever he was, left thirty guineas with the landlord to defray the expenses of the dance.

Captain Clement apparently tried to make a return for the kindness he had received by making the lot of his prisoners tolerable. He provided them with the best fare obtainable, rigged up a sort of kitchen for them, and allowed them to do part of their own cooking. They were supplied with a few books, and Martha Russell derived special pleasure from the *Tales* of Marmontel and the *Ruins of Memphis*. "We experienced a tranquillity and degree of ease and enjoyment that had been a long time banished from our breasts."

It was while they were on board this homelike prison that a curious accident befell William Russell.

“He had received a large quantity of *assignats*<sup>1</sup> from Captain Bryan. They were put into his pocket-book, and this he carried in his side pocket. One morning, when washing himself in the stern galley, he took off his coat and hung it over the rails. Soon after he returned into the cabin, having finished washing, and had occasion to use his pocket-book for something, when to his great surprise it was gone, though he had, as he thought, had it not more than half-an-hour before. As he clearly remembered having it when he went to bed the night before, we all set to to examine the beds, which were tied up in bundles and placed upon one another in the corner of the cabin. My father was quite distressed about this, as the money was of no small value at any time, but particularly now. Whilst we were all busily employed pulling the beds about, in came Mr. Huddy with the pocket-book in his hand, and as wet as possible. He did not know either of our loss, or that it was my father’s book, but said there had just been a boat with oysters alongside the ship. He went to buy some of them, and saw the sailors take it up out of the sea. He thought it appeared to be *English*, and that therefore it most probably belonged to some one of our party, and therefore, with some to-do, prevailed upon them to give it him. No doubt it fell out of the pocket at

<sup>1</sup> A paper currency issued by the Revolutionary Government of France.

the time my father hung the coat over the rails, but it was singular enough that the boat should come by just at that time, and that Mr. Huddy should see them take it up, but above all that he should persuade them to relinquish their prize, as he did not speak the language."

William Russell's luck had not quite run out!

## CHAPTER VII

### FIVE MONTHS OF CAPTIVITY

Transfer to the *Achille*—Companions in adversity—Cramped quarters—Disagreeable associates—A lively quarrel—More castles in the air and renewed disappointment—Delights of making apple dumplings—A family observance—The promised order of release—Accouchement of the Russells' servant—Brest guillotine at work—Death of a girl prisoner—Fears of diphtheria—William Russell breaking down—A cruel order—Captain Bryan's intervention—Happy revulsion—Officers and sailors dirty in the extreme—Fresh hopes of release—The Committee of Public Safety's procrastination—British sailors as prisoners of war—Bullying the other English and intimidating their captors—Martha Russell's feelings—Arrival of the order of release—Its limited terms—Disappointment of friends and sympathy of the Russells—Affecting scenes—Christmas Day spent in freedom—Causes of five months' delay—Text of the Decree—Captain Bryan's exertions—William Russell's testimony—Good faith of English prisoners—A pleasing remembrance.

ON October 2nd the prisoners were informed, with profuse regret, by Captain Clement, that they were about to be transferred to another ship, the *Achille*. Not only were they grieved to part with their kind friend, but they felt their worst misgivings confirmed—that they would remain in captivity until peace should be arranged. On board the *Achille* they found crowds of prisoners—"dirty-looking fellows as ever they saw"—and on being shown into the cabin they came again upon their own party from the *Elizabeth*. Amongst the new prisoners were a Captain and Mrs. James, captured on the way to



Jamaica, where his regiment was stationed. Another lady was a Madame Duver, French by birth, who had married a Flemish artist and settled in Rome. On account of their Republican principles they had found their position there unpleasant, so embarked in a Swedish vessel for Stockholm. Another artist, also from Italy, was named Skirving. Owing to Captain Clement's intercession, the new-comers were given a room to themselves (the lower cabin), and of this the Russells, now experienced foragers, secured one corner, with a good closet, a cupboard, and two windows. They also got a couple of small iron bedsteads, in which the father and brother lay, while the window-seat was wide enough for Martha and Mary to sleep upon.

The cabin was twenty feet by eighteen, and thirty persons had to live in it.

“We agreed to divide ourselves into two messes, one consisting of seventeen in number, to take in all the children, steerage passengers, and servants; and the other of fourteen, which included all the ladies and gentlemen. We were to divide our rations after this manner, and each mess to procure what they could besides. This was for dining, but, as we each had our own tea and sugar, we thought it would be best to divide again into smaller parties for breakfast and tea. Therefore we took Mr. Saunders with us, which made our party five in number. Mr. and Mrs. Terry were by themselves, also Mr. and Mrs. Huddy and Mr. Sharpler and family; Mr. and Mrs. Morgan took in Mr. Bolton—the seventeen also divided again both

for dinner and supper. The two steerage passengers, Mrs. J—— and Mrs. B——, showed their dispositions on the first afternoon, for we proposed that their party should always dine and breakfast first, so that they might go up on deck whilst we ate ours. To this they both objected, saying they had as much right to the cabin as any of us, they were as good as we, all being prisoners alike. In short their behaviour was very impertinent and disagreeable, and they proved sad plagues to us the remaining time of our imprisonment, particularly Mrs. B——, who was really a virago."

It will be noted that Martha Russell's French Revolution principles did not go very deep. She suffered from the close association with ill-bred persons quite as keenly as from the physical discomforts of captivity. Next day, however, her heart was lightened by a letter from Captain Prebble, saying that the Committee of Public Safety in Paris had promised him an immediate order for the release of the Russells. "This inspired a joy not to be described, and dispersed a cloud that hung heavy on our spirits. We all looked upon it as certain that a few days must terminate our confinement, and began each to settle where they should go on being set free. With these airy castles we amused ourselves happily enough." The fare was plentiful—coffee, butter, cake, fresh meat (procured through their American friends or through the cook), pudding and potatoes, rice and currants, in addition to the ship's rations—plenty of bread with a very small quantity of salt pork or beef, salt fish, and occasionally fresh beef. The favourite dainty of the Russells was

apple dumplings—"when they could afford butter to make them."

To the delights of apple dumplings on board further testimony is borne in Mary Russell's diary. The indefatigable and indispensable Captain Bryan supplied them whenever possible with flour and apples. But they had no rolling pin, and were therefore obliged to use a glass bottle. Also they were short of cloths, and had to make it a rule that the lady whose turn it was to prepare the dumplings should also provide the cloths for boiling them in. As fourteen dumplings were required on every occasion, nobody being content without a full ration, the cook's work, according to Mary Russell, was sometimes a "tiresome job." At the time, probably, the occupation was found exhilarating. Anyhow the observance was long cherished in the family after the occasion had been forgotten. Amongst the descendants of these prisoners of war it has been an inviolable custom to serve apple dumplings on a certain day in the year—the day of their release—but until these diaries had been ransacked no explanation had been forthcoming. It is a curious modern instance of the principle which runs through all folk lore—of tenacity in ritual as compared with the rapid decay in tradition.

Occasionally the Russells tried to play whist amongst themselves. As the cabin's only light was a single candle (in a lantern), reading was out of the question. The nightly scene, says Martha Russell, was one which only a Hogarth could depict:—

"In our corner were John, Betsy, and Lyddy



(servants) (with ourselves) unbundling our beds, we sometimes assisting and sometimes not ; putting ourselves in any corner where we could find room to stand, though this was by no means an easy matter. Next to us was Mr. Sharpler's family ; Mrs. Sharpler generally sitting in the corner with the infant at her bosom, three of the children in a little bed in the corner ; Mr. Sharpler, without his coat, making the beds on the floor and Betsy the servant girl assisting. Next was Mr. and Mrs. Terry, both busy making their bed, then Mr. Morgan's ; next to them Mr. and Mrs. Huddy ; behind them, on the locker, Mrs. Lumly, and further still on the locker and next our bed Mrs. B——; in the middle were Mr. Bolton and Mr. Saunders busy slinging their cots, and under them lay our servants' beds in bundles, and upon these beds sat the children, some half-undressed, others more. The great bustle of the scene, the variety of droll figures and attitudes that it every night presented, cannot be imagined."

The worst of their sufferings was caused by the inconceivable heat and stuffiness. The steerage lady (Mrs. B——) asserted her position by refusing to have the windows opened. On this question she fell foul of Mr. Bolton, and the language used on both sides was "such as I never heard before." Once he got up and opened a window in defiance of her orders, whereupon she "hit him a slap." The scene, adds our proper Miss Martha, "was ludicrous though disagreeable."

So a week passed, but with no order of release for the Russells. The father began to ail, and Lyddy,



one of the servants, who was to become a mother, gave them a good deal of concern. A few days later she was prematurely delivered of a boy—"a circumstance which of itself in our present situation was almost enough to have overcome us." The child was stillborn. It is fair to add that every possible consideration had been shown to the mother by the officers on board. In Mary Russell's diary it appears that a small berth was found for her in the gun-room. Another weary week had now passed away, the only excitement being the execution at Brest of a woman and two priests. "We plainly saw the guillotine and crowd of people, but no more." On Monday, October 24th, a little girl on board (Helen Sharpler) was taken with croup, and the doctor comfortingly suggested that it might turn to "putrid sore throat," which would "probably go the round." But there was no help—"she could not be moved, neither could we." On Friday she died, and her body was carried off to the hospital on shore for a *post-mortem* examination. This was an absolute rule in regard to persons dying in prison, and "certainly the medical men at Brest stand in need of all the information possible, for such a set of ignorant, unfeeling creatures I never heard of."

Meantime the father's health seemed to be giving way, partly through the unwholesome surroundings, partly through repeated disappointments as to the release—another fortnight had passed without definite news.

"I felt ill beyond expression, but saw that every exertion possible was now necessary. Accordingly

as much as possible I kept up my spirits. Our *only* consolation was the confidence we felt in the great Ruler of All; He had hitherto preserved us, and I trusted His mercy would not quite forsake us in this time of trouble. Among those around us were unbelievers and libertines; their conversation was full of despair, murmuring, and profane language. Our sources of trouble were various, more than I can mention. Strength both of body and mind failed fast, nothing but clouds hung round us, and they appeared so heavy as though of themselves to overpower us, and, what very *much* increased our sufferings, our friends in England seemed to have forgotten us, for we had not yet heard a word from them."

Then befell what "seemed the final stroke." An order was issued for the women and children to get up into the country while the men should be kept on board, "and, we doubted not, put down into the hold." In the state of the father's health, when he required every attention, this would mean death. Martha Russell had resolved not to be taken away except by force. Her father, however, managed to communicate with the Admiral, and, through Captain Bryan, got the cruel order revoked.

"Now the scene was changed indeed: husbands and wives, parents and children, regarded each other with a joy inexpressible. Satisfaction and pleasure dwelt in every countenance, trouble of all kind died, and the world did not contain a more enviable set of beings as to their feelings than we then were. The

influence of this happiness was felt a long time; it rendered our situation more bearable by making us more content. We thought that this order originated with the officers of the ship, who wanted the cabin of which we had possession, but this for certain we never knew."

The officers and sailors, we read, were dirty and filthy in the extreme, while the soldiers, who were stationed and messed outside the cabin, smelt shockingly of garlic and swarmed with live creatures.

On November 1st news was received by Mr. Sharples (father of the little girl who had died a few days before) from Captain Gooderich that the decree of release had been passed. Still there was no news for the Russells from Captain Prebble. M. and Madame Duver, however, had got their liberty, and often came to visit their old companions in distress. "Yet another week passed, and then a letter came from Captain Prebble, but with no mention of our liberation." The party got leave, however, to visit an American vessel lying in the harbour—returning to their own grimy quarters the more discontented after having seen the comfort and cleanliness on a strange vessel. Occasionally they found a little diversion over a bowl of punch or wine and water in the gun-room, and the Captain sometimes joined them, though he would not touch the punch. The ladies worked him a cravat in the national colours.

Prices ran up to a great height, and the meat was almost uneatable. One whole sheep—that is, the two sides of it—weighed only  $7\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. ! A side of mutton



cost 35 livres (at this time 40 livres went to the guinea). Horse beans, very grubby, were served as rations—half-a-pint each—and next day, perhaps, there might be a salted pilchard.

On December 7th Captain Gooderich came and explained that the delay in the order of release was caused only by the multiplicity of business in which the Committee of Public Safety had been engaged. It had, however, passed a decree against the future seizure of passengers in similar circumstances—cold comfort to those still held in durance. Fever was spreading on board. On the 12th one of the boat-swains died, and next day two English officers. A British vessel of forty guns had recently been captured, and the English sailors were brought on board, where, according to the traditions of the service, they soon made themselves at home!

“They were a most desperate set of fellows—a complete contrast to the French sailors—fine, tall, lusty men, well clothed, and clean to a degree. They obliged us all, very soon after they came on board, to take off our cockades. My father and we were the last who did it, not being willing to submit to English tyranny in France. At last we were obliged to take them out, hardly daring to go on deck with them for fear of their insults. My father continued obstinate till they threatened to throw him overboard if he did not take it off. They sent message after message to him, some in a haughty tone, others begging him not to wear the colour of his country’s enemy. He remonstrated with them by saying England was no longer his country.



France was a friend to America, and his principles led him to admire the French Government. At last all our party appeared to be uneasy, fearing my father's persisting might bring trouble upon them all. He, therefore, to relieve them, permitted *us* to take off our cockades. These fellows threatened to get off with the ship, and, had they been on board after the fleet sailed, I have no doubt but they would. The French certainly were a little in awe of them. Soon after the first fifty came on board they moved the station of the vessel under the forts. These men were marched up the country with the other prisoners, fifty at a time."

In spite of her Republican sympathies Martha Russell seems a little proud of her unruly countrymen. A pardonable aberration.

Another letter from Captain Prebble, saying that the order of release had only to be signed. "Hope, that great supporter of the human mind, revived and exhilarated our spirits. Trouble and distress appeared, in our view of things, to be flying before joy and happiness."

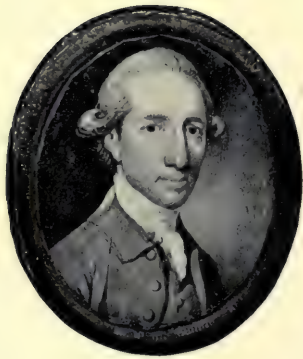
"Thursday was a very fine day, and clear frost ; the country, which we had so often viewed with longing eyes and ardent wishes, now appeared more beautiful than ever because the hope of soon enjoying its pleasures illumined our view. Formerly I used to feel afraid of suffering my eyes to dwell upon its objects, because it was impossible to see green fields and gardens, fine trees and thick bushes, without longing to ramble among them, after so long a confinement upon the water, and because by a combination of ideas I generally

ended by recollecting the paradise we had left at Matson, where we fully enjoyed everything heart could wish for. This induced the most poignant regret from connecting my dear and valuable friends in England with these past pleasures, and a comparison of my present situation generally followed. The anxiety I knew our friends all felt for us, the sincere regard I had for them, the fear we might never meet again, in short a thousand nameless but poignant reflections, succeeded each other in so quick and painful a succession upon these occasions that to avoid this I generally endeavoured to direct my attention from the beauties of the country, and in short from every other circumstance that led me to recollect my friends and the past comforts of life. All the resolution and exertion possible was necessary, and everything that could at all damp this I found must be carefully avoided. However, notwithstanding all philosophy, the feelings of humanity often overpowered me. Reflection always made me deeply melancholy—save for the firm persuasion that the same Almighty Being who gave us our pleasures also willed these sufferings; and that His fatherly hand guided all events. Therefore all was for the best, and ere long we should be convinced of this, though at present clouds and distress seemed to hide His mercy from us.

“On December 20th another letter arrived from Captain Prebble. We all expected that it would contain an account of our release. My father opened it with no small degree of emotion, and read with a faltering voice, ‘I am happy to inform you your

release is *sent*; it went on the 12th'—a general exclamation of joy!—but here my father stopped, his countenance changed astonishingly, he turned as pale as death. All now anxiously fixed their eyes upon him, to divine, if possible, what was amiss by his expression. Suspense had not long possession of our minds; he soon continued reading, and the next sentence was a blow indeed, 'but I am sorry to add that it is for your family only.' What surprise, consternation, and disappointment now filled every countenance. It was some minutes before any of us could speak a word. This was a most cruel stroke. To have experienced so much suspense, and for so long a time to depend fully upon receiving the joyful order soon, to have the letter expected to contain it arrive to say that the release *was* sent, according to the hopes and expectations of each in the company, and after all to find *they* were not included, but must go through the same suspense again, and perhaps for a longer time, was a trial of the most *cruel kind*."

William Russell, it was added by Captain Prebble, was expected to proceed at once to Paris. This he was the more ready to do as he might then be able to help in the liberation of their detained friends, and also because it would be more pleasant to spend the winter in France than on a voyage to America. Martha Russell's pleasure in the prospect of freedom was damped by the sorrow of her friends. The family servants, however, were all ecstasy, and she felt she had never loved them so much. They had suffered severely themselves (especially poor Lyddy),



WILLIAM RUSSELL (1740-1818)

*From a miniature*





but had done everything they could to alleviate the troubles of their employers.

All Sunday the approach of "the little boat from Brest" was eagerly awaited. On Monday still no news, and some of the fellow-prisoners began to scoff. Not till Tuesday, December 23rd, was the suspense terminated, when the American consul, Mr. Anderson, came on board and presented William Russell with the long-looked-for paper. "No treasure, however immense, was ever more acceptable, no jewel, however precious, was ever eyed with more delight, or ever excited equally exquisite sensations. No one who has not felt the loss of liberty can estimate its worth, nor fully conceive that next to life it is the first of blessings, or that without it life scarce deserves the name of a blessing but is merely a dragging on of existence."

William Russell and his son were soon ashore. His daughters busied themselves with "packing up their matters." They transferred themselves joyfully to the American vessel *Alexander*. On the night of the 24th they "slept luxuriously," though their slumbers were interrupted by a storm in which a French man-of-war was lost with 112 men. They saw it quite plainly, Mary Russell testifies, and "a very sad and shocking sight it was." Next morning they were rejoined by their father and brother, and in their company they ate an excellent Christmas dinner. On the 26th they set their feet on terra firma "with feelings hardly to be imagined." In Brest they met their faithful friend Captain Bryan with "good Captain Clement." In the afternoon they visited their friends

on the *Achille*, where, in Martha Russell's quaintly formal words, they "experienced a mixture of feelings not altogether agreeable"—meaning, probably, that all the ladies had a good cry—kissed—and cried again.

If only for the sake of the signatures appended it may be interesting to read the text of the document which marked the end of the imprisonment of William Russell and his family—an imprisonment which had commenced with an unwarrantable<sup>1</sup> extension, if not absolute defiance, of the rules of war, and which was prolonged, over nearly five months, by the inexcusable procrastination and red-tape methods practised by the Committee of Public Safety.

Bureau  
des prisonniers  
de Guerre.

PARIS, le 25 frimaire, 3<sup>ème</sup> année  
(15 December 1794)

Le Commission de la Marine et des Colonies  
A l'Agent Maritime à Brest.

CITOYEN,—La Commission t'envoie l'expédition d'un arrêté que le Comité de Salut public a pris le 16 de ce mois en faveur de William Russell, et de sa famille. Elle te charge de faire mettre sur le champ cet arrêté à execution.

*Signé* DAVID.

Pour Copie  
GENAY

Au C<sup>en</sup> Anderson.

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<sup>1</sup> It was alleged by the French that the British had set the bad example.

Extrait du Registre des arrêtés du Comité de Salut public de la Convention nationale.

Du 16 frimaire l'an 3<sup>me</sup> de la République française une et Indivisible.

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Le Comité de Salut public, après avoir entendu la Commission d'Agriculture et des Arts sur la petition de William Russell, ci-devant manufacturier de Birmingham, actuellement détenu comme Anglois à Brest à bord du V<sup>au</sup> de la République *l' Achille*.

Le Comité instruit que cet étranger, lors de son arrestation, abandonnoit l'Angletere où il etoit persécuté, à cause de la manifestation de ses sentimens pour la liberté, et la révolution françoise, arrête ce qui suit  
Art. 1<sup>er</sup> William Russell sera sur le camp mis en liberté avec sa famille.

#### ART 2<sup>me</sup>

Il se rendra sans délai auprès du Comité pour conférer sur des objets d'industrie manufacturiere, il lui sera tenu compte des frais de son voyage à Paris.

#### ART 3.

La commission de la Marine est tenu de veillir à l'execution du présent arrêté. Signé Cambacères, Boissy, Carnot, J. J. B. Delmar, Pelet, L. B. Guyton, Prieur (D.l.m.) pour copie conforme. Signé David.

Pour Copie  
GENÂV.



The two following documents explain themselves :—

PARIS, le 3 *Pluviôse*, l'an 3 . . .

(22 January 1795)

Le Comité de Salut Public de la Convention Nationale  
A William Russell.

C'est avec satisfaction que le Comité de Salut public vient d'apprendre ton arrivée à Paris. Il t'invite à te rendre à la Commission d'Agriculture et des Arts, rue Dominique, Faubourg Germain : le citoyen Berthollet, Commissaire d'Agriculture, te recevra avec l'empressement que méritent tes malheurs et tes travaux. Tu conféreras avec lui des arts et manufactures, et nous ne doutons pas que ton zèle à servir une nation qui t'accueille comme un ami de la Liberté, n'équale tes connoissances et la réputation qui t'a précédé.

Les membres du Comité de Salut Public.

L. B. GUYTON.

DUBOIS-CRANCÉ.

CARNOT.

MARU.

BOISSY.

PRIEUR.

MIHAROI.

(d.l.m.)

*Addressed to—*

Au Citoyen  
William Russel,  
Maison de thuileries,  
Rue Vivienne.

PARIS, le *floréal*, an 3<sup>e</sup>

(April or May)

La Commission d'Agriculture et des Arts  
Au Citoyen Russel.

Nous avons reçu, citoyen, la dernière lettre que tu nous as écrite.

Nous t'assurons que nous saisisons avec le plus

vif empressement toutes les occasions qui se présenteront d'encourager et d'activer L'Établissement que tu te proposes de former. Sois persuadé que nous ferons (près des) Comités du Gouvernement toutes les démarches qui pourront contribuer au succès des projets dont tu nous as fait part.

Salut et fraternité  
le Commissaire-adj.  
J. C. DUBOIS.

*Addressed to—*

Au Citoyen  
Russel, Maison du  
Carousel, Place du Carousel,  
à Paris.

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Maison des thuilleries, rue  
honoré.

It will be observed that no explanation of the official delays is offered by this dilatory Committee of the National Convention. We may fairly assume that the eventual concession to William Russell was brought about, not by the inherent justice of his demand, but by the persistence and adroitness of his American friend, Captain Joseph Bryan. Though the original cordiality between the French and American Governments had recently been exchanged for an attitude of mutual suspicion, citizens of the United States still spoke in Paris with a certain authority. Already their official representatives showed the resolute spirit which they have subsequently displayed in their dealings with foreign powers. Captain Bryan, the unofficial seaman, was in this respect a worthy progenitor of American diplomatic tradition.

In a letter addressed to the *Monthly Magazine* and dated September 5, 1801, a full acknowledgment

is made by William Russell of his deep obligations to Joseph Bryan. A touching tribute is paid to the courage, kindness, and self-sacrifice of the sailor's devotion to his fellow-citizens, whether actual or prospective. "In spite of the jealousy of the French, in spite of the remonstrances of some of his countrymen, whose narrow souls dare not show compassion to the enemies of France, in spite of difficulties we were afterwards informed of by others, his exertions to serve us in every way that our wishes would lead us to mention, or his generosity could suggest, were indeed truly extraordinary." His liberality in providing helpless persons with the comforts and luxuries which meant so much to them was hardly more remarkable than the personal sacrifice which he underwent, even when he was ailing, in order to raise their spirits and keep up their courage. Nor was it only to influential persons like the Russells, who might one day repay his favours, that he extended his beneficence. He distributed his bounty among people of whom he knew nothing, and who could give him no security but their word for his indemnification. A long panegyric, in which the heartfelt sincerity is not disguised by the somewhat Johnsonian style, is concluded with a pleasing remembrance.

Amongst the objects of Captain Bryan's generosity were English people—not in the position of the Russells, nor intending to become American citizens, but ordinary prisoners of war. He distributed amongst them several hundreds of pounds, and could, of course, obtain from them no acknowledgment of their debt beyond letters to their friends at home. Not a single

case occurred in which the obligation was ignored by the friends of the sufferers, or in which the payment of the debt was not accompanied by handsome expressions of gratitude. Amongst the Russell family he inspired an affection not second to their regard for Dr. Priestley himself. They were always full of praises of this "Guardian Angel," for that was the appellation given to him by common consent. But Joseph Bryan was something more than an open-handed philanthropist. He also possessed the business-like quality of getting justice done—even by the Committee of Public Safety.



## CHAPTER VIII

### JOURNEY TO PARIS BY ROAD

Start for Paris—A quaint turn-out—The peasants' costumes—Difficulty of posting—Official delays and landlord's impositions—A desecrated church—Royalists and "brigands" on the road—The Mayor of Morlaix—Entertaining company—Stories of the guillotine—A bread riot—Stupid officials—Horses unshod—Awkward workmen—A dangerous stage—The driver's fortunate barbarity—A Republican officer's advice—Sugar in the warming-pan—Misery of the peasants—A château destroyed—Impassable roads—Scarcity of bread—A plain breast of mutton—Charms of Caen—The approach to Paris—A girl Republican's enthusiasm—"The centre and zenith of the magnificence of the world."

ON December 30, 1794, the Russell family started from Brest to Paris—their vehicle, which cost them about £80, was like "what in England would have been called a very small coach." It had a deep well, which held the luggage so that the seats were comfortable. The horses—six of them—looked fit for nothing but food for dogs. The harness was made of ropes, which broke several times on the road to Landerneaux. The two "drivers" wore great jack boots and woollen caps with large hats over them, and had pipes in their mouths. This comical turn-out was the best that could be procured by a gentleman of means anxious to reach Paris without delay. In hoping for speed he counted without the *citoyens* with whom he had to deal on the road. On no account would they be hurried. On the other hand, Martha

Russell noted with approval the neat dress of the peasant women, mob caps with the ends turned up and pinned at the top instead of under the chin, coloured woollen petticoats, and short skirts, like jackets, of different colour. The wooden shoes worn by men, women, and children made an astonishing noise ; when they went to work in the morning it was like a drove of cart-horses.

Arrived at Landerneaux and their passports examined, the travellers' first care was to arrange for horses. William Russell and his son requested the municipality to instruct the post-master that they should have the next horses he got. But in the morning they discovered that the six destined for them had been claimed by a Representative of the People. The landlord offered some at sixty livres each for the two-league stage, whereas the regular charge was forty-five livres. Like a true Englishman, Russell preferred suffering inconvenience to being fleeced by a foreigner, and waited another day. Two churches were noted, "apparently of Saxon architecture." One was being used as a barn ; the other kept for reading the Mass and singing the Marseillaise Hymn, "which we understood, is all the service they have on the dead." This church was inscribed on the door, *Le peuple Français reconnaît l'Être Suprême et l'Immortalité de l'Âme.*

At Morlaix on January 1st they were delayed because the guard insisted upon the drivers producing passports—which, of course, they did not possess. At the inn the travellers fell into conversation with a talkative stranger, who told them the danger of meeting

brigands on the road had been exaggerated, "as an amnesty for a month had been agreed upon." Still, there was some risk, and it would be well to inquire at Guingamp whether an escort would be necessary.

Russell and his son called upon M. Deot, Mayor of Morlaix, and American Consul. In the evening the whole party went to his house and met a large company, all French except a Mr. and Mrs. Macnamara who had been prisoners for nineteen months, but "since a system of moderation prevailed, were allowed to be on parole, residing with a guard at their own expense in M. Deot's house." Mr. Macnamara described some of the scenes of distress which he had himself witnessed.

"Among his fellow-prisoners were a number of *ci-devant* nobles, people who had been accustomed to all the comforts and luxuries of life, and reduced to living on a small portion of bread and water and sleeping on the bare ground. The number of these was lessened almost daily by the guillotine. Innocent persons who had committed no crime but that of *having been* among the *noblesse* were selected one by one. Mrs. Macnamara mentioned having formed several pleasing and gratifying attachments with charmingly amiable characters, but they were one by one snatched away. The distress, consternation, and terror that always seized the whole company when the *gens d'armes* appeared cannot be conceived. Each was alarmed for him or herself, no one knowing who was then the object, or whose turn would come next. Mr. Macnamara had some hopes of going to England in a cartel ship (for



exchange of prisoners) which was soon to be sent with Lady Ann Fitzroy, who, he informed us, was a prisoner at Quimper and during her captivity had lost her husband, and had suffered much distress ; but, Mr. Macnamara added, she had met with a most feeling friend among the American captains, who had visited her often, much alleviated her sorrows, and had been the chief promoter of this cartel on her account. The circumstances mentioned of this American so much resembled what we had experienced in our friend Bryan that I could not forbear asking the name of the person, although it was carefully intended to be concealed during the whole of the relation. My question was answered, though in a whisper, that it was Captain Bryan."

M. Deot did not appear until nine in the evening, and then explained that as mayor he had been compelled to help in dealing with a riot. A mob of 500 persons, on account of the scarcity of bread, had broken windows in the town, and he feared that they would be made to suffer.

"At Belle Isle, a small, poor place, no horses were to be got. Consequently we went to the municipality, the members of which were very civil, but seemed to be a set of clowns that scarcely knew their right hand from their left. It took three of them at least ten minutes to read our passport and order for horses. It was as much as they could all three do to make it out. After this process was over, and they had explained one to another the different words as they went on,



they set to making out an order for horses for us, but it was in vain that we with our broken French endeavoured to render them sensible that we were in haste, having another stage to perform before night, and that therefore despatch was necessary. It was at least half-an-hour before the order was ready."

It was impossible, the Russells found, to quicken the movements of French officialism. When eventually the horses had been produced they were not shod, so the night had to be spent at an inn, where the travellers were served with an excellent supper—partridge, woodcock, fowls, and veal, with apples and butter—but had to sleep in a huge draughty room without a fire or blankets. Young Russell was the only one of the party who could speak French, and he had to contend all the way against a conspiracy, so it seemed, of inn-keepers, post-masters, and postilions to delay and defraud the English party. For mending a broken shaft, which an English blacksmith would have done in half-an-hour, fifty livres were charged, on the plea that the job had taken till two in the morning. The cord harness was continually breaking, and the awkward way of mending it made these stoppages ten times longer than they need have been.

"At Guingamp it was the old story over again. Here, as in almost all other places we had stopped at, the horses wanted shoeing before they could be put to the carriage. My brother attempted, as he had done

before, to persuade them to shoe them for frost. But they would not be put out of their way; they said it was not the custom of the country, and they therefore did not choose to do it. This to be sure was a curious sort of an apology when they had just broken down their old political system, and are erecting an entirely new one, and consequently are introducing numberless new customs which before they had no idea of. But the awkwardness of the peasantry is astonishing, as well as their careless indifference and universal vivacity and cheerfulness. There are in general three stout lusty men employed to shoe a horse. One of them holds his head, another his foot, and the third operates upon it. He is in general half-an-hour about one shoe, having often to take it off two or three times before it is right. All the time they are chattering as fast as their tongues can run, and every now and then stopping to laugh at something or other."

Already it appears that Martha Russell, though she had shaken the dust of England off her feet, was falling into the British habit of comparing domestic with foreign ways and manners.

Proceeding from Lamballe to Jugon the travellers found themselves going through the "brigands' country"—that is, where the Royalists were holding their own. They were rather thankful, it seems, that their postilion was a "brute of a fellow with his horses." By his barbarity he kept the half-starved animals to the full exertion of their strength. It was distressing to sit behind him. Still they got on rather better

than they had expected at first starting. But it was nervous work, and the ladies were glad enough to be joined by a foot traveller.

“An amazing stillness reigned on all sides, no living creatures of any kind were to be seen, and it appeared as if we had the whole world to ourselves or were in an uninhabited island. However, we travelled the whole way without the least molestation from brigands or anything else, though not entirely without something like fear, which made us now and then take bushes for men, and start at every noise that appeared at all like human voices—imagination was all alive and heated to a degree by apprehension.”

At the inn in Jugon the party were joined at supper by the Commander of the West Republican force—a pleasant, rattling fellow, who told them about his work in fighting the “brigands.” As the ladies were evidently tired he advised them to put a little brown sugar in the warming-pan for their beds. It dried the linen, he said, and was infinitely refreshing. But this interesting experiment could not be tried, as the good woman of the inn flatly refused to waste her good sugar! At Dinan the direct road was reported to have been made impassable by baggage waggons and artillery, so the travellers were advised to go round by Chateau-neuf past St. Malo and then to Dol. Afterwards they received different counsel and got into difficulties. The road was frozen so hard and the ruts were so deep that they had to walk



most of the way. They had ample time, therefore, to note the wretched condition of the peasantry, who lived in miserable hovels made of mud, with no window but a hole in the wall. At Chateau-neuf they saw the work of the Revolution in the ruins of a fine old mansion which had belonged to a *ci-devant* nobleman. They also saw something of the devastation wrought by the Royalists.

On January 9 the party reached Villedieu, where they were much alarmed at a fit of spasms which seized William Russell. They would not call in a physician, "having no opinion of these gentry in France." Next day, however, he was well enough to go on, and reached St. Sever. Presently they found the road to be a "mere sheet of ice" over an almost perpendicular hill. Having harnessed three extra cart-horses to the carriage, they got it up about a tenth of the way, and then the driver abandoned the ascent and determined to go round on a by-way. But how to get the carriage down again? It was decided to lock all the wheels and let it slide down.

At a later stage the travellers were cheered with nice fresh eggs and some brown bread and butter, though the latter were not much to be boasted of. The landlady, however, showed them, as a curiosity, some bread sent to her from Paris—white and nice—which was sold there at three sous the pound. The people in the country already were "obliged to pay fourteen sous for very bad, and glad to get it." The old lady did not think this a good Republican practice, and complained loudly.



In another roadside village the fare offered was a breast of mutton plainly roasted and served with nothing but pepper and salt. This was such a treat to our English people that they voted nothing could be nicer. Here also they came on "the first symptom of religion." On going downstairs after supper young Russell "found them all at Mass as busy as they could be." He retreated without disturbing them.

"The road to Caen was charmingly fine and level, though now very slippery from the snow and frost, the country tolerably level and finely outlined, orchards on each side of the road, and the road straight as usual. The spires of Caen we saw rising a long while before we reached the town itself, which was by far the most considerable we had seen in France: it is the capital of Lower Normandy, and had formerly sixteen convents, a celebrated University, and several churches. The Cathedral is a very fine old Gothic building. It is a fine old town, and seems to contain plenty of good things. Here William the Conqueror is buried. The inn we found good, and more like an English one, except in dirt, than any we had yet seen."

It was no doubt the favourable impression then produced by Caen that predisposed William Russell afterwards to acquire an important property in this neighbourhood.

From Caen onwards the travelling became easy, and the country, to the travellers' eighteenth-century

eyes, delightful. Here is one of Martha Russell's descriptions:—

“The next stage, La Rivière, the bonne-ville, was a most beautiful place situated at the foot of a fine hill, before which the river, meandering along through a rich and highly cultivated plain, was truly ornamental. On mounting a hill a most charming view opened upon the sight; a superb mansion rose in front among a rich group of trees. Before it was spread a fine lawn bounded by the river, and this surrounded by the finest valley imaginable even at this season, when the ground, half covered with snow, assumed an unpleasant greyish colour. What must the country be when Nature, clothed in all her rich variety of colour, exhibits these objects in their gay attire!”

The girl's excitement on nearing Paris is naïvely confessed. The beauty and grandeur of the road from St. Germain's onwards produced “sensations unknown before.” She felt a strange kind of reluctance to believe that they really were approaching the place concerning which her earliest impressions had been as of the “centre and zenith of the magnificence of the world.”

“These ideas were imbibed from a set of pictures we had seen in a show of the different places round and in Paris. Seeing this show was one of our greatest indulgences, and from this circumstance my infantine ideas had been impressed so strongly with

admiration of this city that the effect of it still remained. Add to this the more permanent impressions recently made of this place as the scene where the great acts of the greatest of revolutions had been transacted. I was quite amazed to reflect that I was approaching the spot and the people of which and of whom I had heard and read such astonishing things. I appeared to be in a dream rather than a reality."

The passage is interesting as revealing the light in which this amiable and clever gentlewoman had been taught to view acts and scenes such as the execution of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette, the mock trials and murders in the Reign of Terror, and the worship of the Goddess of Reason. In Martha and Mary Russell's nature there was nothing harsh or unwomanly, but crimes committed in the name of Liberty were, to their enthusiastic spirits, sufficiently condoned by the pretence under which they had been perpetrated.

The lighting on the roads was hardly less remarkable in this "emporium of politics" than were the Elysian Fields. Having duly admired the Revolution Bridge and the temporary statue of Liberty, the party got a peep at the Gardens of the Tuileries and the Palace. Thence they drove through streets, narrow and dirty enough, to the Paston Hotel, where they found Captain Prebble. The shops, they remarked, were very smart. Their senses were all alive to take in every object that presented itself. On the way to their lodgings in the Place de

Carousel, opposite the Louvre, they beheld "a most amazingly smart lady, rouged most wonderfully, so that, in fact, we all burst out with a unanimous laugh." Their first meal, sent in from a *traiteur's*, they did not relish at all. Even the few things that might otherwise have been tolerable to an English palate, were spoilt by the onions, garlic, and oil.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AT CLOSE QUARTERS

A circle of friends—An Irish adventurer—Advanced lady—Gorgeous apartment—General Miranda—Victims of anarchy—Philosophical instruments of Citoyen Charles—Visit to the Convention—Grotesque Republicans—Disorderly proceedings—The Observatory—A Jacobin astronomer—Women furies in the street—Sound of the Tocsin—The city under arms—Rising against the Convention—General Pichegru in charge of Paris—Trial of Fouquier—Scene in court—His audacious behaviour—Execution witnessed by the Russells—The guillotine—Veteran soldiers at the Hospital—A novel view of the Revolution—Municipal bakeries—The distress in Paris—Persecutions and arrests—Brissot's sister-in-law—Madame Roland's daughter—Another alarm—Summary measures.

ALMOST before the Russells had settled down in Paris they found themselves surrounded by a little circle of friends, old and new, who took pleasure in showing them the sights of the city. Active amongst these was, of course, Henry Prebble, who had been compensated for leaving his ship the *Mary* to follow his passengers' fortunes by being associated in some of William Russell's many commercial ventures. Since they had last seen him he had married a young woman of lively disposition, who was nothing loth to join in their social gaieties. Another acquaintance in whom the girls became interested was Archibald Hamilton Rowan, a political Irishman with a happy knack of getting into trouble and out of it again. He was accompanied by Mary Wollstonecraft, author of the

justly famous *Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Her supposed husband, Gilbert Imlay, author of an account of Kentucky, was then in England. She had much information, Mary Russell says, and was fond of communicating it. Also she possessed a little girl of eight months old, whom she was bringing up "quite on her own plan." In the intervals of applying her educational theories she was, it appears, engaged in writing a history of the French Revolution—a task somewhat prematurely undertaken. Mary Russell's language seems to indicate that in a demure way she is making fun of her gifted friend.

[We can gather from the references made to "Mrs. Imlay" that Mary Russell believed her to be married to the light-of-love American who was the father of her little girl. Fully emancipated as the Russells may have been from political and religious orthodoxy, they were not the people to condone lightly the laxity of a woman who lived openly with another woman's husband. Now we know that this was the position of Mary Wollstonecraft in 1795. She had fled to Paris in December 1792, not to study the language, nor even to observe the Revolution, but to escape from the untenable position into which she had been swept in her passion for Fuseli, the painter and writer on art, who it may be observed was also a married man. Her offer to live in the same house with the Fuselis, and as a member of the family, in order that she might enjoy the daily pleasure of his company, had been declined by his wife. Fuseli, who had a keen sense of the ridiculous, and who was a man of over fifty, eluded the ardour of her attack. Mary Wollstonecraft

fled to Paris. The history of her connection with Imlay may be said to have been an illustration of La Rochefoucauld's maxim—that there are women who never have an affair of gallantry, but there never was a woman who had only one. No marriage was possible for them, but Mary Wollstonecraft was registered as Mrs. Imlay at the American Legation, was accepted as his wife, and passed by that name till she did actually marry Godwin in 1797, a month before her death. We will not go further into her unhappy history, the infidelity of Imlay, her frantic efforts to maintain her hold on him, her two unsuccessful attempts to commit suicide, her liberation from the American by Godwin, and her tardy marriage to him. She died in childbirth, of a daughter, the Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin who became the second wife of Shelley.

The Russell girls must have been acquainted with Mary Wollstonecraft's work—with her *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, her so-called "answer" to Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, and certainly with her widely-read *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, published in 1792. There was nothing in it to offend such open-minded people as the Russells. The author pleads in substance that women should be treated neither as "saints nor brutes," but as "reasonable beings." The Russells had been themselves treated as reasonable beings by their father. Their position as daughters of a humane, right-minded man of fortune protected them against the evils which had beset Mary Wollstonecraft herself—poverty and the obstacles placed in the way of a woman who



was compelled to earn her livelihood. But their good sense and knowledge of the world must have shown them how large an element of truth there was in the *Vindication*. The work on which she was engaged when the Russells met her in Paris was her *Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution*. A first volume appeared in 1794. She no doubt spoke of continuing the work, but no second volume was published. Mary Wollstonecraft, who like so many others had "hailed the dawn of freedom" in 1789, was greatly disillusioned by the course of the Revolution, but not for the same reasons as most English people. With a sagacity which does her considerable credit, she saw that the overthrow of the nobility had so far served mainly to add to the power of the moneyed bourgeoisie. The poor were but little if at all the better off.]

Clearly, the Russells were impressed with Rowan's story of adventures, though they might perhaps suggest that he sat somewhat lightly to his obligations, whether of matrimony or parole. He was born in 1751, and his original name was Archibald Hamilton: the Rowan he took from his maternal grandfather, from whom he inherited a fortune on condition that he should be educated at an English University, and should not go to Ireland before he was twenty-five years of age. At Queen's College, Cambridge, he had been noted as a dog-fancier, as also for threatening to pitch his tutor into the river. In Portugal he served in the army, and at the age of twenty-six obtained the rank of lieutenant-colonel. About the year 1788 he settled for a time in Ireland at his place, Killyleugh



Castle. In 1791, he became a "United Irishman," and three years later was arrested on the charge of distributing a seditious pamphlet. Believing that the Government meant to make an example of him, he fled to France, where, as we see, he soon became acquainted with the Russells.<sup>1</sup>

He had arrived in a small boat with four sailors; as soon as he landed, he applied to the municipality, stating his situation. The answer they gave him was that as he had escaped once from prison they would take care he should not do it a second time. He hoped the sailors who brought him would have escaped, but he heard in a few days that they had been pursued, taken, and imprisoned, which seemed to hurt him very much. The place where he first landed was near Brest, and he was soon removed there, where he remained many months, making continual applications to the Committee of Public Safety, but for a long time receiving no answer. At last an order came for his removal to Paris under a guard, and there, on his case being known, he was set at liberty. He said he much wished to go to America, but feared

<sup>1</sup> Subsequently he went *viâ* Hamburg to America. The Government, however, did not confiscate his estates, and allowed his wife to send him £300 a year. He was a supporter of the Union and of Roman Catholic Emancipation. He was pardoned in 1803, acted as justice of the peace, and was a guest at the Castle. In 1821 he was received by the King himself. In 1825 Sir Robert Peel got himself into a scrape in the House of Commons by describing Rowan as an "attainted rebel." He was soundly lectured by Hutchinson, so we read in Lord Broughton's *Recollections* (vol. iv.). "Never did Minister get such a whipping, as the Americans call it. Peel looked so red and silly, and all those who had cheered him looked so red and silly, and we so roared and cheered our champion, that a by-stander would have thought the Opposition certain of a victory."

he should not get a passport. He escaped from prison by getting leave to sup with his wife (along with the gaoler) and, while the latter was regaling himself with the servants, escaped out of the window of the apartment by means of a ladder that was ready provided. He said he had a wife and eight children, and seemed hardly able to mention them without great emotion. He had never once heard from them since he left.

Rowan, no doubt was excellent company, and presented a type unfamiliar to girls who had hitherto mixed only in the rather serious society of a highly educated and thoughtful English circle. Amongst the well-known people to whom he introduced them was Rouget de Lisle, author of the *Marseillaise*. Perhaps it was on Rowan's advice that the family, after a month in the lodgings chosen for them by Captain Prebble, removed to more elegant quarters in the Hotel des Tuileries—an *apartement* of almost pagan magnificence.

“ We had a very large saloon with two handsome sets of furniture ; one, blue and white silk damask, the frames of the chairs gilt ; the other, white silk worked with coloured ribbon. Over one of the sofas was thrown a white satin cover painted in Chinese figures very delicately ; a handsome cut glass chandelier hung in the middle of the room ; the ceiling was well painted in clouds with stars and Cupids. In the four corners of it were the four seasons. The door was panelled with looking-glass, the walls gilt in panels, beside which were two exceedingly large mirrors. Three

large windows on one side reaching to the ground, and one at the end opening on a fine large terrace in front of the gardens of the Tuileries, made the room delightfully pleasant. The saloon opened into another which also opened upon the terrace. In a recess stood a handsome chintz bed where my father slept, and in this room we most commonly sat, for we were so far become French as to forget that it was a lodging room that we occupied when sitting there. A door covered with morocco led out of this room into a little boudoir, the walls of which were ornamented with paintings of natural flowers, as large as life, in the prettiest bunches, so that you might fancy yourself in a little summer house."

Here the ladies gave a grand tea-party: the company included—

"Mrs. Henderson, an English lady settled in Paris, Miss Adams, another English lady at a *pension* and a friend of Mrs. Prebble, two French American ladies from the same *pension*, two Misses Dulens with their father (French people), Miss Dupont, the sister-in-law of Brissot, Miss Williams and her sister Mrs. Lockart, General Miranda, Mr. Stone, Captain Cowper, Colonel Fulton and Mr. Skipwith, Americans, the latter the consul in Paris; Mr. Kearney, a *ci-devant* Abbé, now our great friend and French master; M. Holenboc, a Dane, a Mr. Jones, Mr. Cockerel, Mr. Beresford, a Worcestershire man, and Mr. White, also an Englishman, and one of our most intimate associates."



The last was a mechanical inventor of great ability with whom the Russells, father and son, afterwards came to be intimately related in business.

It is unnecessary to reproduce either girl's descriptions of the Paris of those days. To tell the truth, they are written in the regulation guide-book style, though the zest of the young sight-seers lends a certain charm to their formal appreciations. Some of their reflections, however, are worth quoting; *e.g.*, on a walk with General Miranda, after visiting the old Louvre, they passed the Châtelet, the "gloomy place where so many persons lost their lives on September 2nd and 3rd."

"It was through a dark large gateway we passed, on the side of which was formerly a door, now bricked up, through which the unhappy victims were brought. Here our ideas naturally took a gloomy cast. Hence we walked to the Conciergerie and the Revolutionary Tribunal: in the former the good General [Miranda] was confined eighteen months, and in the latter he had not been since he was carried *from* thence amidst the acclamations of the people after his trial. Poor man, how much he seemed to feel, and how much his feelings awakened ours! What kind of sensation struggled in my breast in mounting the steps of the Tribunal cannot easily be imagined. How my heart shrank within me on the recollection of the many, many aching hearts that had mounted and dismounted these steps, the number of innocent victims that have here been condemned to suffer by the cruel hand of anarchy and party. Humanity cannot forget



even should ages of happiness flow from this bloody source."

The General, at this time a man of forty, had already gone through many adventures. By birth a Venezuelan, he had fought in the Spanish Army, with the French allies of the North Americans, commanded a division in the French Army of the Republic, and in 1793 was tried before the Revolutionary Tribunal. At this time he was engaged in Paris with plots for the emancipation of Spanish America. On his return to Venezuela, he was made first commander of the patriot army and afterwards dictator. Eventually, however, he was vanquished and sent as a prisoner to Spain, where he died in 1816.

At the Louvre the Russells had been specially interested in a collection of philosophical instruments.

"They are the property of an individual of the name of Charles. In the middle of the room, in a cupola, is suspended the car in which he ascended in a balloon with Blanchard. He has two astonishingly large electrical machines, besides several smaller ones, and curious machines of all kinds, hydraulic and all others. Among other things we were much pleased with a little harmonium, with keys the same as a harpsichord, but not larger than a portable writing desk; also a curious piece of metal, round and bent in the middle. On the least touch of a kind of sponge he had at the end of a stick, it sent forth such an amazing sound as almost stunned you, and by repeating the blows though ever so gently it increased to that extent it

was not to be borne. It appears like brass, and looks more like a large brass kettle lid than anything else : it comes from China, but it is not known what metal it is. He has the largest camera obscura I ever saw. It has a charming effect, showing the opposite part of the Louvre and all the passing to and fro through the court, which is very great. Here is also a most curious collection of time-pieces, the exquisite workmanship of which, together with the ingenuity displayed in their construction, as well as the great variety, is astonishing ; also curious mirrors of all kinds—in short, to mention all the curiosities is impossible. Citoyen Charles has been indefatigable in making this collection, and at his death means to give them to the nation.”

On several occasions the girls visited the National Convention. Martha Russell was painfully disillusioned on seeing at close quarters these makers of the Republic. Her first experience is thus recorded :—

“The confusion, noise, low language, the nervous attempts to overpower one another by the loudness of voice in place of the strength of argument, the stamping, raving, and uncouth attitudes, menacing each other with clenched fists, some jerking their arms suddenly as if throwing stones at their adversaries, others while speaking moving their whole bodies like a pendulum of a clock—in fact such a variety of uncouth gestures and vulgar-looking people I should have thought could be found but among a set of old-clothesmen. In truth their appearance was much

more like this than anything else—dirty, mean, shabby-looking fellows, all of them; some in fur caps, others in red and blue caps, some apparently in dirty night-gowns, others shabby great coats, many that had not been shaved for a week at least, and some that had not a comb in their hair that day. A few among them there were who looked clean and had smooth locks—among these the first day we were there was Relle, who was their President, Tallien, Bourdon, De l'Oise, Loudret, and some others. This day the President broke three bells trying to keep silence, and this circumstance, together with the unparalleled turbulence of the meeting in my idea, made me suppose that this was an uncommonly tumultuous meeting. Much was I astonished on inquiry afterwards to find that it was not more so than common, and in fact very seldom indeed were there then more peaceable meetings. It seemed to me impossible that any business could be there settled, particularly the business of a great nation. That this was the National Convention of France, of which I have read and heard so much, appeared to be almost impossible.

“Immediately on one member finishing a speech four or five would start up and begin in the most vociferous manner, and continue trying to overpower each other by the strength of their lungs, till the President by means of his bell overpowered them all and decided who should speak first. This generally was he who had the oftenest attempted it before. He then advanced to the tribune, but generally stood there a long time before he could gain silence to be heard. The gestures and oratory of each of the



speakers were to me perfectly original, and not less curious than that of the President, who, all the while any one is speaking, on the least noise (and that is nearly always) stands up with his arms extended and hands spread, and moving them up and down, as if by that means he was keeping the people down in their seats. In short, the whole of the scene excited in my breast a degree of disappointment, disgust, and astonishment scarcely to be imagined."

At the Observatory the Russells were conducted over the sights by an official who seemed to be a man of high culture and scientific knowledge. They could not help envying him his "delightful employment amongst such a charming collection of instruments in so quiet a spot"—free from the strife and turbulence of the disordered city. On their next visit they heard that their friend had been arrested for a Jacobin and was lying in prison.

For some few days there had been rumours of renewed trouble.<sup>1</sup> It was, of course a regular thing in the Tuileries to see groups of men and women disputing about politics (or bread); latterly, however, the quarrels had become more frequent and acrimonious between the two parties, the Jacobins and Muscadins—enemies and friends of the National Convention. The vehemence of the women was incredible, and William Russell, though he could not understand their language, was so shocked that he lost all patience with them. Martha could only compare them to a "set of

<sup>1</sup> This was the abortive insurrection of the Jacobins commonly called the 12th Germinal.



Furies, and that of the most vulgar, impudent cast possible."

"On the evening of the 11th of Germinal (March 31) our friend Mr. White, who seldom missed spending his evenings with us, and in whose society we ever found the truest pleasure, told us he expected some disturbances might take place soon. The guard at his section was doubled, and, he believed, at most of the sections in Paris. The next morning, as we passed through the Tuileries, we met Mr. Kearney : he begged we would not walk in those gardens after two o'clock, as he thought it very likely they would be suddenly shut and that we should not then get out. It happened that we had appointed this morning for doing some errands with Miss Adams, who was come to spend a few days with us. Towards one o'clock the streets became uncommonly crowded, particularly with women, and we were insulted once or twice. We had walked the first part of the morning, and intended to take a fiacre when we were tired, not then having got horses to our own coach. But behold, on seeking a coach, they had all left the streets, and we were obliged to get home as well as we could. By three o'clock we heard the tocsin sound—which I had really wished to hear, though I did not long for any disturbances. It is merely the sound of a chapel bell, when the clapper hits one side only, but it touches a string of dreadful ideas in one's mind.

"About four o'clock Mr. White came. He told us all Paris was under arms, and a plot had been discovered by means of a billet found in a small piece of cheese

that was going to be sent. Fouquier-Tinville and his accomplices were in custody and on their trial at the Revolutionary Tribunal. The message informed them that when a number of eggs should be sent them, half of them white, and half coloured, then they might depend upon it the plot was ripe ; and as many eggs as were sent, so many days would it be before they should be delivered. The word of *ralliement* was to be ' Vive la Montagne ! ' The Faubourg Antoine were to go to the arsenal, and by surprise get possession of the arms, then repair to the Convention and demand the arrest of Jullien, Fréron, Barras, Dubois-Crancé, Legendre, Louvet, and many others. The reinstatement of Barrère, Billaud, and Collot, by a decree of the Convention was to be effected. Cambon and Thuriot were likewise to be brought in, the telegraph was to be seized, and the prisons opened, and in short the terrible Mountain again to rear its head.

" Happily, however, this plot was discovered, the papers found and seized, which proved its existence, and proper measures taken to prevent its ripening. Every one being under arms and prepared, our fears were quite calmed, and we walked out in the streets in the evening on purpose to see what was going on. How different a scene presented itself to what we had witnessed in the morning ; every shop shut up, the streets filled with armed men, different sections marching about, some with pikes, and others muskets and bayonets, also a great many horse and foot military, but all as quiet as possible. The citizens continued under arms all night ; the next day was extremely disturbed, and the contest by no means over. The garden

of the Tuileries was filled with armed men. Sentence of banishment was passed upon Barrère, Collot, and Billaud, and the Convention were resolved it should be executed. They had attempted to send them off thrice, and the populace, or rather the Jacobins, had brought them back. General Pichegru was sent for, and this day commanded the troops in Paris (of which many more were arrived). With the well-disposed citizens who carried arms, they were said to amount to 100,000 men. We managed this morning to get to Mrs. Imlay's, whose rooms were just over our old lodgings in the Carousel, and fronted the Committee of Public Safety. Here we were so fortunate as to arrive in time to see Barrère brought in. He was in a hackney coach with two *gens d'armes*. The place and the street opposite, as well as the square of the Tuileries, were filled with armed men, through the midst of which Pichegru with a company of horse soldiers made his way. As soon as he had arrived opposite the Committee he addressed a short but energetic speech to the citizens under arms, exhorting them to patience, and to recollect how his soldiers had fought for them and been for weeks without tasting a mouthful of bread while exposed to hardships they had no idea of.

“Soon after this we saw the carriage moving slowly along, and had full time to view the villain's countenance [Fouquier-Tinville's], which betrayed a mixture of impudent hardness and villainy I hope never to see equalled.

“In the afternoon we were engaged out to tea. Not supposing any danger as the party for the



Convention were so strong and so well upon their guard, we set off to walk it, being but just across the water. We passed through crowds of armed men, some with their arms on the ground and themselves trying to get a little rest, others parading about. Cannon were placed round the Convention, at the end of every street leading to it, and through most of these no one could pass : the shops all shut up ; in short, the whole scene wore so much the appearance of a besieged town, that it was impossible not to be much impressed by the sight.

“ Just as we were got half-way there was a smoke seen from some of the cannon we had passed and a general cry of ‘ To arms.’ It seemed as if some enchantment had been employed, for in a moment innumerable bayonets glittered in the air. We stopped to look, but were commanded to pass on and not stand still. It appeared afterwards that just at the moment a Jacobin had found means to put a lighted match to the mouth of the cannon, from which we had seen the smoke, with the intent to set it off among the people ; luckily he was discovered. Barrère was this evening sent off again, and again brought back in face of Pichegru himself. In the night, however, they once more packed him off, and then he was suffered to go : after which all grew quiet.”

As illustrating Martha Russell's serenely observant frame of mind, it is worth mention that from this lively account of the attempted rising against the Convention she passes on to the remark that the French are “ very fond of eggs boiled hard,” and “ you see great quantities



of them exposed for sale in the market; but they are always coloured on the outside to distinguish them from those that are not boiled." Having disposed of this housewifely item, the diarist turns to the tragic events which are in progress about her. The sisters were fortunate enough to get seats for one day of Fouquier-Tinville's trial at the Revolutionary Tribunal. They were "gratified as well as disgusted" by what they saw there. It was impossible, as Martha justly observed, to enter without sensations of horror and disgust the place where so many innocent victims had heard their last sentence pronounced, in many cases without accusation or leave to make a defence.

The Tribunal was an oblong room, about two-thirds portioned off for women, the rest for the public. At the upper end sat the President in black robes and a black hat, looped up in front, with a large plume of black feathers; on each side were the judges, robed like him and wearing similar hats. On the right, against the side wall, were seats one above another where sat "the execrable Fouquier and his gang." In the centre were the seats reserved for spectators holding tickets from a Judge or a Senator in attendance.

"Fouquier was of a tall, meagre figure, visage long, thin, and sallow, hair dark, dirty with powder, greasy, and looking as if it had not been combed the last week. His beard also had not for some time been impeded in its growth, and a filthy, greasy great-coat accorded well with the other parts of his person. On first entering we thought his countenance betrayed dismay mixed with its ferocious villainy. But soon

did he convince us, both by its expression and his words, that impudence and hardness still held their places among the wickedness of his heart. He brought under his arm a box, out of which as soon as he was seated, he drew an abundance of papers, and a pen and ink. As soon as a witness was called and sworn he began making notes of the evidence given, and often interrupted him in the course of his evidence in the most impudent manner. As soon as the witness had finished, he endeavoured, by means of equivocation and the most bare-faced lies, to set aside the evidence. Among the witnesses examined this morning was a young lady whose name had been placed by Fouquier on the list to be guillotined. She was in prison, not knowing the cause, and was very near her time of lying in. On receiving her sentence she demanded to know the offence charged upon her, and the brutish refusal to this request given her by Fouquier, together with her unhappy fate, affected her so as to bring on premature labour. The next morning, which was to have carried her to the guillotine, from her weak state she was suffered to remain for another time, and afterwards, fortunately for her, among the crowd of prisoners that there were, she escaped observation.

“The chief argument that Fouquier made use of was that he was only the instrument in the hands of Robespierre and Barrère, and did but execute their commands, and that, as Barrère had preserved his life and was only to be transported, it was very hard that he, the servant only, should suffer; but facts proved that he was a hearty accomplice in all their

guilt. Fouquier-Tinville was the President of the Revolutionary Tribunal at the time when France was so stained with innocent blood, and the jury who were now on their trial with him all appeared to be equal in hardiness and guilt with himself. The open, candid, and patient behaviour of the Judges and President now was very pleasing, and offered a striking contrast to what was laid before us, the conduct of the then culprits. The populace behind was very noisy, and at last were so provoked by the impudence of Fouquier and one or two others as not scarcely to suffer them to speak."

The impudence displayed, as Martha Russell thought, by Fouquier and some of his associates was explained, she suggests, by their knowledge of the plot previously described, for their rescue. "My father and brother," Mary Russell writes, "went to the execution. The sixteen condemned men were guillotined in thirteen minutes. Fouquier was the last, and as the multitude showed great signs of joy when he mounted the scaffold, he, not being able to express the resentment he felt any other way, turned round and grinned at them."

At this point the younger sister mentions that she went once with Martha to see the guillotine erected for an execution. They thrilled with horror at beholding the knife which had deprived so many innocent fellow-creatures of existence. Then they walked away in the direction of the Champs Elysées, but returned another way, thinking the execution was over. To their great distress, however, they met the poor victim going in a cart, with his neck shaved, and



in his shirt and trousers. He was a mulatto, and leader of an insurrection in the Faubourg Antoine. "We were not only hurt by seeing the poor man that was to be soon launched into eternity, but also by meeting such throngs of people going with the greatest gaiety to witness the execution."

Among the sights that shocked the girls in a minor degree was the deplorable spoliation of the churches. Round some of the most famous ecclesiastical and other buildings they were escorted by General Miranda, a man who had travelled widely in four continents, had studied the Fine Arts in Athens and Rome, and who perhaps inspired some of the sound if rather obvious æsthetic criticism which, though not reproduced here, appears in the young ladies' diaries.

At the hospital they found the veteran soldiers going in to dinner.

"The sight of the long tables so nicely spread for them," says Martha, "was very pleasant. Soup plates, with a napkin in each, were set all round, and everything looked, though coarse, as clean and comfortable as possible. The sight of so many poor maimed fellows as you here meet is distressing, but to see how happy they are altogether does one's heart good: a great many with wooden legs, and some without arms, others on crutches; all merry, and singing, or laughing, with their pipes smoking away, both old and young; but the young ones I could not but look upon with the superior degree of veneration, strange as it may seem: it was because they had been maimed in fighting for the liberty of their country."



In conversation with one of the women who showed them over the Hospital the Republican young ladies discovered to their surprise that two opinions prevailed amongst poor people as to the effects of the Revolution. The men in power, so this woman said, did not know what they would be at. What they had done one day they would undo the next. In fact the country was going to destruction. This despondency, however, Martha attributes to the personal misfortunes of the speaker—a pretty young woman with seven small children, whose husband was disabled by rheumatism, and only able to get for them all one pound of bread a day—and that only fit for pigs. It was indeed a severe winter in Paris. Food and fuel were scarce and costly. Many poor families underwent privations “compared to which even the fangs of despotism they had not thought hard.”

Bread, we read, was distributed by bakers appointed by the Sections (private sale being forbidden), and before you could get any of it you must obtain from your Section a card testifying to the number of your family. During the greater part of the winter the Russells, being six in family, could only draw one pound a day, and that so bad that if you threw it against the wall it would stick there. Many days they obtained no bread at all, but had to content themselves with one or two mouldy hard biscuits or with rice, and for this their man-servant was obliged to stand many hours *à la queue*. Poor women often waited all night so as to get a good place the next morning. In a general way they stayed peaceably

side by side chattering and laughing (for "*une Française* feels but at intervals"). But too often the miserable objects seen in the streets showed that there was much justification for the cry, *Du pain, du bain pour nous et pour nos pauvres enfants.*

Presently this famous experiment in municipal trading was given up as a proved failure, and bread became both cheaper and better.

Authentic accounts of the prevailing distress were given to the Russells by a Mlle. Dulens, whose father was a member of the Faubourg Saint Antoine Section—where most of the *ouvriers* lived. But the hardship was by no means confined to the working classes—"many of the deputies and wives of deputies made away with themselves." One fine young woman, wife of a deputy, threw herself out of a window just opposite the Russells' hotel.

"The dismal histories we were continually hearing from those we fell in company with about the sufferings that they and their friends had endured in the time of Robespierre made one's heart shrink within one. Never were we in company when more than two were present who had not been in prison. Often, very often, did it happen that not one present had escaped, and the sufferings they had there experienced were as little to be imagined as the causes of their imprisonment. . . .

"Among our friends was the sister-in-law of Brissot. Her order for arrest I read myself, and the cause of it was solely for being *la belle-sœur de Brissot.* In short it is now considered as an honour and a card of

civism to have been in arrest. Brissot's mother and this sister-in-law were among the friends we saw oftenest. Once we had the melancholy pleasure of being in company with the wife of Petion and the daughter and only child of the unfortunate and great Madame Roland. She is an uncommonly interesting girl, has a fine open countenance, and a degree of simplicity in her manners and dress seldom met with among the French."

A certain alarm was caused in Paris on the First of Prairial (May 20) by the report which the Russell ladies received from their drawing-master—it was said that the Mountain that day would make another great effort. The girls went out at noon and returned without molestation. But during their absence their father and Captain Prebble had felt some anxiety, as they had seen some well-dressed ladies being led to the Convention by a party of fish-women. The streets were filled with parties of these furies—apparently drunk with passion. After dinner the Russells witnessed the ducking of a Muscadin in one of the Tuileries ponds. Meantime, several guns had been brought into the garden and turned upon the Convention. The Faubourg Antoine had assembled, and sent a deputation to the Convention to state what laws they desired to be passed. The guns were to back up their demand!

"After dinner the gentlemen walked out and found the streets filled with armed men; they were obliged to go out armed, no one being now suffered to walk



the streets without ; several times were they stopped, but showing their American passports secured them. After tea Mr. Prebble left us, but Mr. Skipwith seemed rather fearful of venturing alone lest he might get ducked for a Muscadin, as he was neatly dressed. However, after putting on the shabbiest greatcoat we could find, and hiding his little cane under it, he walked off, though with a pale face. . . .

“The number of reports we heard through the day was astonishing : the disturbances continued through the night ; by three o'clock the next day troops arrived, but all in great disorder. In the evening Mr. Kearney brought us an account that the insurgents had gained possession of the arsenal, and that he much feared the party for the Convention would be overpowered. The struggle through this night was severe indeed. Feraud, one of the members of the Convention, was killed in the Convention itself, and through the night this body was insulted in the most alarming manner by the Jacobin party. But the sitting was declared permanent, and the members remained at their posts. Boissy d'Anglas showed much courage as President. The next day more troops arrived ; in the evening they went round the Faubourg Antoine and made prisoners of the principal conspirators ; we saw them brought up in much triumph by the horse soldiers to the Surety General. The next day the guillotine was erected and the principal of them executed.”

Then everybody was happy and comfortable again.



## CHAPTER X

### SOCIAL LIFE IN PARIS (1795)

Reviving gaiety of Paris—Carriages in the streets—Dress of children and women—Food of the people—Theatre-going—Mary Russell on the French drama—Stage realism—Teaching of the deaf and dumb—Sicard's system—A clever, good girl—Visit to a convent—Hardships of the Sisters during the Revolution—The days of terror—A charming Englishman—William Russell's commercial undertaking—Claim for damages against the French Government—Captain Prebble—Purchase of properties in France—Preparations for the voyage to New York—Live-stock on board.

“THE longer we stayed in Paris,” wrote Mary Russell, “the gayer it became. Every day seemed to add something to it. The people were by degrees recovering from the times of terror during Robespierre's reign, when every one was afraid of appearing not merely smart but even clean.” The two girls—though they dutifully studied French and drawing—threw themselves heartily into the social life of the city. They were delighted, as healthy-minded young Englishwomen should be, with walking in the Palais Royal, which was then the fashionable shopping-place for Parisian ladies. The cheapness and beauty of the shops were, they declared, indescribable, especially when they were lighted up in the evening. When the ladies first drove out in their carriage they had encountered some unpleasantness, being pointed at and called Aristocrats—a form of infamy which the ordinary

unregenerate person is apt to enjoy unless the democratic censure takes too material a form, as, for instance, on their first outing, when a man had "aimed a large stick at the glass and threatened much." After a little time, however, the streets were filled with carriages, and no further trouble was experienced.

Martha Russell was "disgusted," she says, with the manner in which French children generally used to be dressed—like little men and women. But already this fashion was wearing out and the English simplicity adopted.

"The method of swaddling the infants is terrible. They are girded round and round as tight as possible with a broad band of dimity and then rolled up tight in a piece of thick flannel, the head only coming out, and the flannel doubled about the feet and bound as tight as possible, so that the poor thing cannot stir any one of its limbs and feels more like a mummy or that sort of statue called *Hermes*, viz. a long block of stone with a head at the top. It is certainly owing to this circumstance that many more deformed people are seen among the French than the English."

Nevertheless, Martha notes that Frenchwomen in general have good shapes, carry themselves well, and walk much better than the English. This observation may be comforting to English ladies of our own days, who are often reproached with falling away from the ease and grace displayed by their ancestresses of three or four generations ago.

“Of wine an astonishing quantity is drunk in Paris, it being the common beverage. They have no water but that of the Seine, which is conveyed to different parts by pipes, where are fountains from which men carry it about the city in buckets. It is very unpleasant, dirty water, and on the least rain very thick. Most of the floors are of large red brick or tile, except the state rooms or saloons, which are of bright oak inlaid in different forms. The tile floors and stone staircases are very generally a great preservation against fire. The common people live chiefly on bread, butter, hard eggs, fruit, salad and rice. They make little use of tea, but are immoderately fond of coffee. The coffee-houses here are as numerous as the ale-houses in England.”

“French people,” says Martha Russell, “would sell the clothes from their backs rather than give up theatre-going.” This taste seems to have been rather quickly acquired by two young Englishwomen then resident in Paris, though, to be sure, Mary Russell accounts for their assiduity by saying that it was the best means of perfecting themselves in the French language. She was a little disappointed, however, at the Théâtre de la République, which they visited a few days after their arrival in Paris. The actors were very few, the scene never changed, and the house, though good, was not equal to the New Drury. It was badly lighted and “the company by no means smart.” But the girls were not discouraged; thirteen other theatres were open, and in time Mary Russell qualified as a critic of the drama. “The French,” she says,

with delicious juvenile confidence, "exceed the English in comedy, though in tragedy they cannot dispute the palm."

"Their comedies in general are full of good moral sentiments, and have none of those low scenes which are too often introduced on the English stage. I never hardly went to an English play without being disgusted with some immodest sentiment, but never saw anything of the kind here, though in general their manners are more free than the English—I mean the manners of the people in general. One piece called *Fénelon* we were particularly struck with. It is the most interesting thing I ever saw. The chief of the scenes are in a convent where the Lady Abbess and all the nuns appear just in the dresses they used to wear. Another very pretty piece we saw was called *William Tell*, where the father shot the apple off his son's head. We went with Mrs. Imlay to the opera; it was one of the most famous ones called *Castor and Pollux*. The scenery and dancing were excellent. The manner in which they managed their scenes was very ingenious. They seemed to rise out of the ground in a very quick manner. One scene was very pretty in which he was taken up to heaven in a triumphal car. The scenery then changed to heaven, and he descended apparently in the midst of the clouds. The scenery of heaven was more beautiful than anything I ever saw. We saw a representation of heaven and hell at the opera in London, but the French heaven was, I must confess, much superior in taste and beauty to



the English, though the English hell was far more terrific and dreadful than the French.

“Vestris, the famous dancer, was ill this evening and could not perform. We therefore went again some time after to see him perform. The opera was called *Telemachus*—it was very well acted. Vestris danced wonderfully. It is almost incredible with what agility and ease he danced. Several of the girls danced exceeding well. The opera house is a very fine one, but not equal, in my opinion, to the New Drury in London. Both the play and opera in Paris are exceeding cheap, not a third of what they are in England.”

An instructive day was spent on May 4th, when the party visited the Academy for the Deaf and Dumb.

“The Abbé Sicard, the governor, when we entered was delivering his lecture to the poor subjects, which he does publicly three times a week. I regretted we had not come earlier to have heard the beginning, but learned that he divided all words into different families, making his pupils understand and express many things by signs. Morning he represented by putting the fingers of the right hand behind the back of the left, and causing them to rise up gradually to represent the rising sun: time past, by passing the right hand quickly over the left; a large number by closing the fingers of one hand over those of the other; giving, by laying the hand upon you and letting it remain some time; lending, laying the hand upon

you and taking it away quickly ; asking to borrow and beg, by laying your hand the same way upon themselves ; building, putting the hands repeatedly and quickly one over the back of the other.

“ When we entered, one of the pupils, a young man of perhaps twenty-one, was explaining to the others the use of the definite article, and, as a sign of it, drew a semicircular score from one word to another where it was wanted. He explained it by tying a piece of string to his watch and then to himself, and giving the watch afterwards to another ; he then wrote his name, *Massieu*, and the word ‘ watch,’ and drew a line from one to the other, which showed them the watch tied to *Massieu*.

“ The Abbé *Sicard* is a most humane and ingenious man, and deserves the highest encomium for the unremitting attention he pays these poor unfortunates. *Massieu* was an acquaintance of our friend *Mr. White*, and we invited him to return and dine with us, which pleased him highly, and equally gratified us. As we walked along he conversed chiefly with *Mr. White* by signs, and interested us most amazingly. His countenance is lively, and expressive of great sensibility and quickness ; not the least vacancy, but everything opposite to it. He wrote a most excellent hand and with the greatest ease, and thus with a slate and pencil conversed with us most freely. All his answers or questions were sensible, and discovered him to be well informed on every subject started, which from curiosity, were not a few. He wrote and seemed to understand English as well as French, and never all the day spelt one word wrong in either, or committed

the least grammatical error that we observed. He is the most excellent mimic I ever saw, and acted a monkey, lion, and President of the Convention, Louis XVI., Marie Antoinette, Virtue, Vice, a coquette, a gallant, &c., most wonderfully. He delighted us so much that we urged him at parting to repeat his visit frequently, to which he appeared to have no objection. He was very inquisitive to know our history, and seemed very sorry to learn we were going to leave France, telling us about a sister he had who was also deaf and dumb. He said she was a clever, good girl—she never laughed but when there was occasion.”

An admirable definition of a clever, good girl! This much abbreviated account of the sisters' experiences and observations in Paris may be wound up with Martha's description of their visit to a convent of English nuns. They were taken to it by their friend Mr. Kearney, formerly Head of the Irish College, but (so it may be inferred) withdrawn from active exercise of his orders. Their interest in this particular convent was due to a letter from Mr. Skey, a friend of one of the White Nuns (Mrs. Fitz-Herbert), and intimately associated with the Russells.

“On Monday morning, the 10th of April, we took a walk to their residence, situated in Rue Sainte Victoire—the house the White Nuns have always occupied. There were formerly in Paris three sorts of English nuns, the White, Black, and Blue; all that now remain of each reside in one building. The one among them Mr. Kearney was most acquainted with



and for whom he inquired was the youngest among the Blue Nuns. The house stands in a court back from the street. On ringing the bell a portress appeared, who accosted us in English, which at first surprised us, not immediately recollecting that it was among our own countrywomen we were going. Having inquired for Sister Theresa, Mr. Kearney's acquaintance, we were desired to walk in the garden till they should call her. There we found a very pleasing retreat consisting of delightful walks, shaded by fine old trees. We had not walked many minutes before Sister Theresa appeared with another Sister, also known to Mr. Kearney. They both accosted us in the most affectionate manner, after the French fashion, with a salute on each cheek. The open simplicity of their manner, and the unfeigned pleasure they testified on seeing us, their countrywomen, much increased the interest I before felt in their situation, and I believe we all felt much more like old friends than new acquaintances.

“ We were, as is natural to suppose, fully employed answering the numerous questions of our friends concerning their native land, from which they had not seen any person for many years, and also concerning our own sufferings and expectations.

“ Their ignorance of the world and all passing there much astonished us. After we had a little gratified their curiosity, they began to recount to us their sufferings, which they appeared to think greater than any one else's, though in fact to those who had been in the world (or rather in France) they were scarcely to be named as sufferings, when compared



with what others had to recount. The having to leave off their nuns' dress seemed to be their greatest trial, and was looked upon by them as a most severe one. The next grievance was that they had been brought from their own convent. They in common with others had suffered from a scarcity of provisions, though this they laid little stress upon. Their property had been seized, and they had scarcely anything to live upon, but this they seemed to esteem a trifle in comparison with having been forced to quit their beloved convent and lay aside their vestal attire. These nuns had never been in prison, but were sent here from their own convent. They acknowledged having been treated very kindly by the White Nuns, to whom the house belonged.

“The Black Nuns only had been in prison, and they had suffered much, having been sent to Vincennes, with a number of other unfortunate people, among whom were several profligate women—from some of whom the nuns received great kindnesses. This house in the time of Robespierre had been used as a prison for some Englishwomen and a few friends of distinction. Happy was it for those who happened to be sent here, as in all probability there was not in or near Paris, perhaps not in all France, another place of arrestation so comfortable. The liberty of rambling in the garden, with the solacing society and good offices of the nuns, who studiously did all in their power to relieve their distress, were alleviations but too sadly contrasted in the other prisons. In these sad times our friend witnessed many trying and heart-wringing scenes; amiable and charming

women, with whom she had formed a feeling attachment, suddenly and without notice or reason dragged from her to the guillotine by the ferocious *gens d'armes*, on whom prayers, entreaties, or any signs of distress had no other effect than exciting laughter and derision. A rap at the outer gate was never heard by any of them without raising terror and dismay not to be described or imagined, and numerous were the tryingly affecting scenes which passed in this place only, during that horrid reign of terror and cruelty. What then can be said or thought of those passing in the numerous other prisons, all of which were as a dungeon to a palace when compared with this?

“The present dress of these nuns was neat and clean—cotton gowns, delicately white handkerchiefs and aprons, mob caps, with borders quilled, close round the face, and little plain black bonnets. Theresa begged to introduce us to her Mother Abbess and the rest of the Sisters; we were therefore shown upstairs. The house was large, and seemed to consist entirely of long galleries with small rooms on each side, which served as cells for the nuns, five of whom had died since their arrest. Theresa said in consequence of it there were now only seventeen of the Black Nuns. The Lady Abbess we found to be a very cheerful, good-humoured woman; she had nothing at all of the morose about her, which I had expected to have seen, and all the Sisters appeared so likewise, and greatly attached to each other; in short I could not but be much pleased as well as surprised at the simple, truthful life

they led in the midst of this disordered city. They had no idea of the distress that had been felt there, never having been beyond their own door, and spending their time in praying, reading, and working. After sitting a little while we took leave, not without first promising to pay them another visit soon, and offering to execute any little commissions they might have in the city. It was not long before we fulfilled our promise, and sending our man one morning with two meat pies, some cakes, tea, sugar, &c., Mr. Kearney, Mary, and I went in the afternoon to taste the tea with them, and thereby made them very happy. In the course of our first visit Theresa had given us each a curious satin pin-cushion of her own making as a keepsake, and in return for mine I now took her a red morocco thread-case, which seemed to please very much. She was yet quite young, although it was six years since she had taken the veil. There was something very interesting in her manner as well as graceful in her person, though I found more to admire in the former than in the latter.

“The next time we visited this convent, to our great astonishment we found Theresa gone to England with three other Sisters and the priest. Never was I more surprised. We had several times proposed it to her, really wishing to see her released, as her health was evidently much impaired, and I thought she was going into a decline. She appeared to have such a dread of going into the world that I should have supposed nothing hardly could have overcome: but it seems hard living and the fear of a decline had



driven her to it, for they had really not enough to subsist upon. She and those who accompanied her applied for passports, though without the smallest expectation of obtaining them, which, however, they did, and were ordered to leave the city in forty-eight hours after, so that no choice or time for deliberation was allowed them. Our visit this time was to one of the White Nuns, for whom we had been requested to inquire by letters from England. A neighbour of our friend Mr. James Skey (Mrs. Homeholds) had a sister here, of whom she had not heard for two years, and he wrote to ask that we would inquire for her. This commission we executed with much pleasure, and found Mrs. Fitz-Herbert, the lady in question, a most worthy, good woman. She was exceedingly gratified to receive news of her friends, and more so with the opportunity offered her of writing to them. Mrs. Fitz-Herbert was about forty years of age, had received a good education, and had superintended the education of eight Sisters, all of whom had been in the convent under her care. She alone had taken the veil.

“She showed us up into her little room, or cell, which was charmingly pleasant, being at the corner of the house, and having a window each way. Each of them presented a sweet, though different view; from one was seen an extensive part of the city with the country beyond it, and from the other nothing but the fine, stately trees and close, retired walks of their own garden. Here were the cooing wood-pigeon and sweet warbling blackbird striving to welcome us to their hallowed retreat, for they began



tuning their sweet notes as soon as we entered the room. This little cell was cleanliness itself, the walls as white as snow, and also the little calico bed and coverlid; the door and chest of drawers were oak as bright as a mirror. In one corner was a little row of shelves filled with books, opposite to it a large crucifix, and under that a St. Augustine, the saint of this convent, and at the bed's head was suspended another, but very small, crucifix. The floor was so clean you might have eaten off it, especially after you had been accustomed a little to the French filth. To *us*, who had now seen a great deal of it, the sight of this room was a real treat. We visited Mrs. Fitz-Herbert several times, and always found much pleasure in her society. Among the Blue Nuns is the Viscountess of Stafford, who has a pension of £200 per annum, or rather ought to have, for she has not received it for the last two years. She is an odd-looking old woman of fifty years of age and half crazy."

Mrs. Fitz-Herbert fairly captivated the whole Russell family, even Mary, the staunch anti-clerical, who had disapproved of the decree by which the Convention restored liberty of worship. She had agreed with people who "looked beyond the present moment," and feared that its influence would be bad: the "priests might regain their power and corrupt the minds of the people." On William Russell the impression produced by the good-looking and pleasant-mannered Mrs. Fitz-Herbert was still more favourable—she had, he told James Skey, much elevated

his conception of a nun. Her agreeable conversation and refined bearing were much superior to his expectation. But what, perhaps, most surprised him was her refusal to take money for her charities. He was ready, he wrote, to give her £500, but she would only accept £5. Probably in his English experience he had never before encountered a religious person who was not beating up subscriptions.

His correspondence at this period relates chiefly to his business concerns. He had at last come up with the letters withheld during his five months of captivity, and began to understand—what had given him so much anxiety while he was a prisoner of war—the long silence of his friends in England, especially of his brother and late partner, George Russell. When the rumour was first received in Birmingham that the English passengers on the *Mary* had been seized by the French it was discredited, and, even when confirmed in William Russell's letters from Brest, his friends, not unnaturally, assumed that he would almost immediately be released. The prolongation of their captivity was as unexpected in England as it was unexplained in France.

Russell, with the courage and persistence displayed against his persecutors in Birmingham, now set himself to get damages from the Republic, and filed a claim for the expenses incurred through his capture and for the maintenance of himself and family in prison. To the end of his stay in Paris he seems to have persevered in the sanguine belief that he would obtain satisfaction. His more practical thoughts, however, were devoted to complicated

dealings in various kinds of merchandise and to setting up Prebble as master and owner of a ship. He had withdrawn the captain from a seafaring life, hoping to make him useful in a more profitable line of business. Finding, however, that the experiment was not successful, he resolved, with his accustomed generosity, to reinstate Prebble in his old profession. His first hope was to purchase the *Mary* for him, but she had been lost at sea, so he set aside £1500 for acquiring a similar vessel. He was also concerned in the purchase of large plots of house property in Paris, and of a considerable estate near Caen, the Abbey Ardennes. In these monetary transactions he does not seem to have been altogether successful, being disposed to place overmuch reliance in agents or partners whom he had not sufficiently tested. Some of them, as was to be expected, took advantage of his generous confidence. Nor does he seem to have considered adequately the position in which he had placed himself, while still a British subject, by purchasing landed property in France while the two countries were at war. It is true that his fixed purpose was to reside permanently in the United States and become a naturalised American. But having, as it appears, entertained and firmly rejected the idea of applying to be made a French citizen, he should have taken into account the possibility—soon to be realised—of strained relations arising between the two Republics.

Apart from what then seemed the impossibility of his ever wishing to live again in England (which would introduce a special set of difficulties), his legal



advisers should have warned him of the embarrassments that might befall a person not a French citizen who should acquire property in France.

His original purpose had been to stay on in Paris till the autumn. But by midsummer he had completed his business arrangements, while his family, somewhat disillusioned with Revolution principles as seen in operation at close quarters in Paris, were eager to embark for America, which they were sure would realise their dreams of a Land of Tranquillity and Peace.

It may be interesting to take note of the provisions collected by William Russell for the voyage on the *Nancy*. He ordered large quantities of beef, pork, and salmon in cases, while his daughters asked for a good stock of preserves (currants, gooseberries, cherries, strawberries, and bilberries). The bottled peas did not answer, we read, but satisfaction was given by a fine store of prunes and figs. Then there were tamarinds, biscuits, and drugs, good French brandy, wine, and cider, porter; cheese, gingerbreads, eggs in salt, butter, and dried haricots.

With these stores was to be a good supply of live stock. Russell instructs his agents at Havre to provide him with a goat (fresh milk) which had previously gone to sea; five dozen fowls; three dozen ducks; some fat, middle-sized porkets (not too large), and a sow with sucking-pigs eight or ten days old.

Evidently the travellers felt no misgivings about their digestions at sea.



## CHAPTER XI

### FROM PARIS TO NEW YORK

Reflections on leaving Paris—By coach to Havre—A French rural scene—A little white cat—Dirty Rouen—Normandy caps—William Russell's visit to Abbey Ardennes—Boarding the *Nancy*—Rough weather—Suitable reflections—Cards under difficulties—The recovered ham—A notable anniversary—Land in sight—Beautiful America.

ON June 25, 1795, the Russell family, travelling in their own coach with hired horses, started from Paris for Havre *en route* for New York. The weather, recorded Martha, favoured their flight as they rattled down the *Rue Honoré* and passed the *Place Victoire*. She departed without regret from the city which about six months before she had entered with hope, affection, and enthusiasm. One tear she shed—on passing, in the *Rue Florentine*, the windows of their “great and good friend General Miranda.” In the sorrow of parting she was grateful that she had ever been allowed to know such a man. On driving through the *Place de la Révolution* the girl thought sadly of the hundreds and thousands of guillotined persons, and confessed on leaving the French people that her original ideas of their Revolution had been somewhat modified.

The first stage ended at Gaillon—“a poor, miserable dirty town, as all French towns are,” remarks Mary Russell; but near it was a fine castle once belonging

to the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, but then being used as a jail for Austrian prisoners of war. The travellers walked about the park, and Martha, though she had no eye for the wild and rugged in nature, could keenly enjoy a scene of typical French comfort and plenty.

“We walked up the side of a hill in the park, and enjoyed one of the sweetest views that ever met the eye of man ; immediately under the hill lay a fine old wood, broken in places by the appearance of a garden well kept and laid out. Adjoining this were cottages and farm houses, each enjoying its garden, orchard, well-stocked farmyard, and the different little enclosures and etceteras necessary to complete the picture of a cottager’s treasure. Through the midst of these interesting objects meandered the Seine, reflecting in its limpid waters the rich fringe that adorned its banks. Beyond, the ground exhibited the sweetest intermixture of villages and enclosures, of different shades of green and yellow, and spotted here and there with comfortable-looking chateaux and their appendages. The boundary line of this sweet picture was a fine range of hills, beautifully wooded, and appearing more beautiful to us because they resembled what we have so often looked upon with so much pleasure in Gloucestershire.”

On returning to their gloomy quarters in the town they were cheered by the welcome of their white cat. The animal which they were taking with them to America had a history which threw a light on the general destitution in Paris. In the streets of Paris

their friend Mr. White had seen a little ragged girl, with a deeply concerned face, running as hard as she could from a *traiteur's* door. He found that she had deposited there a kitten which her father and mother had no food for, but at a cookshop she thought there must be plenty for it. The *traiteur*, however, said he already had too many mouths to feed, and was about to despatch the kitten, when it was rescued by Mr. White and given to the Russells. On the road to Havre the travellers met with no remarkable adventures. Sometimes they could not get rooms and had to sleep in their coach. Everywhere they found it difficult to obtain horses. Apparently they were not impressed with Rouen—"a very ugly town," says Mary, "the streets very narrow and crooked, the houses very high." Rather than be detained over the night at such a place they paid an exorbitant price for horses—800 livres for two stages. After an expensive dinner, hastily consumed, they set off, not without fear and trembling, as the driver was rather drunk. "However, we got on very well." At the next stage they met Mr. Astor, who was to be their companion on board ship. No details are given about him in the diary. But he was a New York gentleman, married, and evidently of substantial position. At Havre they drove to the best inn in the town, which was "about as filthy a place as could well be."

Mary Russell had been favourably struck, on the approach to Havre, with the number of gentlemen's seats bearing a certain resemblance to country houses in England. But the Normandy caps of the peasant women she thought preposterous. "They are the



inner part in the form of a sugar loaf, made of silk or satin richly embroidered with gold spangles: over this are very high pleated lappets which reach down very low—I am sure some of them were near three-quarters of a yard high.”

Here it may be mentioned that William Russell had hurried the journey to Havre in order that before the sailing of the *Nancy* he might have a few days to spare for a visit to his property near Caen, which, apparently, he had not yet seen except in passing. The estate he found far better than he had expected, and the house fit for a nobleman.

During the stay at Havre the anti-clerical Mary was annoyed at the occurrence of a Saint's day, which prevented her doing anything active in the way of preparation for the voyage. The fears she had expressed in Paris as to the “revival of superstition” were already being realised in Normandy, and “the priests seemed to be resuming their power very fast.”

On July 3rd the emigrants rose betimes and boarded the *Nancy*, a vessel of 350 tons burden, built for the West Indian trade. Captain Butler was said to be one of the best American officers, and the accommodation for the party was pronounced excellent. Martha and Mary had a state-room with two comfortable beds and a window looking upon deck. Round the cabin were four berths, occupied by William Russell, his son, his secretary (an Irish gentleman named Carstairs), and Mr. Astor. It was, therefore, with light hearts that they bade farewell to the “French rogues,” who had “pinched us through the nose to the very last.”



Travelling by sea, for people who had plenty of money, were not pressed for time, and were tolerably good sailors, was in those days, the risks of war excepted, rather more comfortable than the hurry and scurry of a crowded modern steamer. Most of Martha's diary is occupied with notes on the weather and memoranda of their meals. The pigs and sheep gave thorough satisfaction, but the fowls and ducks did not thrive, and had "fallen away sadly" before they fulfilled their destiny on the table. The weather at the outset was fair and suggested suitable reflections to Martha :—

"This immense, this beautiful, this grand body of water, of which the depth is unfathomable, what a wonder in creation is it, how does it display the unbounded power of our Almighty Creator! and this little vessel of wood, the work of man, to us a world of itself in the midst of this great sea, how does it display the extent of those faculties with which the Almighty has blest His offspring! To see the proud sails swell with the wind and waft the vessel along which thus rides upon the waves, and seems to defy their swell, is nearly as beautiful and to us more interesting to contemplate than the ocean itself. Gratitude to the Almighty and His rich gifts to us as intelligent creatures and for His rich display of magnificence in creation, always fills my mind on the review."

On July 7th the *Nancy* was passing "in triumph" from the "proud shores of England," as Mary remarked, though she could not help feeling a pang of regret for the "many valuable friends" left behind,

or without wishing that they too were bound for the "peaceful America."

Presently the sea became rougher, but Martha's confidence is not shaken, either in the care of Providence or the skill of Captain Butler. But the party did undergo a fright when they saw a strange sail bearing down, so they thought, upon them, and the captain suggested that it might be an Algerine. He had once been chased by one of these gentry, and did not wish to repeat the experiment. The *Nancy* put on all sail, and, favoured with a brisk wind, got clear away. A few days later the alarm was renewed, but this time the stranger proved to be a harmless brig from Baltimore.

One serious storm the *Nancy* encountered, and Martha Russell suggests that the sailors were frightened. The Captain was laid up, and they had been demoralised by the bad behaviour of the mate.

"We all sat up till nearly one o'clock, when, being quite exhausted with balancing ourselves to the motion of the vessel, and having hitherto waited ineffectually for the abatement of the storm, we thought it best to go to bed or rather lie down, for to sleep was not possible. I could not persuade myself to undress, but threw myself down to give vent to these reflections which the continuance of so awful a situation naturally called forth. After adoring the power of the Almighty in whose hands we were, and whose power and omnipotence we then so particularly experienced; after feeling in a most forcible manner that we were in His hands to do with us as seemed good in His sight, and

that perhaps the next moment He might send us to Eternity; after recollecting the great sum of enjoyment and happiness, the mercy and indulgence of the same Almighty Being we now adored with trembling, had kindly allotted me in past life, gratitude warmed my bosom, and excited a glow of hope that the same bounty would still be with us, and preserve us happily through this storm. Added to these and such like reflections, the remembrance of my dear friends in England pressed upon my mind and excited a pleasure, though a melancholy one."

The *Nancy* had fallen in with the tail of a West Indian hurricane, and not till four in the afternoon did she get into quiet water. "Few can conceive of the degree of happiness we all felt at having been so mercifully delivered in such an extremity." The storm-tossed mariners' dinner that afternoon was reasonably substantial—"boiled mutton and soup, fowl, pork, cold plum pudding, cheese and figs." But though the water was calm enough for the party to enjoy that good old English repast, the motion of the vessel was still lively.

"After dinner, whilst I am writing this, our gentlemen form so laughable a group, that I cannot help minuting down their appearance. Mary and I are tossing about in the window-seat writing as we can, in the opposite corner are the four gentlemen playing at whist. Their party commenced by lashing each his chair as he could. Then down they sat, with a board upon their knees to serve for a table; about every five minutes the four heads went clang together,



and swing they go, first towards one corner of the room, and then the other. Just now I heard an outcry, turned to look and saw, instead of four heads, three heads and two heels. They had all rolled upon Mr. Astor, and thrown him over. They hoisted him up again, shouting as the sailors do when pulling the ropes, and again they fastened their chairs and set to. This we saw three times over. Poor Mr. Astor got three falls in a short time, but escaped unhurt."

Mr. Astor, it appears, was a bad sailor, nervous at the least breath of wind, and anxious, at any expense, to abbreviate the voyage.

On July 30th they had a shark adventure :—

"This evening the Captain caught a shark. One of our steerage passengers had put a nice piece of fat ham in a net, and tied it to a drag in the sea, in order to soak out the salt a little. Near this the Captain had suspended a hook for the purpose of catching fish : towards evening the ham was gone, and about an hour afterwards the shark was caught. The Frenchman who had owned the ham immediately suggested that it might be in the belly. If so, he hoped the Captain would give it him. This diverted us all very much. However the poor shark was dragged upon deck and his tail cut off, after this his head, and then his stomach opened, in which sure enough was the Frenchman's ham. Amidst a burst of laughter Captain Butler surrendered it to the owner."

According to Mary's account, "the Frenchman put the ham in soak for dinner next day, but the smell



was very strong and disagreeable." The mate afterwards regaled the party with a pleasing story of a shark which he had captured with a button of the Fifty-seventh Regiment in its belly.

On August 13, 1795, the anniversary of the embarkation at Falmouth on the *Mary*, the *Nancy* fell again upon rough weather. When the storm had abated Martha Russell found leisure for reminiscences. "What a year we have passed!" she exclaimed. "It appears more like a dream than a reality being a twelvemonth going to America."

On August 19th, a year and a day after their capture, the travellers saw land and smelled it—the delightful fragrance from the pine trees. Presently they got the scent of hay from Long Island. After a good many exasperating little delays and disappointments, the Captain told them on August 21 that he could see the high land of Never Sink. By evening they should make Sandy Hook!

"How this rejoiced our hearts! We now were as happy as a few hours ago we had been miserable, and immediately set to putting our things together for going on shore, intending to go up in the pilot boat this evening, provided we reached the Hook early enough to admit of it. We were thus happily employed till dinner when, about four o'clock, having accomplished all our odd jobs, we went upon deck to view the happy land we were approaching, and here was a view never to be equalled or forgotten from the feelings it inspired.

"Never did I see such beautiful land before: it had

a thousand charms not to be described: it was the land to which my eyes had been directed for more than a year; it was the land of virtue, of peace, and of plenty. In short it was America, though to believe this I found no easy matter. It appeared as if I were in a dream. Sure, I thought, it is impossible that I really see America, the place of which I have heard and thought so much, and to which I have looked forward as the place of rest from all our troubles. I felt giddy, I could hardly breathe on seeing the beautiful rich country within a mile and a half of us: the sandy beach appeared close to us, and beyond that finely wooded hills and rich green fields offered as highly cultivated, as rich, and a far more pleasing view, than any part of England could boast."

At 6.30 P.M. the *Nancy* cast anchor in Sandy Hook, but the pilot told the travellers that he could not take them to New York till next morning, as his boat was wet and his men tired.

For conveyance in the pilot's boat the sum of \$30 was asked. At this demand William Russell kicked, but, on Mr. Astor, eager at all costs to be safe on land, offering to pay one-third, he gave way as to the \$20. The pilots, it was said, became quite rich men. That was easy to believe.

Martha's epithets of joy, admiration, and enthusiasm seem to fail her when she tries to describe the first voyage in American water—the verdure on the shore, the beautiful trees ornamenting the tops, the fields of Indian corn like vineyards, the comfortable houses, the mouth of the Hudson River. It was

impossible to express the pleasure felt in feasting the eyes on fair America.

“How beautiful did everything now appear in our eyes! Every tree, every green field, every house, and in short every object wore a thousand charms unknown before. ‘Oh that our friends in England did but know how happy we are now!’ did we often exclaim—and also how many thousands there were in the world that would be glad to exchange situations with us if they could. That we had been preserved through all our trials and brought safe to our destined port filled our hearts with gratitude to the great Author of all our mercies, that Great Being who had protected us.”



SOUTH-EAST VIEW OF NEW YORK CITY IN 1768





## CHAPTER XII

### IN SEARCH OF A HOME

Hunting for rooms in New York—Start for Philadelphia—Road scenery—Visit to Priestley in Northumberland—Sunday observance in New Jersey—Golden rod and Michaelmas daisy—Impressive tavern-keeper—Scene at Dobbs's Ferry—Entering Connecticut—M. Talleyrand de Périgord—The epidemic—Evasive replies—Valley of the Connecticut—Like place, like people—A vision of Middletown—Springfield in 1795—A self-possessed beggar-woman—Road adventures—Manners in New England—Priestley's remarks—Fever almost universal—Approach to Boston.

BETWEEN the New York of 1795 and that of to-day the difference cannot, perhaps, be more vividly marked than by the fact that the Russells had considerable difficulty in providing themselves with board and lodging. Eventually they were taken in, almost as a favour, at a coffee-house recommended by Mr. Astor—who had incontinently rushed off to meet his wife and children—and made themselves tolerably comfortable. Indeed, they were not in a mood to be critical. Never was such cold beef and pickles as they ate upon landing, never bread so delicious. But they were not given much time for enthusiasm over New York, where, by the way, "the fever" was raging with unusual virulence. William Russell was eager to reach Philadelphia, then the capital city of the United States. On the 26th the start was made in their Parisian coach, drawn by four hired horses.

Along the winding way the girls feasted their eyes on the arbutus, oleander, and other flowering shrubs, which at home they had cultivated only under glass. They counted the sail gliding along the river. The road, to be sure, was terrible. For miles it was made on logs laid in the swamp and loosely covered with stones and soil.

Newark was voted enchanting. It was a fine evening, and the rural scene was illumined with the sun's parting rays:—

“Children were playing under the trees, and the neat houses at different distances from each other, around the green, completed this charming picture of rural felicity. What a different scene is here presented to those we used to behold in Paris. Here they know not, ‘the busy hum of men,’ nor the vain hurry of the bustling great. Intrigue, licentiousness, and the various vices abounding there are here unknown, and in their place reside quiet, content, happiness, and virtue (though in some cases, perhaps, of a negative kind).”

The young immigrants were naturally struck with the distinctive feature of the American village:—

“The houses here are all what they call *frame*, that is a frame of logs, one single brick wall within it, and a casing of shingles or boards cut in small planks and laid one just over the edge of the other on the outside. These are painted, some white, others red, and others again stone colour and yellow, with red and slate-coloured roof. All of them have sash windows, and

they have a small garden and trees before them, and neat white rails round them."

At Philadelphia the family stayed some time while William Russell looked around him a little. Also they visited Dr. Priestley at Northumberland, Pennsylvania. The next journey recorded by Martha Russell commenced on October 3rd, with Boston as destination. A stage-waggon had been engaged for the party, and as "the springs were very short" the diarist gently remarks that the "exercise was much more than they had been accustomed to in their own carriages." Her brother, less cheerfully, complained of the intolerable jolting with four excellent horses and on a good road—unusually good, the remark is. They soon reached Bristol, but at a Frankfort tavern were stopped for health certificates. On reaching Princeton they found a capital inn and civil landlord, but were told that he could not let them have horses the next day (being Sunday). By the law of the State of New Jersey he would be liable to a penalty of £5. William Russell, however, wrote a note to Judge Beattie, who very politely sent an open order to all whom it might concern to suffer the party to proceed. Passing Kingston and Brunswick, they had a delightful drive to Woodbridge. Here they noted the fine turf and beautiful shrubs, "so that it appeared like riding through a gentleman's park" and, as usual, the still unregenerate Englishwoman "caught herself looking for the house."

"The prettiest shrubs of which we knew the names



in this ride were the arbutus, which was in blossom, and the juniper, which last grows very luxuriantly: and among the flowers fine golden-rod and Michaelmas daisy, far superior to any I have ever seen in England for the beauty of its colour. Stopped at Woodbridge only to change our horses and carriage, and then proceeded on to Elizabeth Town, where we found all the good people at church, and were astonished at the number of carriages, chairs, and other sorts of vehicle which stood waiting. At the door of one church I counted between seventy and eighty. This we had observed at two other country chapels as we came along, one in the morning and the other this afternoon. At one small chapel stood forty-five and at another thirty."

From Elizabeth Town they went to Newark, where they were cordially greeted as old friends by Mr. Gifford, the landlord. On their asking him to get them a carriage so that they could join the high road between New York and Boston, he introduced a "genteel-looking man in black," a General Cousins, as the person who would let them the carriage. "So it is commonly here," remarks Martha; "men of property are the tavern-keepers and have the hiring of carriages."

"The title of Major, General, Colonel, &c., is very frequently met with indeed in the country places, as there they are fonder of retaining them than in the towns. Whilst we were at Northumberland an excursion was one day proposed to a Major Beatts' in the neighbourhood. As we went thither I inquired if

we did not take a great liberty in going such a large party without sending him word. I had no idea that a Major would keep a tavern—which was in fact the case.”

From Newark the road lay over Dobbs' Ferry—passengers and horses having to cross first, the carriage afterwards. The tavern on the other side was also a general store, and the only window a wooden shutter. Under the shed running along the front of the house sat a number of decent young women. They had started down the river with their goods for the New York market, and, as the wind had left them, were waiting for its return.

On October 6th the Russells arrived at Stamford—the country astonishingly stony. Next day they got to Norwalk, a pretty town with several neat frame houses.

“These houses outwardly are the prettiest pictures of content and cleanliness. Here as well as Newark, Hackensack, and indeed in most of the country towns they stand at regular distances from each other. In front of them is a fine green turf; between each is a garden railed round, with sometimes the addition of plot of land.”

In this part of the country the travellers saw nothing inviting except “the fine variety of tints which the hand of autumn exhibits.” At Fairfield (Connecticut), they met M. Talleyrand de Périgord. The former Bishop of Autun, the future member of

the Directoire and Foreign Minister of Napoleon and Louis XVIII., was then in the United States. He had fled to London to escape the Jacobins, and then went on to America to avoid the suspicious English Ministers. In America he engaged in rather obscure land speculations. The Russells would know of him through Mme. de Staël, the friend who finally obtained leave for him to return to France, and whom he treated with cool ingratitude. Though unwieldy and deformed, he had a distinguished manner and garcious speech.

“After dinner we left Fairfield and went to Stratford, a charming road through a pleasanter country, and not near so stony as that we had last come through. Passed a pretty town called Herefield, a seaport, where is a very long wooden bridge, nearly 200 yards in length. Ever since we have been in Connecticut we have observed the country has been much more enclosed and bears marks of having been longer inhabited. The orchards, of which there are many, appear to have an old turf like those we have been used to see in Gloucestershire, and the trees are quite old. The fences here are chiefly stone walls. We observed at every place we came to that they said they were healthy there, but that the country round was extremely unhealthy. No one seems willing to own that his own spot is sickly, but at Fairfield and at Stratford they *have had* the dysentery, and some children have died of it.”

Newhaven was reached on the 8th. The town

made a conspicuous figure in the landscape, and had "several brick buildings."

"Having heard reports, and seen many accounts in the papers of this place being unhealthy, we, not only to satisfy our curiosity, but also to see if they would not find some ingenious way or other to throw the sickness a little distance from them, inquired into the matter. So in fact it proved, for on asking the boy who waited on us if the dysentery did not prevail in the town, he replied 'Yes, but only three have died this morning' (it was now nearly eleven o'clock), and 'we are very healthy in this house.' They call the disorder prevalent here the camp disorder, or dysentery. It is principally confined to children, young persons, and old women. There are very few instances of its being fatal to men; they had this same disorder much worse last year than this."

On the way to Durham the travellers were "much incommoded by the abominable stench of the swamps and gutters, which, no doubt, was increased by the rain, but which as certainly is the cause of the people's unhealthiness." However, the stony ground was now passed, the hills were left behind, and the roads good.

"Supposing that we could not, from the time we had set off, be far from Durham, we stopped to inquire of a man how far it was; he told us we were in the town, but that the tavern was two miles off. We looked round to see for the houses. Only one was to be seen, and we rode on for another quarter of a mile



before we saw any other houses in these streets than those inhabited by the birds and squirrels. So it was very well that we inquired, for had not this good man informed us, we should never have discovered that we were riding through a town. At length we came to a meeting-house, and half a mile farther off we found a comfortable tavern."

Durham town, the landlord said, was five miles square, but all the people lived close together.

In spite of delay at Durham over the shoeing of a horse—almost as long an operation there as in France—the immigrants were delighted with this part of New England. They well might be. A fairer land than the Valley of Connecticut on a fine October day—then or now—it would be difficult to imagine. But let Martha Russell speak, not her editor :—

"Indeed I do not recollect a day's ride, either here, in England, or France which has given me so much satisfaction and pleasure. A fine undulating country, richly and extensively cultivated, although finely wooded and watered by the clear, beautiful river Connecticut, and populated beyond any spot I have ever seen of like extent. Here are no signs of poverty either in the country or the inhabitants. The houses all show a degree of taste, elegance, and neatness not to be found in Pennsylvania; the breed of cattle also indicates a degree of spirit and ambition among them. In short, here you feel to be not only in the world but in a most delightful part of it. Every comfort seems here to be within the easy reach of all: to which is

added simple elegance, devoid of ostentation and parade. Were I to sit down and in idea paint a country as I could wish to find it, no visionary fancies could approach nearer to my wishes than this day's reality.

"The beauty of the houses it is not possible to describe. They are all framed, painted different colours, some white, others different shades of yellow stone colour, and a few light green ; most of them are double houses, and apparently very roomy ; some of them have wings adjoining the body of the house, others attached to piazzas, and others without them. Many of them have square roofs, and flatter than those we have been accustomed to see in Pennsylvania, which gives them a much more light and tasty appearance, and most of them have a small garden before the door with neat white rails running round it. In short, the extreme neatness, comfort, simplicity and elegance of these sweet dwellings quite enchant me. Sure, the inhabitants of them must be happy! It seems almost impossible that discord or any evil passions should dwell in such Arcadian-looking places. Although the judgment of the Almighty may visit them, I cannot help expecting that the constructors of these temples to neatness must possess minds cast in a finer mould than the inhabitants of the other States we have seen ; but I ought to recollect that this country is more than as old again as some of them, and has therefore had so much the longer time for improvement."

On that principle, however, the Russells would have been wrong in going to the New World and

leaving the Old, which had enjoyed so much more time to make itself perfect. The truth is, and Martha's diary makes it evident, that the girls fell in love at first sight with the region through which they were passing, and had practically decided that, if they could, they would make their home there and nowhere else.

“ Six miles from Durham we came to Middletown, without exception the prettiest place I have seen in America. It is situated on a rising ground, about half a quarter of a mile from the river, beyond the river, whose waters admit vessels of 200 and 300 tons up it. It is a most enchanting country, exhibiting the riches of nature brightened and improved by the hand of cultivation, and ornamented by numerous villages, with detached orchards and farms, &c., without number. The streets are all covered with the finest green turf imaginable, excessively wide, and the houses all good, and mostly detached from each other by neat gardens. Trees stand here and there in the streets, and children, pigs, and poultry each in their way under their shade.

“ I very very much lamented that it did not accord with my father's arrangements for the day to stop here, especially as we heard at Durham that several English were settled here, some of them lately come. Perhaps if we could have stopped we might have found some one we knew, and from them have learned if the inhabitants are in any degree as superior to the rest of the Americans as their houses are.”

Other “ small but sweet places ” were passed, but





CITY OF MIDDLETOWN IN 1825

*From the east side of the Connecticut*





none quite so charming as Middletown. At Hartford, a pretty considerable place with four thousand inhabitants, they fell in with a man who had a carriage and horses, which he would let them take to Boston for \$60—an offer that William Russell thought too good to refuse.

At West Springfield, not without difficulty, the Connecticut river was ferried by lantern light. At Sykes's tavern the travellers found that they could not be entertained, owing to the camp disorder having broken out in the house. The next inn, two miles away, promised well in the distance, but, "within all was filth and nastiness." Here also there was camp disorder, but the people offered to provide breakfast. The party would not stay for meat ("which it is here the universal custom to eat at breakfast"), but contented themselves with a dish of tea ("terrible stuff it was, as black as your hat") and rye bread, which they had often inquired for. On this occasion, however, they did not find it preferable to white—being "mighty weighty."

It was here that the Russells met with the second beggar whom they had seen in America—a neat, cleanly dressed woman, who said she was waiting for a chance to get to Bushfield, where she had plenty of friends. She was, she said, crippled with rheumatism and for half the year unable to work. Coming into the room where Martha and William Russell were sitting—

"She preferred her complaint to my father. As there was an empty chair by him where my

brother had been sitting, she quietly sat herself down, giving us an instance thereby of the plebeian manners of which we had heard so much whilst in England, but as yet had seen but little—none that to my feelings was in the least offensive. Presently she began to admire Mary's shawl, feeling it and at the same time exclaiming, 'Well, this is the most curiousest shawl I ever saw.' After breakfast, seeing my father use his glass to look at something across the road, she jumped up in a violent hurry, exclaiming, 'Well, I've seen a great variety of glasses, but that is the most curiousest I ever saw.'"

The country on the way from Springfield, though pretty, did not excite Martha Russell's admiration as the Valley of the Connecticut had done, though she was struck with the fine larches covered with long white moss. Brookfield, a pretty town though not containing many houses, had a church. Thence to Leicester they found the road very rough, and on coming within five miles of Worcester were told that they could not get on.

"The rain had swollen a small river so much, a little farther on, and had carried away a bridge. A waggon that had just attempted to cross had been carried away and much damaged. Soon after a boy came up who told us we might go through. Accordingly we drove on to see how the matter really was; but a stage overtaking us just as we got to the place, we suffered them to pass us, thinking to let them make the attempt first. My father, getting out to

examine, thought it most prudent to turn back and go to a tavern we had observed about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles off, as it was now grown very dark, and would be quite dark long before we could get to Worcester. This, added to the danger of crossing the water, determined him, for they said the horses must swim and the water would come into the carriage. We accordingly turned back and soon reached the tavern, which, though not very inviting on the outside, proved clean and comfortable within, and was kept by very civil people—'The Black House.'

"Observed as we rode along this afternoon, also yesterday and the day before, several grave-yards, as they call them here, uninclosed by the side of the road, and oftentimes on each side of it—the road as it were running through the middle of it. These grave-yards, sometimes enclosed and at other times not, you often see a long distance from the chapel or meeting-house."

But if the roads in Massachusetts 115 years ago left something to be desired, autumn tints on the leaves were irresistible.

"The fine colouring upon the woods seems to get finer every day; its variety and richness is inconceivable; many trees we see all of the finest orange possible, others as fine a red, and others green in the inner part, and the outer branches as a kind of border of red or yellow. It is chiefly the gum and maple that turn the finest red, and the orange is principally pleasing. The variety of colours in



a clump of wood, and also the beauty of the trees standing singly, is not to be described or imagined. The fields of buck wheat now just reaped made a pretty variety in the view. The stubble is the most beautiful red that can be, and the orchards also, with their trees laden so that literally in many places the fruit is as thick as reaves of onions tied close together; and their apples, piled in heaps here and there on the turf, are no unpleasing objects among the great variety that attract our notice."

In Massachusetts at that time it was noted that you scarcely ever passed a person without receiving a bow or a curtsy. Nothing of the sort was offered in Pennsylvania, though in other respects the people had been equally civil.

Priestley, in a letter from Pennsylvania, remarks that his State compared unfavourably in this respect with Connecticut. "I believe the lower class of people with you," he wrote to Russell at Middletown, "are more decent than with us and something better than in England. But I think there is not as generally a principle of honour and honesty in any class of men as in England, and their religion is chiefly form and bigotry, which does not tend to improve the heart."

Here also, the travellers found, sickness was distressingly prevalent—a putrid fever and "canker rash"—the latter attacking adults as well as children and frequently carrying them off in forty-eight hours. In almost every district which the Russells had visited they had come upon some formidable malady. Reading and Northumberland had been fairly healthy, but



MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT

*From a water-colour drawing by Miss M. RUSSELL (about 1800)*



along the Genesee there was a bad fever very general and very fatal. All the way to Philadelphia fever and ague were very prevalent. At Philadelphia there was the fall fever, and in New York dreadful ravages were made by yellow fever. In all small places, Martha Russell declares, it was discovered on inquiry that sickness was about, though an attempt was made to conceal it. But the disorders in Massachusetts, she thought, were of a more dangerous kind, as well as more peculiar and dangerous than in Pennsylvania.

“12th [October].—Rose soon after five, not having had a very comfortable night's rest from a little fear we had of getting some disorder from a sick woman, who we found out just before we got to bed was in a room adjoining that in which Mary and I slept. A door opened out of it into ours which would not shut close. On seeing a fire through it in the next chamber we made inquiry, and were told by the landlady that one of her daughters had had a tooth drawn that day, and was very ill after it. Her countenance said much more than her tongue, and we found on a little further inquiry she had been well blistered, and had pains all over her as well as in her teeth. However, thinking it best not to be too minute in our questions, since there was now no remedy, as our room went through my father's and brother's and they were now in bed, we shut the door, and stopped the crevices as well as we could with our petticoats and, keeping the window a little open, went to bed, though not perfectly at ease.”

Next morning an early start was made, as water



had to be crossed. Men had been at work during the night, and the flood was reduced, but the bridge had been partly moved from its foundations, so the driver was sent across upon one of the horses to test the depth of the stream. But soon after the passage had been made the tyre came off one of the wheels. This meant a long visit to the blacksmith's, and hardly had the party started again when, on going down an ugly bit of road, the pole broke. After breakfast at Jenison's tavern, they passed through Henborough and Marlborough, though, if they had not been apprised beforehand, they would hardly have known these places to be towns. The roads, they remarked, were still bad, though at Jenison's tavern they were within forty-two miles of Boston. But every three or four miles they found a good inn. They hired their last horses at Munro's, where they enjoyed an excellent beef-steak, and were charmed with his daughter, a very pretty girl of pleasing behaviour—with very light hair and complexion and fine blue eyes. The prevailing type in the neighbourhood, they were told, was fair complexions, with dark hair. From Captain Hogg's tavern they passed through Waterton, a neat pretty place, and on to Great Cambridge, where they were delighted with the sight of a number of pretty seats. Except that the buildings were of wood, the scene recalled the villages about London.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE JOURNEY CONTINUED

First view of Boston—The clergy and churches—Chief industries—The beauty of the women—A dinner-table story—Prices of provisions—Journey to Rhode Island—Untidy farming—A venerable joke—The Malbon Estate—Advantages of the island—Society at Newport—A chance lost—Return to Middletown—The corn-fed girls of Connecticut—Admiration for Yankees—New England vocabulary—A winter in Philadelphia—Public spirit in New York.

MARTHA Russell was impressed, as she could not help being, by the fine approach to Boston. It may be worth noting how it looked in 1795. "The city," she writes, "appears almost to stand in the water—at least to be surrounded by it—and the shipping, with the houses, trees, and churches, have a charming effect. We passed over a long causeway and bridge—the latter wood, but excessively neat, with lamps on each side. This bridge and causeway together, they say, is a mile and a half long."

In 1795 the population of Boston was 18,000: in 1900 it was 560,892, and since that time has very largely increased.

Unfortunately for the readers of Martha Russell's diary she did not stay very long in the capital of Massachusetts, already the centre of a vigorous political and intellectual life. Truth to tell, it was, like most American cities at that time, a little clergy-ridden,

though the divines there, so Martha Russell says, were the most liberal and enlightened of any on the Continent.

“The number of churches I do not know: the one we attended (called the Stone Chapel), where a Mr. Freeman officiates, is a handsome, neat building, and has a very numerous and genteel congregation. This is a Unitarian Church where they use the reformed liturgy of the Church of England. They have a custom here and I believe in most towns upon the Continent I like much, which is that all sects meet to worship at the same time and the same bells call them. The first rings about an hour before service both parts of the day, and at the second many church-goers turn out, so that the streets are filled with people going to worship, some going one way and some another, but to see all so quietly and cheerfully thus going to worship at the same time each in his own way inspires one with pleasurable and animating reflections.”

The Russells duly inspected the chief industries of Boston (shipping, candles, cord, paper-hanging &c.): visited a beautiful theatre (where the performance was better than the scenery), the Assembly-room, and “a most noble State-house, in as fine a situation as can be imagined, on the side of Beacon Hill, and commanding a superb view. From the top of this hill is such a prospect as I never before beheld.”

But the chief ornament of Boston—here Martha

Russell does but anticipate the verdict of subsequent visitors—lies in the beauty of its women; while its greatest boast is the hospitality and kind, friendly manners of its inhabitants. Streets, however, were so ill paved in 1795 that the fact was pleaded as “an apology for the ladies walking so little and walking so badly.” “The water,” we read, “was so brackish that when a Bostonian travelled he was obliged to add salt to the water in order to make it taste.” Already, it seems, the American cities had begun to drive a factory in jokes at one another’s expense—especially New York and Boston.

Whatever may have been the quality of the water, the longevity of the inhabitants was a subject of general remark. A Dr. Parker in twelve months had buried eleven people, whose united ages made 1000 years. As a good housekeeper, Martha Russell noted the prices of provisions at Boston:—

Beef, 6d.-9d.	Cheese, 6d.-8d.	Milk (goat’s), 4d. pt.
Pork, 8d.	Wood, per load, 33s.	Potatoes, 3s.
Mutton, 7d.-9d.	Partridges, couple,	Apples, 4s.
Butter, 1s. 4d.	3s.-6s.	Carrots, 4s.
Eggs, doz. 1s. 8d.	Fish, 4d. per lb.	Onions, 4s.
Eels, 6d. per lb.	Cider, 13s. barrel.	Cranberries, 3s. 6d.
Sucking pig, 9d.	Pigeons, 7s. 6d. doz.	Soap, 1s. 6d. per
Flour, \$16 barrel.	Geese, each 3s. to	lb.
Ducks, \$1 couple.	4s. 8d.	Candles, 1s. to 1s. 4d.
Fowls, 2s. to 4s. 6d.	Hams, cured, 1s. 2d.	lb.
Turkeys, 9d.-11d. lb.	lb.	

For our lodgings and boarding \$7 per week each, exclusive of fire and wine.

Men-servants’ wages were from \$12 to \$14 a month: women’s from \$3 to \$7, and washing, if “done out,” was \$1 a dozen.



## At New York in December :—

Beef, from 10d. to 2s.	Flour, \$14 barrel.	Washing, \$1 per day.
Butter, 2s. to 2s. 6d.	Wood, \$18 load.	Oysters 10s. to 12s. per hundred.
Eggs, 2s. 2d. to 2s. 6d. per dozen.	Potatoes, 4s. Apples, \$5	Geese, 5s. each.

Wages as in Boston, but no charwoman to be had under \$1 per day.

A friend of ours paid a man for sawing wood half a day \$2.

## At Middletown in November :—

Beef, 3½d. to 4d.	Eggs, 5d. to 9d. per dozen.	Wood, \$4 to \$6 load.
Chickens, 1s. 6d. couple.	Potatoes, 1s. 6d.	Women's wages, \$2 to \$2½ per month.
Turkeys and geese, 5d. per lb.	Apples, 1s. 6d. to 2s.	Washing, 3s. per dozen.
Butter, 10d. to 1s.	Flour, \$13 barrel.	

These household notes were not made without a purpose. Already it was in the mind of Martha and Mary to make out a case for settling at Middletown.

The family with their servants from England (whom they had picked up at Boston) started on November 6th. About Stoughton they pronounced the country the most dreary they had ever seen—nothing but stones, stumps, dead leaves, and stunted trees. They were astonished that the farmers could make it answer. After passing Norton and Taunton they came to a romantic scene, where “the Fall River tumbles most sublimely down a rock of fifty or sixty feet, with different beds and interruptions of trees and projecting pieces of rock, and runs at length into Providence River.” The rest of the way to Tiverton is dismissed as “vile country.” Presently the travellers found rest in a tavern opposite the still unfinished

bridge to Rhode Island. It was there, in spite of Middletown's attractions, that William Russell hoped to make his residence.

“After peeping over the bridge, where we paid a toll of fourpence, we came upon a neck or projection of land, which formed one end of the island, and the appearance of this strip of land pleased us much, as it was clothed in a fine rich turf, and wore a different face to the stony land we had left on the other side of the water. Soon we mounted upon the island itself, and found a most charming road, on each side of which, at different distances, were comfortable-looking farm-houses, the grounds about which, such as the yards and gardens, appeared neat, and much more like English than the generality on the Continent. For an apathy and indifference to everything which does not immediately relate to the comfort of the inhabitants are but too evident in most places we have yet seen, and this is particularly obvious as relates to gardens and farm-yards on the land round the house. In the former as many weeds are permitted to thrive as Nature pleases so as the vegetables they sow have a space left them. As to their farm-yards, so little trouble do they give themselves that in Pennsylvania we actually saw a stable door one-third filled up by dung that lay on the outside. Mr. Wallis, who was with us, remarked that he had no doubt that the stable would soon be moved from the dung, as it could be effected with more ease than moving the manure.”

Mr. Wallis, it is to be feared, was an unprincipled

wag. This is one of the Old English jokes believed to have gone out to America in the *Mayflower*. Eleven miles' drive brought our home-hunters to Newport, where they were taken by a Mr. Channing to the Malbon Estate—700 acres of meadow and upland, with the ruins of a capital stone house (destroyed by fire) and extensive gardens. The view was delightful, commanding Newport and the ocean, Providence River, Massachusetts, and Cannonicut Island.

“We admired this spot so much as to think we should here find everything necessary for our happiness, especially as in the course of our ride this morning we saw that there was plenty of room for any of our friends who might have an inclination to settle near us. Several farms around were upon sale, and so great is the spirit of emigration up into the back country, that it is thought nearly all the island might be had. However, we did not find the island itself so beautiful as we expected, though certainly the season now is bad for judging of it, yet the weather proved delightful. The land is by no means what it was described to us, neither as to the state of its cultivation nor its quality; and the scarcity of trees, they having been all burned down in the time of war, with the universal stone wall fences, gives the whole a very cold and barren appearance.

“The advantages which might here be derived from uniting agriculture and commerce are by no means inconsiderable, as Newport is one of the finest and safest harbours on the Continent, and you might have

a wharf on your own farm. The water communication with New York and Philadelphia offers also a very advantageous method of disposing of your produce, and this easy communication would also be productive of many conveniences, as the packet boats are constantly going to New York and the stages to Boston. The society in Newport is at present small, though in an increasing state. As a proof of which the houses in the town sell for just double what they did last year, an advance seldom to be equalled, and the place, from its great salubrity, is much resorted to in summer by people of property from all parts, particularly the south, so that in this season we should find as much society as we could wish. This evening we drank tea at a Mr. Gibb's, where we found a large party of ladies, dressed up most amazingly, but all of whom we found sensible and chatty."

For the Malbon Estate William Russell offered \$40 an acre, expecting it would be accepted, but the vendors would not take less than \$45. "This we all thought too much," so on Nov. 10th, "having seen all worthy of notice on the island," they went away. They had to spend two hours, owing to the badness of the boat, in crossing Bristol Ferry. The night they spent at Providence, between which place and Newport there was a keen rivalry. "The moon's bright beams discovered to us that its situation was pleasant and its apparent convenience beyond that of Newport."

At this time the population of Newport was about 8000 persons. What the profit on a purchase of



the 700 acres in the Malbon Estate at \$40 an acre would have reached by this time is a sum that would stagger the statistician. Of all William Russell's bad investments the most unlucky was the one he did not make in Rhode Island. On the 14th the "Fishes' Tavern" was reached and the country of stones re-entered.

"It seems really astonishing how any one could be induced to settle in such a country as that around the Tavern; and yet the inhabitants appeared to think it very pleasant, and not to have a wish ungratified. The house was newly built and clean, and they apparently had everything quite comfortable about them, though not many neighbours. Could a Deucalion spring up in this region, and turn the stones into men, it would become populous indeed—beyond most of the European States."

From Norwich on the 15th, through Lebanon, to East Hartford, and on the 16th, from Hartford (where the travellers had a visit from a Captain Wordsworth and a Mr. Bull), they made their way back to the fascinating Middletown—which had not lost the high estimation they first set upon it.

"My sister and self by means of a letter we had to a Mrs. Allsop, as well as through Mrs. Philips, became acquainted with all the Middletown ladies, and a more sociable, pleasant set of acquaintance I never wish to meet with. There is a simplicity in the manners here I have never seen equalled anywhere.

Here are several French people from the Cape, who have been well brought up and who have lived in great affluence, but have unhappily lost their all, and suffered much. They make a pleasant variety, and had it not been for these gentlemen we should have had no *beaux* at all. As to the situation of this place and the beauty of the country round I cannot say enough, and shall not therefore enlarge, but only just mention that it resembles some of the prettiest parts of Devonshire more than any other place I have seen.

“There are about eight thousand inhabitants in the township of Middletown, and in the town are two meetings and a church, but no market-house. The streets are wide and adorned with trees, the houses in general are in a pretty style, neat and elegant without, and within neat and clean. The ladies here are very pretty in my opinion, much more so than in Rhode Island, and their sociability charms us. We passed a month here in all. Part of the time my father and brother were with us; and all the time we were so full of enjoyment that not one day did we spend alone, and I believe had we stayed two months longer it would have been the same. In short we all admire the Yankees much, and thought ourselves half become Yankees already. That we shall in time be so altogether by residing among them does not appear very improbable.

“The corn-fed girls of Connecticut, it seems, are noted for health and beauty, and I admire them much, and also relish their fare, such as wheat and

Indian and rye bread, Indian pudding, mush, pumpkin pudding and pie squash, buckwheat cake, waffles, &c. . . .

“Some of their phrases much diverted us, and the strange way in which they use some words, as for instance, *fetch* for *bring* (‘Did you fetch that from Boston with you?’), a *likely* man or a *likely* woman, for a *good-looking* person, *spry* for *nimble*, *won't* for *will* (‘Won't you come to dinner?’) Horses they call creatures, but this is general over the Continent. *My son* or *my daughter* instead of the names, and *I guess* for *I suppose*; *elegant* does for everything (elegant house, elegant prospect, elegant horse, &c.). Throughout the Continent they use *clever* as meaning *good*, and on inquiring your way they universally direct you to the point of the compass the place lies in (keep to the eastward or westward). They also call their chambers the north and south chamber. To those other phrases might be added; suffice these for a memorandum.

“My father and brother were highly pleased with their ride up the river; the land they found good and cheap, the country beautiful, and the roads charming, and every ten or twelve miles was a neat, pretty town all the way they went (beyond Brattleborough), but I do not think any place can equal Middletown for advantages. At least none have fewer objections. Northumberland has its agues, Boston its easterly winds, and Rhode Island its fogs; here is a situation unrivalled in its healthiness as in its beauty; possessing equal advantages for commerce and agriculture, and through which the

mail and other stages from Philadelphia and New York to Boston are daily passing."

In spite of Middletown's charms and advantages it was wisely decided to spend the winter in Philadelphia, and the servants were sent ahead to make ready the house that William Russell had taken for a short period. On December 12th the family drove to Newhaven, Stratford, Fairfield, Horsenach, and slept at New York on the 14th. The city was pronounced "very healthy," as 750 persons (chiefly poor and low Irish) had died off, and presumably the survivors were regarded as immune! These had almost been confined to one quarter of the town where the docks were filthy. Martha Russell inquired of the landlady whether the Corporation or some private inhabitants would not some day take measures to drain the unwholesome district. "It was to be feared," she was told, "that there was nobody in New York with sufficient public spirit."



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE EARLY SETTLER

Untidiness of American towns—Disregard for beauty in estate management—The early settler—His successor—The Priestleys at Northumberland—An unflattering picture—Early history of New Haven—Influence of prosperity on national character—Luxury in Boston—Social dissipations in Philadelphia—General Washington's friendship—Extravagance of upstarts—Commercial dishonesty in America—Priestley as a guest—Infirmities of great men—Study of the Prophecies—Curious interpretations—Piety in Philadelphia—A country house in Maryland—The easy life—A runaway marriage—American depravity—Republican manners—A friendly disputation—Society in Middletown—Innocent familiarities—A young gentleman's misgivings—Unbending—An unedifying minister—Views on a domestic institution.

WHILE Martha Russell, delighted in the sense of novelty and adventure, and giving way gracefully to her girlish enthusiasm, was recording her impressions of American life and scenery, her brother Thomas, as became a very young man, maintained a critical, detached, almost pessimistic attitude. He will concede praise when it is deserved, not otherwise, nor will he shrink from speaking his mind when he finds that they order things better in England. In New York, for instance, Thomas Russell saw but one good street—Broadway—though that was "noble." Philadelphia, however, struck him as a city of considerable beauty, with the streets regularly disposed and crossing each other at right angles.



THOMAS POUGHER RUSSELL (1775-1851)

*From a water-colour*



“ A large market-place standing in the middle of the street extends from front to Fourth Street, and greatly diminishes the beauty of the street, but you are still more hurt by the constant sight of waggons, sometimes to the number of twenty, standing in the street with the horses tied to the shafts, where they remain night and day as long as the waggons stay in town. For they belong entirely to persons who come out of the country to bring their produce to market, and not choosing to be at the expense of stabling, bring food for their horses with them and fix a trough behind the waggon which they put upon the shafts for them to feed out of : thus is this noble street rendered offensive from filth and the horses exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather, for want of a good police.”

The young Englishman is offended by the general disregard for beauty and art. Everything is sacrificed to order in the management of profit.

“ There are a great number of gentlemen’s seats (if they deserve the name) on the Skulhill, Delaware, and other parts, where families retire during the hot summer months and raise fruit and vegetables sufficient for the supply of their own table and perhaps hay and corn for their horses, but they have no idea of taste in the disposition of their grounds, of beauty in a flower garden, or the management of a hot-house ; indeed the same observation will apply to the *Arts* in general, owing chiefly to the absence of that class of men who, *inheriting* large fortunes, have leisure to attend to these delightful pursuits. But this will not entirely



excuse them, as many, though they may not have inherited an independent fortune, have acquired one, and that in a short space of time; but when a man has once devoted himself to the gaining of money, it is difficult to change the object.

“As far as Harrisburg the land on each side the road was generally cultivated; houses were frequent and towns at no great distance from each other, but having passed that place we often travelled many miles through thick woods without seeing the least signs of cultivation except at the regular taverns and those miserable holes with a few acres of clear ground, an apple or peach orchard, around them. The inhabitants were chiefly Germans; indeed in several towns we passed through we could scarce find a person that could speak English.”

After a brief account of the various methods employed at the time for clearing the ground of useless timber, we come to an interesting sketch of the stages in an agricultural settlement.

“New settlers are commonly of the poorest order, and their object, of course, is to make their land produce them the necessaries of life as soon as they possibly can. These people, when they first go upon a tract of land, build themselves a bark hut, where they live till they have cut down an acre or two of ground. They then chop the logs into proper lengths, notch them so as to fit into each other, and when all is ready they make a frolic of it. That is, if they should happen to have any neighbours, they are collected together upon the

appointed day, and all assist in raising the logs. This is generally completed before evening, when they are regaled with whisky and such provisions as the situation may afford. The interstices of the logs are filled up with clay, and a rough framed roof is afterwards put on the top of the logs and covered with shingles. This house serves them for a few years, by which time, as one settler generally attracts others, they probably get a saw-mill erected in the neighbourhood, if there was none before, and begin to build a frame house by the side of the log house, which serves afterwards as a stable or barn. This being done, they begin to enjoy the fruits of their labour, and please themselves with the thoughts of having advanced the value of the property at the same time that they have been procuring the necessities of life."

As a rule, however, the first settlers do not stay. They sell the property to men of a different type—retreating themselves into the backwoods, there to repeat the process. The improvement of the land is carried on by the second settlers, who frequently are skilled mechanics. They are followed presently by the tavern-keeper, next come the physician, the lawyer, and the priest, who, our young philosopher adds, "disturb the peace of society with their quackeries, litigations, and superstitious doctrines."

Of Dr. Priestley and his family, who had been settled for some time in Northumberland, we are given a not altogether engaging picture:—

"Dr. Priestley and his family have selected

Northumberland for their residence. He has bought a frame house, and it is fitted up with all that neatness for which his wife is well known, but still it is a mere hut in comparison with the one they lived in formerly. His eldest son, Joseph, lives with his wife in a large brick house. William and Henry, his other sons, cultivate a farm three miles from town. The Doctor is enveloped in his studies, partly philosophical and partly theological. Joseph is both a farmer and a speculator; he has sturdiness enough for the former, and is, I believe, a pretty good adept in the latter. He is concerned in several large tracts of land in the back country, and has bought several small places about the town, and, I imagine, thought the value of his property would be much increased if his father should settle there, by which others would be attracted, and a considerable settlement formed.

“He might probably think it as good a place for his father to reside in as any that could be found out of the great cities. But an impartial person would be far from making the same conclusion. There is not a family except his own, and perhaps Mr. Cooper, with whom Dr. Priestley can enjoy that kind of society to which he has always been accustomed. From its remote situation there is very little communication with Philadelphia. The post only comes in once a week, and the intercourse by water is so uncertain that anything more bulky than a letter is sometimes longer coming from Philadelphia to Northumberland than it would have been coming from England to Philadelphia.”



JOSEPH PRIESTLEY

*From a pastel by MRS. SHARPLES*





The climate is unhealthy, and has told severely on some of the family, especially on Henry Priestley. Thomas Russell's pessimism in this case was justified, for Henry died while quite a youth. He and William were farming together on a place they had purchased, "with a bad situation, and on a bad soil." But the unsteadiness of William's disposition would "soon make him discontented." Henry had more perseverance and inclination for the employment, but weak health. A Mr. Cooper of Manchester was also applying himself to agriculture on "as barren, rude a farm as he could have selected." If they had been banished by law to this spot, Thomas thinks, they would have been right to make the best of the situation. But to retire into voluntary exile, appeared to him extraordinary and unaccountable.

With all his youthful foibles, Thomas was evidently a man of judgment and character. Probably it was the son's strong view against Northumberland that determined the father against his original idea of joining forces with Priestley, and making a sort of colony. Already William Russell's agent, Mr. Watson, had bought some farms for him in the neighbourhood, and hopes were entertained that the property would largely improve in value. But that was a different matter from living on the place, even with the advantage of Dr. Priestley's society. *Quid non potest auri sacra fames?* asks the young philosopher. But it should not blind them, he trusted, so that for the acquisition of a little more wealth they would sacrifice the main blessings of life. His business judgment was not less sound than his moral principle,

for in point of fact the Northumberland settlement, partly through young Joseph Priestley's errors of judgment, did not turn out prosperously.

It is unnecessary to quote the brother's notes on places which the sister has described with more sympathy, but occasionally he drops an amusing or edifying remark, as, *e.g.* on reaching New Haven, one of the first places settled in the Eastern States, and—

“Chief witness of those horrid scenes of monstrous tyranny, and barbarous enthusiasms, which the first inhabitants, who had themselves but just escaped from persecution, exercised in the name of religion. Their government was then ecclesiastical, to the great misfortune not only of their own brethren, but of the poor Indians, thousands of whom were massacred under the banners of the Lamb. Alas, how anxious have Christians hitherto been to protract the coming of the time, when that emblem of innocence shall be at peace with the savage lion—savage indeed when compared with the lamb, but meek and compassionate in comparison with these defenders of Christianity.”

Another admirable reflection is suggested by the lack of architectural interest in scenes of rural life.

“The eye,” says Thomas Russell, “would be gratified by the occasional view of a ruined tower or elegant country seat, but a rich compensation arises from the reflection that the general distribution of property causes general plenty and general contentment. Happy will it be for them if this plenty, which already

seems to produce apathy, does not beget indolence and end in corruption. The simplicity of their present mode of life, added to their distance from the sources of corrupt example, may preserve them for some time. Perhaps the general diffusion of information, which the Government encourages as much as it can, though still the means of acquiring it are very scanty, may so increase as to make succeeding generations sensible that public happiness is best promoted by private virtue. That, it is true, will be unprecedented in the history of nations, though it is doubtless consistent with the intentions of the great Governor of the Universe that the period shall arrive when nations shall act upon that principle, though probably this continent will not be the first to reduce it to practice."

At Boston the young Englishman was less pleased with the buildings, the prospects, and the physical surroundings than with the company.

"Upon arrival our good friend Mr. C. Vaughan came to see us, and in a few days after we were waited upon by many gentlemen of the town, Mr. Bulfinch, Stonor, Mr. Russell, the principal merchant here, Judge Sullivan, Mr. Freeman, a Unitarian minister, Mr. Elliot, Judge Tudor, Mr. Craigie, Dr. Deyton, Dr. Smith, Mr. Gore, &c.: each of whom showed us every civility in their power, so that the whole time of our stay there was one continued succession of dining, tea, or supper visits.

As to the pleasures of the table, few places display



more abundance or more luxuries, and still fewer can boast that concord, goodwill, and real sociability which reign here but are never found in the fastidious ostentation of high life, or in the gluttony and clamour of intemperate circles.

“When we dined at Mr. Russell’s the third course was served in a most elegant service of brilliant cut glass, with everything proportionally splendid; he is one of the most courteous, free and, as common consent says, the most generous of men. What the disposition of his wife may be, who is young and beautiful, I cannot say. My father while at Boston was made an honorary member both of the Humane and Agricultural Societies there, the latter of which he frequently attended, and speaks highly of the intelligence and enterprise of its members.”

With Rhode Island, and especially with Newport, Thomas Russell confesses himself a little disappointed. Though the climate is moderate, there are daily fogs in spring and autumn, which perhaps account for the prevalence of consumption. The island is famous, he remarks, for the beauty of its females, but “though I examined the streets and windows very attentively I did not encounter one pretty face.” Perhaps he would not give the same verdict if he were a young man in Newport to-day.

William and Thomas Russell, after returning to Middletown, where they left Martha and Mary for a short time, went on a prospecting expedition through Suffield, Westfield, Northampton, Greenfield, Deerfield, Barnardstown, and Brattleborough. Another

journey was made to Springfield, where the arsenal, with a stand of 6000 arms, besides cannon and accoutrements, was visited and admired.

During the winter spent at Philadelphia (1795-96), the Russells found themselves absorbed in what Thomas, not without secret complacency, describes as a "vortex of luxury and dissipation." He used, with his father, to attend President Washington's levées, and, with his sisters, occasionally went to the drawing-rooms. The formal relationship was to ripen into a personal friendship, and already the Russells were sometimes invited to drink tea with General and Mrs. Washington. They were on such terms that they could take their friends with them—a privilege by which the Priestleys profited on their visit to Philadelphia. The Doctor was greatly delighted with the General's cordial reception of him.

Amongst the Russells' American friends occur the names of a good many persons known in the early records of the United States: Mr. Breck and Mr. Travis, Judge Wilson, Dr. Rush, Mr. Dallas, Mrs. Pembroke, Miss Shoemaker (since Mrs. Morris), Mrs. Capper, Mr. Nicklin, Mr. Sharples, Mrs. Serjeant and Mrs. Waters, daughters of Dr. Rittenhouse, Major Butler, Senator from S. Carolina, while a number of gentlemen also called, who were strangers in town or had no families, such as many members of Congress.

English friends were less numerous; their French acquaintances numbered the M. Talleyrand-Périgord already mentioned, the Duc de Liancourt, M. Volney (brother of the Minister), and M. Guillemard.

In January 1796, the arrival of Dr. and Mrs.

Priestley "involved the family still more deeply in the turbulence of never-ceasing calls and daily visits." Scarcely ever did they go to a dinner-party of less than twenty persons; the luxury and profusion far exceeding the display made by English persons in the same circumstances. Dr. Priestley declared that in the days when he was tutor in the Marquis of Lansdowne's house he never witnessed such display as was made by the merchants of Philadelphia. But listen to our young moralist :—

"When men either by good fortune or address find themselves suddenly in the possession of a much larger property than they ever expected to enjoy, it is commonly found that they dispose of it profusely, unless the passion of 'still, still to be getting, never, never cease,' obliterates every other thought; and often, by grasping at too much, they not only lose all, but involve themselves in difficulties, troubles, anxieties, and disappointments."

Fortunes had been rapidly amassed by speculating in back lands, town lots, and house property, as well as by navigation and commerce. But a stranger must be on his guard in dealing with these adventurers—men of all nations, all characters, and all professions. There was as yet no national character, nor did these people regard the rules universally observed amongst the inhabitants of European countries.

"Here a man may break his word with impunity, and may without disgrace flagrantly violate those



established customs, the infringement of which would in England irretrievably ruin his character. He may have been two or three times a bankrupt and be known to have defrauded his creditors, and if he thereby reacquires considerable wealth, he will nevertheless be received in the first company. One who rises on the ruins of a benefactor whose property he may have purloined would meet with respect from his rich neighbours, and a land jobber, though he made his fortune by the sale of lands that never were created, would yet be received in the first circles. In short, as wealth is the darling object of their attention, so a person with that needs no other letter of recommendation."

In this judgment, harsh as it was, Thomas Russell was evidently sincere, and over and over again in his private letters to his father he reaffirms the view here set out. A metropolis, he adds here, has ever been a seat of corruption, and Philadelphia could be no exception to the general rule. The example and influence of the Quakers, who were very numerous, had not counteracted the general tendency. The elder Russell, it should be added, was of his son's opinion, and on several occasions roundly denounced the morals of American cities.

Priestley, we are told, preached in a chapel belonging to the Universalists, and his sermons were largely attended—amongst others by Vice-President Adams (of whom more anon), Pickering, and many members of Congress. But most of Priestley's auditors, Thomas Russell declares, were attracted more by curiosity than any other motive, and were "too



worldly-minded to receive any lasting benefit from his teaching."

"The cause of religion has need of the exertions of every learned and candid man like him, by disseminating rational ideas of Christianity and clearing it from the superstition and prejudice that has hitherto concealed its true form, may perhaps in some degree arrest the process of infidelity, which now stalks through this city with unrestrained rapidity. He had brought with him a set of Sermons on the Evidences of Revelation, and as he preached but once a day, he was detained in Philadelphia till the month of April before he had delivered the whole of them."

This long visit paid by his father's famous friend was not altogether to Thomas Russell's taste. He was not the first humble person, however, to remark on the difference between a great man's public character and his private aspect:—

"Dr. Priestley is undoubtedly a very virtuous, learned, and agreeable man, and his name will be handed down to posterity as a great philosopher, and as one who dared to reduce religion to the laws of reason and common sense by chasing the superstitions and prejudices that had till then veiled not only the Catholic but Protestant faith, yet he is not one with whom one could enjoy the pleasures of domestic intercourse. In the little occurrences of a family he is apt to be discontented and fretful. In case everything does not go to his mind, he will be upon the fidgets

until it is rectified, and perhaps for some time after. In short he displays a degree of selfishness which I should never have suspected from one who acts so disinterestedly in greater things. But who can lay a just claim to the title of a consistent character through all events and circumstances?"

It appears that Priestley was "much disgusted at the depravity and narrow, worldly tempers of the Philadelphians." His intercourse with Mr. Ritterhorn was interrupted by death, and it was only with Dr. Rush that he could share the pleasures of the intellect. Hence it was without reluctance that he returned to Northumberland.

On a subsequent visit the Russells found Priestley living with his son Joseph, Mrs. Priestley having died. The old Doctor felt the loss very deeply, but kept his mind occupied with his theological and philosophical pursuits. For intellectual society he might have turned to his neighbour, Mr. Cooper, but their sentiments on religion were so opposit  that they would probably fall into dispute. They both professed great liberality of sentiment, says Thomas Russell, but there were very few even of modern freethinkers who would not disclaim the lengths to which Mr. Cooper proceeded. Another of Priestley's neighbours was Mr. John Humphreys, but he also was a professed unbeliever, and his political sentiments, though he practised reserve as to them, were certainly not Republican or Radical. Thus the lonely old divine was thrown back upon himself and upon his curious cogitations on the fulfilment of the Prophecies.

Upon this topic, it may here be mentioned, he corresponded, quite late in life, with William Russell, who was equally interested in the subject. When the French arms seemed likely to be victorious in Europe, Russell speaks of France as being an instrument in the hand of Providence. In April 1799, he writes that the present state of the world baffled all calculation. But he would not be shaken in his conviction that, amidst all scenes of violence and commotion, the Ruler of the Universe was bringing about the speedy deliverance of the human race from the power of Anti-Christ and all its adherents, with the complete overthrow of Superstition and Tyranny, which had so long ruled the Old World—but for whose destruction all the Prophecies led men to hope with a cheerful assurance.

In the following September Priestley feels sure that England cannot be exempt from the impending punishment. "If all anti-Christian tyranny and persecution is to be punished, and where the spirit of persecution has imbued the land with the blood of the Protestants, or the tyrants of the country have persecuted and oppressed the views, the avenging sword of destruction is now to execute Divine vengeance, Britain, who is not free from either of these charges, must expect to drink of the bitter cup, and I cannot but think there is great reason to fear her day of humiliation may speedily approach, notwithstanding her unprecedented career of naval successes."

Such passages as these, representing so intensely Biblical a point of view, however perverted we may



think the interpretation, prove the injustice of confounding Unitarians like Priestley and Russell with the Deists whose heresies they were incessantly striving, in their own words, to root out.

An attractive episode, which Thomas affects to regret, was a visit to the house of his father's sister (Mrs. Sheredine) near Baltimore in Maryland—a well-to-do, hospitable lady, widow of an iron-master, with grown-up boys and girls. The eldest daughter, Maria, was brought by her mother to Philadelphia, and spent a fortnight in one long round of gaiety. Thomas (the impudent young dog) describes his aunt as a well-meaning, excellent old lady without any of the refinement of high life but full of simple decorum. Maria has a "fine person," but, while free from affectation, lacks the polish of genteel society: Fanny and Nancy are hardly less attractive, and seem to have "shaken up" their English cousin with some considerable success. As for their brother, he is "rough in mind and appearance, but has a good temper and a great deal of genuine *naïveté*."

To these relatives Thomas Russell paid a return visit, and was given an opportunity of describing Maryland society. In a few days spent at Baltimore he saw more gentility and good breeding (with equal luxury and profusion) than in a whole winter in Philadelphia.

"Col. Howard, the Governor, is now finishing a most elegant seat in as elegant a situation, and is worthy of the large property he possesses. Col. Rogers and Mr. Nicol are men of superior manners,



as Mr. Caton and Mr. Fredk. Smith also. With all these we dined and received other marks of politeness, as we did also from Mr. Pleasants, Mr. Merriman, Mr. Gittings and several others. Although it is very pleasing to receive attentions from persons of this description, yet it is disagreeable from one point of view. In accepting their civilities you are necessarily obliged to give in to an excess both of eating and drinking which the laws of temperance cannot justify, yet which they cannot altogether condemn, as it was never carried beyond what the modern rules of hospitality and good fellowship require."

Here it may be mentioned that one of these personable young women (Miss Fanny Sheredine) afterwards got herself into a sad scrape. For no assignable reason she made a runaway match, and thus threw her mother into deep affliction. The husband of her choice was in no way detrimental, but she was resolved—though not otherwise resembling Miss Lydia Languish—to have a romance in her young life. It was the fashion of the hour. Uncle Russell was called in to counsel the grieving household, and very sensibly declared that there was nothing to make a fuss about. So everybody was happy again. But it is not uninteresting, in the records of a quiet Maryland family, to come upon an echo of Sheridan's recently published *Rivals*.

Thomas Russell, like his father, was deeply impressed with the sinfulness of American cities. Staying near Boston, he came across a young Englishman named Greenway, who had been sent out to transact

business for his father, and also, no doubt, "with the idea that in this land of simplicity and virtue he would be free from the temptations which assail young men in the corrupt cities of Europe." "It will be his own merit," adds Thomas sardonically, "if he returns as virtuous as he came."

At the house of Mrs. B. Vaughan in Little Cambridge, he met a Mr. Merrick, who had come over as tutor to her children. He was, like Thomas Russell, one of those men, who in England had formed enthusiastic ideas on the happiness of a Republic, "but he had not yet stayed long enough in America to have his ardour cooled."

"I told him I contemplated with pleasure the very small amount of misery that was to be found in this country, when compared with most parts of Europe, but that I attributed this not to the form of its government, so much as to its particular situation; for as yet the population bears so small a proportion to the extent of country, that land is comparatively of little value, and consequently agriculture is the chief employ of the middling and lower classes, who with a moderate share of industry may soon gain a comfortable livelihood. The scarcity of labour is such that those of the lower class who are not disposed to possess land of their own may earn a comfortable subsistence by the price of their own labour. By their Constitution, they certainly enjoy a greater degree of religious and of civil liberty than the people of England, but I believe the sum of virtue is as great there as it is here, and perhaps, as the country advances in age, the

corruptions, the luxuries, the vices of Europe will be introduced, and make an easy prey of the present independent spirit of Republicanism. But as neither the horrors of superstition nor the political abuses that we have beheld in Europe may be here endured to so extreme a degree, we may hail the Revolution as a step, though almost an imperceptible one, towards the general improvement of the human race."

Mr. Merrick rejoined that it gave him pleasure to see the lower class riding about in their horse chairs and enjoying all the pleasures of life. He did not trouble about their posterity.

"In returning home, we met some of these citizens in chairs on a narrow bridge, and they were very near overturning us into the river—in showing us that they were free to run against our carriage if they chose, though there was abundance of room to pass clear of us. A little later we met some independent bakers and independent butchers in their carts, whose pride it is to show their freedom by making every one turn out of the road indiscriminately, and should any one refuse it would be at the risk of his life."

In due course, as described in the last chapter, the Russell family found their way back to Middletown, and they had agreed that no other place would suit them so well for the home they wished to make in New England. Although a town, it had all the appearance of what in England would be called a country village, containing about 200 houses. It was situated



on a beautiful eminence and surrounded by undulating plains. It lay on the main road from the three great cities of the United States—Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. While the air was exceptionally salubrious the society appeared equally free from “ostentatious pride and disgusting ceremony.” A house was found without difficulty—a large brick building with a fine view, standing with garden and stables in a lot of 4 acres. It belonged to Mr. Thompson Phillips, brother of General Phillips, who offered it at £60 New York currency or \$200 per annum on an eight years’ lease. With it could be taken about 30 acres of land near, on the same terms—the whole being just half what William Russell had been paying for a house in Philadelphia not nearly so large.

The new comers were received kindly by the old inhabitants, and Thomas Russell, though perhaps a little surprised, took pleasure in the comparative freedom of New England manners. He was invited to go out for a ride with Miss H. Phillips. The reserve so general in England is discarded between young people and apparently not regretted by the parents. “In society with each other they are perfectly free and often indelicately so. It seems to make very little difference whether other elderly people are present or not, and even these appear not to have the smallest objection to a young man’s visiting their daughters when alone, and attach no idea of impropriety to their riding or walking together.” Thomas confessed that in the company of Miss Phillips he felt no disposition to moralise. He even derived “some pleasure” from the ride, nor did he think that she was altogether



displeased. Still, he had his misgivings about the American custom, though hardly on the grounds which one would have expected a young philosopher to assume. The English reserve had, he saw, a certain advantage—that the swain to whose favour a lady relaxes feels the favour heightened, while it is “rather humiliating” in America to reflect that the “same condescension would probably be granted with equal benignity to any one whom chance should place in the same situation.”

But pleasant communications corrupt austere manners, and Thomas easily fell into the ways of the place.

“This evening there was a public ball in town, to which all the elderly people were invited, say all above five or six and twenty (a curious distinction). General and Mrs. Phillips were of the party: we drank tea with Mr. Bull and in the evening I walked with one of his daughters (a comely lass) down to General Phillips to bear Miss Hannah company. We found another young lady, Miss Warner, with her, and being all of us in good humour we amused ourselves in dancing, singing, &c.; till at length, our spirits continuing to rise, laying aside all English reserve, I joined them in what they termed a proper *frolic*. However, we had no game more romping than Blind Man’s Buff, though, to be sure, the candle happened to be thrown down by the blind man; the fair damsels might be ranked among those who as Boileau says—

‘Mollement resiste, et par un doux caprice,  
Quelquefois le refuse, afin qu’on le ravisse.’”

Amongst the Russells' neighbours was a U.S. senator who, like Cato of Utica, when released from the service of his country, employed himself in farming. Mr. Hillhouse drove his own team and held his own plough, though it would probably appear that his present energy was due to necessity rather than desire of independence. From his features he appeared to have some Indian blood in his veins. He presented no appearance of being either an orator or statesman. Still, as Thomas genially remarks, he must have possessed some merit, or he would hardly have been made a senator.

At Christiania Bridge one day Thomas came across "a Presbyterian parson," who "appeared to be in the Baptist way." He had lived seventeen years in America and persuaded two congregations to elect him as their teacher.

"In the course of conversation, this worthy minister of that Gospel which teaches us that 'all men are brethren' told us with perfect indifference that he had just been *purchasing a slave*.

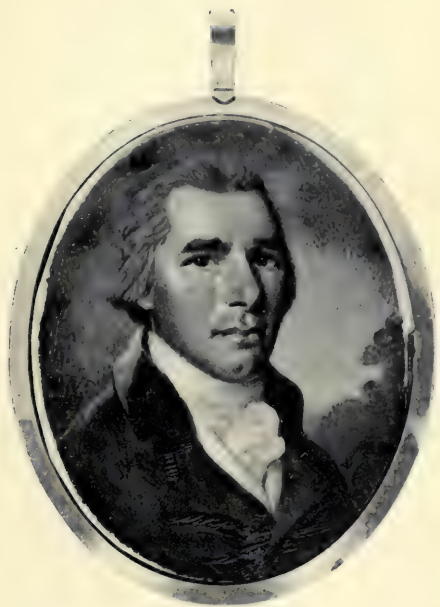
'Mihi frigidus horror

Membra quatit, gelidusque coit formidine sanguis.'

"Is it possible that this man can pretend to explain the Gospel of Christ? Is it possible that he should dare blasphemously to invoke the blessing of that God, who formed us 'all of one flesh' and 'whose tender mercies are over all His works,' with a heart so callous to all the feelings of benevolence? This is what he would call, I suppose, an *accommodating spirit*,

and there are probably not many of his brethren in England, but what in like circumstances would show the same condescension."

Here perhaps Thomas overdoes his indignation. His father, one of the most benevolent of men, entered, as will be seen, into negotiation for the purchase of a negro cook. Only a few pages later in Thomas's own diary, the fact is mentioned that in the Southern States the labour difficulty was solved by the use of slaves. Why should he have applied to this unfortunate Baptist minister a rule of conduct from which he exempted such men as General Washington and his own father?



JAMES SKEY (1754-1838)

*From a miniature by J. MILLAR (1797)*





## CHAPTER XV

### JAMES SKEY

Skey's lack of sympathy with provincial American life—His observations on Ireland *en route*—A long voyage—Devastations of fever in Philadelphia—A pathetic figure—Desolation in New York—Welcome at Middletown—Divorce facilities in New England—Unceremonious courts of law—Heavy taxation—Rates and special calls—Limits of religious toleration—Faith and works—Sunday observance—Sanctimonious deacons—A candid confession—Church government—The school system—Superficial training—Agriculture in Connecticut—Hessian fly—Slovenly farming—Hard life in the small holdings—Lack of cash and want of credit—The maize crops—Neglect of live stock—Dullness of the life—Frame houses—The smoke chamber—Provincial self-satisfaction—Superfluity of ladies—Lack of charm—Scandalous stories—The men unsociable—Dishonest adventuress—Meeting-house anecdotes—The Russells held up for Sabbath breaking—Malice and envy—The right law—Free and easy domestics—Partisan rancour—Treatment of Priestley—New England idioms—The class of small country gentlemen—A tale of home life—Excursion to Maryland—An ineffectual claim against the State—Law and justice in the Assembly.

JAMES SKEY, of Upton-on-Severn, has several times been mentioned as one of William Russell's friends. His correspondence with Martha had led to an engagement, and in August 1798 he started from his Worcestershire home to celebrate the marriage and bring away his bride. From frequent references to him in the family papers as well as from his own diary it is evident that he was a good man of business and a shrewd, humorous, kindly man of the world. In the narrow, censorious, and rather primitive society of

Middletown he was a fish out of water. His criticisms of the people amongst whom he was thrown should, perhaps, be taken with a certain allowance both for British prejudice and personal incompatibility. But the picture which he draws—somewhat maliciously, perhaps—of provincial American life at the end of the eighteenth century is not altogether unhistorical. It is in some degree corroborated by more charitably disposed observers. His judgments, however, were hastily formed. Altogether he spent only a few months on American soil, and for a considerable period of his stay he was engaged in travelling about the country on business errands. He was tempted, perhaps, to generalise freely from a few particular cases, and he seems to have been galled by his failure to make a favourable impression on the Russells' neighbours in Connecticut. At home he had been a popular and acceptable person; naturally he was puzzled and vexed at being viewed in Middletown with undisguised coldness. Clearly the ladies did not make much of him, and the gentlemen declined to laugh at his jokes. The result was that he saw no beauty in the women and lamented the absence of humour amongst the men.

Having sailed on August the 2nd in a vessel of about 300 tons from Liverpool he had to undergo five days' tossing in the Irish Channel before he made Cork Harbour—"one of the safest, largest, and best defended of any belonging to Great Britain." There the *Betsy* had to wait some time for convoy. Owing to the expected arrival of the fleet, and the disturbed condition of the country, it was impossible to make

long excursions into the interior. Martial law was then in force. The insurgents appeared by their conduct to have formed no regular system of defence. They were without leaders, without resources, and even in general without arms and ammunition. A wild and barbarous fury, almost peculiar to the lower Irish, led them to actions of extravagant rashness and mad conduct, not only in exposing their own persons but also in the destruction of those who fell into their hand inimical to their cause.

“However lamentably popular all insurrections generally are, and though it may naturally be anticipated,” writes Skey, “that rapine and barbarity will accompany the steps of the enraged and undisciplined rabble, excesses of this kind would not be expected from a well-ordered military. But it must be acknowledged by every impartial observer of the soldiery at this period in Ireland, that they are distinguished by acts of unprovoked cruelty and extreme injustice. It was distressing to see the sad ruins of numerous little cabins set on fire by the military and to hear the miserable tales of helpless women and little innocent children who were necessitated to sleep under the hedges and to subsist upon what they found in the fields. A guard of one or two soldiers were placed upon the roads and on the side of the rivers to enquire of the passenger where he came from and where he was going, and if this was not to their satisfaction, the traveller was confined.”

Skey experienced great hospitality in Ireland—



“courteous and friendly without ostentation,” but lamented the backward and wasteful methods of agriculture.

“There is something in the lower order of people, their look and manner, which indicates a savage disposition. This alarmed me when surrounded by a multitude of them at my first landing, but I soon found this was without cause, for although this place is inhabited by poor people principally sailors and fishermen, yet such is the confidence of the shopkeepers, that I observed they have but one small bolt to their doors and no shutters to their windows. A house broke open, highway or footpad robbery has not been heard of in the neighbourhood; not one instance of either can be recorded. Several murders have been committed, but all were the effect of passion and the impulse of momentary resentment, generally occasioned by too large a portion of whisky.”

The voyage was continued on August 26 on the *Chesapeake*, a very fine ship and good sailer, 1400 or 1500 tons, bound for Philadelphia. On September 10, she was followed by a French privateer, which in turn was chased by the accompanying man-of-war. Except for some rough weather, the crossing was unadventurous, if slow—4195 miles having been traversed—and on October 26 the *Chesapeake* reached American waters.

“I could hardly persuade myself that I had crossed the Atlantic and that I was arrived in America. Cold and inanimate indeed must be that heart, which on

such an occasion was not only full, but would not overflow with emotional sensibility; and a sense of gratitude for personal preservation, together with the wonderfully expanded works of nature now before me, must excite in the breast of a rational being those devotional feelings which of all others must be 'in spirit and in truth,' the most natural worship we can pay to the great and benevolent Parent of the Universe."

Opposite Newcastle the ship was boarded by a Custom-house officer, who advised that owing to the fever nobody should disembark before Chester. The coach-drive to Philadelphia was pleasant enough, but on entering the American capital the dreadful effects of the prevailing fever became manifest.

"It would be impossible to relate the many instances I saw, as they were apparent in almost every carriage which passed us, all flying from the infected city, and, as I was told, were the survivors of families who had been detained there waiting the sad termination of the fever to some part of the family which had been infected. Not one carriage did I see pass us for the city.

"A sad and very striking scene now presented itself to view. The police of Philadelphia, which is perhaps the best of any city in the world, had wisely and benevolently provided the lower order of the inhabitants, who had not the means of flying from the pest, with tents, which were placed on a common or green, just at the outside of the city. The number

which inhabited these tents, several told us, were about ten thousand ; in each eight were admitted. Through this range of temporary inhabitations I passed. What rendered the scene more affecting was that these poor people appeared to be in want of many necessaries. In many places, the pot was boiling in the open air between two bricks, but as there was no wood to be seen for this or any other purpose, they were obliged to collect it at a distance.

“When I had passed these tents, we came to the commencement of the city, and here the coachee stopped, while my companion and myself determined whether we should enter or avoid it by taking a road through the suburbs. Curiosity and a natural desire to see the first city in the United States invited, but prudence and caution directed us to pass by.

“After some deliberation we resolved to enter it, and we proceeded within sight of the very long range of the Market Buildings, but were shocked to see almost all the houses shut up, and scarce any persons in the streets ; as well as the signals from the windows of infected houses. We did not stop, but turned again to the main road : affected by the very dismal scenes we had left, we journeyed on through Frankford to the General Washington, ten miles from Philadelphia, in silent contemplation. We had scarcely sat down when rather a young man and six small children entered, all in black. By his fixed and melancholy look, and also by the silent, attentive manner in which these six children stood round him, we readily saw he was flying with some remaining part of his family from the plague. I never longed so earnestly to communicate



consolation had it been in my power, but this was impossible. Our concern was expressed by the silence we observed till his horses were baited, and then he left us. We were afterwards informed that he had lost his wife and mother."

The condition of New York, which was reached on October 30, was little better. Most of the houses, James Skey records, were empty: few persons were walking the streets, and half of these wore mourning. Hardly anybody who had long resided in the city but had cause for putting on his sable.

"This, however, was forborne by numbers, at the public request of the magistrates. Dreadful as the accounts given in the public papers were of the fever in different places, yet they did not express the extent of the calamity. Every city and town cautiously avoided publishing the ravages they had experienced, nor for a time would it be known that the fever had visited them till it became too notorious for concealment. The alarm lest it should injure the trade and the fixed property of the place induced the inhabitants to secrete it. From the best accounts I could collect at this time there had died in Philadelphia from 5000 to 6000 and at New York from 3000 to 4000.

"Soon after I had got out of the city the driver pointed out a piece of ground, closely adjoining the road, where those persons who had been infected with the fever were buried. The manner in which this was performed in so public a place was not only



shocking but very unsafe. The bodies were placed on the ground and the mould on each side thrown over them, so that these receptacles of the dead seemed like long ranges resembling potato buries. In excuse of this it may be said, so great and immediate was the mortality that time would not admit of a better disposition of the dead."

On arriving at Middletown, where Skey was affectionately welcomed by "the best of women" (Martha) and the Russell family in general, he learned that they had written to him to avoid both Philadelphia and New York, but their letters had miscarried. Before settling down to a study of American life as presented in Connecticut, the lover congratulates himself, in the round but not inelegant language of the time, upon the "invaluable acquisition of a virtuous, faithful, and affectionate friend and partner in domestic life and a kind and tender parent to my children." (He had already been twice married.)

In the leisurely but very sensible fashion of the period the traveller transcribed, and thus fixed in his memory, long passages from Swift's *Laws of Connecticut*. He omitted, however, the author's frequent deviations in honour of the wisdom, virtue, and happiness of the people. Skey's own observations are less complimentary; the law, he say, was good enough, but it was apt to be in some instances perverted and in others badly administered. We may pass over his summary of Swift's book and his comments upon particular passages. But his personal experience and inquiries, are not without interest. He was shocked,

apparently, at the ease, even in primitive and virtuous Connecticut, with which marriages were dissolved.

“ Within the town of Middletown, eight divorces took place in the course of five years last past. The ceremony which sanctions the matrimonial engagement is not of that serious, solemn nature as in England ; it is considered as a civil institution rather than a religious one. A person may be married when and where he pleases, either by a minister or magistrate, who is not bound to follow any particular form of words ; he may vary them at his pleasure. The marriage fee is one dollar. A respectable parson in the next State, Vermont, informed me that in his parish, a needy magistrate was applied to upon all matrimonial cases ; he united all who came to him. When ill with the gout, he would marry from his chamber window, and, if unable to walk when required to attend at any distance, he would ride up to the door of the house appointed and there perform the ceremony, sitting on his horse’s back.”

At every assize, so Skey says, much of the Court’s time was occupied with matrimonial causes. In case the suit of one party was not opposed by the other, judgment was forthwith given, the fees amounting to the not extravagant figure of 11s. 3d. In case of a defence, however, the expense was somewhat greater. In England at this time the cost of a divorce, not to mention the legal delay, was almost prohibitive to persons of moderate means.

Skey was a little scandalised to note that the judges were not distinguished by their dress on the

bench from the ordinary layman. They wore coarse brown coats with large capes, and instead of cravats two of them had common silk handkerchiefs round their throats.

“I have frequently lamented that in the Church and at the Bar with us, the externals of their profession should be so conspicuous. But I am now convinced that an extreme in this way is far better than having no investment or badge. In these enlightened times men in general are too discerning to admit of any improper influence from them. Entirely to discard them will tend to diminish and destroy all that deference and respect which, tho’ not attached to the person, adhere to the office. At the American Bar, there is such a want of dignity as gave me no high opinion of its decisions.

“The five judges left the bench for the comfortable enjoyment of a good fire in the hall or court house, and in this way the business of the day passed on: the judges now and then, while the attorneys were pleading, would enter into familiar conversation with the farmer-like men who surrounded them, and I even observed a transaction of some money concern during a trial, between a jurymen and a person on the outside of the box in which they were confined; but no notice of this was taken by the Court.”

Taxation in the United States. though not to be compared with the burdens then laid upon Englishmen, was severe, and likely, Skey thought, to increase rapidly “on account of the preparation for war with France” (1798). A new and general tax on houses

was expected in 1799. The list appended is sufficiently formidable:—

	£	s.	d.
Polls from 21 to 70 years (males)	18	7	0
"    "    16 to 21    "    "	9	0	0
4 years old oxen or bulls	4	0	0
Cows and bull, oxen, heifers and steers, 3 years old	3	0	0
"    "    "    "    "    2    "    "	2	0	0
"    "    "    "    "    1    "    "	1	0	0
Hornkind, 3 years old	3	0	0
"    2    "    "    "	2	0	0
"    1    "    "    "	1	0	0
Swine of 1 year old	1	0	0
Acres of ploughed land	0	10	0
"    upland, mowing and pasture, &c.	0	8	0
"    boggy meadow, mowed	0	5	0
"    "    "    not mowed	0	2	0
"    meadow land in Hartford County	0	15	0
"    other meadow land	0	7	0
"    bush pasture	0	2	0
"    unenclosed land, first rate	0	2	0
"    "    "    second rate	0	1	0
"    "    "    third rate	0	0	6
Tons of vessels at per ton	0	15	0
Coaches	25	0	0
Chariots	20	0	0
Phaetons	15	0	0
Curricles	10	0	0
Chaises	5	0	0
Riding chairs with open tops	3	0	0
Gold watches	5	0	0
Silver and other watches	1	10	0
Steel and brass wheeled clocks	3	0	0
Wooden wheeled clocks	1	0	0
6 per cent. on silver plate at 6s. 8d. per ounce.			
Money at interest at 6 per cent.			
Houses of . . . fireplaces at 15s.	0	15	0
"    "    depreciated 1 qr.	0	11	3
"    "    "    half	0	7	6
"    "    "    3 qrs.	0	3	9



These taxes did not cover the occasional levies for such purposes as highways, bridges, churches and schools. In Middletown, for instance, in the year of Skey's visit, a new meeting-house was erected by the members of the congregation. Everybody, be it noted, had to belong to some definite sect and bear his share of the burdens. In this case the money was raised from about 2500 persons, from a special rate of 4s. 6d. in the pound, or what was known as the grand levy. The building would hold 3000 people: it was built entirely of wood, and had a neat cupola with a single bell. There were but three sects in Connecticut worth notice—Congregationalists (far the most numerous), Episcopalians, and Baptists or New Lights. In practice there was complete religious toleration so far as public worship was concerned. Every one could attend what service he chose or absent himself from all. But he must pay his proportion as assessed by the Church levy; all he could do was to appropriate the money to what society he might favour. According to the strict letter of the law, however, there was a certain limit to free thought. Any person in Connecticut, who had been educated in or had professed the Christian religion, was liable to prosecution if "by writing, printing, teaching, or advised speaking" he denied the existence of God, the deity of the three persons of the Trinity, the truth of the Christian religion, or the divine authority of the Old and New Testaments. On conviction before a superior Court he would be declared incapable of holding any office, ecclesiastical, civil or military. On a second conviction he would be disabled from suing, prosecuting, pleading,

or maintaining any action or information in law or equity. Nor could he be appointed guardian, executor, or administrator.

Skey was harsh in his judgment of the Congregationalists in Middletown. He compares them with the Calvinistic Presbyterians in England, and asserts that they insisted far more upon dogma than duty. "To be faithful, honest, and just, charitable and benevolent, is not esteemed as essential as faith in their unintelligible doctrines." If he did not generalise from a few cases he certainly formed his judgments too rapidly. He was particularly affronted by the rigid observance of the Sabbath.

"Tything men, grand jurymen and constables are directed to preserve order on the Sabbath Day by seizing the persons of offenders, on whom fines are levied, who shall engage or employ themselves in any secular business whatever. Sport, play or any recreation are expressly forbidden. No vessel is allowed to depart from any harbour, to sail or pass by any town or society in Connecticut River on the Lord's Day. To walk or travel is contrary to law, which expressly says: 'No persons shall convene or meet together in company or in companies in the street or elsewhere, or go from his or her place of abode on the Lord's Day, unless to attend to the public worship of God or some work of necessity or mercy, on penalty of five shillings.'"

Other punishable offences on the Sabbath (which began at sunset on Saturday) were running or "walking"

in one's garden (or elsewhere except reverently to or from meeting). Travelling, cooking victuals, making beds, sweeping houses, cutting hair or shaving, even for a mother to kiss her child, were forbidden. In case the minister was disabled by illness the duty of holding service fell upon one of the four deacons, who therefore must be persons of great sanctity and consequence. One of these in Middletown had lately admonished a young woman for attending Sacrament with her hat a little on one side. The same giddy offender had subsequently to be reprimanded for taking dinner with a female friend on the Lord's Day.

Numerous tales, Skey says, were in circulation as to the hypocrisy and dishonesty practised by the deacons. Himself he preferred to relate an anecdote which showed that one deacon at least was "not devoid of liberality." A member of a Congregationalist body had been reported to have been seen in a state of intoxication.

"A meeting was accordingly holden of deacons, grand jurors, and select men. The general voice was against the criminal; one deacon only dissented. 'I cannot vote for expelling this man for getting drunk,' he said, 'because I sometimes get drunk myself, and (turning to his brethren) you get drunk, and you and you; we all get drunk. Therefore, if the Lord will have a society upon earth, He must take up with us such as we are.' And by this speech, he prevented the impending disgrace."

The Episcopalian Church at Middletown was a "very neat building," and possessed an organ.



“The present officiating clergyman is Dr. Abraham Jervis, Bishop of Connecticut, a man of good moral character, tho’ perhaps somewhat too much of the Bishop for his situation and circumstances. His emolument from his Church does not exceed ninety-four pounds per annum, nor from the Episcopalian see more than twenty-four pounds per annum, so that he derives little more from it than his dignity, which, however, does not entitle him to the appellation of ‘my Lord.’ He reads well and has a good delivery. The Common Prayer Book is the same as that of the Church of England, except that instead of praying for the King, &c., &c., is substituted the President of the United States, the Senate, and Assembly.”

The Congregational minister’s stipend was £124 (with firewood). He was a respectable character, Skey admits, but as a preacher laboured under the defect that his utterances were scarcely intelligible. This misfortune—due, it was thought, to a lung complaint—was not much felt by his congregation. They “assemble from habitual custom,” and “derive satisfaction and self-complacency from it.”

An interesting criticism is passed by Skey on the “excellent institution of schools at the public expense.” The benefit that should have flowed from the system was diminished by the introduction of Greek and Latin, the learning of which was thought to be more valuable than the acquirement of “useful and practical knowledge.” The period of education being very brief, since able-bodied boys in the lower orders would not long be spared from farm work,



their school attainments were quite inconsiderable. In the higher ranks there was no desire for a thorough training. Parents were satisfied that their children should give a single "quarter" to such "accomplishments" as music, drawing, and dancing, or even to more solid studies.

Skey devoted a good deal of his time to learning American methods of agriculture. He complains of the conservative, indolent disposition of the average Connecticut farmer. In particular no systematic attempt was made to deal with the Hessian fly, which had worked havoc amongst the maize, wheat, and barley. Rye alone seemed capable of defying the pest.

"It is generally credited that this fly was first introduced to America, at the time of the American War, in the corn imported for the Hessian horse, and from hence it is called the Hessian fly. It first appeared about that period, but the conjecture of its being imported in the Hessian corn is improbable, as we hear of no such destructive fly in Germany."

The only person in America from whom Skey obtained any useful information about the fly was a Quaker in Pennsylvania, who wrote to William Russell.

"The first appearance of the Hessian fly upon my place was in the autumn of 1788, when they did me great damage by destroying the early grain, but the early part of the succeeding winter was so warm that

they came out to fly, and the nights being cold and frosty they perished before their eggs were deposited, which almost annihilated them. They did me but little damage till the spring of 1791, when they appeared again very numerous. In the month of April I took some entire plants of wheat with these insects in their brown state attached to them, which I put into glasses covered with paper to prevent their escape. In about a week they began to appear, a perfect fly, nearly in shape, size, and colour like a Mosquito of the smaller kind. At this time the fly was general upon the wheat in the fields, soon after which I found the maggots very numerous, which were undoubtedly from the second hatching that spring. When the fruit came to form the ear a great part of it fell and perished, The same year an acquaintance of mine in Burlington County sowed a field of wheat very early in the autumn which was all destroyed by the Hessian fly. The beginning of October, he sowed about an acre in a field adjoining the former, which had borne pumpkins that year, highly manured and in excellent order. This wheat flourished for a while, and then dwindled till there was scarce a blade of wheat to be seen. Upon examining the cause he found the roots full of this insect, from which circumstance it appears to me he raised the fly in his first corn which destroyed the last."

Skey's love of English trimness was offended by the prevailing untidiness of American farms. The houses in Connecticut, he complained, were cold, comfortless, and dirty. There seemed to be no "management"

in the place, or the neat cleanness, which it was so pleasant to see in a country cottage, conveying to the mind the idea of comfort and wholesomeness, while the want of it suggested wretchedness and poverty. This is a criticism which has not altogether been antiquated by the hundred years which have passed since it was written, though it should be borne in mind that the English regard for domestic appearances is by no means a guarantee either of prosperity or sanitary conditions.

Life on a small holding, even when the cultivator has the fee simple, is everywhere and always has been hard and frugal.

“This State is divided into small farms, and the little farmer, in this as well as in any other State, is a poor, miserable being. What though he be the proprietor of thirty, fifty, or even a hundred acres? It is an ungrateful soil, which he cultivates with his own hands. On this he wholly depends for every produce on which himself and family subsist. The aid of tillage workmen is not within the reach of the common farmer, as the price of their labour is from four to six shillings a day. All therefore is obtained by the sweat of his brow—the mowing, reaping, &c., beneath the scorching sun which so enfeebles and exhausts him, that his countenance displays great pallid languor and striking symptoms of premature old age. Perhaps his daily food tends very much to produce this, for though in winter he may venture to kill an ox or a cow, and keep some part of it for his family use (because, being frozen,

he can preserve it as long as he likes), yet in the most laborious season he subsists upon salt beef or pork, which with potatoes served up in the same dish and Indian pudding is the farmer's general fare if the time of killing is excepted.

“In this city of Middletown there is not one individual who would purchase an ox or a cow and could be confided in for the payment of it. The farmer is therefore under the necessity of turning butcher himself, and any person in this place or neighbourhood who may feed any cattle for his amusement either sends his servants to his acquaintance to dispose of the joints here and there before he kills it, or sends him to stand by the sale and receive the money as the person, who is the butcher, disposes of it. Very little money ever reaches the hands of a Connecticut farmer, as almost all his transactions are done by barter. With his beef or pork he discharges the annual demands of his doctor, tailor, collar maker, &c., &c., and if he has grain or any other article for sale, which he cannot dispose of to private families, he applies to those who keep public stores (as it is called here)—that is, shops, where the farmer barter to great disadvantage, as he receives, in return for what he has for sale, the store-keeper's commodity on which a most enormous profit has been put.”

Skey was much impressed with the value of maize, as being easily cultivated and rapidly coming to maturity. He points, however, to the general practice of leaving the stalks in the ground until the land



is ploughed for the next crop as a proof of Connecticut slovenliness. Nobody there had any notion of making manure from straw and stubble or of farmyard management. The one care of the farmer was to save labour, and this caused everything to be ill done. The ox-plough was primitive and inefficient. The working oxen, Skey said, were well looked after, but all the other farm animals were in a starved and miserable condition. The currycomb and brush, he said, were unknown instruments. No attention was paid to a horse's coat, nor was he cleansed after work. In hot and cold weather alike, he would be left standing at the door of a tavern, and never cost the proprietor more than the corn brought to him.

“Thus of a Sunday, the horses of the congregation are tied to a rail which is near the Meeting, from morning till night, as those who come from any distance do not return home to dinner, but bring it in their pockets with them. The horses are early inured to the treatment, and therefore no injury arises from it, but on the contrary, for here it is a rare thing to see an unsound horse. In every part the stable is universally boarded with plank floors, and this becomes necessary in such a climate, as the flies in summer cause them to strike so violently that, was the floor of brick, it would break, if not occasion the shoe to come off.

“This treatment of the horse—hard and injurious as it may appear to those who are accustomed to feed and dress him perpetually as well as to keep him wrapt in warm clothing—is much more suitable to the nature

of this useful animal than so much attention. Notwithstanding the little care which is taken of American horses, they are more sound and will travel farther with less apparent fatigue than the horses of England. I have been taken by one pair of horses several hundred miles, at the rate of forty to forty-five miles a day, sometimes stages of twenty and five-and-twenty miles, and even by allowing them fifteen or twenty minutes only for eating one feed of corn, they have been on the road from eight o'clock in the morning till eight at night, and that without their sustaining injury, altho' they drew a four-wheeled coachee of the country, with my friend, myself, driver and baggage."

How thoroughly out of sympathy James Skey found himself with American life may be seen from his contrast of the scenery with the people of Middletown.

"I have neither seen nor heard of any part of America more pleasant nor more healthy than this, but what is there here for the enjoyment of a liberal, social, and rational man? He sees with wonder and pleasure for a time the vast rivers, the stupendous rocks, and the immense forests, which in every direction present themselves to his unbounded view. But when these are become familiar to the sight, he soon feels a longing desire to turn from the grand and rugged scene, which now no longer excites surprise, to those varied views of plenty which appear in every part of Britain. If the hand of Nature has not wrought in a way so stupendously majestic in that favoured isle,

yet her operations are infinitely more rich and bountiful than this continent can display. To taste her productions from the soil and climate ; to enjoy with discerning relish the rational social intercourse, which in a peculiar manner and degree is found in Britain ; to feel the glow of friendship, and to be delighted with beholding the virtuous, God-like effusions of benevolence, a man should cross the Atlantic and examine the state of these things here. Then he will return to his native country and be satisfied that with all its present evils and abuses, it is by comparison to be preferred, as holding out the means of solid rational happiness in such a degree as is not to be found upon the continent of America.

“ There are indeed some kinds of men who value above everything the means of procuring a mere animal existence at a cheap rate ; who can enjoy content at a distance from the delicate manners of refinement and the tender, generous feelings of the heart. They would do right to embark for America, as their expenses and taxes would be considerably less than in England, and they could not fix upon a place more adapted to the several purposes of health, economy, and congeniality of disposition in the people than at Middletown.”

Skey describes rather minutely the building of a frame house. Bricks and mortar were seldom employed, and even regarded as unwholesome. The wooden structure was laid upon stone foundations.

“ Nothing is more easy or common than to travel with your house and furniture from one street to



another. The Town Hall, or as it is called here Court House, at Hartford, a very extensive building, was in this way not long since removed without injury, but here (in Middletown) a business of this kind was not so happily conducted. In this place are two venerable old gentlemen famous for their skill in moving buildings from one place to another: it is become the hobby-horse of their old age, and any one who wishes to set his house in motion applies for advice or assistance to either one or the other of them. It lately happened that a very cautious inhabitant, desirous of changing the situation of his house, separately solicited the assistance and counsel of these two able directors. On the appointed day they both met, but unfortunately, as no previous consultation had taken place, each hooked on his oxen and began the operation by drawing in a different direction, and down fell the whole edifice, proving that the old proverb of safety in a multitude of counsellors is not always verified.”<sup>1</sup>

A contrivance which Skey admired was the “smoke house” for drying and keeping bacon or other preserved flesh. The fires being of wood, at the top of the house some boards were closely jointed by the side of the chimney. In this way a closet was formed through which the smoke passed by a communication from the chimney at the bottom and into it again at the top. Thus the smoke could be turned on or cut off by opening or closing the communication.

<sup>1</sup> The practice of moving houses in America has not yet become quite extinct. Quite recently one of the financial magnates had his mansion taken up stone by stone and re-erected elsewhere.



American slackness gave offence to Skey. The mails from Middletown to Newport (115 miles) never took less than three days, though the roads, except for a few days in the year, were not bad. For this slowness he could never find any other reason than that it "had always been the custom." The people of Middletown, he goes on, were far more refined and polite than those of the inland towns and cities generally. Indeed they plumed themselves a good deal upon their advantages.

"But with all this, in the eye of those who have been used to good company in England the contrast is so great, so much inferior to what he has been accustomed to, that when the novelty of the change is abated, he must be disgusted by that general ignorance, that contracted little way of thinking and acting, which the most candid observer must admit. There is also in the disposition of the American people of all descriptions such a marked indifference to everything which does not relate either to themselves or their country as is very striking: they are so perfectly satisfied both with one and the other, and they listen to whatever is said to them with a cold indifference should a foreigner endeavour either to amuse or inform them."

It would be impossible, says Skey, for a Frenchman to live in any of the New England States. This we know to be an exaggeration, for at this time several were residing at Middletown. It was, however, an unpleasant situation, and if they appeared in

public they ran the risk of inconvenience. But at this time, it should be remembered, there was imminent danger of war between France and the United States. Even an Englishman, Skey goes on, if he wished to be popular would not contrast an American custom or institution unfavourably with those at home. That, one may remark, should be an elementary rule for the traveller whatever be his race, and wherever he may be, if he wishes to have a good time amongst his hosts. Unhappily the rule is almost universally broken, and Skey it seems was a rank offender.

“The American who knows nothing of the world, and whose travels have never been extended beyond the limit of the State in which he was born, arrogantly assumes to determine that under heaven there is no such country as America. Virtue, science, and the arts are more highly cultivated than in the Old World. At the assize here, as I was attending to a pleader who had for some time addressed the judges for his client, in a miserable harangue of bad English and by much in the worst manner and language I ever saw addressed to the Bar, an attorney, the best-informed young man in the city, came to me and with great exultation said, ‘Can your Erskine equal this?’”

There was little hospitality in Connecticut, Skey complains, and at the few banquets he attended the fare seems to have been rather monotonous—roast turkey at one end of the table, boiled turkey at the other. He was inclined to scoff, on another occasion, at the sacrifice of a hen and her nine young chickens.

(Probably those little "squabs" were excellent.) Again he experienced a painful shock at a dinner when, having been twice pledged by his host in excellent Madeira, he was counting upon a comfortable English sitting with the decanters. Saving himself up for the good time coming, he drank water with the rest of the meal. What was his surprise when the cloth was removed to see the wine also taken away!

The ladies of Middletown spared no trouble or expense, he records, for their dress on public occasions, though, whether through frugality or lack of servants, they clean the house, cook the dinner, and wash the dishes. It was not the custom to give a portion with a bride; if her father furnished the house that was all the husband had a right to expect. Yet one might have supposed, if Skey's story be true, that the dowry system would have been introduced by stress of competition. He solemnly asserts that the proportion of women to men in Middletown was as 15 : 1, and goes on to explain his estimate. Most of the young men, he says, were either brought up to the sea or were engaged in farming at a distance from their place of birth. At balls it was the custom for every gentleman to be responsible for two ladies, dancing alternately with one and the other.

"I cannot say the ladies here are very captivating; most undoubtedly they fall very short of equalling Englishwomen either in beauty, accomplishments, or amiableness of manner. The general conduct of the females in Connecticut is not restrained by that prudent reserve to the other sex which distinguishes



the British fair, by whom the ladies here would, with much reason, be deemed very forward and indiscreet. Now and then the consequences of this unguarded conduct produce some unpleasant effects. When such circumstances do appear, the parties marry, and by so doing they give ample satisfaction to themselves, their friends, and the world for their irregularity. For there is not that disgrace attached to it with them, as would be in England, where such circumstances rarely occur.

“Tho’ the Connecticut women may very justly be charged with some degree of frailty before marriage, yet afterwards they become very faithful to their domestic duties; infinitely more so than their mates, who are notoriously known to form criminal intrigues with other women. The law for punishing this crime seems very defective; it says, ‘Be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, that if any man be found in bed with another man’s wife, the man and woman so offending, being thereof convicted, shall be severely whipped, not exceeding thirty stripes, unless it appears upon trial that one party was surprised and did not consent, which shall excuse such party from punishment.’

“This law, however, such as it is, is seldom executed, for though this species of profligacy is very common, little notice is taken of it.”

For these rather scandalous generalisations it would probably have puzzled Skey to quote chapter and verse. But if he misdoubted the women’s virtue he also disliked the men’s company. They had, he



said, no esteem for social virtues—not even a disposition to enjoy conviviality and mirth. They were dull, and without ideas except as to country life; content merely to answer questions and (here, perhaps, was the rub) with no relish for wit and humour. At home Skey passed for a merry gentleman, and in America was disgusted to find that his good things fell flat. It was, he said, impossible to communicate one spark of vivacity to their torpid souls.

“If you invite a party to dine with you, and exert every faculty to promote cheerful social mirth, it is labouring quite in vain, for if you attempt to give them useful information from the example of other countries, they hear you with unconcerned indifference, and all your endeavours to excite mirth will scarcely produce a smile.

“Before tea is announced, the company is dispersed, as it is not usual to sit long after dinner; this is not the time for American intemperance, or the moderate enjoyment of wine; they are more accustomed to what they term ‘frolicking,’ which is getting drunk upon some instigation of the moment, without regarding whether it be morning, noon, or night. I recollect a frolic from the circumstance of a person having a cask of wine brought home, which being seen by his neighbours quite late in the evening, eleven of them descended into the cellar, where they became so immoderately intoxicated as not to be able to walk away without assistance.”

As to the prevalence of commercial dishonesty,

Skey does but corroborate the views of Thomas Russell as well as the severe though less sweeping judgments passed by William Russell and Priestley. The credulity of Englishmen in trusting their property to Transatlantic adventurers was a surprise to Americans. Men from Connecticut had got credit in England for £6000 or £7000 whom their neighbours would not have trusted with £10.

“The general disposition to speculate with English property is notorious; the trading American, rather than wait the slow and sure means by honest industry to acquire wealth, with eager impatience launches into some speculative scheme, either by the purchase of tracts of uncleared or uncultivated land, or in an adventure by sea, in which he will embark not only the whole of his own property, but also that of his creditors, and with astonishing sangfroid wait the issue. If he is successful, he boldly launches into more extensive plans of enterprise, till at last he meets with disappointment and ruin.

“An Englishman, who has not resided in this country, can form no just idea how very different a thing it is to be ruined here and ruined in England, where it is attended with poverty and disgrace. Here the circumstance of bankruptcy is so common that it creates no surprise, nor does it cause any disgrace or change in the style of living or expense. This has been secured by previous management, for the arts of fraud and evasion are more easily conducted than in England, and the common disposition much more prone to practise them. By persons in

business here, I am informed that justice and common honesty have so little influence, that of demands upon the effects of a deceased person seven instances in ten are not of the smallest value, for, whatever property they may leave behind them, it is all secured to the heir from creditors by a previous assignment."

To the general condemnation of American business methods, Skey makes an exception in favour of the Philadelphian Quakers. But the dishonesty was less offensive to him than the hypocrisy and self-righteousness with which it was cloaked. He returns to the attack on the detested deacons.

"A good old man in this place, having had the misfortune to derange the watch he usually wore, had recourse to an old family repeater which had been brought from England by his ancestors. Without intending to profane the Lord's Day, or behave irreverently in the Sanctuary, he took his seat in Meeting with this same watch in his pocket, when lo! the sound thereof was heard in the midst of the congregation. The next day the Deacons and Selectmen assembled themselves together, and caused the Man of Belial to stand before them, and they levied a fine upon him for his wickedness in profaning the House of the Lord. And it came to pass that as the congregation was assembled on the Sabbath Day, the wind blew violently in at the door of the House, so that it caused the Garments of a certain Deaconess to be lifted up. Now this was a reproach to seven young women of the congregation, for they did laugh.



These were also made to appear before the righteous elders of the people, and they were compelled to make an offering of silver for the sin they had committed."

Carrying on this humorous vein, Skey relates the parable of Thomas Russell and his sisters:—

"There was a certain young man of the City of Middletown, who journeyed with his two sisters into the Land of Pennsylvania, and upon his return he halted at the town of Durham, and tarried there, for it was the Lord's Day. Now when evening was come, he was minded to take a Sabbath Day's journey and reach his own home. But this thing displeased the holy men of Durham, who gathered round the chariot, taking hold of the reins of the horses, and they brought the young man and his two sisters to the Inn, and there they imprisoned them. And four Selectmen of the congregation, men of great valour, kept watch over them all that night, lest they should escape. And when the morning was come, they brought them forth and carried them before a magistrate of that place, saying: 'These profane persons would have broken the Sabbath, which the Senate, the Assembly, the priests and the Levites, have ordered to be kept holy; we have therefore brought them before thee to be judged.' Then the magistrate opened the Book, containing the Law, and read: 'No person shall be permitted either to walk or run or ride upon the Lord's Day, but reverently to or from the Tabernacle.' He commanded them therefore to be punished by the payment of ninety-six



shillings, and when they had so done they departed. Now the name of this young man was Thomas, and the names of his sisters were Martha and Mary. Their father was surnamed Russell, and had brought them from a land flowing with milk and honey for to sojourn in the wilderness."

In candour Skey confesses that the Americans were hospitable, and so little was theft apprehended, that windows and doors were seldom made secure with bolts and bars. On the other hand, envy and malice were rife. "If you are richer than your neighbours they will plunder you," said a respected minister; "if better, they will defame you."

"The doctrine of equality, in its worst and perverted sense, is strictly adhered to. The desire is that there should be an equality of property, but also of genius and industry, of virtue and vice. If inquiry is made, why such and such an ornament or improvement is not made, it is common in reply to be told, 'Why, my neighbours would destroy it some night or other.' This most detestable disposition of maliciously injuring and destroying the property of others, veiled by the darkness of the night, is so common that there is a particular law for the punishment of it, which is called the Night Law. This gives a power to any person injured to carry before a magistrate as many persons as he may suppose at all suspicious, and they are bound to render an account of themselves how and where they passed the night; if discharged, any expense which may have been incurred is paid by the person suspected."

Soon after William Russell's arrival in Middletown, the harness of a coach, particularly fine, attracted this spirit of envy, and was cut to pieces. Again, a neighbour had made a hot-bed for forcing melons. His garden was entered at night, the fruit broken off, and the plants chopped up.

The "servant difficulty" was already a domestic anxiety in the American household. Slaves, says Skey, could not be purchased in Connecticut, and with white servants, it seems, the mistress would not be too rigid about "characters."

"Amongst the lower order of the women they are notoriously addicted to a certain licentious frailty. This has no worse effects than that which the laws of nature impose; the character of a woman is not injured, for, if she is a good servant, a natural child or two is no impediment at all to prevent her getting immediately into a good situation as a servant, and she takes her family with her. None of them engage but from one week to another; as to hire themselves for a year is too much resembling slavery, and not the custom of the country."

As it was always easy for a woman with a good pair of hands to get a place, she would not make any trouble if sent away. The servants considered themselves on the same footing as their employers, and, as a rule, associated with the family on terms of equality.

"Mr. Field, an emigrant from Worcester, was the

other day mentioning that his servant maid would dress herself as fine as she possibly could, and enter into the parlour where he was sitting with his family, for the benefit of a large glass, to place black patches upon her face, and after all things were adjusted she sallied forth to pay a visit, without saying one word. If the mistress should take the liberty of hinting that her going out at that time was inconvenient as she was going to receive company, the reply would be: 'I can't help it, for I must pay my visit, as it is an engagement I made some time past.'

It is strange to find the son-in-law of a man who had practically been driven from England for asserting unpopular opinions complaining of the bitter partisan spirit ruling in America. The rancour which Skey observed between Federalists and anti-Federalists far surpassed anything of the sort in his own country. "If your friend is of the unpopular party, and should your intimacy continue and you are known to visit him, you will be unpopular too and abused." Here we have an incidental light thrown upon the growing reluctance of the Russell family to stay at Middletown. They had sympathised and associated with some French residents, and certainly were not the sort of people to give up friends who had incurred local dislike.

An interesting passage, which, no doubt, was partly derived from William Russell, relates to the American treatment of Priestley:—

"His reception among them was with that cold

civility peculiar to Americans. At that time a few literary men of the then popular party showed him some attention, and with them he formed an acquaintance. But since that period political opinions have undergone a sudden and violent change, and Dr. Priestley's former acquaintance are now considered in the public mind as Jacobins and traitors. Uninfluenced by this political revolution, or without attending to the subject of politics at all, he continued occasionally the same intercourse as heretofore with his literary friends. But this was a crime too atrocious not to meet with the severest reprehension; he has therefore been abused and vilified with the lowest scurrility of party rage, and is become extremely unpopular.

“In a generous nation some would undoubtedly be found to protect from insult, and vindicate the injured reputation of a stranger who had fled to it as an asylum from the prejudices and persecution of his own country, or to advocate the cause of this very eminent promoter of science and virtue, but in America the influence of such sentiments is languid and feeble. No such advocate has appeared. This great and most excellent man, in a short time after arriving in this country, perceived that the public mind was not sufficiently liberal and enlightened for hope that his public exertions would be attended with any beneficial effects. He therefore retired to Northumberland, a remote part of Pennsylvania, and there devotes himself to philosophical pursuits.

“From this place he wrote me a letter dated 7th November 1798, to Middletown. In this he speaks of



the illiberal treatment he experienced in the following words:—

“ I find myself exposed to more gross abuse here, on account of my supposed attachment to the cause of France, than I was in England, tho' I have nothing to do or say about the politics of the country, which indeed I hardly give any attention to, looking as I continually do towards Europe, which is the great theatre of interesting transactions.' ”

It would, however, be misleading to suggest that Priestley suffered acute annoyance or discomfort. We shall see that he was comfortable enough in America to decline without hesitation Russell's offer to make a more congenial home for him in France. But his popularity had declined, and he was unable to exercise the influence on which he had reckoned.

The language of the United States was, Skey testifies, beyond all comparison more correct than in the Old Country, and even amongst the lower classes it was free from the lingo and dialects of England. He notes various idioms (especially “help” and “guess”):—

“ Such as ‘Give me a cut of beef on the *west side*’ or ‘Shall I help you to anything?’ It always is ‘*Try* this beef,’ or ‘Do *try* this mutton,’ and what is singular, the custom is to have or *try* two or three different kinds of meat at the same time and on the same plate. Nothing is more common than to hear sentences concluded with *to*. ‘I am going to,’ ‘I

should like to,' 'I intend to,' &c., and the word *depend* as often occurs, as 'It rains, you may *depend*,' 'It is a warm day, you may *depend*.' To express a short space of time, it is a *spell*, and cheerfulness or activity is being very *spry*. Young pigs are called *suckers*, then *choats*, and when full grown *hogs*. The clock, watch, or gun is always of the feminine gender. 'What o'clock is it?' 'She has just struck one.' 'Have you got your watch in your pocket?' 'No, she did not go well, and therefore she is at the watch-maker's.' 'This is a good gun, but she is out of order as she has not been cleaned.'

"The Meeting House everywhere is the general point to or from any place. If you ask, How far to Hartford? 'So many miles to the *Meeting House*.' or 'Such a distance from the *Meeting House*,' and to your inquiries as to the road to any place, they invariably employ the cardinal points as directors, as 'Keep on to the eastward and when you come to such a place, then turn to the northward,' and so very general and so well understood is this mode of expression that it is employed upon every common occasion."

Skey notes with pleasure, as became an English country gentleman, the existence of a class of independent and substantial freeholders, owning and farming 400 or 500 acres of good land, living upon and from their estates. Besides getting every kind of food from their own property they made their soap and candles, spun their flax and hemp, wool and silk. A member of this fortunate class told Skey that his outside expenditure for the year on behalf of his whole

family had been £19, 17s. This was one side of the picture. But they led a secluded and almost solitary life. Their enjoyments were primitive, and if the following story be illustrative, as Skey suggests, of the social life in general, their sense of humour was rudimentary. Skey was passing the night at one of these farmers' houses.

“Tho' a person of some notoriety in his neighbourhood, a justice of the peace, &c., he had no female servant in the house. His daughters performed every part of the domestic business, and these were young women of irreproachable characters. Yet such is the peculiar taste for humour in this country, that soon after I was in bed I found that a very thin boarded partition divided my lodging from the ladies, which was not fixed to the floor, but was suspended by hooks from the ceiling so as to swing. Against this partition my bed was closely placed on the one side, and on the other two of my landlord's daughters had placed their bed also. The joke appeared to them very amusing, and consisted in their attempts to keep me from sleeping; but in this they did not long succeed, for having for a time endured their laughing, whispering, scratching and moving the partition from one bed against the other, I changed my position by taking my pillow to the foot of the bed, and being much fatigued, I soon fell asleep. This is termed frolicking. All things of this kind are considered as innocent in themselves, and therefore the parents are more disposed to forward the joke than disapprove of it.”

Partly for pleasure and partly on William Russell's business Skey made an excursion through "the States of Connecticut, New York, Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and to Annapolis in Maryland," where he attended a meeting of the Assembly. An interesting debate was held upon William Russell's claim against the State on account of "some paternal land, which it confiscated at the time of the American War, contrary to the Act for selling British property." The respectable part of the Assembly, says Skey, were unanimous and eager for restoring the property—Russell's claim being supported both by law and equity. A Committee appointed by the Assembly itself had reported *nem. con.* in favour of this course. Nevertheless, on a division, the payment of compensation was negatived. In spite of Russell's case being warmly supported, "arguments founded both on the laws of the State and the immutable law of right and common justice had no influence with the majority of the members," many of whom, Skey declares, were retained in the Assembly "avowedly because they were known never on any occasion to vote for any payment from the public purse." This, perhaps, was an extreme statement of a disappointed suitor's grievance, but from William Russell's letters it is clear that he had cherished an honest faith in his case, and considered himself to have been scurvily used by the Maryland House of Assembly.



## CHAPTER XVI

### HOME LIFE IN NEW ENGLAND

Original plans for a settlement—Pennsylvania unsuitable—Farming in Connecticut—William Russell's business enterprises—Litigations—Mount Vernon—General and Mrs. Washington—Notes on Virginia—A black cook for sale—Drawbacks of life at Middletown—Mary Russell's explanation—A limited range of interests—Trip to New Haven—Commencement at Yale—Mary Russell's criticisms—Animosity against the French—Danger of war—Priestley and President Adams—Reasons for leaving Middletown—William Russell's offer to Priestley—Return of the family to Europe.

"You will never stay here," wrote Priestley from America in 1794 to William Russell, "while England is tenable for you." House rent and other expenses were, he said, extravagantly high, and except in the large towns there was no society. He would not himself have gone to America but for the purpose of settling his sons. It is doubtful whether this letter, dated June 25, was received by Russell before he sailed on August 13 from Falmouth. But at that time no advice would have turned him from his purpose—to abandon for ever the country where he had been so harshly treated. His fixed intention was to withdraw his property from England (having wound up his partnership with George Russell, his brother in Birmingham) and become a naturalised citizen of the United States. In the bustle of preparations for departure he expressed to James Skey his deep

satisfaction at leaving "your proud isle," and to another friend wrote that soon he would be "steering on the mighty waters towards the land of peace." In Paris he had already assumed the name of an American citizen, as being more in harmony than that of an Englishman with his feelings and opinions. His daughters, as we have seen, thoroughly shared his enthusiasm for the free Republic in the New World, and at the outset their young brother, indignant at the father's wrongs, was very much of their way of thinking.

The original plan was for the Russells to make their home near to Priestley's. There may even have been some idea of founding a little Unitarian community—a model colony of friends and neighbours sympathetic in culture, pursuits, and religion. While the emigrants were still detained on French soil, Russell's agent had purchased some considerable farms, on what was then considered to be improving land, near to Priestley's property at Northumberland, and after landing at New York, Russell's first care was to visit his old friend and inspect the new estate. Apparently, the son had already seen enough of America to decide him against settling in Northumberland, and, from his remarks about Priestley in private life, it is clear that he was not altogether in love with the idea of having him as a near neighbour. Being a lad of strong character and sound judgment, he, no doubt, turned his father's mind. The driving tour which the family had taken in New England had shown them more attractive situations, and the girls, though prepared to make their home, if required, in Rhode

Island, had really set their hearts on the valley of the Connecticut, and especially on Middletown, then a little place of two hundred houses, which now counts its inhabitants in five figures. Their father was soon persuaded to fall in with their views because, though still a man of ample fortune, he was a little terrified at the scale of expenditure practised by the leading people of Philadelphia, where he spent his first winter, and also because the profits from his numerous trade ventures were rendered highly precarious by the war between England and France. His correspondence at this period with George Russell largely consists of warnings to his brother against undertaking any considerable commitments. Moreover, he had rather changed his mind as to the easiness of making money in America. At first he was convinced, he wrote, that he could make four times as much as in England with less trouble and less hazard. Later on, we find him pointing out the peculiar conditions of American commerce—the long credit required and the small profits obtained. At the same time he retained faith in the agricultural prospects of the country. He should have room, he wrote to Birmingham, for every kind of stock—those of human kind not excepted, who were honest and industrious. But the great cities, so he told his brother, were better places for making war, spending money, for exertion and diligence in early life, than for that “sedate retrospective inactivity relished and desirable in our mature and declining days.”

In these circumstances he naturally looked for a place where his family might live with credit and at



small expense, while he and his son could indulge the Englishman's natural taste for amateur farming. For this captivating pursuit they both possessed aptitude, nor did they fall into the common error of applying British methods to foreign soil and climate. The son, as his letters show, carefully studied the different American systems of agriculture, while the father chiefly devoted himself to stock-breeding—a pursuit on which he found a congenial correspondent in General Washington, whom he visited at his lovely home in Virginia on the River Potomac. Whether the farming operations carried on by the Russells in Connecticut were, from the money point of view, profitable does not appear. Certainly they had either paid too much for their lands at Northumberland or received too little on giving them up, but a man's agricultural merits cannot fairly be judged by the result of his dealings in land. That is another story.

Whether under different conditions the Russells, father and son, could ever have settled down as prosperous Connecticut agriculturists it is difficult to say. They never gave themselves the chance.

In speaking here of William Russell's business transactions in America, would it not be well to give him credit for the ceaseless perseverance and indomitable energy with which he devoted himself to collecting (no salary) his late partner's (George Russell's) outstanding debts (many thousands of pounds) in Philadelphia and the principal cities, while, from April 1796 to April 1800, he acted as the American agent (*i.e.* while he sent Zaccheus Walker on his own behalf to Paris)? This also accounts for much of the travelling



William Russell did in America at this period. His efforts were rewarded by complete success in almost every instance, even in many cases which Zaccheus Walker had always regarded as hopeless.

If I remember correctly, in several letters it is stated the "courts of law," banks, and "leading houses of business" were closed for *weeks*, if not *months*, together, owing to the complete hold yellow fever got of the inhabitants of certain of the principal towns which the writers visited.

William Russell was evidently a man of speculative, adventurous disposition and boundless energy. His letters show, in spite of the sage lesson administered to his brother at home, that he was constantly engaged in heavy undertakings, which involved periodical anxiety as to meeting large payments due in Boston, Philadelphia, or New York. Faithful himself to the very letter of his bond, he could not always count upon equal punctuality in some of his American business connections. In justice to the commercial men of the New Country, whose failings are so sharply castigated by Thomas Russell, it should be remembered that even moderate and reasonable calculations might, at this period, be suddenly upset through the risks of war, the recurrent uncertainties about peace, and the frightful ravages wrought in the great cities by yellow and other fevers. There were times when the courts of law suspended their sittings and the leading houses of business were brought absolutely to a standstill.

In addition to these troubles, Russell had a taste for what is generally the most hopeless of human

undertakings—prosecuting a private citizen's claim against a public authority. Perhaps he had been infected with this passion by his success at Birmingham in recovering damages from the Hundred for the destruction of his property at Showell Green, though, even in that case, he had been obliged, in his capacity of rate-payer, to contribute handsomely towards his solatium as an injured house-owner. His next attempt was made in France, where he tried to extract compensation from the Republican Government for the destruction of his property on the *Nancy* when captured by a French man-of-war, and for the expenses of maintaining himself and his family in prison. His failure in Paris did not deter him from entering into expensive and tiresome litigation with the State of Maryland. The result was set out in the previous chapter by James Skey. In pressing a claim against the State of Virginia on behalf of a country in which he was personally interested he appears to have had some success, though at the outset he was inclined to despair of his single-handed fight against "a combination of rascals in a strange land." Again, in Pennsylvania, he appears to have established his right as heir to a small property, which had been confiscated during the War of Independence. He was also much occupied, though without remuneration, in getting in debts due to his brother in Birmingham. On this work he expended as much energy as on business of his own. Whether lucky or unlucky, all these enterprises helped to wear out the strength, though not to quench the energy, of an elderly and in some respects disappointed man.

Now and again he seems to have rested in his charming Connecticut home. Sometimes, when his health had really been failing or his deafness was especially troublesome, he would allow his son to go alone upon these business errands. But he could not long remain sedentary. Eminently sociable, he enjoyed travelling, and particularly liked to look up old friends. Amongst the most notable of his visits was one of several which he paid to General and Mrs. Washington at Mount Vernon. An interesting glimpse of that famous household is given by William Russell in a letter to his son written from Dumfries in Virginia on October 24, 1797. Apparently he had not informed his host of his intended visit, for a short distance from the house he met General and Mrs. Washington in their state coach with four horses.

“They both knew me at once, and expressed great concern that they were under an engagement to dine at Alexandria, but he told me they should be at home in the evening. But I did not choose to lose a day in that manner, and therefore excused myself then, but promised to make my visit upon my return. Both the old General and his wife appeared to be in better health than I ever saw in their countenances in Philadelphia, and they both said they thought themselves to be so. He inquired after my daughters cheerfully, and seemed pleased to hear you were so well in health and so well pleased with your situation in Middletown. The Spanish Ambassador, I am told, is there on a visit to the niece. It was rumoured that he came to Annapolis to see Miss Carroll, but, as he made too



GEORGE WASHINGTON

*From a pastel ascribed to MRS. SHARPLES*





short a stay for that report, his errand is now said to be for the purpose of making his addresses to the other lady—and probably with no more truth than the former.”

On November 8th Russell jotted down for Skey's benefit some sound observations about Virginia :—

“I am much better pleased with this part of Virginia than what I saw before. These fine roads and the breed of very light horses they have here induced them all to use Sulkies,<sup>1</sup> which are as much the carriage of the country as a single horse chair is with your neighbours. The Sulkies are, however, very frequently upon four wheels, and it is the general practice for ladies to use them, but then they are always driven by a servant and never drive themselves. The style and etiquette of this State is as different from Connecticut as that is from Philadelphia. Here a family scarcely ever visit in any other carriage than a handsome English coach or chariot drawn by four horses with two drivers upon saddles with caps, liveries, &c., &c., as in England, but then all the servants have black faces, which to me always proves a sad take-off when I see the smart liveries, &c., at a distance and the black faces when they drive up to me. Through all Maryland and this State I have never once met a gentleman with a white servant. I have heard of a capital black cook, a man cook (the female cooks are not valued here). The fellow I refer to would I think suit us admirably well . . . the price is \$500, but he would

<sup>1</sup> Progenitor of the light two-wheel car used for trotting matches.

be sold for 100 guineas, and if what I hear of him is true would be *cheap* to us at that price. It seems now very evident to me that we should have either all white or all black servants. Had our finances been in good plight and we had concluded upon the blacks I have a fine opportunity of getting them. But I do not precisely know upon what footing we could have or hold them in Connecticut. I wish to be informed of this in your next letter. . . .”

*Letter from Richmond* continued:—

“*November* 10, 1797.—I was really surprised upon my arrival at the capital of this State to see in what a scattered, disjointed state it is: the appearance as I entered from Fredericksberg reminded me very much of the Federal City, and I still think it more like that than any other city I have seen upon the continent. They have an enormous pile of building which they are very proud of and call their Capitol. It has been built about twelve years, and they have now just finished the fourth roof which has been put upon it. It contains the archives, &c., belonging to the State and all the different offices upon the ground floor, which is all arched with brick, and the doors plated with iron, so as to be effectually secured against fire. . . . I was pleased, however, to see a full statue of General Washington, which appears a good likeness: there is also a bust of the Marquis de la Fayette, who is in my opinion more honoured by his company than his deserts entitled him to.”

The deferred visit to Mount Vernon was duly paid,

and briefly described in a letter to Thomas Russell written on November 27 from Bladensburg.

“I reached Mount Vernon in the morning, before General Washington was prepared for his morning’s ride, and gained two mornings with him instead of one, which was all I should have otherwise allowed myself. Two very interesting mornings they were to me, and, if I can trust to my own judgment and the repeated and very cordial invitation he *again and again* gave me at parting, I really believe he was not a little pleased with my visit. Mrs. Washington I found the same attentive, good-humoured old lady she has always appeared to us. They were quite alone, but had an invalid in the house whom Mrs. Washington announced to me, but I did not hear what she said. My hearing was very bad, and still continues so, to my very great mortification, but I have no remedy but patience, and therefore endeavour to acquiesce as cheerfully as I can. . . . I wish you, my dear Thomas, not to sell the two best of the ram lambs at any price. I propose to keep the best for myself, and am to send the second to General Washington, whose sheep are by no means *near* mine. . . .”

Meantime, Thomas Russell, as is clear from his views given in the preceding chapter, had conceived a hearty dislike of the American people and their institutions. A genial and generous lad, adored by his sisters, to whom he was the best of brothers, leader in home gaieties and country diversions, he seems to have been ruffled by the social aspect of Republican



life as developed at the turn of the eighteenth century. As soon as he touches upon the manners and customs of New England the bright, clever lad becomes sententious and unsympathetic. He soon made it evident that he would never agree to settle permanently in America, and his chief hope, as expressed to friends of his own age, was for an eventual return, as soon as might be, to his native country.

At first, the sisters found it more easy than the brother to accommodate themselves to the new surroundings. For the first year or two of their residence in Middletown we have only Mary's diaries on record. The indefatigable, observant, and enthusiastic Martha's pen was stayed, at first by illness, and afterwards by pre-occupation. At some date, not stated, her correspondence with James Skey of Upton-on-Severn had passed into an exchange of love-letters, and, when he arrived at Middletown in the autumn of 1798, it was with the purpose of making her his wife. The wedding was celebrated on December 13th of that year, "very quietly." So quietly indeed, that not before a fortnight afterwards were the neighbours informed of that important family event.

From this remarkable secrecy it is sufficiently obvious that the Russells had more or less withdrawn from the social life of the little township. Almost as much is confessed in the first page of Mary's diary, written after twelve months' trial of their Connecticut home.

"With respect to the natural beauties of the country round this place"—she begins on November 5, 1797, with charming old-fashioned formality—"they

Adv. 28hb

William Ruysek Esq<sup>r</sup>

Middletown - in

See

Connecticut

G. Washington

Mount Vernon 28. Sep. M<sup>o</sup> 1798

Sir,

Your favour of the 8. inst. is received, and I thank you for your obliging attention to the article promised me, when I had the pleasure of seeing you at his place.

I will direct twenty of my best ones to be reserved for the Parnoyer have kindly promised me; - which, with the Chaf machine, I shall look for when an opportunity shall offer you to send them. -

their shipment, is very affecting to humanity, and must be sorely felt by the City of New York, and other places under the same calamitous circumstances.

I have sent to the care of Mr. Thomas Porter of Alexandria, fifteen bushels of fine forward wheat, in five flour barrels, agreeably to your desire.

— Having none of my own growth that was pure & unmix'd, I purchased this quantity from a neighbour of mine who raises no other kind, & am assured it is pure

9



I feel very much obliged, Sir, by your  
presence of the Ram, and further kind intention,  
— for the trouble you have taken to procure  
the Chaff machine for me; — and will beg for  
your kind wishes — which I appreciate with  
great cordiality — being

Yours most Obedt. Servant

Very Obedt. Servant

G. Washington

quite exceed the expectation I had formed of them and indeed 'tis generally the case with all Dame Nature's works that the more we examine them the more reason we find for admiration whereas in the works of Man a closer examination is but too apt to discover to "us faults which on a slight observation were not observed." After this unpunctuated exordium Mary comes to the point. "This has been too much the case with the people here. Many with whom we were much pleased on first acquaintance have not justified the good opinion we had formed of them. But the feeling and enlarged mind of an European cannot be expected in this situation, where in general the sphere of observation is very narrow, and so much of the time always occupied (and in the present state of society almost necessarily so) in the care of and provision for a family that it leaves but little leisure to attend to any of those literary pursuits and elegant accomplishments which not only enlarge the mind but heighten the sensibility and improve the heart."

Very true. But it was a dangerous discovery to be made by young girls fixed—apparently for an indefinite term—in a small country town amongst neighbours of narrow circumstances and limited interests. At Birmingham, already the centre of a bustling intellectual life, they had lived among people who read (and wrote) the newest books, indulged in the most advanced speculation, and were actors or sufferers in a struggle which, for a time, had held the attention of all England. Dr. Priestley was not merely a local divine or simply an esteemed philosopher. He was also a public person who had crossed swords with Mr. Burke

and (in the opinion of his friends) had held his own. Their father's reputation was not a mere reflection from his intimacy with Priestley. He was a leading magistrate of Birmingham, well known in London, and, when ill-treated, could speak confidently about laying his case in person before Mr. Pitt.

From youth upwards Martha and Mary Russell had, more or less, shared in the intellectual and political movements of public life in England, and before setting foot in the New World they had graduated in the most thrilling experiences of the Old. If they could pass, without conscious transformation, through the prolonged trials of their imprisonment on successive French men-of-war, they must at least have undergone a moral awakening when they were brought face to face with the French Revolution. The worst, perhaps, was over. Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette, Mirabeau, Marat, and Robespierre had been removed. But the Russell girls had witnessed an attempted revolution; had seen Paris under arms, and were present at the agony of Fouquier-Tinville. They had walked and talked with some people who had done—or still were doing—great or notorious things in Paris. They knew Madame de Staël and some of her circle: they were united in affectionate friendship with men like General Miranda. They were intimate with famous philosophers. They had read, studied, and been taught. It was not likely, therefore, that they would comfortably settle down in a hum-drum township, where the most exciting subject of conversation would be criticism of the preacher's doctrine, or gossip about some boy-and-girl love match, or speculations on



the coming harvest. From a world of books, thought, action, of noble aspiration and strenuous endeavour, of war and crime and civil strife, the new-comers were transplanted to a village scene, more remote and limited than could nowadays be matched in the most world-forsaken retreat of the New England or the Old.

At first sight, of course, the girls, exhausted by a long series of violent sensations, weary with travel, believed that they would always be happy in Middletown and never could be happy elsewhere. With genuine zest they threw themselves into the little life of the place. Mary's diary is full of the rural pleasures on which they are feeding—the multiplicity of gorgeous flowers, the heavenly notes of unknown birds, the long rides on horseback in the summer mornings, the thrills of sleighing through the winter months. Almost equal pleasure they experienced in the simple hospitalities of kindly neighbours—the picnic parties in the woods, the friendly little dances, the games amongst the young people, Dumb-crambo and the like, with the occasional formality of an Assembly. At first all this was very charming and satisfying. Only twice during the first twelve months had the Russell girls gone outside the range of Middletown. Once was to pay a visit to a friend at Hartford, no great distance. The other occasion was to attend "Commencement" at New Haven.

Graduates of Yale University may be interested to hear Mary Russell's account of the proceedings in 1797.

"In the morning at 9 o'clock we were to be at



the Brick Meeting House, where the young men were to give specimens of their learning. We found a very crowded audience assembled. The president occupied the pulpit, and the Corporation were in a semicircle under him. Under him in front of the pulpit a stage was erected for the speakers. When we arrived a young man was delivering a Latin oration, which he appeared to do with great ease and to pronounce well.

“After that came a long and very foolish debate concerning the manners and customs of the first settlers of this State. It was maintained by four of the students. One argued the superiority of the manners of the Greeks in the time of Plato. Another indicated the character of a fine gentleman. The very frequent and ill-natured sarcasms that were thrown out during all this piece against the French nation were very disgusting. The evident consciousness of the great superiority which they thought their State in particular to enjoy was too apparent. A debate on Divorce was then introduced, and, after that, one of the most ridiculous that could be for such an exhibition as that. For a set of strolling players it might have been tolerable, but for young men assembled to give specimens of their learning it was quite out of character. It was a short farce or tragedy performed by some of the students. The young man who was going to commit suicide had two pistols and put them to his head to shoot himself with, when a friend interposed and stopt him. Though some round us were wiping their eyes, to us it was truly ludicrous, and we had some difficulty in restraining our countenances.

“The last piece we were much pleased with. It was in poetry, composed by the young man who delivered it, was well spoken, and had some fine ideas in it. It was on the Being and Providence of God, in answer to some of M. Volney’s opinions. In the afternoon we did not go, as we were to attend the Ball in the evening.”

This, no doubt, the girls thoroughly enjoyed, though no record is given of their adventures. Perhaps one may conjecture that Mary’s criticism of the dramatic piece would have been more sympathetic (since some of the company were moved to tears) if she had not been irritated and pained by the previous attack upon the beloved French. Though the young ladies had been, as they confessed, put a little out of conceit with Revolutionary methods, they still clung tenaciously to the central idea of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, and to Paris as the great world-beacon of Light and Learning. In Middletown their most intimate and best liked friends were French settlers—a fact, as we have seen, which largely accounts for their apparently growing estrangement from some of their American neighbours.

At this time (1797) the relations, once so friendly, between France and the United States, were dangerously strained. The trouble arose out of the Jay Treaty between Great Britain and the United States. The French took it amiss that, after having so materially helped to bring about American Independence in 1783, they were now left alone to fight out as best they might their renewed struggle with the

English. The behaviour of the French diplomatists had for some time been overbearing, and in 1796 some unpopularity fell upon President Adams for preserving a conciliatory attitude towards Paris. Next year a storm of patriotic fury broke out when the United States Minister was ordered to leave France; it was renewed when the three Commissioners subsequently sent by the United States were addressed in terms which, to the excited American sentiment, seemed to constitute a demand for tribute. Instantly, an agitation was worked up with characteristic vigour, and a large party clamoured for war against France. The ill-feeling did not pass away until Bonaparte, having got rid of the Directory, restored cordial relations between the two countries.

Meantime it was a difficult position for French people living in the United States; not less difficult for their friends. It made no difference that they disapproved, as the Russells did, the insolent action of the Directory. Patriotic indignation does not make nice discriminations. Priestley, who stood bravely by his French Revolution friends, suffered in American repute, and remarked sarcastically upon the conduct of that enlightened statesman Adams, who, as the term of his Presidency came within view, thought it wise to withdraw (with something very like an apology) from his support of the pro-French divine. Mary Russell says distinctly that her people became unpopular because they were faithful to their French neighbours in Middletown.

In other respects her diary is almost free from political references. She does indeed allude to the



approaching competition for the Vice-Presidency between Jefferson and Aaron Burr, but only to say that she hopes the latter will fail because, though a man of great political ability, he was personally an evil-liver. On the question of slavery she also mentions that her father, on returning from a visit to the South, had not condemned the institution, but regretted its universal prevalence in Maryland and Virginia, and was pained by the inhuman manner in which the negroes were treated. "It must shock the feelings of every friend to humanity whose heart is not hardened by education and habit to regarding the negroes in a light not superior to beasts." But, as we have seen, William Russell, like most white people in the United States at this time, saw little objection to domestic servitude as practised in kindly and enlightened families.

The crops of the field, the promise in the orchard, the prevalence of hydrophobia amongst cattle as well as dogs, the arrival of a new settler, or possibly the sermon of the previous Sunday—these are the topics that fill most of Mary Russell's neatly written pages. There is no discontent expressed with the retired life, no harsh criticism of individual neighbours, but gently and unobtrusively the writer lets it be seen that she is weary of the uneventful daily routine and the lack of congenial society.

Martha's engagement and approaching marriage, to be followed by her return to England, fill Mary with a sense of almost intolerable loneliness. From the day when Mr. and Mrs. Skey sail for the bridegroom's home it is clear that the days of the Russells



in Middletown—and in America—are numbered. The parting, when it comes in May 1799, is a sharp wrench to the father and sister left behind. William Russell writes that he is “tremblingly alive” to the perils from French privateers, and curiously enough this was the one alarm—happily a false one—that broke the monotony of the young couple’s prosperous voyage home. A strange sail was sighted, and all hands, passengers included, made ready to fight the vessel bearing down upon them—whether she should be French or Algerine. Happily, it was a false alarm.

William Russell, though not yet old in years, was somewhat broken in health. Always a little delicate, he had, during his captivity, undergone hardships that might have tried a strong constitution, and he never altogether recovered from the long strain. Neither in his own business nor in his friends’ did he spare himself. At one time he wrote to his brother that he was rising with the sun and going to rest not before midnight—working all day and every hour. Clearly he had already caught the American restlessness. To so energetic a man it must have been peculiarly vexatious that his hearing should fail him. He was troubled with deafness to such a degree that much of the zest was taken from his life. On returning from one of his many business journeys he found it painful that he could not understand what his daughters were trying to make him understand. On one occasion he gave up a promised visit to Priestley because he would not be able to enjoy his old friend’s conversation. Nevertheless

he formed plans, or dreamed dreams, of a close association. When in 1800 he had so arranged his rather complicated investments and commitments that he could see his way to revisiting Europe on the first news of peace, he suggested that Priestley should come to live with him at Abbey Ardennes, and establish a Unitarian organisation in France.

The divine, who, in some respects, was a better man of the world than his lay supporter, would not listen to these proposals. His French was not good enough for a theological propaganda amongst Frenchmen. The scheme, he gently suggested, was somewhat Utopian, and his friend should wait until he had spent some time in the country before he embarked in any large project. As for himself—on that point he was quite decided—he could not and would not leave his Northumberland home, at least until peace had been assured in Europe. He might have added, with a contemporary French cynic, that there was not enough faith in the country to support two religions!

It was, therefore, as a weary though not disheartened man that William Russell in 1801 left the land to which in 1795 he had sailed as to “a clime where peace and serenity prevail.” In his letters there is nothing to suggest that he had abandoned the ideas which he had so valiantly maintained or the ideals that he struggled to uphold. But, as a man advanced in years, he did not wish to live with the ocean between himself and his dearly loved children. When he asks his son-in-law in England to send him over a “bob wig”—the fashionable wear in

London, so he had heard—he adds that the order must not be taken to mean that he has given up the purpose of leaving America on the first good opportunity. Martha Skey and her husband had gone away with no intention of coming back, two years before, and now Mary and Thomas Russell were sailing for England—never to return, writes exultant Thomas. It only remained for their father to follow them—though not to England. For the present, and for a good many years to come, his country was barred to him, and he could live no nearer to his own flesh and blood than on his estate near Caen.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE RETURN TO EUROPE

William Russell's arrival at Bordeaux—His anomalous position—Perils of doubtful nationality—Investment in French land—Residence at Abbey Ardennes—Technical felony—Pardon suggested—Erskine's opinion—Russell's attitude—Correspondence with his son in Paris—Suspicious French authorities—Proposed petition to the English Government—Fear of prejudicing title of French property—Political gossips—The Emperor of Russia—Lord Lauderdale's mission—Death of Fox—Prolonged suspense—Thomas Russell and the First Empire—Bonaparte's marriage—Public fêtes in Paris—Return of William Russell.

MARY and Thomas Russell, happy in the thought of their return to Europe, lamented that their pleasure was to be spoiled by parting with their father. It was impossible for William Russell either to travel with his children or rejoin them on British soil. Indeed his legal position in 1801, and for many years afterwards, was sufficiently complicated, if not perilous. As a reputed and formally adopted citizen of the United States he had resolved to profit by the settlement of outstanding disputes between Washington and Paris. It was safe, so he considered, to take up residence on his Normandy estate. But in point of fact he could not divest himself of British nationality. He ran a certain risk, therefore, of being denounced in France as an Englishman and once again becoming a prisoner of war. That the danger



was by no means imaginary appears from his correspondence with his son, in which he speaks of the suspicion entertained by the local French authorities as to foreigners living near the coast and receiving letters from abroad.

On the other hand, he could not return to England so long as it remained at war with France. His purchase of land in Paris and Normandy in 1799 had been a felony in the eye of the English law. Though, perhaps, he had no personal enemies in England, there were plenty of political adversaries who might rejoice in setting the law in motion against a well-known public character. It is true that the purchase of these French estates had been conducted in the name of Mr. Fulwar Skipwith, American Agent-General in Paris, and Russell had carefully enjoined his agents that nothing should be done that would reveal the real ownership. But that sort of fiction is not easily maintained in regard to a landed property of very considerable value. The investment in the Quai Voltaire was quite important, and the rental of the portion of the Ardennes estate not occupied by Russell himself was about £800 a year. Although at first he did not contemplate a permanent abode in Normandy, a few days after his arrival at Bordeaux (July 2, 1801) he wrote to his agent at Caen, asking him to arrange for temporary house accommodation. He proposed, he said, to take an active part in the management of the estate, and wished the tenants to understand that he would soon be amongst them. In such circumstances it was evidently useless to think of concealing his true position. He had not long

installed himself when he set up a Protestant place of worship in Caen, and on this proof of spiritual energy he received warm congratulations from Priestley. Himself too old and weary to help in familiarising the French people with "rational Christianity," the divine praised the layman's energy, and regretted that similar efforts were not made in other parts of the country. For though the Protestants in France were pretty numerous they were, he said, excelled in zeal by the Roman Catholics.

At first Russell had been very happy in his gardens and orchards and farm. He is frequently inviting Martha Skey, his married daughter, now a mother, to pay him a visit.

"You see, my dear Martha, I include you in the number whom I invite to come, for I think your being a nurse is not an *insuperable* objection, and the packet, which oftentimes reaches Havre in twelve hours, may for a trifling expense be engaged for yourselves, and will bring you and all your family with great convenience. At least they had such vessels before the war, and such are expected again. I can assure you I have room not only for you and all your family, but for all our relations, and all their families with them. I shall have plenty of provisions of all sorts, for as many as will come—even now at this barren season. We have fish, wild fowl, game, and poultry *in great plenty* (particularly the former). I buy all sorts of shambles meat (veal excepted) at  $3\frac{1}{4}$ d. pr. lb., fine wheat bread  $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. pr. lb., butter  $7\frac{1}{2}$ d., vegetables in abundance. I wish I could send your

young folks a present of some of the fine apples and pears I now have in my *fruitier*, where I have a store that will last for many months to come. I told your husband in my last that I drink very good wine at 15d. pr. bottle, and I have since learnt that there is good beer and ale too at Caen. As to cider I have a large magnificent mill within my precincts, where more than one of my farmers have made above 1000 gallons for the consumption of their own family and workmen. Every farmer I have makes more or less for the like purpose, and all from the trees upon their respective farms. What is the quality of the malt liquor or the cider I cannot say, for I have never tasted a drop of either, nor yet of spirituous liquor of any kind since I landed in France. If you drink water, as I do, at dinner, I shall give you as much as you please from a very fine spring at my own door."

". . . I said in my last to your sister [he writes in December 1801] that I was then preparing some apartments in the Convent, and I have now to say that I have taken up my abode there, and find it very comfortable—for such a situation, at a distance from every friend and relation, and with all my infirmities about me. It is certainly a bad season of the year for a single person to enter upon such large and *lofty* rooms as mine are, each of them being 22 by 25 and 16 feet *high*. I have a sleeping-room, a breakfast room, a dining-room, a noble kitchen, and a servant's bedroom, all contiguous and in a line, with a garden in each front. In addition to these I have store rooms, cellars and a *fruitier*, &c., in abundance. I found the





THE CHURCH, ABBEY ARDENNES, NEAR CAEN

*From a photograph by T. H. RUSSELL*





whole of the old as well as the new Convent in the most neglected, ruinous condition that such buildings could possibly be reduced to, but the old one in as firm a state as the new, and likely to last as long, according to all present appearances. But all was in a state of degradation and depredation, and the whole were exhibited as a property whereon was stamped neglect and an idea of its being of *no* value. My judgment had led me to conclude that it was my duty to alter the word "no" before "value" and make it appear of *much* value, and it is the prosecution of this plan which has occupied much of my attention since I arrived here, and has contributed not a little to the satisfaction I find in fixing my residence in retirement. Yet, in the midst of such a property as I never possessed before or can ever hope to do again, I intend to come and see my friends and relations in England a few months hence (if the definitive treaty is ratified), whether any of you come here from thence or not—and you are all at liberty to do as you like as to coming here.

"I am intending to turn a wilderness of a court into a *French* garden, and when any of you come to see me I am persuaded you will be pleased with this metamorphosis, whatever you admire besides. I wish you to prepare me a packet of choice flower seeds that will flourish in the natural ground without any hot-beds, for I shall not be likely to give in to any expenses of that kind, however I may labour and till the grounds around me, whether for use or ornament. This reminds me of having mentioned to our dear Mary, Darwin's *Botanic Garden*, and to add that if

your husband has not seen his later publication entitled *Phytologia*, I would recommend it to him and your brother to procure it forthwith. I have it here as well as the *Botanic Garden*, and am highly pleased with both as far as I have read of them, but that is not much, and was chiefly whilst on my passage from the Western World."

Amongst other books which Russell wishes to have brought or sent from England (1801) are Belsham's *Philosophy of the Mind* and Paley's *Natural Theology*.

But neither the pleasures of a country gentleman nor the recreations of a scholar contented the old man's heart. He yearned for daily intercourse with his family and hankered after his native land. He was for ever plotting and planning how to get back to England. For a time the two countries were at peace, but nobody believed that the happy state of affairs could last. There was therefore no time to be lost. As he had so plainly identified himself with Ardennes, it occurred to James Skey, his son-in-law, that the boldest would be the most judicious course. Why not approach the British Government, confess the technical crime, and sue for a free pardon? In November 1802, a case was stated for Erskine's<sup>1</sup> opinion. By an ingenious selection and arrangement of facts it was made to appear that Russell, while staying in Paris, and intending to become an American citizen, had obliged the American envoy in Paris (Skipwith) with a loan of several thousand pounds. This advance

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards Lord Chancellor.

was to be repaid soon after Russell's arrival in America. Not receiving it at the time appointed, Russell sent his agent, a Mr. Walker, to obtain either the money or some security. Mr. Walker, accordingly, took a conveyance of a house in Paris and an estate at Ardennes. At this time, it was explained, neither Walker nor Russell was aware of the Statute passed in the thirty-third year of George III., though in point of fact, even if they had possessed such knowledge, they might still have acted as in fact they did act, since at that time Russell had no intention of returning to England. Afterwards his plans had been changed by the fact of his daughter having married an English gentleman, and come to live with him in England.

This recital of assorted facts was followed by a legal argument based on the language of the Act :—

“ If any person being a subject of his Majesty, and out of his Majesty's dominions, shall in any such manner as aforesaid, make or authorise, direct, procure, or cause to be made, any such buying, purchase, contract, agreement, loan, or advancement as aforesaid, or shall aid or assist therein, and shall after voluntarily return, or come to Great Britain, every such person so returning or coming to Great Britain, being thereof convicted, or attainted, by due course of law, shall be deemed, declared, and adjudged to be a felon, and shall suffer the pain of death, and also lose and forfeit as in cases of high treason.”

On behalf of Russell it was suggested by his



attorneys that, though the intention of the Legislature was pretty obvious, the words of the Act were ambiguous. The point might be raised "whether the returning to England did not constitute an essential part of the newly created offence, and, if so, as Mr. Russell had not yet returned, the offence was not complete during the continuance of the war, to which period by the first enacting clause the operation of the Act was confined."

In giving his opinion the great lawyer (after the manner of his kind) brushed aside legal subtleties not invented by himself. He went for a straightforward construction of the Act. "In the strict construction of a Statute so highly penal it might be fairly argued that the offence should be committed during the continuance by a person who at the time of committing it was resident in Great Britain; but I am afraid that the law would attach upon any person who had been in Great Britain during the continuance of the war, and who, during such continuance, purchased lands in France.

"It is also clear [Erskine continued] that the consent to and adoption of the purchase during the war is the same as original employment of an agent to make it; but under the circumstances of Mr. Russell's case there can be no doubt that upon a proper representation to Government he would obtain a pardon, and I advise him to pursue that course."

This opinion was forwarded next day to Russell by Skey, who mentions various friends in Parliament as being likely to support the petition. The present Administration (Addington's) have, he says,

“conducted themselves with candour and liberality : they seem to act upon very different principles from those of their predecessors (Pitt’s).”

Skey’s letter was received at Ardennes on 20th November, and endorsed by William Russell as “answered,” but what the reply was there is no document to show, nor has any tradition been preserved in the family. For some reason, however, Erskine’s advice was not followed. William Russell’s keen disappointment was expressed in a letter six weeks later. He had apparently made sure of getting leave to return to England. The disappointment threw him into “an agony from which he did not know when he would be free.” On March 14, 1803, he renewed the attack with a long letter addressed to Lord Whitworth, British Ambassador in Paris, war not having yet broken out again. He gives a brief recital of his adventures by sea, leading up to the arrangements under which he acquired the estates in Paris and Normandy. His return to France on the way from America to England he represented as due to anxiety about the properties ; he had no idea that it was felony for an Englishman during the continuance of war to reside in France. He begs Whitworth, therefore, to grant him an indemnity in order that he may “return to the bosom of his country and the endearments of his friends.” “As a proof of my steady attachment to my native land,” he winds up, “and my hopes that your Lordship may thereby be induced to think me worthy of your patronage, I entreat your Lordship’s indulgence whilst I add that upon the estate I possess, and from whence I have the honour

of addressing your Lordship, there are two convents in high preservation, with a seaport almost adjoining; and that I am in a part of the Republic where the price of labour is peculiarly inviting to a manufacturer."

In spite of all these commercial and agricultural advantages his "attachment to *natale solum* preponderates," and he begs Whitworth to remove the present unexpected impediments to his return. The letter, delivered in person by Thomas Russell, was favourably acknowledged, and once again the old man's hopes revived. "But what a dismal change does the present hostile appearance in England threaten us with. May a kind and gracious God avert the impending evil. I hope the blow is not already struck, but I see no newspaper, and am content with such political intelligence as Thomas transmits me once a week." On May 16 Russell laments the departure of Lord Whitworth. On June 28, after referring to "this unhappy war now threatening to rage with unexampled severity," he complains that his newest friend and only English interpreter had been ordered to Fontainebleau. Almost completely deaf, unable to make himself understood by his neighbours, cut off from his daughters, and only seeing his son for short periods at long intervals, the old man got little pleasure from life beyond what he found in his property. At this point the records of his experiences break off, but from account-books preserved in the family it appears that, except for a few visits to Paris, he spent all his time at Ardennes. In 1807 he seems to have given up the expectation of returning to England, for on



May 11 he was admitted to the rights of a French citizen.

For a long time the old man was cut off from his family. His daughters were tied to England, and their only hope of again seeing their father lay in the prospect, alternately approaching and receding, that peace was about to be made between England and France. Thomas Russell, whose letters at this period demonstrate him as a shrewd man of the world, experienced almost beyond his years, and a keen observer of political tendencies, spent a good deal of time in Paris. He corresponded frequently with his father at Ardennes, but was extremely cautious about compromising their somewhat delicate positions by personal intercourse. On August 20, 1806, he writes that he had been looking forward to a meeting at Ardennes. Evidently William Russell had been pressing him to come down, and the son was anxious to "relieve the solitude" of his father's situation. But the plan had to be postponed, and on October 2nd he is writing again that he cannot leave Paris without the formalities of petitions and reports, "which always take up so much time that I am really afraid the vacation will be nearly expired before I can obtain the permission." Besides, there was a risk of the Préfet de Police referring him, "as before," to the military authorities—which would be disagreeable. It was of course possible to dispense with a passport and yet escape molestation, but the risk would be rather serious. Two days later, having taken counsel with friends in Paris, he wrote that it would be unadvisable to awaken the attention of the police. He must



therefore submit to the "mortification of not paying a visit to his father this Fall."

It might be easier, Thomas suggested, for his father to come to Paris. Probably there would be no difficulty about a passport, and he could have his lodgings on the same terms as before.

Meantime, James Skey was working for his father-in-law's return to England by means of a petition to the Government. He wrote to Thomas that he was confident of success, though delay might be occasioned by the difficulty of gaining access to men in office. But was it at the present moment wise to press the application? Besides, how would it affect the property in France? If William Russell should go back to England and openly resume his English nationality it might affect his title to French lands. First, it would seem, the property should be sold. Here, it seems likely, the doubtful status of the proprietor, if not absolutely fatal to a transfer, might reduce the price. Moreover, from the correspondence between William Russell and his son, it is clear that the old man loved Ardennes and enjoyed living upon it. Nor did Thomas, even when, subsequently, a good offer had been received, urge his father to agree to what he would feel as a painful sacrifice. Thomas himself did not relish the idea of settling down to an agricultural life in Normandy, but in some of his letters he used expressions which implied that he might, for his father's sake, adopt that career.

Year after year the suspense was continued. It seemed inadvisable to take any decisive step while the question of peace or war was still unsettled. Action

on the part of the Russells in their private affairs was paralysed almost as much by the recurrent hope of peace as by the continuance of war. Naturally the family letters are full of political gossip.

At one time the highest expectations are founded on the noble character of the Emperor Alexander. "What renovations amongst mankind may we not hope for," exclaims William Russell, "when so splendid a man is sitting upon the throne of Russia." Russell had been talking to the Czar's tutor (Col. La Harpe), who had related a "variety of interesting anecdotes" about his late pupil. According to La Harpe the young ruler's desire to do good was something more than principle. It was positively a passion. When speaking of his people he did not allude to them as subjects but as fellow-citizens. In referring to himself he never used the title of Emperor, but expressed for his people the affection of a father rather than the authority of a magistrate. Many were the legends about the Czar, and deep the disappointment which in every country of Europe that gallant and well-meaning ruler inflicted upon sanguine cosmopolitan reformers.

An arrangement for the exchange of prisoners is talked about, and this, the *Quid-nuncs* declare, will be followed by a general understanding. On the prospects of Lord Lauderdale's mission in the autumn of 1806, the speculations are almost of daily recurrence, and vary with every day of the week. What, again, will be the effect of Mr. Fox having been successfully tapped for the dropsy? Will his death, which had occurred a few days later, destroy all hope of a treaty?

So it goes on—men's minds alternating between the expectation of early peace and dull resignation to a perpetual state of warfare. But what most strikes one, on reading the intimate letters of this period, is how thoroughly accustomed people had become to victories and defeats, how quietly they put up with the personal inconveniences, the loss and suffering and sheer misery, how stoically they went about their ordinary business. Apart from the interest of the scenes at which the Russells of Birmingham assisted, either as actors or spectators, the diaries and letters here summarised have a special value as illustrating the manner and degree in which the fortunes of private persons, essentially non-combatants, may be influenced by the strife of rulers and the feuds of Governments. This sort of a side light on history is more clearly visible, when we follow the adventures of a quiet, unambitious family, as recorded in documents never intended for publication, than if we study the correspondence and journals of illustrious or self-conscious personages writing with one eye on posterity.

On May 11, 1807, William Russell had been admitted to the rights of a French citizen, but the nominal change of status did not affect his way of living. Practically the whole of his time was spent at Ardennes.

Young Thomas Russell, who had been admitted to French citizenship in 1809, and was a Major in the Garde Nationale, lived in Paris and witnessed some of the most brilliant events in the First Empire. He used to entertain his aged father at Normandy with accounts of the bustle and gaiety of the preparations



for Bonaparte's second marriage. He had got a ticket for the gallery.

With quiet gusto he describes the apparel (it is still preserved in the family), which he procured for the splendid ceremony. With another English gentleman, three English and two French ladies, he set out in a private coach, at an early hour in the morning. The gates were to be opened at nine o'clock.

“Two staircases had been erected, one on each side the Louvre, by which the persons invited to the gallery were to enter, so that the carriages set down the company at the colonnade which runs under the gallery. This had been covered on each side within by rich tapestry, and along it was placed on each side a row of orange trees, the same that are in the Garden of the Tuileries in the summer, so that we advanced along this beautiful walk to the staircase, and, as the opening between different columns allowed of several entrances, many other persons were flocking in at the same time as us, which made a still more lively scene. On entering the gallery we were struck beyond measure with the beauty of the sight. Though we were so early, yet more than half the places were already occupied, and the rest filling apace, so that we made haste to secure the best we could find, and seated ourselves very advantageously about half way down—that is, the ladies seated themselves and the gentlemen stood behind. We enjoyed at leisure the novelty and elegance of this beautiful sight, which was like an enchantment. All was animation. Pleasure and surprise were painted on every countenance. The



elegance of the company gave a new splendour to the place, and the grandeur of the place gave a new richness to the brilliancy of the company. It was such a varied and lively scene that we did not find the time at all long, though it was near three o'clock before the cortège entered the gallery; there was a constant stream of persons coming in till one o'clock, when the doors were shut, and after that others were continually walking up and down the gallery, which was covered with rich carpets all the way along. It is impossible to conceive a more pleasing prospect than this walk offered to the view. It was so gay, and at the same time so grand as to the general effect, that every one was delighted, and this general satisfaction added a new life to the scene. The ladies were dressed with great taste, but without any excessive richness, which was reserved for those of the cortège, who were covered with gold and silver embroidery. Between two and three, the cannon announced the arrival of the Emperor at the Tuileries, and in about half-an-hour afterwards the cortège entered the gallery in the order which you have no doubt seen in the newspapers. All eyes were naturally fixed on the Emperor and Empress—especially the latter, who appeared with some dignity and without being much disconcerted. She is of a good figure though not a beauty, and even rather an ordinary expression of countenance. She is said to be of a good disposition, though not of very bright parts, and to be quite bigoted in religion—which is generally looked upon here as an unfavourable circumstance. The train of queens, princesses, maids of honour, &c., that followed her

was dazzling; they were all confounded, as it were, in a general blaze reflected from their splendid dresses. The ceremony of the marriage was much shorter than we expected, so that we had not to wait long before the return of the cortège, when we had again an opportunity of viewing the new married couple, who seemed now in better spirits than as they went. She had on her head, besides the crown, a diadem set in diamonds of great value; her gown was also embroidered with diamonds, and is said to have cost three millions of livres."

Thomas Russell was also present at the ball given to their Imperial Majesties by the Ville de Paris. Writing on June 13, 1810, he says:—

"The company, from 600 to 700 persons, was ranged on benches on each side—the ladies first, elegantly dressed as you may suppose, and the gentlemen behind. At one end of the room were seats somewhat elevated, and a rich canopy for the Emperor and his attendants. On his arrival, about 10 o'clock, he took his seat with the Empress and the Queens of Westphalia and Naples at his left—the King of Westphalia and the Viceroy of Italy at his right. The concert then began, which consisted merely of some verses for the occasion. After that the Empress opened the ball before us; when the dance was over, she returned to her seat. The Emperor then mixed with the company, went round, and spoke to all the ladies one after the other who happened to be placed on the first and second benches, and that with great

good humour and affability. After this he retired, and the dances then recommenced, and were followed by a very abundant supper. It was a most brilliant and interesting sight. I could not wish a more favourable opportunity for seeing the Emperor and his Court. The room was not at all crowded, and there was so much order that every one was as much at his ease as in a private company."

A longer account is given, again from personal observation, of the Fête of the Garde Imperiale. Thomas Russell was even more strongly impressed as to the vast orderly crowd of 200,000 or 300,000 persons outside than with the splendours of the ball-room.

"Soon after the Court was gone we got into the ball-room, which afforded, to be sure, a most brilliant spectacle. It is ascertained that there were near 5000 assembled in it, so that you may judge of its extent. All the decorations were of a piece, and it was lighted by above sixty large and elegant chandeliers with wax candles—which, however, was attended with this inconvenience, that on being nearly burnt down they ran over, and dropt on the company below, so that a great number of gentlemen had their coats all bespotted with wax. The room was of an oval form, and the seats for the ladies were disposed in amphitheatre, with a broad corridor behind all round for the gentlemen and for the company to circulate in. The dancers were in the middle. It was a most splendid collection of beauty and elegance, such as one can hardly expect to see assembled. There was indeed



a certain part that was not of this stamp, but in such a collection it was impossible it should be otherwise. Upon the whole, however, I prefer the effect of the gallery of the Louvre on the day of the marriage to this ball, which was dazzling by its magnificence, but the other scene had something grand and imposing in it, which flattered the feelings in a more agreeable manner. We had much difficulty in getting into the Salle du Banquet, which was also very elegant, and where above 100 tables were laid holding from twelve to twenty persons, and each loaded with everything that was good. The scene was more lively on this side, as there was less restraint, and as a good supper was no unpleasant thing after the fatigue inevitable from the heat and the crowd. It is said that the supper was ordered at a *louis* per head without wine, but this I doubt, though it is said to come from the restaurateur who undertook it. It was not, however, so well served as the supper at the Hotel de Ville."

Meantime the old gentleman (he was now seventy years of age) to whom these accounts of gay doings in Paris were addressed was leading with more or less contentment the life of a squire and farmer at Ardennes. Much as he delighted in the place, and keen as he was to improve it, he was always ready to consider offers of purchase, and frequently consults his son as to terms and conditions. An amusing instance of his tenacity is related in a letter from his son to James Skey (May 1812).

"You would have laughed heartily if you could have seen what a drubbing the poor cow had the



other day—she had got once or twice into the enclosure from the gate of the farmyard being left open inadvertently. In consequence of this an idea presented itself to the old gent. to accustom her to see the gate open without daring to go through. No sooner thought than done. He placed himself on the other side so as not to be seen, with a stick to beat her back. She advanced, of course, directly to the gate, and when she was half through he ran forwards in great haste to stop her. Unfortunately the ground was slippery and down he came, while the cow pushed forwards, cocked her tail, and scampered over the field, stopping every now and then to browse on whatever she found. It was some time before we could stop her, but at length the old gent. got hold of one of her horns and led her back, shaking her head and scolding her when she offered to resist. Arrived in the yard, he set about her with all his might, holding on by the horn with one hand and beating her with the other. At length she escaped him into the cow-house. Away he ran after her, fury in his eye and menace in his actions. Out she sallies again, into the yard; out he bounces after her, crying out to every one to pursue the poor beast unconscious of the dire offence it had given, though he was determined to make her remember it. But he will not, I believe, soon attempt to give her another lesson of this kind—depending rather on the gate being kept shut than on the cow's docility. . . .”

On August 19, 1812, after alluding to the “dreadful din of war” between England and America,

William Russell wrote to his daughter as though he were almost reconciled to ending his days in Normandy.

“I will now acknowledge to you that I have been much influenced by an idea that I am more extensively useful amongst the poor here than I can be elsewhere. Poverty is truly in its meridian here, and has attendants you have no conception of. There are from two to three thousand poor in one small village within little more than 100 yards from my boundary. There are no parish rates, and in general no relief but by begging. The late scarcity has rendered it necessary for Government to send supplies, or otherwise many must have been absolutely starved. I have distributed 180 soups twice in the week, in addition to 100 lbs. of bread which it has been my practice to distribute weekly for several years past, and so necessary is it that I scarcely know what I shall do should I remove my residence. . . .

“They are a hardy, stout, robust race beyond all you can conceive. Tall, bony, sallow, with countenances and complexions accordingly: more calculated to terrify and intimidate than to please. Were your husband to make a tour here in summer he would have an ample field for his amusing drollery.”

In the same year, however, his thoughts again turned to *natale solum*. In 1812, rightly or wrongly, Russell made up his mind that he might safely risk the penalties incurred under the Intercourse Act, and he renewed his attempt to return. Again he was

disappointed, but in 1813 he sold a part of the Ardennes estate, but it was not till September of the following year, Bonaparte having been interned at Elba and Louis XVIII. placed on the throne of France, that advantage was taken of the peace, and William Russell's passport made out from Caen to England. On October 25, 1814, it was viséd at Calais. His journey home was made in his son's company. No record exists in the family of the terms on which Russell made his peace with the authorities. Probably his technical offence was appropriately purged by the legal fiction of a friendly prosecution. William Russell was spared to live four years in England. On January 26, 1818, he died at his son-in-law's house near Upton-upon-Severn, aged 78, a long-suffering man who had met all his troubles with a cheery spirit and indomitable courage. On the whole, perhaps, he had enjoyed his life, so full of adventures and experiences, as heartily as though he had never been persecuted for conscience' sake and driven into a long exile. During his worst times (and some of them were pretty bad) he never lost heart, or dropped a word of repining, weariness, or resentment. He was buried at St. Philip's Church, Birmingham, not very far from the house which, twenty-seven years before, had been burnt and wrecked by a mob of fellow-townsmen.



WILLIAM JAMES RUSSELL (1830-1909)

*From a photograph by RUSSELL & SONS*





## POSTSCRIPT

THOMAS POUGHIER RUSSELL, who has been so frequently mentioned in the foregoing pages, married in May 1817, Mary, daughter of James Skey by his second wife, Eleanor (née Brockhurst), and had issue two daughters and one son. For the last thirty years of his life he was a banker in Gloucester, being in partnership with James Skey and others; this private bank afterwards became the Gloucestershire Banking Co., of which he was a director. He also served for many years on the Committee of the Gloucester and Berkeley Canal, and died in 1851 at Gloucester, of which city both he and his son were Freemen.

It is interesting to note that during his stay in Paris in the years 1801-3 he attended the lectures of eminent French men of science, particularly of the chemist Vauquelin.

His son, WILLIAM JAMES RUSSELL, who died on November 12, 1909, may have been in the first instance turned by his example, sympathy, and guidance to the chemical researches in which he earned a distinguished reputation. A brief and appreciative summary of his life and work appeared in *Nature* on November 25, 1909, over the initials G. C. F. (Professor G. Carey Foster, F.R.S.) of which the following is a somewhat abbreviated version.

## DR. W. J. RUSSELL, F.R.S.

William James Russell was born in May 1830, at Gloucester, where his father was a banker. He was educated at private schools—Dr. Wreford's at Bristol, and afterwards at Mr. Bache's at Birmingham. In passing, it may be noted that this was before the educational revival that produced and was furthered by the Public Schools Commission of 1859, and that in those days there were very many private schools where scholarship was carried to quite as high a level, and where the conditions of out-of-school life were in some respects much better than in most of the public schools of the time.

After leaving school in 1847, Russell entered University College, London, where he studied chemistry under Thomas Graham and Williamson. In 1851 he was appointed the first Demonstrator of Chemistry under Frankland in the then newly-founded Owens College, and helped to plan and superintend the building of the first chemical laboratory of the college. This laboratory, built on what had been the garden attached to the original college building (Mr. Cobden's old house in Quay Street), was the cradle of the great Manchester School of Chemistry, which has become as famous in its way as the Manchester School of Politics. After two years at Owens College, Russell went to Heidelberg, where he worked under Bunsen from the autumn of 1853 to the end of the session 1854-55. During his stay at Heidelberg, he graduated as Ph.D. After his return to England, he lectured at the Midland Institute, Birmingham, and near the end

of 1857 came again to London to act as assistant to Williamson, his former teacher, at University College. He was associated with Williamson in working out a method of gas-analysis whereby many corrections were eliminated. The results of this investigation were published in the *Journal of the Chemical Society* and elsewhere, and the form of apparatus finally arrived at was the forerunner of the most improved modern types of gas-analysis apparatus and instruments for the application of the measurements of gases to quantitative analysis.

From 1868 to 1870, Dr. Russell was Lecturer on Chemistry in the Medical School of St. Mary's Hospital. In the latter year he was appointed to a similar office at St. Bartholomew's, and retained this appointment until 1897. After his retirement, he continued his experimental work, and until very recently was actively occupied at the Davy-Faraday Laboratory. He died at his house at Ringwood, after a very short illness, on the 12th of the present month (November 1909).

At the time of his death, Dr. Russell was one of the oldest Fellows of the Chemical Society, having been elected in 1851. He served on its Council, and was successively a Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and President. The Society, which was only ten years old when Russell joined it, celebrated the jubilee of its foundation in 1891, during his term of office as President. It naturally devolved upon him to take the leading part in the proceedings, and all who were present must have been struck by the admirable manner in which he acquitted himself. He had to



make many speeches, long or short, and they were always simple and appropriate. Without wasting words, or any apparent striving after effect, he managed every time to say exactly what wanted saying.

He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1872, and served twice on the Council, and was a Vice-President from 1897 to 1899. He was an original member of the Institute of Chemistry, founded in 1877, and was its President from 1894 to 1897.

Dr. Russell's connection with Bedford College for Women (London) began with his being appointed Professor of Natural Philosophy in 1860. He retained this office until 1870, and opened in 1860 the first laboratory accessible to women-students for practical work at science. He was a member of the Council of the College from 1878 to 1903, being its Chairman from 1887.

Dr. Russell's contributions to the methods of gas-analysis have been mentioned already. Among other investigations, we may refer to those relating to the atomic weights of nickel and cobalt, which were important in consequence of the way in which results obtained by very different methods were employed to check each other; papers in conjunction with Dr. Samuel West, on a new method of estimating urea, which gave rise to a valuable clinical method; on absorption spectra, and researches on the absorption bands in the visible spectra of colourless liquids; a remarkable series of papers on the action of metals, resins, wood and other materials on a photographic plate in the dark. Some of the results of these latter

investigations were given to the Royal Society as the Bakerian lecture for 1898. By well-directed and persevering experiments, the effects observed were traced to the generation of peroxide of hydrogen. In another set of experiments on the figures formed by the deposition of dust, Dr. Russell demonstrated the curiously definite course of the currents of air that rise from a heated solid body.

A report made to the Science and Art Department, in conjunction with Sir William Abney, on the action of light on water-colours was published as a Blue Book in 1888. It involved a very careful investigation of the subject, and was highly appreciated by artists. A committee consisting of the President and other prominent members of the Royal Academy, in reporting on it, said that they "unanimously desired to record their sense of the very great value and of the thoroughness and ability with which so laborious an inquiry had been conducted."

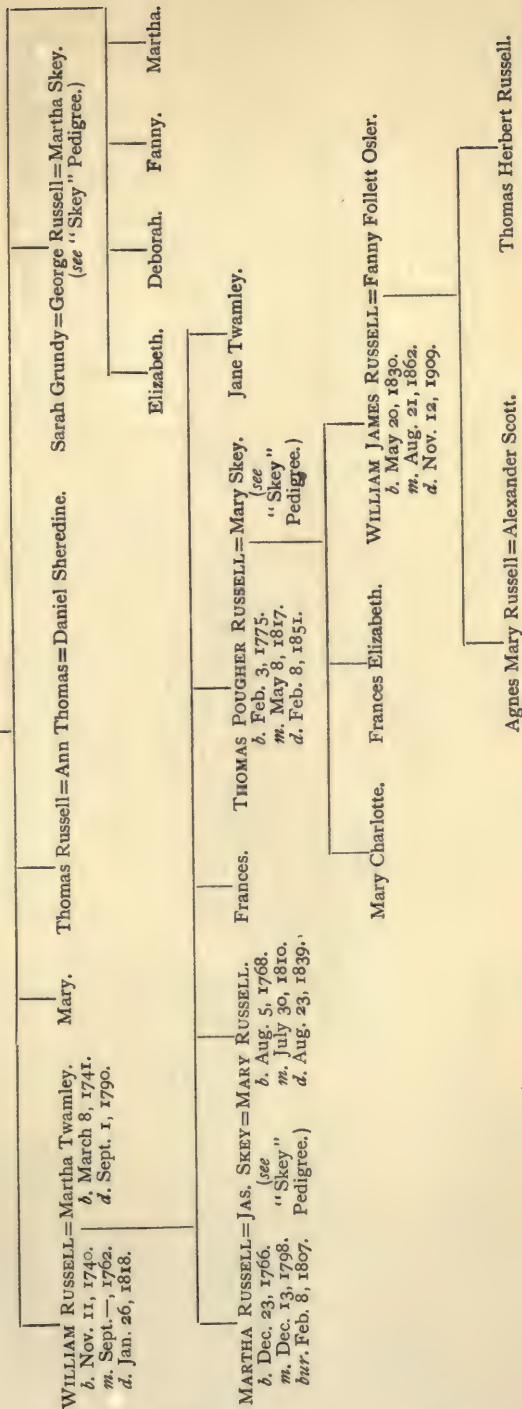
In manner, Russell was quiet, and entirely free from anything approaching self-advertisement, but he was genial and hearty with his friends, and was gifted with a sympathetic laugh that it was always refreshing to hear. As some indication, both qualitative and quantitative, of the estimate formed of him by his fellows, it may not be out of place to mention that, as a young man, he was the first Secretary, Treasurer, and Keeper of the Archives of the B Club—originally a society of young chemists which grew out of Section B of the British Association, first took definite shape at the Oxford meeting in 1860, and kept itself alive between the meetings of the Association by

consuming monthly beef-steak puddings at the "Cheshire Cheese"—and that, in later life, he was elected to serve on the committee of the Athenæum Club. His death will be felt as a sore personal loss by very many. He was liked by all who knew him, and by all who knew him intimately he was held in affectionate esteem.

Dr. Russell married, in 1862, Fanny, daughter of the late A. Follett Osler, F.R.S., of Edgbaston. He leaves one son, and a daughter married to Dr. Alexander Scott, F.R.S.

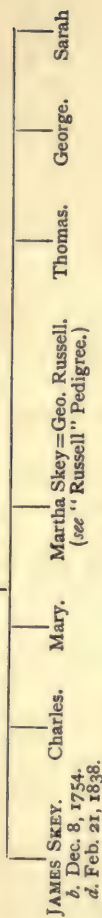
GENEALOGICAL TABLES SHOWING THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE MEMBERS OF THE RUSSELL  
AND SKEY FAMILIES WHOSE NAMES ARE MENTIONED IN THE BOOK

THOMAS RUSSELL=FRANCES POUGHET.





JOHN SKEY=SARAH BAKER.

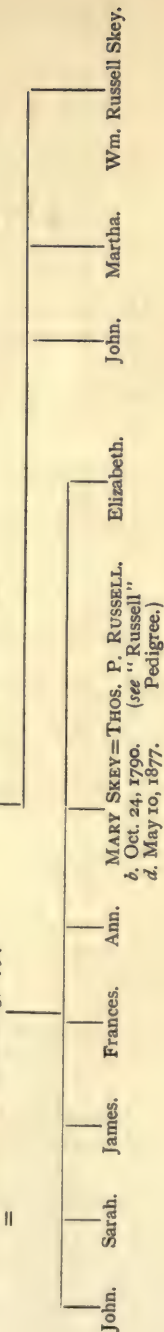


*1st Wife,*  
 Fanny Brooks.  
*m.* in 1778 (?)  
*bur.* Ap. 13, 1780 (?)

*2nd Wife,*  
 Eleanor Brookhurst.  
*b.* Oct. 25, 1760.  
*m.* Sept. 16, 1782.  
*d.* Dec. 13, 1794

*3rd Wife,*  
 MARTHA RUSSELL.  
 (see "Russell" Pedigree.)

*4th Wife,*  
 MARY RUSSELL.  
 (see "Russell" Pedigree.)



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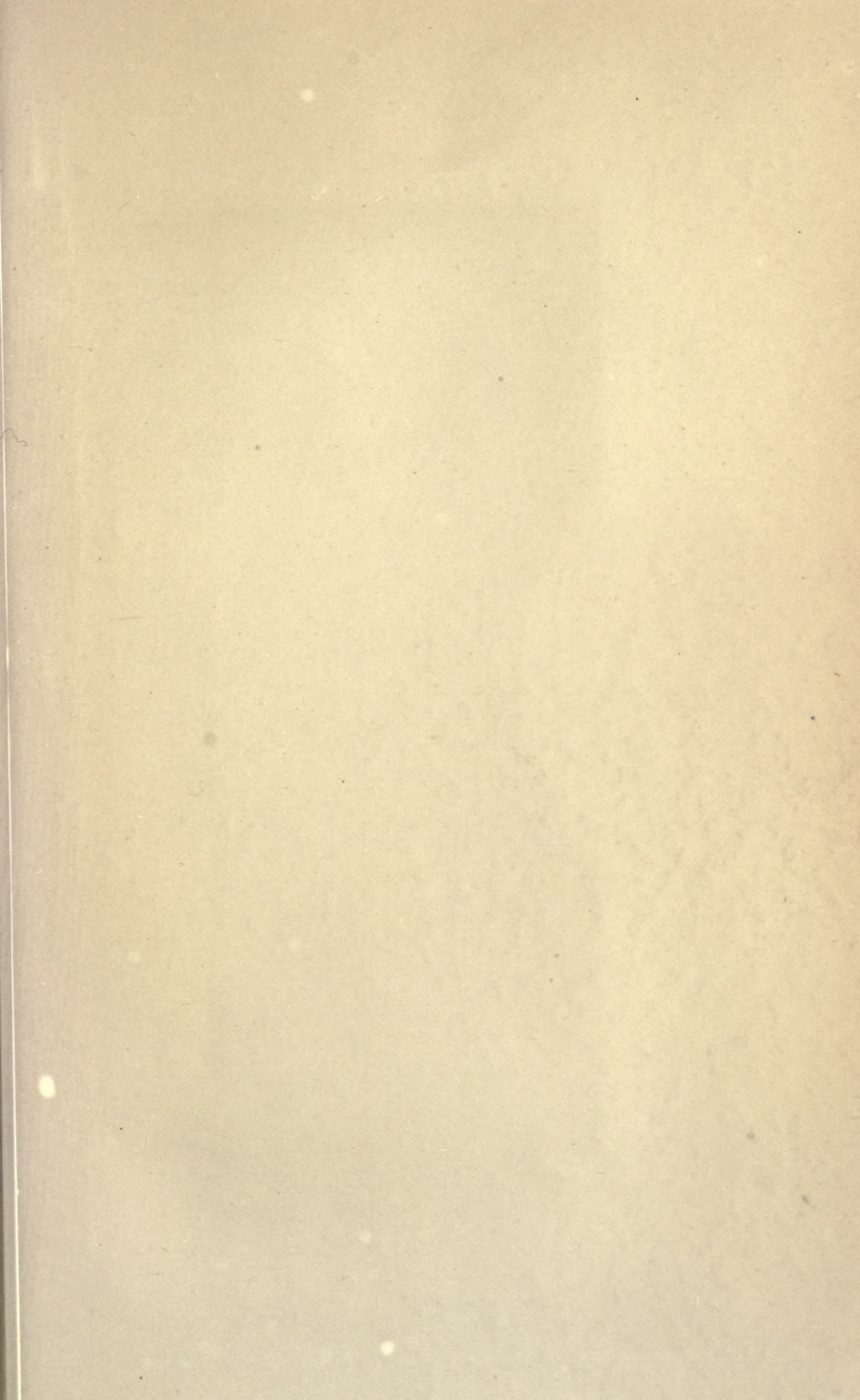
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Revolution and in America

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