

THACKERAY'S FRIENDSHIP WITH AN AMERICAN FAMILY¹

FOURTH PAPER

THIS series of entirely unpublished letters by Thackeray were written to the various members of a single American family, that of the late Mr. George Baxter of the city of New York. They appear in *THE CENTURY MAGAZINE* with the consent not only of Miss Lucy W. Baxter, but of Mrs. Ritchie, the great writer's accomplished daughter, and of the London publishers of Thackeray's works, Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co. The first of the letters were printed in the November issue of the magazine, with an introduction by Miss Baxter.—EDITOR.

*Naples. Sometime in March—
28th the last day, 1854*

MY DEAR MRS. BAXTER: I am paying off debts of friendship as time serves, and now I think comes the turn of my dear friends in New York, to whom my thoughts often go if my letters don't. I have such hard work now that letter-writing becomes difficult to me; and such a number of cares and troubles encompassing me that the letters when I do write are perforce the most gloomy comfortless scraps of paper. What did Sarah's last sad letter mean, and what ails my bright S. S. B.? She wrote as if she had quite a serious malady—full of affection for the kindest parents in the world, but of dismal forebodings for herself ill or well. As for me I have been ill ever since I have been in Italy—twice at Rome: as often since we have been here: and travelling without a female servant for my girls I have had them both ill with the scarlatina—Anny first, then Minny a week after: then I took ill on my own account: and we were all three, 10 days since, stretched on our backs looking out at the Mediterranean yonder—so provokingly bright and blue. As soon as ever I'm well, I fall to work again: to keep up my 4 numbers ahead. The care and anxiety are constant you see. God grant that you have gone through your share for poor Sarah, and that she and the Spring are come out

together. I've scarcely been out of doors for weeks past: and have had little heart to enjoy things when I went out. Am I not fulfilling my promise of a dismal letter? Thank God my girls are both up now and well—Anny who has been the longest convalescent, taking sweet kind care of her younger sister. Minny during Anny's fever was a fine little nurse: and when we were all on our beds we by the best of good luck got an excellent Irish nurse, who took care of poor little No. 2 when her turn came. This Italy has been a failure. I start off from one glum topic to another. I don't like the accounts of your constant headaches: nor the report that the last year has n't been a good one for your husband. He must n't mind my not writing to him. I don't to any man except on business (and neglect that dreadfully too). I wish you and he and Sarah and Lucy would come over to us at Kensington. I wish we were there. I must get back and to read for the new lectures; though I despond about them rather; and feel about 20 years older than when I saw you.

I was right, was n't I, to shut up my portfolio two days ago, and take my hat and go out. The blue devils were growing too blue—bluer than the sea out of window and that's glorious to look upon. Do you know what this is? This is the island of Capri right opposite my window. It is as

¹ The writings and drawings by W. M. Thackeray which are given in these articles appear with the permission of Smith, Elder & Co., the owners of the copyright.

purple—as purple as the pelisse Miss Baxter used to wear this time last year—and there are 1, 2, 3 little ships dotting the sea line, and the blue ocean seems swelling over, gently dancing landward as if it would hop into my windows. Night and morning come musicians with song and roundelay. O my stars how sick I am of their noise! They have bawled it under my windows and spoiled my work: they have bawled it and spoiled my girls' sleep. There comes one of them now, the villain! (I am trying to restore my good humour by drawing those little waves between the lines.) If it had not been for a nonsensical Xmas book I have been writing I don't know what I should have done in these last dreary weeks. How much men make of a little confinement! (not your husband that pearl of papas and husbands) but selfish people like your humble servant—And how kindly and simply women bear it! What! Shall I go on writing this ejaculatory sort of sentiment. I have nothing else to say, see no one, remark nothing, take Anny out, read the newspaper for relaxation, work all the morning at No. XI when health permits—might as well be at Brompton as here—I think I'll wait for another day, and stop again.

When was the above written? Ever so many days ago. Now No. 2 goes out as well as No. 1, and soon I hope we shall be able to leave this ill-starred country, and get to Paris and London. Times are going a little more pleasantly. The children have their dinner, with huge appetites thank Heaven, at 1. Then we go out. Then I go and dine with my friends. It is a comfort to get out of the wearisome sick-room for a while, and have a holyday.

March 28. Now I begin for the fourth time—And this shall go on to the end of the page or sure it will never be done. Well then, this is to go by a quick boat to Marseilles and thence swiftly to London and thence to Liverpool, and it will reach you about the 15 April won't it—which I remember very well though it seems a hundred years ago—and Crowe bringing me the sham flowers; and the party in the Brown House yonder—dear old friendly Brown House—and Miss Clark's marriage-day that fatal day and Miss Lucy crying, and Miss Sarah tripping away to her coach, and the tea afterwards and ever so many thoughts pleasant and dismal. Write to

me, to Young Street, Kensington, by the very first ship please. Tell me good news of every one. Shall I come and see you in the fall? Can't you coax Felt on the part of his Societies to make me an offer? You and Mrs. Snelling might take him in hand showing how popular the series of lectures which I intend would surely be. Men of the world! Chesterfield, Wharton, Walpole, Brummell, what fun and satire! what an opportunity for young men to learn about Euroapian manners! Depend on it the ladies would be the best negotiators in this matter: and I would sooner have your help than the smartest man in Wall Street.—I do feel 20 years older than when I was in America: and 3 months of ill health and gloom in this charming climate have made me about 70. I used to have some reminiscences and feelings of youth left when I was 42, now I am near 43 and no grandfather can be more glum. I sleep like a monk with a death's head in my room! "Come" says the cheerful monitor, "rouse yourself, Finish New-comes—Get a few thousand pounds more, my man, for those daughters of yours—For your time is short, and the sexton wants you. You have been in this world long enough. You have had enough champagne and feasting—travelling, novel-reading, novel-writing, yawning, grumbling, falling in love and the like. You are too old for these amusements and what other occupation are you fit for? Get 200 £ a year apiece for your girls and their poor mother, and then come to me!" So be it. Is n't it a cheerful letter? The other day at dinner, my neighbour (with a certain twang in her pretty nose by wh^{ch} I recognized my beloved Republic) says to her neighbour—"Do you know Howadji? He's going to be married to Miss (I forget) of Boston." Is this true? Give the swain my compliments—I wish I could take them to him to the Century tomorrow night. Yesterday I was the only Englishman at the table d'hôte. 5 French, 4 Germans, 24 Americans—and amongst them, ah such loafers! Our nations did not mingle in the least in Rome, nor do they here. I made friends with the Storys, poor people, they had just lost their son, and the last I hear of them is that they have had to stop between this and Rome in a town close on the Pontine Marshes with their remaining child struck down by a fever which she

has had for 4 months past. It has been an awful season for illness here—Here I am, growing lively again! The paper will not hold much more grumbling and moping, but there's space enough left to tell you my dear friend how affectionately I remember you all, and how sincerely I am yours.

W. M. T.

What a comfort to think the next letter will be straight to Kensington about 1 May!

*36 Onslow Square, Brompton,
May 18, 1854*

Now it is Miss Lucy's turn to have a little note. Miss Lucy's turn indeed? It is a mile and three days off her birthday when she ought to have had one, and do you call this fag end Miss Lucy's turn? B. would n't go on in this way, or would go off very quickly if he did—Well—but the truth is my dear (Dont you frown, and clench your hands and stamp so) the truth is this very day I have written 14 notes on business—No not 14—13—(One was to Misses A. & M. Thackeray telling them to come to Boulogne from Paris on Sunday w^e their Papa would be in waiting there to fetch them) but the rest were all about other people's business almost because you see this is the first day I have got into the new house, and there is ever so much to write about, and anything more dismally uncomfortable than the new house, of w^h only 2 rooms are ready as yet, mortal man cant conc—I wont go on with this sentence w^h is n't true: the fact is there are 50000 houses about London a great deal more uncomfortable.

I wonder whether the pickles and peaches directed to Young St. (where I've left no servant) and about w^h your dear mother writes me word in her letter just received, will find their way from Kensington to Brompton? I feel somehow as if they were going to escape me and that the rogues to whom they are entrusted will take advantage of the change of residence and confiscate my edibles. They dont know how I value 'em and that there are no peaches in all the world so good as those in my eyes. And so Sarah has increased 20 lb in weight and looks ever so handsome again! Here comes a ring of the bell on which perhaps my future life depends.

Who do you think it was?—It was a Governess & Companion—and there came in such a simpering ogling sighing sentimental spinster that at the end of 1-2 an hour's silly conversation I was glad to get rid of her. To console her I told her I was afraid she was too handsome: that did n't seem to strike her so I tried her in French in which she made such an awful igspouse of herself, that the poor thing saw it was all over and curtsied out of the room. Ah poor thing! there she has come 5 miles in her new gown, new bonnet, best shawl to find a glum middle aged gentleman smoking a cigar and to get her congé—I must take the German lady, thats the end of it. Did I write you about the German lady? In the governess hunt t' other day I lighted upon a school called a German college for ladies, so nice, neat, pretty, well ordained, with such a nice mistress over it that had I known of it 2 years since my girls should have gone there during my trip to a certain country and by this time would have spoken German, known history, and every kind of ology, and been perfectly accomplished instead of being utterly ignorant as they are now of everything except one thing, the art and science of loving their old father. I know 2 young ladies in New York who have that accomplishment too—who love *their* father I mean, and my girls' father too for the matter of that—dont they a little?

What rambling rubbish this is! Do you know why I go on writing it though it is 7:30 o'clock; though I know its stupid; though I am as ungrateful as an unter on the ills—why, because tomorrow morning early I start for Boulogne: tonight I must go for the first time this season into the bo mondy Lady Ashburton & Lady Granville and if I dont write now that debt I owe my dear kind Lucy Baxter will be left over for 10 days certain & perhaps 20 days uncertain. I wish all my other debts were paid. But O the upholsterers, the carpeters, the fenderers the looking glass people, on coming into a new house!—O their bills their bills!

So I will shut up my letter—and I give my hearty good love to all of you to the old folks and to S., L., W., G., L., O and to Mrs. Sn-ll-ng and her family, and my best remembrances to any one who recollects

Your afft old friend

W. M. Thackeray.

August 3, 1855.

MY DEAR KIND MRS. BAXTER: I have only one minute to write and thank you for your offer; but we have debated, the girls and I, and agreed with very heavy hearts that it is best they stay behind and take care of Granny and Colonel Newcome.

My passage is taken for the 13th—How glad I shall be if that little arrangement I proposed when I wrote from Paris of a meet at Boston and a visit to Niagara could come off! But what comes of my letters? I am sure more than two or three must have been lost.

I bring out a good natured, good looking simple lad, son of my neighbour Baron Marochetti—I saw him 2 days ago standing on his door step and said out of window "Maurice, will you come to America with me?" and it was agreed instanter. He is very good looking, and will dance at the balls.

It is hard to part, but O it will be very happy to see you all! *W. M. T.*

*36 Onslow Sq., Brompton,
Friday, October 5, 1855.*

MY DEAR FRIENDS: What a ninny I was to order you to Boston. Do you know I thought Boston was much nearer Buffalo than your village is; and that is why I asked you to meet me. How kind it was of you to say you'd come! But for the satisfaction of seeing you a day or two sooner, I must n't bring you hundreds of miles out of your way. I shall see your faces or your letter at the Tremont House at Boston, shan't I? I have done George I, II, III and can afford a day or two at Niagara. I shake you all by the hand. I give the girls fair warning of what I intend to do when I see them. I wish I was taking my own dear women along with me but we have debated the matter many a time, and they agree it is best to remain with their Granny. God bless all sick persons, young children, all travellers by land or by water. Tell Putnam to keep a nice room and one for my secretary—Wylly will be a good friend for him—and so farewell, till D V we meet. *W. M. T.*

November, 1855.

How are you all? I have been at work all day till this minute—and should so like to come to dinner. But had n't I

better after dinner here now—come up stairs and reread George I? Yes indeed —& so God bless you all is all I send by way of good morrow.

Tremont, 11 Dec'r, 1855

MY DEAR FRIEND. I feel as if I was doing wrong though I am doing right. I lay awake for hours that night when Baxter said he wished me to come to N. Y. for tomorrow, & thought of your kindness & regard and that I ought & would do anything to please you. But an engagement was made for me here for Wednesday evening, another on Thursday. Ought a man with a chill and fever on him to break a contract, travel 9 hours and 9 hours next day to see a pretty lass made happy? You would be more angry if I were ill than I should be myself; and I think the chances were against my well-ness if I had done those 2 journies—After four hours I am feverish, anxious, and obliged to lie down. No. My duty was to stay away. I heartily pray God bless Sarah and make her happy. I heard such a fine character of her husband from Mrs. P. yesterday. *She* Mrs. P. was so changed, improved, *happyfied* by her marriage that it did one good to see her. May your girl be so too. I know your heart and time are full and send only a shake of the hand and the kindest, kindest wishes for you all from W. M. T.

My dear Sarah. I must not come; but say with all my heart God bless you and your husband. I hope he will be my friend and that I always may be

Affectionately yours

W. M. Thackeray.

Tremont, Saturday, 15 Decr, 1855.

MY DEAR MR. BAXTER: I think you will be pleased to hear that on *the* Wednesday I got a fine attack of spasms, (part of which I was obliged to bear grinning through the compliments of a Quaker family.)—that they came on much worse in the night, & that I was in bed all yesterday in considerable pain having to put off my lecture at Providence.

Now suppose I had got this attack on Wednesday at New York? I should have lost that night's lecture—Thursday's, Friday's & Saturday's (for I'm so weak now that I can scarce see the paper, & you see its a very different thing being carried 5 minutes in a coach to a lecture room, &

having to travel 9 hours before getting to it)—and then how annoyed Baxter would have been that I should have lost 4 days and the proceeds thereof for the sake of a ceremony which I would as soon see as see one of my children have a tooth out! It was a comfort to me when I was hit, to think of this and to sigh out "Well, now Baxter will see I was right." Is that fatal day well over? are the tears dried, and has the pretty bride left you? I don't know that I want to know about it. What a blow it must have been to you two!—to the father especially—I am certain I shall never quite forgive my daughters for marrying—a very reprehensible sentiment—did not you fall in love? did not you marry?—is it not written that a woman shall leave all and follow &c? yes—this is very well, but we retain our opinions, at least I do. And so now it is done and done, I don't intend quite to forgive Sarah—It is the highest compliment that I can pay her. . . .

At last I have letters from the girls, with 2 more from that postmaster at Paris who can send *his* letters, confound him, unpaid though not the children's. They are happy—pretty well—busy—going out quite enough—Old GC and Granny doing their best to make their old house pleasant to those young ones—I wonder whether I shall suddenly rush back upon them as on a former occasion? T' other day I got an anonymous letter containing a newspaper article having the author's own ribaldry—Good God, thinks I, why put myself in a position to suffer this kind of thing? What amount of dollars can compensate a man for this insult? To be sure I have had anonymous letters at home. It is as well that I stopped this maundering letter here yesterday—continued to be unwell all day and all night—certainly could not have lectured last night or tonight had my illness befallen at New York—so we must console ourselves once more for an absence which renders no one inconsolable. This is nonsense—my head is so weak that I can hardly write sense—I can read though and enjoy the egotism of quiet—have been reading the *Life of Goethe*, the old rogue who at 75 had a deep passion for a girl and was severely wounded—the girl "was sent back to school."

If you could see me now you would see me feeling a deep passion because I can't

get a pen to write nor paper to suit me, not smooth paper, nor rough, nor gold pen, nor quill. When we are ill what selfish drivellers some of us men are! This was to be all about you, about Sarah, about the marriage, about poor Lucy's grief—and its all about me and my little two-penny aches and pains. Never mind, your heart on your side is so unreasonably soft that you (there! it wont work though its mended!) that if I tell you I am unwell you will straightway begin to forget your own woes and so I do a little good by writing. But write me about matters please. O my! what twinges I had yesterday as I was lecturing! No one would have thought from the sweet serenity of my countenance what hagonies were going on within!

*Gilmore House, Baltimore,
Friday, Jan 11, 1856*

MY DEAR MRS. BAXTER: The welcome handwriting found me at Philadelphia; and now it is Baltimore and 6 days later. We assemble very meagre audiences at Baltimore. The Opera Company has chosen my nights; and, small blame to them, the pretty girls of B. prefer the greater attraction—I am pleased with the anger of my *Felt* here, Mr. Bradenbaugh, that our room should be 1-2 full, and our audience away to the other entertainment. They are 100 in their company; wanting bread many of them, and shall I be angry, because they take a little of the butter off my enormous loaf? The bitter weather too fights against us. So it did at Philadelphia; nevertheless we did very well there, and the last audience was prodigious. I have not been very well, and in these fits become exceedingly glum and the thoughts of rushing home at such times overpoweringly strong. But one goes home and lo the blue devils salute you on the other side of the water! I found excellent company, kindness, and hospitality at Philadelphia—the same to a minor extent here—That going out to suppers after lecture, when one is tired, sick, hating society and longing to go to bed, is awful. Twice I spoke last night to the very pretty lady of the house—once about terrapins, that they were good; once about the old china—that was all. Why did she ask me? what will she not think about the conversation of these literary men? Yet her husband would have been sadly disappointed if I had not gone. I

wish I could do kind acts with a good grace—These are my news. I have read Macaulay Vol. III.—it did not amuse me so much as Prescott, or near so much as the first 2 volumes. He has been sick too; his hand is more languid than in the first part of the work.

I thought I saw death in that poor boy's face the day I dined with the good S's—A melancholy appealing look in his eyes scared me—and now they are closed and the end come for him. Their loving hearts will be awfully wounded. Before these griefs one can't say anything—Take off your hat and let the funeral pass—God help the mourners. It is the knowing a few good folks like these, that makes me love this country of yours. Why should you not go to Boston for a while, and break down those fevers of your dear children? About Young's country of Riverdale they are unknown; but there good doctors of course are not at hand. Some time—a good bit hence—I shall write to that lady you speak of—but now I can't, there's a something between us—I might sit with her for hours alone, and should not be able to open my mouth—any more than to the lady of the terrapins last night. When my girls do that inevitable, natural, righteous thing—I know it will take me years to be reconciled to it— . . . we must take each other and ourselves with our peculiarities—about w^h there is no reasoning, and w^h there's no changing. . . . I have been chewing the cud since I wrote this; and turned the pages, and laboriously put in stops, crossed the t's, and dotted the i's—I began to take a liking to a very nice woman at Philadelphia, widow of poor Henry Reed lost in the Arctic—sad, plaintive, gentle, sensible, sensitive—and there's another there Mrs. Neilson, as bright as sunshine—with a brave old father (Lewis) immensely sympathetic to me. Here is Bradenbaugh a clever man—rough diamond—Mr. Wallace a very elegant scholar and gentleman, Mr. J. P. Kennedy, exceedingly pleasant, natural and good-natured; and he has introduced me to a club—O Gods such a dreary club! such a desperate dinner! such a stupid man that *would* talk! What rubbish is this to fill sheets with?—I send you all a hearty greeting and to the S's my very best regards—I don't know what I am going to

do next. Have made no plans—Am I going South or no? Good bye my dear friend, and hail all at the B. H. and its master. I am always yours W. M. T.

Savannah, 17 Feb, 1856

MY DEAR MRS. BAXTER: A little note from Lucy at Charleston reached me last night, and told me what I was very sorry but not surprised to hear that in the midst of all your watchings and cares and nursings you had fallen ill too—surely there must be some malaria hanging round that Second Avenue corner, and you should all move away for a season at least and get into a wholesomer air. How well your girls (*our* girls they almost seem to me) looked at Charleston! Sally in her blue dress and lace—the 10,000\$ worth w^h I gave her and the 10,000,000 w^h her father gave her—looked as handsome as a fairy Princess going to the ball. I liked her husband more thoroughly every day I saw him. I thought her Papa-in-law a fine courteous old gentleman—and his daughter-in-law happy, improved, bearing her new name and station with a great deal of good sense and cheerful graciousness; and as for Lucy, I must tell you that there was a very strong Lucy party in Charleston, and that all of us young fellows agreed in admiring her looks (w^h I fear is the first thing we young rogues think of) and her sweet natural manners which win everybody. F. H. & I got on by feeling and expressing a fellow-loathing for a certain person whose name I daresay you can guess. And yet vulgar as that Individual is I rather like h—bless me I was going to mention the individual's sex!—and am glad that Sarah should be kind to the party in question. I write only petty rubbish—I have nothing to say. The wearisome lecturing business goes on, the little heaps of dollars roll in gently, and every week makes the girls about 500\$ richer; and almost every week brings me in a delightful letter from them. At Baltimore I did not know whether I was going to strike for the West or not and had very nearly done so because Jno Crerar was so pressing. At Richmond I had a pleasant little time a very pleasant little time—Went to the Virginia University in the snow then to Charleston then to, let me see, to Augusta then on here to my friend Low's house delightful for its comfort and quiet

and decorated with a pretty little wife and baby since last I was here. And I have a passport for Havannah in my desk and should have gone thither on Tuesday had not money-grabbing chances offered at Macon Columbus probably Montgomery; then Mobile and New Orleans. Then the Mississippi and St. Louis and Cincinnati and who knows what other places on my way to New York?—You will have the snow removed by April, won't you? whereabouts please God I shall see Second Avenue again. I see and observe no more and like the life no better than I did; but hold out my hat for the dollars perseveringly, and am determined to go on resolutely singing my dreary old song. Suppose I am stupid and bored, what then? A few months boredom may well be borne for the sake of 2 such good girls as mine. At every place I find kind and pleasant people and am a little melancholy when the time comes to leave them. So let us trudge on till the Summer comes, and the bag is pretty full. You will give very kind remembrances to the Snellings for me. You will and must go out of the Brown House, and set up poor dear little George on his legs again. What a year of trials you have had! It was a comfort to see Lucy smiling and being happy & getting well. Let the house; that is my solemn injunction; and get well all of you. A letter at New Orleans I think would find me—or send one to J. G. King's, who will forward to me that is when I and they know who is to be my correspondent in that city. Hark! There come Low and his pretty wife from evening church. I went in the morning, and have so much of lay sermons in the week, that one (occasionally) on the Sabbath suffices. O how I have relished the quiet here though! the snug room, the clean bed, the absence of noise, the hours to one's self—no not quite. Did n't I send 7 letters to England yesterday? Good bye; my very best regards to all. You know that I am affectionately yours

W. M. T.

Wednesday, May 7, 1856

(On board the Baltic with the pilot on board.)

I TRY to write on the last day of a horribly uncomfortable voyage, (I was going into a catalogue of its sicknesses &c but what 's the good?) and to wish you all a farewell and God bless you for which I

had n't time or heart as I was leaving New York. The process of saying Good bye you know is horrible to me—as I shook kind hands and walked out of hospitable doors at Philadelphia for the last time I felt quite sad and guilty as it were. Where was the need of prolonging these adieux? So Friday 25th as I walked down Broadway seeming very bright, warm and cheery I went with my usual sudden impetus straight to Collins's office and was off the next day before I knew I was gone. So goodbye Brown House (though I've seen but little of it this time and, Bon Dieu, how dismal it looked when I called one day and no one was at home!) Goodbye Mrs. Snelling, goodbye kind friends at Boston—well, if I had stopped, and taken my place for a month before hand and gone the round of farewells, what a hang dog time I should have had! We had a dinner at Houston St. the last evening—what forced jokes, what dreary songs, what deadly lively jollification! But that host of mine, W. D. Robinson, what a good fellow it is! how hospitable how kind and soft hearted! —I know I shall feel America sick ere many years are over, and be for paying you all a visit. Luckily 2 days before I went off I happened to go into Tiffany's, and there saw that pretty little sulky teapot &c—which I thought I could not better in England and ordered to be sent as a 12th of December token to S. S. H. God bless her and all her belongings. . . . Next thing I hope to hear is of you making little wee caps &c &c. I am sure you had a fine time in the South—and only 3 nights ago dreamed that Lucy was engaged to an elderly physician there. Is she?

I was to go to Mrs. Snelling one Sunday the last Sunday in N. Y. but was so unwell that I could n't leave the house—please accept my apologies Mrs. Snelling,—and the week rolled away and on Saturday I had run. There is a letter for my mother in the post now, it only reached Liverpool last night in the *Cambria* which sailed from Boston 3 days before us and does n't contain a word about my home-coming of course—how should it? as I did n't know myself.

I am unwell, have had one of my best attacks on board, have n't been well a single day after the first and am going to lay myself up either in London or Paris, and see if this crazy old hull of mine can

be patched up & made sea-worthy again. The best thing I can do for the next 3 months is to devote myself to being ill—and then we will see what fresh work is to be done—and then we will go on working and being ill and so forth & so forth until—There are 3 yellow-gilled Popish priestlings in the cabin now—They know all about kingdom come & have the keys of heaven in their portmanteaus—yet why did one of 'em faint almost the other night because it blew a little hurrykin? What numbers of gates to heaven have *we* built? and suppose after all there are no walls? But this is a mystery. The Rev'd Osgood, the Rev'd Hawkes, the Rev'd Hughes have the keeping of it—I am come, twaddling in the dark almost—to the end of my page. Good bye and God bless you my dear friend. May your children prosper and the fondest of all mothers on *your* side of the water long be happy with them. I am theirs and yours and Baxter's ever

W. M. T.

36 Onslow Sqr., Brompton.
June 19, 1856

MY DEAR FRIEND: It is a comfort to see your kind hand again, and I like you for not liking me to go away as I did in that sudden natural manner—about ten years ago it seems to me now. But to come away was best. I have done what I threatened, given up all business & pleasure, and am doctoring myself and bettering myself every week I hope. It was quite time, & my Doctor here says that he trembled for me and the risk I ran in going to America. I have had plenty of chill and fever since I returned (don't you see how my hand trembles in writing?) but have had no attack for 3 weeks now, and believe they will diminish as I get cured of my other afflictions. What a bore for my poor Nanny! I have been able to take her to very few parties, and come away at one o'clock from the one or two balls we have been at just when the fun is at its best. She comes off or does n't go at all, quite good-naturedly & says "You know I should n't like the balls near so much if I went oftener." She is very much liked and so is little Miss Min thank God—that is amongst my old fogeyfied set—the men (& women

too as she is no beauty) praising her good humour and good manners. Not one word of work has W. M. T. done since he came home, nor will he for a month or so more until his health is better. And I have been able to have no entertainments at home, which annoys me, for there have been some Americans here to whom I should have liked to hold out a hand of fellowship—but what can a fellow do perpetually menaced with chill &c &c? So the quarrel between us is stayed for the present, by the humble pie we have eaten. I would not have eaten it; for that kind of humility never will appease your Anti-English over the water or be understood by them. O me! its dreadful to read of these unchristian squabbles. I fear I 'm not near so good an American as I was after the first visit—no doubt all that abuse rankles in my heart, which is very generous I believe but dreadful unforgiving. Ashburton told a friend of mine that "I was as tender as a woman but as cruel as Robespierre." I wonder whether it's true? I wonder why I prattle this rubbish to you? I hope you'll see my new friend W. D. Robinson sometimes—such a good jolly soul! Him and you (but very few) of those I know I value true. You don't tell me what I should like to have heard about S. S. H. I broke my vow and went and dined at Sturgis's yesterday, sitting next Chevalier Wykoff's Miss Gamble. I found her a very well behaved, clean looking, nice little oldish body—But I had n't the heart to go to Mr. Peabody's great feté at the Crystal Palace—which everybody says was the handsomest feast ever seen. You don't mind my writing stupid letters? I pass my days skulking about at clubs away from my family; and growing more silent every day. Charles I fear is spoiled by America. He is discontented with his position and I suspect aspires to be a flunkey in a family of superior rank. The last, the very last, of my loves, Jane Ingilby by name, was married last week, she being 25, to a great lawyer of 6—with 10,000 £ a year—and now my emptied heart has only its paternal chambers occupied. What more dullness can I put in this corner? Only kindest remembrances to 286, and your sister, and sincerest regards from yours ever

W. M. T.

(To be continued)



CURRENT MISCONCEPTIONS IN NATURAL HISTORY

THE PREVAILING SENTIMENTAL VIEW OF ANIMAL LIFE—ANIMAL
INSTINCT MORE OR LESS DEMORALIZED BY CONTACT WITH
HUMAN LIFE—A LETTER FROM PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT

BY JOHN BURROUGHS



VERY recently a countryman wrote to a city paper, giving his name and address, and telling of the trial, the condemnation, and the execution of a crow by a jury of his fellows, which he had witnessed. A number of crows sat in a row upon a limb—they were the jury; a large dignified crow sat alone on a higher limb—that was the judge; some other crows were the prosecuting attorneys, and another crow was the prisoner at the bar. After much cawing, during which the jury spoke, and then the judge, two crows fell upon the criminal, choked him to death, and threw his body to the ground. The man went and examined the dead crow. *Its wings were tied together over its back with pieces of bark!* The writer seemed to be telling this story in good faith, though he may have been only burlesquing certain recent popular nature writers.

The fact that a fairly intelligent man should write such a letter and that a fairly intelligent editor should print it is evidence of two things—of the growing interest on the part of the public in the wild life about us, and of the growing tendency to read such life in the terms of our own moral and intellectual concepts. It seems as if the public was ready and even eager to believe that the animals are at least half human. The fact does more

credit to our hearts than to our heads. It is a sentimental view of animal life, which has its good side and its bad side. Its good side is its result in making us more considerate and merciful toward our brute neighbors; its bad side is seen in the degree to which it leads to a false interpretation of their lives. The notion gains credence with us that the animals have schools and courts of justice, that they practise capital punishment upon their criminals, that they train their young in the way they should go, and that they have a materia medica of their own and practise a rude kind of surgery upon themselves, amputating injured limbs and mending broken ones. This tendency is no doubt partly the result of our growing humanitarianism and feeling of kinship with all the lower orders of creation, and due partly to the fact that we live in a time of impromptu nature study, when birds and plants and trees are fast becoming a fad with half the population, and when the "yellow" reporter has invaded the fields and woods. Never before in my time have so many exaggerations and misconceptions of the wild life about us been current in the popular mind. Even certain professed nature students and editors of popular sporting and outdoor journals are not exempt from some of these misconceptions. It is becoming the fashion to ascribe to the lower animals nearly all our human motives and attri-