

Literature, &c.

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF FUDGE.

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VERILY, this is the age of philosophy. Nothing, now-a-days, is above or below its all-pervading influence. Men philosophize on every thing, from a stone to a star. The wonderful is made plain; there is now no mystery, "neither in the heavens above, nor in the earth beneath, nor in the waters under the earth;" all is matter of fact; and science is so simplified that he who runs may read. Persons talk as glibly of suns and solar systems as though they had a hand in the making of them, or as though they were no more than so many raisins stuck in a Christmas pudding.

It was said of Socrates that he called Philosophy down from heaven to dwell with men. But we have improved upon him. Our very children have become philosophers—thanks to the pap-meat philosophy diluted down to their juvenile powers—able to give you *why* and the *wherefore* of everything in nature and art too. They suck in wisdom with their mothers' milk. The fairy tales of former times have given way to food for the intellect. "Jack the Giant Killer," is superseded by a Catechism on Geology. "Pass in Boots," "Cinderella," "Jack and the beanstalk," and a host of others of a like nature, where are they? The nursery room knows them not. Any child can tell you that they are *fictions*—they have given way to Elementary Treatises on the Sciences.

There are few things that philosophy has not had a finger in. Thus, for example, we have the "Philosophy of Clothes," the "Philosophy of Food," the "Philosophy of Dreams," and a long list of other philosophies, "too numerous to be mentioned," as the advertisements have it, "in the narrow limits of this paper." May we not add another to the list? Let us try.

Thus much by way of parenthesis. Now for the subject with which we set out: THE PHILOSOPHY OF FUDGE. Strange that so important a subject should have been so long neglected. Dim revelations of it have, to be sure, appeared from time to time; but there has been no attempt, that we know of, at its systematic exposition; it has never been laid fully bare to the world's gaze. The reader will perhaps more readily forgive the feebleness of the present attempt, if he bear in mind that it is not the writer's fault that the subject has not been taken up by abler hands.

Perpetually before the world, directing the operations of society with a power as mighty and as far-spread as the attraction of gravitation, it has been as little heeded as was the latter before Newton, prompted by the fall of an apple, caught at the idea, and traced it into a universal law. Persons ordinarily look more at effects than at causes. Thus, generation after generation of mankind, with their eyes wide open, had seen apples fall to the ground; but they never thought of inquiring into the reason. They were content to be pinned down to the earth by the aforesaid power, without knowing anything about it. Even so, people like to be humbugged—only it must be after a certain fashion, suited to the idiosyncrasy of each individual—submitting to it quiescently, like persons under a mesmerising process.

Fudge is to a man what the lever is in mechanics: it enables him to do that for which his own powers would be insufficient. Archimedes said—or is reported to have said, which will answer our purpose just as well—that, had he a place whereon to rest his lever, he could move the world. Fudge does this effectually. "Soft sawdur, and a knowledge of human nature," say, that is it, Jonathan Slick: here are lever and fulcrum combined, by which the world is daily, hourly moved.

A certain Mister Burchell (vide "The Vicar of Wakefield") had some insight into this matter, if we may judge from his monosyllabic ejaculations in the memorable scene in which one Lady Blarney and a Miss Carolina Wilhelm Amelia Skeggs had much to say; which conduct of Mr Burchell gave, it is said, great offence to all the party; and indeed rightly so; for only consider, if his example were generally followed, what would be the consequence. How exceedingly awkward—not to say indecorous—it would be, wherever we were—at the tea-table, in the ball-room, in Parliament, at Court, even in the Church—to have "Fudge" perpetually ringing in our ears.

Fudge has many aliases, of which the one most current at present is Humbug; it is a perfect Proteus in its way of adapting itself to everybody's taste; its name is Legion, its scene of operation is world-wide. One Tom Little, it would seem, knew some of the family at Paris.

Now, touching this system of *feelosophising* Education which now-a-days obtains among us, and to which we have before briefly adverted—is there not some suspicion of fudge about it? Has it always for its end and aim the giving a "sound mind in a sound body"? the teaching children "how to think, rather than *what* to think"? With its mere matter-of-fact instruction, in its repudiation of any flight of fancy, so captivating and graceful withal in the very young, is there not a sacrificing of some of the powers of our nature? Has the human mind no poetry in its composition, which needs be administered to and fostered with delicate care, requiring only to be directed into proper channels, not to be dammed up at its fountain head, and converted into a sealed well? Is not man something more than a mere calculating machine? If not, Rabbage were a veritable man-creator. Can our very young, in sober

truth now, be supposed to know what they are talking about, when they rattle forth so glibly, with such an off-hand jauntiness of manner, such a pert volubility, about suns and solar systems—measuring you off with a draper's exactitude, to the fraction of an inch, the orbit of every planet in our system, and the distance of every fixed star? Is there any real information we ask, in all this? Do the children indeed know what they are prating about? Can truths whose vastness startle and bewilder the comprehension of the maturest intellect, weighing it down with a sense of its own insignificance, opening to us prospects far stretching on every side into an immensity, of which all we can ever hope to explore is but a speck indeed—can truths such as these be conned over in school exercises, or crammed into the brains of childhood by dint of rod and birch? Does not the schoolmaster here overstep the bounds of pedagogy? Thinks he that he has given *ideas* to the children in his charge? Words! words! nothing more! The school-room too often is but a cageful of parrots—albeit of the genus *homo*—pouring out a flood of learned lingo, to them a meaningless, idealless jargon.

Education! what a word of import, when rightly understood! How deep its significance! How comprehensive, yea, all-embracing is its sphere! Yet how narrow is the meaning commonly annexed to the term. Many folk think that they have given their children a good education, or a good schooling, as the phrase is, when they have had them taught writing and ciphering. The rich man, who looks down, possibly with scorn, upon this pittance of school education, thinks full surely he has hit the mark: has he not given his son a college education? and has not the youth acquired a smattering of sundry languages, besides what he may or may not know of his vernacular tongue? Now, writing and ciphering are doubtless very well in their way, and much is the poor man to be respected who has stunted himself to give his children thus much; but, alackaday, this is not education. Nor is a knowledge of divers languages a whit nearer the mark, unless it be carried out to some practical purposes. What boots it that I know the languages of Greece and Rome, if I do not avail myself thereof by enriching my mind with the perusal of their poets, their philosophers, their orators? Am I the better in that Demosthenes and Cicero spoke, and Homer and Virgil sang, if I make no use of my newly acquired powers? The knowledge of languages is indeed the master-key wherewith we may unlock and enter at will the storehouses in which genius and science, in past ages and in other countries, have laid up their rich hoards of thought: of invaluable worth if so employed; but, unused, of no conceivable use—dead languages then in very deed! The possessor of which may not be unaptly compared to a miser, having vast treasures in his possession, but valueless because unused. Nay, he is in a worse condition; for when the miser dies, his heir will probably scatter the hoard with a profuse hand, and so the community may be benefited; but the other's treasure dies with him, useless to the owner, and therefore useless to mankind at large.

Some men have a singular knack of humbugging themselves as well as others. Thus in the Christian world, how often will you see a man wrap himself round and round in formalities, and fancy, good easy man, his goodness is a-ripening fast for heaven, whilst enveloped—nay, incarcerated—within this garment of external decencies, his soul, like a plant, shut up from light and air, dies within him. He lifts up his hands and eyes with pious horror at the recital of crime from which his frigidity is his only safeguard. Thus encased in soul-armor, he stalks about like a knight of old, impervious to the fiery darts of temptation, which so afflict veritable creatures of flesh and blood—dying at last, the likelihood is, of suffocation. He lives by rule: he eats, sleeps, and drinks—and prays, by rule. He thanks God, with the pharisee of old, of whom he is the precise counterpart, that he is not as other men. He has never known to commit a crime, not he. Has he ever done a virtuous action? Has he clothed the naked, fed the hungry, visited the sick? Has he mourned over penitent error? Has he lifted his voice at any time against wrong and injustice—stood forth the champion of injured innocence—stoutly battling for "God and the right"? Had he no talents committed to his charge—not one, or are they all hidden? All dead and buried: his own cold formal heart the grave of his virtues. What, then, is the broken reed on which he leans? What a question to put. Goes he not to church regularly on the sabbath day, joining audibly in the responses? Is he not a stickler for "Church and State as by law established"; and, moreover, pays he not his way as every Christian should? What though he omit "the weightier matters of the law—judgment, mercy, and faith"—gives he not "tithes of mint, anise, and cummin"?—Has he not filled the offices of overseer of the poor and churchwarden, with much honor and no inconsiderable profit? And is he not looked upon by all parties as a pillar of the Church? Do not his neighbours point to him as a pattern of a well-to-do, comfortable Christian, who goes to heaven his own way, and lets every body else go theirs—there or elsewhere—as they think fit? What would ye more? Listen! Burchell is at his elbow. "Fudge!"

Poor man! he is indeed to be pitied—"having a name to live, and yet being dead." But what shall we say of those who tempt the thunder of the Most High, changing his temple into "a den of thieves"—buying and selling the cure of souls as you would a case of pickled herrings? The avenues of the Church are thronged by a crowd of eager aspirants; it is a genteel profession; though, God help the

journeymen-parsons, for gentility is well nigh their only reward. The army or navy, the bar or the pulpit—it is often a toss-up of a halfpenny which it shall be; but the Church, being the easiest, generally gains; and so the lad, who is come of a troublesome age, is clerically disposed of. Perchance he has a patron to help him to some snug living, or there is one in the gift of his family—else, woe betide him.

Yes, humbug dares (what will it not dare?) to scale even the pulpit. See yon pert popinjay of a stripling skip gaily into the pulpit, rattle over his sermon, and then skip gaily down. Look again, behold that "smooth, fat, oily man of God"—But why particularize? Has not Cowper described them all in his vigorous life-painting? Burchell, here is requirement indeed to give thy lungs full play. Let us draw in a deep inspiration, and shout for thee—"Fudge!"

Heaven be praised, all are not such. Not a few are to be found earnestly engaged in their holy mission, fulfilling its duties with sacred zeal; shepherd's indeed, caring more for the flock than for the fleece.

The Law. Here surely, if any where, shall we find an exemption from fudge. Law—that mighty tribunal which secures to us our property and our lives! Law—the bulwark against oppression, the protector of the helpless, the terror to evil doers, the rich man's curb, the poor man's strong arm of defence! "Fudge." Yee, even upon the bench, and into the jury box, that palladium of English liberty, fudge has worked its way. Alas! for human infirmity! what place shall we hope to find exempt therefrom, when even in the pulpit its grimaces are to be seen! We are constrained to acknowledge—painful as the admission may be—that the law is not what it should be; in its administration we do not always find that even-handed justice meted out to rich and poor which we have a right to expect. Some noble-minded judges, however, even this generation can boast. Thank Heaven, we have at least a Denman!

Not the least sagacious, certainly, among the wise men of old was he, who, in reply to the question as to which was the happiest state, answered, "That in which the Law is supreme." Bad laws are a fearful evil, but a bad administration of the law is still worse. Rigorously severe or contemptibly stupid laws may be borne, if they press equally on all; but when justice is perverted, when that which is law to the poor man is not so to the rich—when that which is law to the Catholic is not so to the Protestant—when party-spirit pollutes the very justice-seat and jury-box—then farewell to peace and order; insubordination is sure to be rife, and men will take, as they have done in Ireland, the law into their own hands. A reverence for the law, and, above that, a deep trust in its impartial administration, are essential ingredients in the well being of any people. The inequality of punishment—so monstrously disproportionate—often dealt out in our police-courts for the like offence, to wealth and poverty, is a serious evil, demanding instant redress. Woe to that people among whom the cry is echoed and re-echoed through the streets—"There is one law for the rich, and another for the poor!" That feeling, deeply seated and widely spread, is the most prolific ground of revolutionary outbreaks.

Yet ever and anon does the English law redeem its character, and challenge the admiration of the world. Wealth and rank do not always shield the "great bad man"; soaring high in his "pride of place," the law pounces upon him, and offers him up a victim to its offended majesty. What juries have done to stay the strong arm of power, when put forth to crush freedom of thought, of speech and pen, we all know—are not their deeds recorded in the Chronicles of State Prosecutions? O that juries were always awake to their duties—their high responsibilities—and capable of discharging them aright! O that every judge were a Denman!

Physic. This is indeed the strong hold of fudge. Here is it enconced in all the plenitude of plausibility. We speak not now of quack doctors and quack medicines ordinarily so ycleped, but of the quackery which obtains throughout the profession at large. It has been said that an honest lawyer couldn't get his living: with how much truth may not this be said also of the doctor: for what is his whole trade well nigh but a thriving on our ignorance and folly? Few indeed would be the requirements for medical aid, were we but commonly prudent or commonly attentive to the commonest dictates of common sense; had we but a little more faith in nature's restorative powers, and a little less faith in doctor's stuff. The plan generally in use of paying medical men for their services, through pills and boluses, is an inducement for them to quack. How else can they pay themselves? They are called in, to wit, for some trifling case, and troubled with a long list of ailments, which often are nothing but the figments—the result of a do-nothing life of lazy luxury. What can the poor doctor do but put on a sympathising face, feel the pulse, and look at the tongue, shake his head very sagely, and mutter mysteriously about something being wrong in the system; and so, laughing in his sleeve, or lamenting over the folly of his patients and his own doubtful position (as the case may be), sends in a slightly aperient powder or two, with a phial of *aqua pura* doctored up just sufficiently to hide its true nature. And he must do this, mark you, not only in order to pay himself for his time, but also to save his reputation from ruin; for woe betide the doctor who cannot sympathise with the thousand and one nameless ailments of his patient, the result of sloth and fancy. He knows how trivial is the complaint, what its cause, and how easy is the remedy; but dare

he name them? He is at once the victim and the victimiser.

THE COMING OF THE SPRING.

How lingered and lingered—ah! may linger yet!—the very last winter, as if reluctant to quit the scene of his icy enchantment. Could the frost-king, like Narcissus, have been entraptured by an image of personal reproduction? We, as dwelling within ear-shot of those ancient bells of Bow, might attest this fancy almost as a fact. Our own outward man hath shivered, while our inward man hath poetized, even at beholding that tree in the old Temple fantastically but beautifully arrayed in its garb of icicles, and we have seen most of the few slight fountains that decorate this metropolis of ours, saving and reserving always, as the lawyers might say, those fountains in Trafalgar-square, which never can freeze, fixed in pendent drops like translucent stalactites. Was it for the sake of these things that winter would remain with us, looking uneasily back, like Lot's wife, to the devoted City?

But a few days back and we were away from the crowded streets and in the silent country. It might be said that our journey was one of business, or it might be that inclination—few, we presume, to be unaware that business and inclination, even in these hurrying, driving, money-getting times are not always terms synonymous—led our steps away from the murky metropolis. But certainly it was to experience pleasure. We have long fancied ourselves—and we hope most others may lay such "flattering unction" to the soul utterly unable to travel from "Dan to Beer-sheba," and perceive all barren. Even in the depth of winter, there is something to inspire a denizen of the town, when he may find himself in contact with rural "sights and sounds." Shawled to the eyes we may be, in pursuance of the dictates of the modern wintry fashion, but still we endeavor to keep one little corner intact. From this "loop hole" we may peep forth upon nature, even in her undress, while yet unadorned with the vesture that summer bestows, of green below, and azure brilliancy above. In every aspect she still develops something to delight, and therefore something one must, perforce, admire. In the nipping frost it is not perfectly correct that we should quite forget the "balm-breathing gale." Byron, in the true spirit of poetry, took occasion to remark, "Dear Nature is the kindest mother still," and when age has fallen upon her, when she has lost much of the beauty and grace erewhile attached to her form, and her dimpling smiles have subsided, it would be the work of an "ingrate son," indeed, were we to "toss the nose" of reproof in her presence, or neglect her altogether. No, winter or summer, "frost or shine," she is, and ever must be, "ever welcome, ever new."

But it is another matter now altogether. We have no necessity, at "this present writing," in our intercourse with the aspect of nature, to exercise any degree of constraint, or bestow upon the "wrinkled beldame," if any must have her so at any time, a huge quantity of our magnanimous consideration. She begins to exhibit sundry signs—and welcome ones we must admit—of the revivifying influences of the solar rays and the lengthening hours. We were sweetly assured of this fact, because we were enabled to gather, a few brief days since, on the occasion of which we speak, and bring home as the legitimate trophy of our travel, the firstling of the Spring. Well, what of this? some might half pettishly, haply half indignantly, exclaim. We might plead in justification the evidence of some score or two of the poets, from Herrick, the quaint old Herrick, of a yesterday two hundred years ago, down to the youngling chirruping in the magazines of to-day. And add the testimony of—how many, pray?—not poets, but men and women clad in the homeliest drab of common sense, and girt about with a myriad of petty cares—which latter, by-the-by, every one seems to consider poets claim an especial exemption from. How many with us might stoop, and, with ineffable delight, gather the first sweet wild flower of Spring, and feel their recollections kindle at the simple act? The fever of the world may lie hot upon the brow, but that "first flower," that snow-drop, primrose, or violet, dear graduations, will dispel its unkindly influence in a moment, and the "dewy freshness" of days gone by again may entrance us.

We once heard of a strange peculiarity, strange we in our simplicity have ever considered it, possessed by a man of talent, of genius, a historian of no mean or undeserved celebrity, and this peculiarity was that he could scarcely endure the sight of a flower. In his eccentricity he bade the gardener root up those lovely evidences of heaven's teeming bounty from around his mansion. Nothing but blossomless evergreens flourished in that spot, tabooed from the gentle presence of Flora's blooming train. We would have nicknamed him old Winter.

Harsh and crabbed winter—a king he has been called, and very jealous of the least interference with his dignity or domination. How he will struggle and bluster—but the "first flower" always bids fair to "thrust him from his stool." His myrmidons, frost and snow, may scatter their favors with a liberal hand, but by-and-by up springs a little snowdrop, to scare the "grizzly monarch and his train," and frighten them indeed from their propriety. Ere the sun asserts sufficient strength to strip the earth of its icy garb, appear the pale blossoms and green leaves of the appropriately-termed snowdrop, and we know that winter's reign is almost over. True, he may decay a little, and leave himself about with unbecoming throe, like a giant in his agony, but his doom is sealed, when once that visitant arrives. Shortly, too, an overwhelming force is against the