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EDWARD WHELAN]

This is true Liberty, when Free-born Men, having to advise the Public, may speak free.—EURIPIDES.

[EDITOR AND PUBLISHER.]

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MOON'S PHASES.—OCTOBER, 1856.

First Quarter 7th day, 0h. 58m. morning. W.
Full Moon 13th day, 6h. 20m. evening. E.
Last Quarter 20th day, 1h. 27m. evening. W.
New Moon 28th day, 5h. 15m. evening. W.

Literature.

(From the North British Review for August, 1856.)

SAMUEL ROGERS AND HIS TIMES.

Recollections of the Table Talk of Samuel Rogers. Second Edition. London, Moxon, 1856.

Samuel Rogers was born on the 30th of July, 1763, and died on the 18th of December, 1855. What he was in himself, and what he did in the literature of his country during this unusually long life of ninety-three years, is tolerably well known. He first appeared as an author in the year 1786, when, at the age of twenty-three, he published *An Ode to Superstition, and some other Poems*. In 1792 he published his *Pleasures of Memory*, by which, and by a subsequent volume containing *An Epistle to a Friend and other Poems*, published in 1798, he established his place among the men of letters who adorned Britain in the closing decade of the eighteenth century. During a period of fourteen years he gave nothing new to the world, either to increase or to mar his reputation. In the course of this long interval of silence, he had changed his mode of life, by retiring from his hereditary business as a London banker, to enjoy, with the help of the ample wealth which that business had already secured for him, a leisure absolutely at the command of his private tastes. The house of Rogers in St. James's Place became a little paradise of the beautiful, where, amid pictures and other objects of art, collected with care and arranged with skill, the happy owner nestled in fastidious ease, and sustained, through two whole generations of contemporaries, a character in which something of the Horace was blended with something of the Mænas. Till 1812, indeed, all but his intimate friends might have supposed that his muse was dead; but in that year he proved the contrary by adding to a republication of his earlier pieces his little poem of *Columbus*. He was then in his fiftieth year; but this was not to be the last of his literary appearances. Composed with the same laborious slowness, and polished line by line to the same degree of smoothness, his *Jacqueline* was published in 1814, and his *Human Life* in 1819. Finally, as the last, and much the longest of his productions, came his *Italy*, the first part of which was published in 1822, in the poet's sixtieth year, and the complete edition of which, illustrated, under the author's care, at an expense of ten thousand pounds, by Stothard, Prout, and Turner, did not appear till 1836. With the preparation of this exquisite book his literary career may be said to close. He still wrote an occasional copy of verses at the rate of a couplet in a week, and some of these trifles, including one written as late as his ninety-first year, are preserved in his collected works. But, upon the whole, it was in his character as a superannuated poet, living on the reputation of his past performances, drawing the artists, and wits, and men of rank of a more modern age around him, dispensing among them the elegant hospitalities of his mansion, and entertaining them with his caustic talk and his reminiscences of the notable persons and events of former days, that he figured among us, or rather in a select portion of London society, during the last twenty years of his existence. He did many kind things, and said many bitter ones. Almost to the last year of his life he trudged about in the open air, and was pointed out in the parks, or in a box at the opera, as old Rogers. He used to give young men excellent advice, founded on his own experience, as to the best means of preserving their health and spirits. Altogether he was a remarkable relic of the past; and an invitation to one of his breakfasts was valued as an opportunity of seeing and hearing much that could not be seen or heard elsewhere. There were a few persons who were specially intimate with him, and who cultivated his society as that of a diminutive patriarch, who had wisdom, or at least information, that would die with him. Among these was Mr. Dyce, the eminent editor and annotator of so many of our early English poets. The present selection from Mr. Dyce's memoranda of Rogers's "Table-Talk" may be regarded as the best record posterity is likely to have of the poet as he was in his old age, and apart from his poetry.

The Table-Talk will strengthen the opinion, which most people will have at any rate formed, that however considerable may have been Rogers's own literary merits, the chief interest in him arises from his social position combined with his longevity. Any man who lives ninety-three years is remarkable,—much more a poet who lives ninety-three years,—and more still, a poet who lives ninety-three years in the very centre of the social and literary activity of his country, and in possession of such means as enables him to be in cordial and even influential relations with it all. Ninety-three years! Why, it is no insignificant bit of the entire duration of the world! Seventy Samuel Rogerses, at this rate, might shake hands in an unbroken chain up to Adam; twenty would connect us with the commencement of the Christian era; nine would take us back, with room to spare, to the date of the Norman conquest; and three linked together would reach into the age of Shakespeare. What Samuel Rogers lived through, therefore, between 1763 and 1855, was, measuring by bulk alone, a seventieth part of all that has taken place on the earth since first there were human beings upon it; it was a twentieth part of all modern history; it was a ninth part of all that Mr. Macaulay would include in the truly national history of England; and it was about a third part of properly British history, or of the history of England and Scotland since their union. It is not often that we have an opportunity of taking up in our hands such a bit of universal time pierced through, so to speak, by one remarkable life, visibly holding it together from end to end, and enabling us to turn it round and round while we examine it and endeavour to become acquainted with it. Feeling this, we mean, for our own part, to speak more of the times of Samuel Rogers than of Samuel Rogers himself; believing however, that what we have to say about the man will have fully more significance if said in context with his relations. Only, in mercy to our readers, we shall not attempt to lift up so slender a wire of connexion, the whole of that seventieth part of universal time which it does, in a sense, hold together, but shall content ourselves with that more limited mass of ninety years of purely British circumstances which the man lived through consciously and sensitively, or, at most, with that coeval mass of general European facts which was within the geographical horizon, and, consequently, within the table-talk range of a

rich and cultivated poet, living in St. James's Place, London, and digesting all into idea and reminiscence.

When Rogers opened his eyes in Stoke-Newington, and his mother could think of nothing else for looking at him, people round about who had not babies, and even his banker-father, when he went to the city on business and forgot the baby, were talking about a great Peace of Paris then just concluded,—a peace fully as important as that which we now, several months after the death of the said baby at the age of ninety-three, are also talking about so busily under the same name. By that Peace of Paris, the Seven Years' War was terminated; Frederick, as the great man of the age, was set free to rule over Prussia in quiet glory; and Britain, his solitary ally, which had subsidized him, and fought on his side both with armies and fleets against France, Austria, Spain, Russia and Sweden combined, found herself retiring from the struggle with a whole retinue of new colonies and dependencies acquired during it,—Indias hers by the conquest of Clive, Canada hers by the victory of Wolfe, a vast region to the left of the Mississippi added to her former American possessions south of Canada, several West Indian islands hers, and more pieces of the African coast made over to her than she knew what to do with. This, in fact, was the epoch when Britain ceased to be a mere kingdom, and became an empire. The change had been the work of one man—Chatham. He it was who, called to the chief ministry at the close of the reign of George II., while the Seven Years' War was going on, had breathed his electric magnanimity into the councils of the nation, had sent his soul abroad in our ships and regiments, and, clinging to the great Frederick, as a kindred spirit with whom Britain ought to rise or fall, and for the first time since Marlborough and his victories, had roused her to deeds that the world called splendid. Two years before the Peace of which we speak, however,—George II., at the age of twenty-four, having in the meantime succeeded his grandfather on the throne,—Chatham had retired from office to make way for meaner men. At the time of Rogers's birth and infancy, the Bute influence was paramount at the court of the young sovereign, though Grenville had succeeded Bute as the ostensible minister. Then in rapid succession during the next seven years, came the first Rockingham ministry, the second but merely nominal Chatham ministry, the Grenville ministry and the North ministry,—the last of which, coming into office in 1770, when Rogers was in his seventh year, remained in office till 1782, when he was verging on nineteen. During all these successive ministries, Britain was under the curse of a peddling politics. The impulse of the first Chatham administration still, to some extent, remained in her,—personified above all in Warren Hastings, who, left to himself in the East, was completing, on his own responsibility, the conquest of India for his countrymen. But, in other respects, the age of political greatness had gone, and that of mere Parliamentary polemics had succeeded. The nation felt this, and was uniformly hostile to the King and his successive ministries. What, in fact, were the questions which then agitated Britain? They were the questions of "Wilkes and Liberty," and of the discontent of the American colonies. The first wretched question had begun when Rogers was in his cradle,—for it was precisely in 1763 that Wilkes was called to account for the seditious No. 42 of the *North Briton*; but it was not over when Rogers had reached his boyhood. During the first nine or ten years of his life, the nation was talking incessantly of Wilkes, Wilkes,—this name also was the watchword of the Parliamentary opposition; and it was in the midst of this precious controversy that Junius came upon the scene wearing his iron mask. The only relief from the Wilkes question was the question of the American rebellion. Begun in 1764, when the taxation of the Colonies was resolved on by the Grenville ministry, this question grew and grew, intertwining itself with that of Wilkes, until actually in 1775, under the dogged ministry of North, the Colonies did take up arms. Then the Wilkes question was finally engulfed, and the war of American Independence became the all-engrossing topic. At the commencement of this war, Rogers, as a boy of twelve, was old enough to feel an interest in it. At all events, when, after lasting eight years, with little else than the Mad Gordon Riots of 1780 to distract attention from it, the war was concluded in 1783, by the reluctant consent of George III. to acknowledge the independence of the Colonies, Rogers, as a clever youth of twenty, could appreciate the importance of that event, and of the consequent organization of the Transatlantic Republic under the presidency of Washington. During the year or two that followed, there was little in British politics to interest Rogers or anybody else. In 1784, Pitt the younger, at the age of twenty-five came into power, ending the two years of confusion which had intervened since the resignation of North, and full of schemes of Parliamentary Reform, and of other great measures such as might befit the policy of one who was determined to be remembered in British history as a great finance minister. Then in 1786 came the episode of the trial of Warren Hastings, with all its accompaniments of Indian debate and reform. It was into the midst of this contest of the best rhetoric of the time against its best genius of action, that Rogers ventured to send forth his first tiny volume of elegant verse. A year or two more, and, lo! a convulsion which shook the world, and in relation to which, aught that Rogers or any other versifier could do a million times more irrelevant! Pitt, too, was out in his calculations. No more talk of Parliamentary reform, no more dreams of fine pacific administration; nothing but war to the death with the Revolution and with France! The same terrible year, 1792, which roused the "heaven-born minister," and made him the soul of the Coalition formed against the Revolution, saw the publication of the *Pleasures of Memory*; and little wonder if, during the next three-and-twenty years, the Muses were to hold their peace. During these three-and-twenty years, in the course of which Rogers passed through the entire period of his full manhood, from his thirtieth to his fifty-third year, what a series of European changes! The revolution runs its course under the Convention and Robespierre; the Directory succeeds; Bonaparte supersedes the Directory, and, first as Consul, and then as Emperor, fills the universe with his name, until he is struck down at Waterloo. To the same period belongs the annihilation of Poland (1794), and all the various trains of consequences, affecting each country in particular, which flowed from the military activity of Napoleon. As regards Britain, her history during this period, ran ostensibly in the usual channel of successive ministries. Pitt remained in office till 1801, throwing the resources of Britain into the contest with France, adding to our conquests in India through the Governors-General whom he sent out, and, as his final act before resigning, accomplishing the Irish Union. This also was the great period of the Parliamentary eloquence of

Fox, and Burke and Sheridan. Then, in the short peace, came the ministry of Addington; and then, from 1804 to 1806, the second ministry of Pitt, illustrated by Nelson's last victory, and closed by Pitt's death. The Fox-and-Grenville ministry came next, proving that even the Whigs could not make peace with Napoleon; then from 1807 to 1812, came the Tory ministry of Perceval, and the first exploits of Wellington in the Peninsula; and then, on Perceval's death, the memorable rule, which seemed as if it would be eternal, of Liverpool and Castlereagh. When Waterloo and the Congress of Vienna had relieved this ministry from the cares of war, and set the nation afloat, with about 800 millions of debt to impede her progress, on a long voyage of peace and commerce, the Muses began to breathe again. Other poets, indeed had been prolific even during the war, and the interests of literature had been abundantly vindicated by the appearance of such organs as the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*; but Rogers had only twice, and in both cases modestly enough, intruded himself on public attention, while the war lasted. The Liverpool-and-Castlereagh ministry, carrying on the history of the country during the first seven years of the Peace—that is, through the whole of the Regency, and two years into the reign of George IV.—carried Rogers on to his sixtieth year, and counted his *Human Life* and the first of his *Italy* among its literary fruits. This was the day of conspiracies, corresponding societies, prosecutions for sedition, and the Queen Caroline agitation. The Liverpool-Canning rule succeeded, with its more liberal foreign policy, consummating itself in the premiership of Canning, when hopes ran so high (1827). In one short year Canning dies, Goerlich does his best, and we have the iron Duke and Peel for our chief statesmen. Catholic emancipation is wrung even from the man of iron; but George IV. dies, and William IV. accedes, and there is still no chance for that Parliamentary Reform which forty-five years before Pitt himself had promised. Again, however, comes the blast of Revolution from France, (July, 1830;) Earl Grey and his Whigs supersede Wellington and his Tories; and there is two years' struggle with the Lords for the Reform-Bill. At the age of seventy, Rogers sees the happy arrival of the nation in its promised Canaan, through the carrying of this Bill, (1832;) and he sets about the illustration of his *Italy*. Alas! the old man lives to hear it confessed that what seemed Canaan was but a political mirage. Not to speak of sixteen years of continued alteration between Whig and Conservative ministries,—an era marked by the notoriety of such names as Peel, Brougham, O'Connell, Melbourne, Lord John Russell, and by such events as Irish agitation, the accession of Queen Victoria, Rebellion in Canada, the Disruption of the Scottish Church, wars in India and China, and Corn-Law Repeal,—Rogers lives to hear in his eighty-sixth year, of a third outburst of Revolution in France, and to mark its effects in thrones again tottering, peoples again shouting, and armies again marching and countermarching all over Europe. Nay, beyond 1848 and its changes, the old man lives to mark changes following changes;—a new Napoleon on the throne of France, an Anglo-French alliance, and a coalition of European powers to arrest the growth of Russia, and prevent dismemberment of Turkey. He hears of the death of Nicholas, of the battles of Alma and Inkermann, of British valour proved, without a Wellington to order it in new fields. At length fatigued with very excess of life, and not waiting to hear of that Pacification of Paris, of which people were about to talk as vigorously as they had talked of a former Pacification of Paris when he was born, he shut his languid eyes, and bade farewell to the world.

Surely, in the political order alone, this was a sufficient medley and duration of facts for one man to have lived through. Not a man of strife or action, almost his only connection with them consisted in the fact that he did live through them. He lived while they happened; and even if he had not lived they would have happened all the same, or with an amount of difference so infinitesimally small that we have no calculus subtle enough to appreciate it. To him it was all so much object and incident flashing and flitting past, causing sensation after sensation, and entering as sensation into the current of his mental life; but no reflex energy, no effort in return, no stroke back, did it or could it provoke from him. For that, the Chathams, the Pitts and the Wellingtons, were the men. They moved, and fought and laboured; while to a man like Rogers all that happened was occasion only for so much reminiscence, or, at most, for so much *idea, doctrine or belief*. Still, as each man's reminiscences and beliefs, occasioned by what he has lived through, depend on his circumstances and character,—as the reminiscences and beliefs of a Wordsworth, for example, living through the same period as a Rogers, and on the whole as passively, would still not be the same as those of a Rogers—it is interesting enough, in connection with the life of Rogers, to inquire what sort of reminiscences he had of the public affairs of his time, and into what sort of doctrine or beliefs his observations of the public affairs of time had shaped themselves.

Here are a few of Rogers's reminiscences of public men and affairs during his long life.

Reminiscence of Wilkes.—"One morning, when I was a lad, Wilkes came into our banking-house to solicit my father's vote. My father happened to be out, and I, as his representative, spoke to Wilkes. At parting, Wilkes shook hands with me; and I felt proud of it for a week after. He was quite ugly, and squinted as much as his portraits makes him; but he was very gentlemanly in appearance and manners. I think I see him at this moment walking through the crowded streets of the city as chamberlain, on his way to Guildhall, in a scarlet coat, military boots and a leg-wig,—the hackney-coachman in vain calling out to him, 'A coach, your honour!'"

Reminiscence of the Gordon Riots.—"When I was a lad, I recollect seeing a whole cartful of young girls, in dresses, of various colors, on their way to be executed at Tyburn. They had all been condemned, on one indictment, for having been concerned in (that is, perhaps, for having been spectators of) the burning of some houses during Lord George Gordon's Riots. It was quite horrible. Grenville was present at one of the trials consequent on those riots, and heard several boys sentenced to their own excessive amazement, to be hanged. 'Never,' said Grenville, with great naïvete, 'did I see boys cry so!'"

Recollection of France before the Revolution.—"My first visit to France was in company with Boddington, not long before the Revolution began. When we arrived at Calais we saw both ladies and gentlemen walking on the pier with small fox-muffs. While we were dining there a poor monk came into the room and asked us for charity; and Boddington annoyed me much by saying to him, 'Il faut travailler.' The monk bowed meekly and withdrew. Nothing would

satisfy Boddington but that we should ride on horseback the first stage from Calais; and, accordingly, to the great amusement of the inn-keeper and chamber-maid, we were furnished with immense jack-boots, and hoisted upon our steeds. When we reached Paris, Lafayette gave us a general invitation to dine with him every day. At his table we once dined with about a dozen persons, (among them the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, Condorcet, &c.) most of whom afterwards came to an untimely end."

Fox in his youth.—"Fox, (in his earlier days, I mean,) Sheridan, Fitzpatrick, &c., led such a life! Lord Tankerville assured me that he has played cards with Fitzpatrick at Brooks's, from ten o'clock at night till near six o'clock next afternoon, a waiter standing by to tell them whose deal it was, they being too sleepy to know. After losing large sums at hazard, Fox would go home,—not to destroy himself, as his friends sometimes feared, but—to sit down quietly and read Greek. When I became acquainted with Fox, he had given up all this kind of life entirely, and resided in the most perfect sobriety and regularity at St. Anne's Hill."

What Fox said of Burke.—"Fox once said to me that 'Burke was a most impracticable person, a most unmanageable colleague,—that he never would support any measure, however convinced he might be in his heart of its utility, if it had been first proposed by another; and he once used these very words, 'After all, Burke was a d—d wrong-headed fellow, through his whole life jealous and obstinate.'"

Pitt and Dundas.—"During his boyhood, Pitt was very weakly; and his physician, Addington, (Lord Dismouth's father,) ordered him to take port wine in large quantities; the consequence was, that when he grew up, he could not do without it. Lord Grenville has seen him swallow a bottle of port in tumblerfuls before going to the House. This, together with the habit of eating late suppers, (indigestible cold veal pies, &c.) helped undoubtedly to shorten his life. Huskisson, speaking to me of Pitt, said that his hands shook so much that, when he helped himself to salt, he was obliged to support his right hand with his left. Stothard the painter, happened to be one morning at an inn on the Kent Road, when Pitt and Dundas put up there on their way from Walmor. Next morning, as they were stepping into the carriage, the waiter said to Stothard, 'Sir, do you observe these two gentlemen?' 'Yes, he replied, 'and I know them to be Mr. Pitt and Mr. Dundas.' 'Well, sir, how much wine do you suppose they drank last night?' 'Stothard could not guess. 'Seven bottles, sir.'"

The Prince of Wales.—"When he (Erskine) had a house at Hampstead he entertained the very best company. I have dined there with the Prince of Wales—the only time I ever had any conversation with his Royal Highness. On that occasion the prince was very agreeable and familiar. Among other anecdotes which he told us of Lord Thurlow I remember two. The first was:—Thurlow once said to the prince, 'Sir, your father will continue to be a popular king as long as he continues to go to church every Sunday, and to be faithful to that ugly woman your mother; but you, sir, will never be popular.'"

Lord Nelson.—"Lord Nelson was a remarkably kind-hearted man. I have seen him spin a toetotum with his *one* hand a whole evening, for the amusement of some children. I heard him once during dinner utter many bitter complaints (which Lady Hamilton vainly attempted to check) of the way he had been treated at court; that forenoon: the queen had not condescended to take the slightest notice of him. In truth, Nelson was hated at court; they were jealous of his fame."

Anecdote of Napoleon.—"I'll tell you an anecdote of Napoleon, which I had from Talleyrand. 'Napoleon,' said Talleyrand, 'was at Boulogne with the army of England, when he received intelligence that the Austrians under Mack, were at Ulm. 'If it had been mine to place them,' exclaimed Napoleon, 'I should have placed them there.' In a moment the army was on the march, and he at Paris. I attended him to Strasburg. We were there at the house of the *prefet*, and no one in the room but ourselves, when Napoleon was suddenly seized with a fit, foaming at the mouth; he cried, 'Fermez la porte!' and then lay senseless on the floor. I bolted the door. Presently Berthier knocked. 'On ne peut pas entrer.' Afterwards Josephine knocked, to whom I addressed the same words. Now, what a situation would mine have been if Napoleon had died! But he recovered in about half an hour. Next morning, by daybreak, he was in his carriage; and within sixty hours the Austrian army had capitulated.'"

Sayings of Wellington.—"Speaking to me of Bonaaparte, the Duke of Wellington remarked, that in one respect he was superior to all the generals who had ever existed. 'Was it,' I asked, 'in the management and skilful arrangement of his troops?' 'No,' answered the Duke; 'it was in his power of concentrating such vast masses of men—a most important point in the art of war.—I have found,' said the Duke, 'that raw troops, however inferior to the old ones in manoeuvring, are far superior to them in downright hard fighting with the enemy; at Waterloo, the young ensigns and lieutenants, who had never before seen a battle, rushed to meet death as if they had been playing at cricket.'"

Lord Castlereagh.—"Lord Grenville has more than once said to me at Dropmore, 'What a frightful mistake it was to send such a person as Lord Castlereagh to the Congress of Vienna!—a man who was so ignorant that he did not know the map of Europe; and who could be won over to make any concessions by only being asked to breakfast with the Emperor.'"

William IV.—"Once, when in company with William the Fourth, I quite forgot that it is against all etiquette to ask a sovereign about his health; and on his saying to me, 'Mr. Rogers, I hope you are well,' I replied, 'Very well, I thank your Majesty. I trust your Majesty is quite well also.' Never was a king in greater confusion; he did not know where to look, and stammered out, 'Yes,—yes,—only a little rheumatism.'"

From the specimens of Rogers's recollections of the public men and events of his time, it will be seen that they were not of a kind to be much use in history. They are the agreeable and lively reminiscences of a man of light nature, hanging on the skirts of his time, but without any deep interest in what was going on, without much reverence for the personages whose actions were filling the ear of the world, and without even such a rich sense of the humorous and the picturesque as was possessed by many of his literary contemporaries as was possessed by many of his literary contemporaries whose lives were equally passive. They are the mere dinner-table gossip of a man who has been much in society, and had picked up stray *ana* and anecdotes, but who had all his life been deficient in that more profound kind of sociability which leads men to enter strongly into the emotions of their time,