

# THE TATLER.

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VERITAS ET VARIETAS.

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## EMANCIPATION OF THE JEWS.

By WILLIAM HAZLITT.

*Player.* We have reformed that indifferently, my Lord.  
*Humlet.* Oh! reform it altogether."

THE Emancipation of the Jews is but a natural step in the progress of civilization. Laws and institutions are positive things: opinions and sentiments are variable; and it is in conforming the stubbornness and perversity of the former to the freedom and boldness of the latter, that the harmony and beauty of the social order consist. But it is said, "The Jews at present have few grievances to complain of; they are well off, and should be thankful for the indulgence they receive." It is true, we no longer burn them at a stake, or plunder them of their goods: why then continue to insult and fix an idle stigma on them? At Rome, a few years ago, they made the Jews run races (naked) in the Corso on Good Friday. At present, they only oblige them to provide asses to run races on the same day for the amusement of the populace, and to keep up the spirit of the good old custom, though by altering it they confess that the custom was wrong, and that they are ashamed of it. They also shut up the Jews in a particular quarter of the city (called Il Ghetto Judaico) and at the same time will not suffer the English as heretics to be buried within the walls of Rome. An Englishman smiles or is scandalized at both these instances of bigotry; but if he is asked, "Why then do you not yourselves emancipate the Catholics and the Jews?" he may answer, "We have emancipated the one." And why not the other? "Because we are intolerant." This, and this alone, is the reason.

We throw in the teeth of the Jews, that they are prone to certain sordid vices. If they are vicious, it is we who have made them so. Shut out any class of people from the path to fair fame, and you reduce them to grovel in the pursuit of riches and the means to live. A man has long been in dread of insult for no just cause, and you complain that he grows reserved and suspicious. You treat him with obloquy and contempt, and wonder that he does not walk by you with an erect and open brow.

We also object to their trades and modes of life; that is, we shut people up in close confinement, and complain that they do not live in the open air. The Jews barter and sell commodities, instead of raising or manufacturing them. But this is the necessary traditional consequence of their former persecution and pillage by all nations. They could not set up a trade when they were hunted every moment from place to place, and while they could count nothing their own but what they could carry with them. They could not devote themselves to the pursuit of agriculture, when they were not allowed to possess a foot of land. You tear people up by the roots, and trample on them like noxious weeds, and then make an outcry that they do not take root in the soil like wholesome plants. You drive them like a pest from city to city, from kingdom to kingdom, and then call them vagabonds and aliens.

When reason fails, the Christian religion is, as usual, called in aid of persecution. The admission of the Jews, it is said, to any place of trust or enrolment in the State ought not to be sanctioned, because they expect the coming of the Messiah, and their restoration, one day or other, to their own country: and Christianity, it is said, is part of the law of the land.

As to their exclusion because they expect the coming of the Messiah, and their restoration, one day or other, to their own country, a few words will be sufficient. Even if it is too much for a people, with this reversion in the promised land, to have a "stake in the country" added to it; and the offer of a seat in the House of Commons is too much for any one who looks forward to a throne in the *New Jerusalem*; this objection comes with but an ill grace from the followers of him who has declared, "My kingdom is not of this world;" and who on that plea profess to keep all the power and authority in their own hands. Suppose an attempt were made to exclude Christians from serving the office

of constable, juryman, or knight of the shire, as expressly contrary to the great principle of their religion, which inculcates an entire contempt for the things of this life, and a constant preparation for a better. Would not this be considered as an irony, and not a very civil one? Yet it is the precise counterpart of this argument. The restoration of the Jews to their own country, however firmly believed in as an article of faith, has been delayed eighteen hundred years, and may be delayed eighteen hundred more. Are they to remain indifferent to the good or evil, to the respectability or odium that may attach to them all this while? The world in general do not look so far; and the Jews have not been accused, more than others, of sacrificing the practical to the speculative. But according to this objection, there can be no amalgamation of interests with a people of such fantastic principles, and abstracted ties; they cannot care how soon a country goes to ruin, which they are always on the point of quitting. Suppose a Jew to have amassed a large fortune in the last war, and to have laid by money in the funds, and built himself a handsome house in the neighbourhood of the metropolis; would he be more likely by his vote in the House of Commons to promote a revolution, so as to cause a general bankruptcy; or to encourage the mob to pull down his house, or root up his favourite walks, because after all, at the end of several centuries, he and the rest of his nation indulge in the prospect of returning to their own country? The most clear-sighted John Bull patriotism hardly reaches beyond ourselves and our heirs.

As to the assertion that Christianity is part of the law of the land, as Popery is a part of the law of the land at Rome, and a good reason for hunting Jews and refusing Christian burial to Protestants, by whom it is made? Not by our Divines. They do not distrust the power of our religion; and they will tell you, that if Christianity, as sanctioning these cruelties or any miserable remnant of them, is part of the law of the land, then the law of the land is no part of Christianity. They do not forget the original character of the Jewish people, and will not say anything against it. We and modern Europe derived from them the whole germ of our civilization, our ideas on the unity of the Deity, on marriage, on morals,

"And pure religion breathing household Laws."

The great founder of the Christian religion was himself born among that people, and if the Jewish nation are still to be branded with his death, it might be asked, on what principle of justice ought we to punish men for crimes committed by their co-religionists near two thousand years ago? That the Jews, as a people, persist in their blindness and obstinacy, is to be lamented; but it is at least, under the circumstances, a proof of their sincerity; and as adherents to a losing cause, they are entitled to respect and not contempt. Is it the language of Lawyers? They are too intelligent, and, in the present times, not favourers of hypocrisy. They know that this law is not on our statute book, and if it were, that it would be law as long as it remained there and no longer; they know that the supposition originated in the unadvised dictum of a Judge, and, if it had been uttered by a Puritan Divine, it would have been quoted at this day as a specimen of puritanical nonsense and bigotry. Religion cannot take on itself the character of law, without ceasing to be religion; nor can law recognize the obligations of religion for its principles, nor become the pretended guardian and protector of the faith, without degenerating into inquisitorial tyranny.

The proposal to admit Jews to a seat in Parliament in this country is treated as an irony or a burlesque on the Catholic question. At the same time, it is said to be very proper and rational in France and America, Denmark and the Netherlands; because there, though they are nominally admitted, court influence excludes them in the one, and popular opinion in the other, so that the law is of no avail; that is, in other words, in England as there is neither court-influence nor popular prejudice, and as everything in this country is done by money alone, the Stock Exchange would soon

buy up the House of Commons; and if a single Jew were admitted, the whole would shortly be a perfect Sanhedrim. This is a pleasant account of the spirit of English patriotism, and the texture of the House of Commons. All the wealth of the Jews cannot buy them a single seat there; but if a certain formal restriction were taken off, Jewish gold would buy up the fee simple of the consciences, prejudices and interests of the country, and turn the kingdom *topsy-turvy*. Thus the bedrid imagination of prejudice sees some dreadful catastrophe in every improvement, and no longer feeling the ground of custom under its feet, fancies itself on an abyss of ruin and lawless change. How truly has it been said of prejudice, "that it has the singular ability of accommodating itself to all the possible varieties of the human mind. Some passions and vices are but thinly scattered among mankind, and find only here and there a fitness of reception. But prejudice, like the spider, makes everywhere its home. It has neither taste nor choice of place, and all that it requires is room. There is scarcely a situation, except fire and water, in which a spider will not live. So let the mind be as naked as the walls of an empty and forsaken tenement, gloomy as a dungeon, or ornamented with the richest abilities of thinking; let it be hot, cold, dark or light, lonely or inhabited, still prejudice, if undisturbed, will fill it with cobwebs, and live like the spider, where there seems nothing to live on. If the one prepares her food by poisoning it to her palate and her use, the other does the same; and as several of our passions are strongly characterised by the animal world, prejudice may be denominated the spider of the mind."

Three hundred years ago all this was natural and in order, because it accorded with the prejudices of the time: now it is absurd and Gothic, because it is contrary to men's reason and feelings. Hatred is the food and growth of ignorance. While we know nothing but ourselves and our own notions, we can conceive of nothing else as possible; and every deviation from our practice or opinions gives a shock to our faith that nothing can expiate but blows. Those who differ from us in the smallest particular are considered as of a different species, and we treat them accordingly. But this barrier of prejudice, which is founded on ignorance, is thrown down by the diffusion of light and knowledge; nor can any thing build it up again. In the good old times, a Jew was regarded by the vulgar and their betters as a sort of monster, a *bans naturee*, whose existence they could not account for, and would not tolerate. The only way to get rid of the obnoxious opinion was to destroy the *man*. Besides, in those dark ages, they wanted some object of natural antipathy, as in country places they get a strange dog or an ideot to hunt down and be the bugbear of the village. But it is the test of reason and refinement to be able to subsist without bugbears. While it was supposed that "the Jews eat little children," it was proper to take precautions against them. But why keep up ill names and the ill odour of a prejudice, when the prejudice has ceased to exist? It has long ceased amongst the reflecting part of the community; and, although the oldest prejudices are, it is to be lamented, preserved longest in the highest places, and governments to have been slow to learn good manners, we cannot but be conscious that these days are passing away. We begin to see, if we do not fully see, that we have no superiority to boast of but reason and philosophy, and that it is well to get rid of vulgar prejudices and nominal distinctions as fast as possible.

#### LAFAYETTE.

(A Letter to THE TATLER, from a Friend.)

[We have great pleasure in being able to lay before the reader an instance of the extreme attention and courtesy, with which this great man "delighteth to honour" those who are worthy of his esteem.]

MY DEAR SIR,—As perhaps you may be pleased to hear of the highly courteous reception which I met with from that truly great man, Lafayette, on my late visit to Paris, the following are the details—

Animated with the enthusiasm which seized every lover of truth and liberty on hearing the glorious event which occurred in Paris last July (so much so, as to be deprived of my night sleep for ten nights together, until I was satisfied of its success) I was naturally anxious to revisit the great nation among whom it had taken place. I longed to see them all again; I longed to pay my respects to that consistent man, who had naturally found himself once more at their head; and I felt as if it would do me very health good, physically as well as otherwise, to breathe that air of Liberty which was now brightening all eyes and hearts, without any of its former clouds. Having been promised an introduction to the General by a friend, I left London for Paris. Immediately on my arrival, my friend, a Member of the Institute, wrote

to Lafayette on my behalf, requesting an interview. The following day an answer was returned, and in compliment was written in English. It was headed, "Gardes Nationales du Royaume."

"Paris, le 5me Novembre, 1830.

"I have the honour to present my compliments to ——— and will be very happy to receive him on Monday morning between nine and eleven, and at our soirées of every Tuesday.

"LAFAYETTE."

As a perfect stranger to him, though highly recommended, I of course could expect no more than a cordial reception, such as would be given to every individual. But a book had been put into his hands, written by me thirteen years ago on Italy, in which the principles of the French revolution were developed, and containing prognostications of the event. Here then, by sentiment and feeling, long ago expressed, I happened to have secured myself the lucky chance of being brought into closer contact with this noble philanthropist, than I could otherwise have hoped for; and this will account for the grace and courtesy of my reception.

On Monday morning I attended at his hotel, and was shown into an anti-room, where I found assembled a number of persons, many of whom were foreigners, dressed in splendid uniforms, with officers of the National Guards and other official persons, and friends, waiting to be introduced in succession. Our cards were taken by the Chamberlain and kept in the order given. I had been conversing about half an hour with the Brazilian Consul, during which time a number of gentlemen had been introduced, and after their audience had retired; but although the door opened so often, Lafayette was never seen. About this time his aide-de-camp came out of the audience-chamber, and looking over the cards in the Chamberlain's hand, selected one from underneath, and placed it on the top, as the next to be presented. This, I could very well perceive, was mine; and accordingly my name was the next announced. On my entrance, I saw before me a comely-looking man, apparently about sixty years of age, and with a countenance full of mildness and benignity. He instantly advanced, and taking my hand in both his, expressed, *in fluent English*, and in the most gratifying terms, his pleasure at seeing me. Being no great proficient in the French language, and at all events unable to express myself in it with that warmth of feeling which my heart was yearning to show him, I was delighted at his giving me this opportunity of venting myself in "household words."

In the course of our conversation, I told him that the object of my visiting France was principally to see him, and generally to contemplate the effects of the late glorious event; and that I was on the point of immediate departure for London. He very cordially pressed me to stay, saying how happy he should be to introduce me to his family, who, he politely added, would be delighted to see me. He requested me, at all events, to remain while the others were introduced; but, with many thanks, I declined, considering it contrary to etiquette. On my bidding him farewell, still keeping hold of my hand, he accompanied me to the door, which being opened, we entered hand in hand into the anti-room; and before all the company assembled there, he again expressed his regret that I was going so soon, repeating his wish to introduce me to his family, and concluding with an invitation to visit him again, when I returned to Paris. The circumstance of his accompanying me to the anti-room I consider an additional courtesy, inasmuch as I had not seen him do so to any other person, who happened to be introduced while I was there.

I feel at this moment the thrill that ran through me from the warm pressure of his hand; and this interview will ever be one of the most exalting of my recollections.

#### INTERVIEW BETWEEN THE PRINCE DE LIGNE AND VOLTAIRE.

(From the Journal of a Nobleman, just published.)

THE best thing I could do at Monsieur de Voltaire's was to make no display of wit. I spoke merely to make him speak. I remained eight days in his house, and I wish I had retained in my memory all the sublime, simple, gay, and amiable things which incessantly flowed from his lips: but, in truth, it was impossible. I laughed or admired, and I was in a state of constant enchantment. Even his faults, his errors, his prejudices, his want of taste for the fine arts, his caprices, his pretensions, all was charming, new, piquant, and unforeseen. He so wished to pass for a profound statesman, or for a man of deep learning, that he cared little whether he would be tiresome as such. At that time he was partial to the English constitution. I remember saying to him, "M. de Voltaire, you may as well say that its support is the ocean, without which it could not last." "The ocean?" he exclaimed; "you have started a thought which induces a good deal of reflection." A visitor from Geneva was announced. "Quick, quick," he said, "*de Tranchin*?" that is, he was to pass as being indisposed, and the Genevean went away without seeing him. "What do you think of Geneva?" he said to me one day. I knew that at that moment he detested that city. I answered that it was a horrid place; though I thought differently. Another time he said, "As you were lately at Venice, did you see there the procurator Pococurante?"—"No," I answered, "I do not remember him."—"What! have you not read *Emile*?" he exclaimed in a passion; for there was a time when he had a special partiality for some one of his works. "I beg pardon,