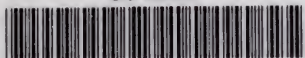


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THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF  
JOHN FISKE  
IN TWO VOLUMES  
VOLUME I









*John Fiske.*

THE  
LIFE AND LETTERS OF  
JOHN FISKE

BY  
JOHN SPENCER CLARK

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

VOLUME I

*Disce ut semper victurus, vive ut cras moriturus*



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
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*Published December 1917*

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TO  
ABBY MORGAN FISKE  
THE WIFE OF JOHN FISKE AND THE INSPIRER  
OF MUCH THAT IS FINEST IN HIS WRITINGS  
*THIS WORK IS DEDICATED*





## PREFACE

JOHN FISKE was not a voluminous correspondent; hence we have not many self-revealing letters to intimate friends and kindred thinkers, regarding his wrestling with some of the great themes which from time to time engaged his mind. The absence of these desirable data is, however, greatly minimized by the possession of his deeply interesting personal letters to his wife and his mother, and of his diaries in which the innermost feelings of his nature are disclosed. These, taken in connection with his published writings, enable us to make out quite a full record of his subjective activities, which, when considered in relation to the seething thought of the time as a stimulating objective environment, yield copious material for a "Life" of Fiske in both its unity and its variety.

In the correspondence between Fiske and Spencer, and in the letters of Fiske describing Spencer, we get pleasanter impressions of Spencer's personality than from any other source. To the end, Fiske was thoroughly loyal to Spencer, while immensely broadening his philosophy; at the same time it must be admitted that Spencer withheld the public acknowledgment of indebtedness to Fiske which he so freely admitted privately.

## Preface

In the preparation of this work I have been greatly assisted by George Litch Roberts, the life-long friend of John Fiske, who appears in these pages, and who, after an honored career at the bar, carries into the period of life when the shadows lengthen all the enthusiasm for science and philosophy which marked his early years. Fiske and Roberts, as they came to their maturity, differed somewhat in their philosophic views; but their friendship was never broken, and Roberts has cheerfully aided in the preparation of this work as a tribute to the memory of his friend. To his criticism and his wise suggestions much is due.

I also wish to make acknowledgment of the great assistance I have received at the Boston Athenæum. My special demands upon this library have been many and oftentimes perplexing; but they have always been met with the utmost consideration and kindness by its scholarly librarian Charles Knowles Bolton and his assistants. No small portion of my work has been done in the alcoves of this fine library, overlooking the Granary Burying-Ground, where sleep, in the midst of the great city's traffic and roar, many of New England's distinguished worthies of years gone by. My experience here is a delightful memory.

JOHN SPENCER CLARK.

BOSTON, *October 1, 1917.*



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*The illustrations for this book were selected  
under the supervision of Mrs. John Fiske*

# THE HISTORY OF THE

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## INTRODUCTION

JOHN FISKE has an exceptional and honored place in American literature. He was a ripe scholar, possessed of a great fund of well-ordered, accurate, useful knowledge; he was a profound philosophic thinker, well versed in the world's speculative thought; he was an able and fair-minded critic, ever alert to detect the good in men and things; he was an eminent historian, gifted with remarkable powers of insight into the cosmic principles which underlie the social, religious, and political organizations of mankind; at the same time he had such a rich endowment of æsthetic tastes so combined with exquisite humor, that he was keenly responsive to the beauties of nature and of art in all their varied forms. If to these characteristics it be added that in the art of thought expression he possessed a literary style of great simplicity, beauty, and power, we have the subjective causes which have given him a distinctive place not only in American literature, but also among the deepest thinkers of our time.

But Fiske was not only fortunate in his subjective endowments; he was equally fortunate in the period in which his life was cast — the latter half of the last century — in many respects the most

## Introduction

memorable period in the history of human thinking. His life was synchronous with this great period, the turmoil of which in philosophic, scientific, religious, and social thinking raged all about him as a mighty objective environment and which, breaking upon his highly endowed subjective mind, brought forth the many intellectual treasures the world so greatly admires to-day. Indeed, when the life of Fiske is considered in its relation to his subjective endowments, on the one hand, and to his objective environment on the other, it is seen that his life in its totality was a distinct embodiment of the highest, most comprehensive definition of all life — “the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations.”

Hence much attention is given in this biography to the environing conditions of thought which surrounded Fiske from his early youth, and which, in one way or another, served as an impelling force to his mind.

Fiske's life on its productive side was of a two-fold character: that of a scientifico-philosophic thinker combined with that of a philosophic historian. He did not live to see his contemplated task in either form of activity completed, but he did see great and significant progress in thought in both.

As a philosophic thinker he takes a prominent place as a protagonist of the doctrine of Evolution, as the process by which the cosmic universe with



## Introduction

man's place in it has been brought into being, in conformity to immutable law. As consistent with this doctrine, he affirmed four important corollaries: a theistic basis for all cosmic phenomena; ethical principles an outcome from man's social experience; man's immortality a rational hypothesis from cosmic phenomena; religion the rational adjustment of man to his environment.

In the realm of philosophic thinking Fiske lived to see the vital problems of life and conscious mind lifted by science out of the narrow mythical categories of theology, and centering around the consideration of their rightful place in a cosmic universe where matter and energy, and life and mind are harmoniously interrelated.

At the same time he was cognizant that as yet no positive knowledge exists as to how the two orders of physical and psychical phenomena of the universe are interrelated; and also that two radically different hypotheses are dividing rational thought on this supreme point in philosophic thinking: the one, affirming that matter and energy are ultimate and self-existing, that life and mind in all their varied forms from plant to conscious man, are potential in matter and energy, and that they become manifest wholly under cosmic conditions — materialism; the other affirming that life and mind in all their varied forms, particularly in conscious man, are manifestations of a force or power entirely distinct from cosmic matter and energy, a

## Introduction

force imparted to matter and energy in some unknown way by a postulated Infinite Eternal Power, the Source and Sustainer of all that is—spiritualism. Fiske did not leave any doubt as to his acceptance of the latter hypothesis.

As a historian Fiske took for his theme the unfolding of one of the great epochs in human history: The discovery of the Western World; the transplanting to this new world of the elements of the social and political organizations of Europe; the rise and the establishment of the Republic of the United States; the reflective influence of this Republic upon the political organizations of the world.

He was only enabled to lay the foundations of the great historic undertaking he had in mind, with intimations here and there of his ultimate conclusions regarding the fundamental principles which govern political development. His narrative was brought down to the Inauguration of Washington as the first President of the great Republic. He had fully equipped himself for tracing out, in the first century of its political existence, through the interplay of the twin evolutionary forces common to all forms of democratic political organization, — local liberties or differentiations on the one hand, combined with provisions for national integration on the other hand, — the rise of powerful political parties whose dissensions culminated in a great civil war, in which were displayed some of the

## Introduction

noblest characteristics of humanity, and which was illumined by types of personal character unsurpassed in the records of any other race or people — all culminating in the firm establishment of the most powerful political organization of the globe, a government of the people, by the people, for the people.

Would that we had to-day Fiske's ripe judgment upon this present world turmoil, when our National Government is laying its hand upon every citizen demanding that he play his part, not only in defending his own interests, but also in doing his bit towards making the political condition of the world safe for democracy.

There can be no question but that Fiske would find, in the despatching of American soldiers to contest for the establishment of democracy in Europe, the legitimate evolutionary outcome from what he had affirmed was the greatest event in human history since the birth of Christ: The voyage of Columbus into the Sea of Darkness in 1492.



THE LIFE AND LETTERS  
OF  
JOHN FISKE  
VOLUME I.



# THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF JOHN FISKE

## CHAPTER I

### HIS PATERNAL ANCESTRY — THE GREEN FAMILY

JOHN FISKE was born at Hartford, Connecticut, on the 30th of March, 1842. His father was Edmund Brewster Green. His mother's maiden name was Mary Fisk Bound. His father and mother were married at Middletown, Connecticut, September 15, 1840. At his birth he was given the name of Edmund Fisk Green. For reasons which will appear later his name was legally changed in 1855 to John Fisk. In 1860 he added an *e* to his surname.

We have but slight record of the family of Edmund Brewster Green back of his father, Humphrey Green, who was born in Salem County, West New Jersey, October 15, 1770. Humphrey Green was of a Quaker family, an only child, early left an orphan, and brought up by his grandparents. He was a man of notable personality, with qualities to hand down. In appearance he was a staunch, old-fashioned gentleman, of large, stalwart frame, carrying himself with that dignity and self-respect characteristic of a fine military bearing. He was a free-thinking Quaker, with a mind of his own. He

## John Fiske

was noted for his great memory, and was respected by his neighbors as a man of wide knowledge and practical ability.

Humphrey Green was twice married. His first wife was Ann Buzby, of Quaker ancestry. By her he had two children. For his second wife he married, February 19, 1807, Hannah Heaton, of Downs Township, Cumberland County, New Jersey, a daughter of Levi Heaton, who served in the Revolutionary War, and a grand-daughter of the Baptist clergyman, the Reverend Samuel Heaton. At this time Humphrey Green was an extensive landholder in Newport, Cumberland County, and had given an acre and a half in Downs Township on which to build a Methodist Episcopal Church. Subsequently he removed to Smyrna, Delaware, and settled in the timber belt of Thoroughfare Neck where he farmed and dealt in ships' timber. At this time he was a faithful attendant at Quaker meetings and was a noticeable figure riding to and from the Quaker Meeting-House at Duck Creek Crossroads.

Six children were born of Humphrey Green's second marriage, three sons and three daughters, of whom Edmund Brewster was the eldest son. He was born in Smyrna January 3, 1814, but later went with his parents to Philadelphia where Humphrey Green became a merchant in the coastwise trade, and owned vessels that plied between Philadelphia and Norfolk. Humphrey Green lived to the ripe old





HUMPHREY GREEN



## His Paternal Ancestry

age of ninety years and died March 12, 1860, in the full possession of his mental powers.

Humphrey Green was a man of means, and as Edmund Brewster Green gave decided indications of scholarly tastes it was decided to send him to Wesleyan University at Middletown, Connecticut, then the leading Methodist college of the country. Accordingly, young Green was entered at Wesleyan University in 1834, in the class of 1838, and his studies were mainly in the literary and scientific courses.

He was a good student and knowledge came easy. He had an attractive personality with very engaging manners. He was quite noticeable in his dress in that he wore the Southern style of soft hat and flowing cloak, which were in marked contrast to the stiff hats and prim, tight-fitting coats of the Northern students. He was popular at the college, and made friends among the young people of the town.

On leaving the University Edmund Green read law in the office of William L. Storrs, of Middletown, an able lawyer and a judge of the Superior Court of Middlesex County, Connecticut. His predilections, however, were for journalism and politics, and in 1840 he became the editor and part proprietor of the "New England Review," a weekly Whig journal published at Hartford, which was then one of the two capitals of the State of Connecticut. The "Review" was a journal of high

## John Fiske

character, and in former years it had had for editors George D. Prentice and John G. Whittier.

In the mean time Edmund Green had become engaged to Mary Fisk Bound, who with her widowed mother was living with her grandfather, John Fisk, one of the most estimable and honored citizens of Middletown. Young Green's acquaintance with Mary Fisk Bound began early in his college days and quickly ripened into a strong attachment. She was a young woman of great beauty and charming personality, vivacious and independent. She had been carefully brought up after the New England fashion, was well educated, and possessed marked artistic ability.

Soon after assuming his editorial position at Hartford, Green regarded his business prospects as well established. Accordingly, on the 15th of September, 1840, he and Mary Fisk Bound were married by the Reverend Dr. Crane at the Fisk homestead in Middletown. The young couple began their united life at Hartford, and on the 30th of March, 1842, a son was born to them, the subject of this memoir, and was given the name of Edmund Fisk.

But the journalistic venture at Hartford did not prosper. Green made many excellent friends among the Whig politicians of the State, but the Connecticut field was not large enough to satisfy his ambition — it did not give full scope to his powers. In 1843 he sold out his interest in the

## His Paternal Ancestry

"Review," and essayed journalism in behalf of Whig principles in the City of New York. He found the effort uphill work, and he gained a very limited and precarious income. The day for the great Metropolitan journals with their large editorial staffs had not yet come; and during this period three master minds, James Gordon Bennett, Horace Greeley, and Henry J. Raymond, were laying the foundations of the powerful daily journalism that was to be. Mrs. Green bravely shared the struggles of her husband, and to eke out their slender income, she taught in private schools for young ladies in Newark and New York City.

When Edmund Green and his wife left Hartford, they were glad to accept the offer of the grandparents to take charge of their infant son until they should establish a home of their own. We shall return to the son's maternal ancestry and his Middletown environment when we have followed the fortunes of Edmund Brewster Green a little farther to the end.

The election of General Zachary Taylor as President of the United States in 1848 and his inauguration in 1849 were great triumphs for the Whig Party. As Edmund Green had for years been an ardent advocate of Whig principles, and as he had strong support among the leaders of the party in New York and Connecticut, it was natural, in view of his labors and sacrifices in behalf of the party principles, that he should turn his attention to

## John Fiske

Washington for some substantial reward now that his party had come into power. In the winter of 1849 and 1850 we therefore find him in Washington, seeking office with the very highest credentials from the political Whig leaders in Connecticut and New York. He was for some time private secretary to Henry Clay, at that time one of the leading statesmen of the country. He applied for positions in the State, the Interior, and the Treasury Departments. He was strongly commended by Mr. Clay, in an autograph letter to the Secretary of the Treasury, as one who "unites to excellent attainments and qualifications for business, the manners, deportment, and character of a gentleman of honor and probity."

His political support was indeed strong and of the best character; but the Whig Party had been long out of office and the scramble for place was great, and the new Administration had to face a series of political obligations entered into by its supporters which necessitated to a large degree an obliviousness to purely personal claims. It needed time to adjust itself to its duties and to its political obligations. In the summer of 1850 the situation was still further complicated by the death of President Taylor and the accession to the Presidency of the Vice-President Millard Fillmore.

Green could not wait the slow development of political manipulation. At one time an important office was apparently within his grasp — that of Surveyor-General of Oregon. He had been advised



EDMUND BREWSTER GREEN



MARY FISK (BOUND) GREEN





## His Paternal Ancestry

of his appointment and was then tricked out of it in a way he could not understand. Thus, after several months spent in pursuing illusions of office in the Treasury and the Interior Departments, he came to the conclusion that the Whig Party was ungrateful, and in the autumn of 1850 he returned to New York.

The year 1850 was marked by a prodigious excitement, world-wide in extent. Two years before gold in unprecedented quantities had been found in the streams and in the surface deposits of Coloma County, California. These discoveries were so extensive and the mining so easy that the story spread throughout the world, and started an immense emigration to California across the plains and over the mountains, and by way of the Isthmus of Panama. Edmund Green joined this great movement, and sailed for Panama on his way to San Francisco in December, 1850. On arriving at Panama he stopped to study the prospects for business on the isthmus incident to this rushing of populations to the new El Dorado. The conditions appealed to his journalistic proclivities, and he at once began the publication of a weekly newspaper — the "Panama Herald." He was measurably successful in this undertaking. It soon became a semi-weekly, and a little later a tri-weekly publication. In the spring of 1852 Green came up to New York and Middletown for a short visit. He returned to Panama in June, 1852. On the 4th of July following he delivered, at

## John Fiske

the request of the American residents, an oration at Panama. This address was marked by a good knowledge of American history, by scholarly taste, and great felicity of style. One week later, July 11, 1852, he died very suddenly of cholera. His loss was greatly felt at Panama, where he had gained a position of much influence through his enterprise, his probity, and his genial personality.

### HIS MATERNAL ANCESTRY — THE FISKE AND THE BOUND FAMILIES

Having given the paternal ancestry of the subject of this memoir, and having seen him placed in the charge of his grandparents, we now return to the Fisk family at Middletown, to trace as briefly as possible his maternal ancestry through the two New England Puritan families, the Fiskes and the Bounds, which were united in his mother.

The Fiske family was of a pure New England Puritan type. It was descended in unbroken lineage for a period of over four hundred years from Simon Fiske, Stadhaugh Manor Parish, Laxfield, Suffolk, England, who was born in the reign of Richard II, — that is, before 1399, — and who died in 1463 or '64. The full record is an honorable one. In the sixteenth century the Fiskes were considered very daring and troublesome heretics. John Noyes of Laxfield was burned alive in 1557, by order of "Bloody Mary"; and Foxe, in his "Booke of Martyres," mentions that Nicholas Fiske, Noyes's



**STADHAUGH MANOR, LAXFIELD, SUFFOLK, ENGLAND**  
Homestead of the Fiske family from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century.  
(June 4, 1880)



## His Maternal Ancestry

brother-in-law, visited him in prison. Cotton Mather, in his "Magnalia," has anecdotes of how these heretics were persecuted. Robert Fiske, fifth in descent, fled during the persecutions to the Continent (possibly to Geneva, as that was the resort of the Suffolk Protestants at that time), but after the accession of Elizabeth, he returned and settled at St. James, South Elmham, Suffolk. Before his flight he married Sybil Gold, by whom he had four sons, William, Jeffrey, Thomas, and Eleazer, and one daughter, Elizabeth. From Robert and Sybil came all the Fiskes who settled in New England in the seventeenth century. Robert Fiske died in 1602.

The daughter Elizabeth married — Bernard of Custridge Hall, and was the grandmother of John Locke, the great English philosopher of the seventeenth century. The descent we are pursuing was continued through the son Thomas, who married Margery (surname not given), and who lived at Fressingfield, Suffolk. Thomas died in 1611. He had three sons, Thomas, James, and Phineas; and two daughters, Elizabeth and Mary. The line was continued through Phineas, who came to Salem, Massachusetts, in 1641, and moved to Wenham in 1644. He was a man of note; was constable and selectman of Wenham, captain of militia, and in 1653 was a representative in the General Court of Massachusetts. Phineas had three sons, James, John, and Thomas, all born in England. The line was continued through the son John, who we find

## John Fiske

was constable at Wenham in 1645, and in 1669 was representative in the General Court. The Christian name of John's wife was Remember. He had three sons, John, Samuel, and Noah; and two daughters, Elizabeth and Remember. This John died in 1683. The next in line was his son John, who was born in Wenham in 1654 — the first Fiske born in Massachusetts. He practised medicine, and in the annals he was called Dr. John. He married Hannah Baldwin, of Milford, Connecticut, in 1682. She was descended from an old English family in Cheshire. Dr. John moved to Milford in 1694. He was a man of substance, as appears by the deed of his estate in Wenham, which he sold in 1693. Dr. John had four sons, Phineas, Ebenezer, John, and Benjamin.

Continuing the line through the son John, we find that this representative of the family was known as Captain John Fiske. He was born at Wenham in 1693 and was decidedly a man of mark. He was town clerk of Middletown in 1722, was ensign in 1729, lieutenant in 1732, captain in 1735, quartermaster of the Eleventh Connecticut Regiment in 1744, representative to the Connecticut General Court in 1742. He wore a wig and sword, and was "very stylish." He had a negro slave, appraised at a value of £35. He was twice married. His first wife was Hannah, to whom he was married in 1716, and by whom he had three children, John, Hannah, and Martha. He often dropped the *e* in his surname. He died in Middletown in 1761.

## His Maternal Ancestry

Next in order is Captain John's son, who was known as John, Jr. He was born in 1718, and lived at Middletown. He succeeded his father as town clerk of Middletown in 1761 and he was also clerk of the Superior Court. The records of this member of the family are very slight. By Ann Tyler, a second wife, he had a son Bezaleel, who was born at Middletown in 1744. There is no record of the death of John Jr., but it probably occurred in 1777, as in that year his son Bezaleel succeeded to the town clerkship. Bezaleel was married in 1768 to Margaret Rockwell, by whom he had a son John, born in 1772. Bezaleel Fiske held the office of town clerk for twenty years, till 1797, when he was succeeded by his son John. Bezaleel Fiske lived to the ripe old age of eighty-six years and died in 1830.

Great probity of character is conspicuous in the line of the Fisk family we are pursuing: for this reason the following lines, written by Bezaleel Fiske, in his eighty-fourth year, and in which the pleasanter side of the grim theology of the time is somewhat reflected, are of interest: —

### ON A WATCH

Could but our tempers move like this machine,  
Not urg'd by passion nor delayed by spleen;  
But true to Nature's regulating power,  
By virtuous acts distinguish every hour —  
Then health and joy would follow as they ought,  
The laws of Nature and the laws of thought —  
Sweet health to pass the present moments o'er,  
And everlasting joy when time shall be no more.

## John Fiske

Bezaleel's son John succeeded to the town clerkship of Middletown in 1797 — the fourth Fiske to hold this office in the order of succession. His first wife was Polly Merrill, of Killingsworth, Connecticut, to whom he was married August 10, 1793. His second wife was Olive Cone, to whom he was married in 1837. By his first wife he had six children, four sons, and two daughters. His second child was a daughter, Polly, who was born March 11, 1795. Polly Fisk was married in 1817 to John Bound, of Middletown. Of this marriage there were six children, two of whom grew to maturity—John Fisk Bound,<sup>1</sup> born in 1819, and Mary Fisk Bound, born June 21, 1821.

As we have already seen, Mary Fisk Bound was married September 15, 1840, to Edmund Brewster Green. Of this marriage we have also seen that a son was born March 30, 1842, who is the subject of this memoir, and who at his birth was given the name of Edmund Fisk Green.

The Bound family, which in the ancestral line we are pursuing was united with the Fiske family in 1817 by the marriage of John Bound to Polly Fisk, was no less Puritan in character, and no less honorable in its descent, than that of the Fiskes. Its ancestral line runs back, through the Bound, Francis, and Hall families, to John Hall, who was born in

<sup>1</sup> Founder of the financial house of Bound & Company, of New York.





POLLY (FISK) BOUND  
Grandmother of John Fiske



JOHN FISK  
Great-grandfather of John Fiske



## His Maternal Ancestry

England in 1627, and who died in Medford, Massachusetts, in 1701. From one branch of the Hall family in Medford was descended Francis Parkman, and thus we have a clear family relationship between the two eminent historians Francis Parkman and John Fiske.

And now, having established the subject of this memoir in the helplessness of his infancy in the Fiske family at Middletown, and having put in order his family antecedents which have revealed, on the paternal side, the sturdy, free-thinking, genial qualities of the Quaker, in contrast, on the maternal side, with the strict, religious character of the Puritan, embodied in the attractive personality of his mother, we will leave him to be brought through the critical period of his infancy, while we make ourselves acquainted with some of the physical and social characteristics of Middletown, which served for his environment during the period of his boyhood and his youth.

Following the death of Edmund Brewster Green, his widow, Mary Fisk Bound Green, continued her teaching in New York City and vicinity, leaving her son, Edmund Fisk Green, in the care of his grandparents in Middletown.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MIDDLETOWN ENVIRONMENT—JOHN FISK— THE FISK HOMESTEAD

READERS familiar with the historical works of John Fiske know the importance he attached to the town as the basis or unit for all social or political organization. How much he was aided in the development of his thought in this direction by the influence of the environment of his early years, we cannot say. This, however, may be said: that if, in view of his important work in the world, a place had been sought with special reference to its salutary influence upon his youthful mind, it is doubtful if more fitting surroundings could have been found than were presented by the physical and social conditions of Middletown between the years 1840 and 1860.

It was a typical New England town of the period, of the best sort. It was beautifully situated on the west bank of the Connecticut River, about sixteen miles below Hartford, and twenty-five miles above Saybrook, where the river enters Long Island Sound. The town lies on an elevation of land which runs along the river for about a mile from north to south, and between two tributary streams, Little River on the north and Sumner's Creek on the south. The land rises from the river in a gentle slope

## The Middletown Environment

to the height of about a hundred and fifty feet, and then forms a sort of plateau extending nearly a mile westward, where it slopes into a broad valley reaching to the Meriden hills beyond. On a portion of the western side of the plateau there rises, quite abruptly, a small elevation called Indian Hill. Along the whole front of the eastern slope the noble river sweeps with slow, majestic power on its way to the Sound. At the southern end of the slope, and directly in front of the southern end of the town, the river makes a sharp bend to the eastward, forming almost a right angle in its course. This bend in the river, the slow current, and depth of water are the conditions that gave to Middletown in years gone by a commodious inland harbor for the prosecution of a prosperous shipping and shipbuilding industry.

The main street of the town runs along the whole face of the slope, a short distance up from the river, and parallel with its course from north to south. The principal business buildings are along Main Street, and the educational buildings and the private residences, picturesquely placed in broad, elm-shaded streets, cover the upper face of the slope and the plateau beyond. Indian Hill has been taken as a cemetery.

At the time when this narrative begins—1840—Middletown had about ten thousand inhabitants, mainly of New England ancestry. It had a rich historical background of colonial experience and

## John Fiske

character running back to the first settlements in the Connecticut Valley about the middle of the seventeenth century by seceders from "My Lords the Bretheren" of the Massachusetts Bay colonies, by settlers from adjacent Connecticut colonies, and also by seceders direct from England. Middletown itself was settled in 1650, and its founders had all the strong and distinguishing characteristics which marked the people of the great Puritan exodus. They had but little property and they had to begin a new social life under the most trying conditions. Their first dwellings were hardly a shelter from the wind and the storm. Their food was meagre and their clothing of the crudest kind, and they were surrounded by tribes of hostile Indians who naturally resented this powerful, unbidden intrusion into their domains. The privations and suffering bravely and cheerfully encountered by these early pioneers cannot be conceived by their descendants of the present generation.

The demands of their religion were of the first consideration in their minds, for it was the "heroic age of theology, when John Cotton used at bed-time to sweeten his mouth with a morsel of Calvin"; accordingly we find in the earliest Middletown records appropriations for building a meeting-house twenty feet square, with provisions for calling the people to service by the beat of a drum. They were none the less attentive to matters of practical, everyday life. People in our day sometimes wonder

## The Middletown Environment

at the strong hold the protective idea — the protection of home industry — has among the people of New England. The idea was indigenous among them from the first; it grew out of their needs and conditions. The early records of our New England towns are full of provisions for the promotion of home industries. In the Middletown Records of 1658 we find a grant to “shomaeker eagellston” of “a peas of Meddow, he ingaging to inhabit it seven years upon it and also doth ingag to endeavour to sut the towne in his trade for making and mending shoes.” It also appears that to get a blacksmith to come among them they offered him a hundred pound lot, he pledging himself “to inhabit upon the land and to do the Townes worck of smithing during the term of four years, before he shall make sale of it to any other.” Wiser than the protective legislators of our day, these simple-minded Puritan promoters of home industry required their beneficiaries to render specific public services for the favors granted.

For one hundred years — 1650 to 1750 — Middletown grew but slowly, and its Records during this period are mainly “the simple annals of the poor,” save where they are irradiated with matters pertaining to the Indians, to questions of church doctrine or discipline, and by assertions of the right of self-government in local affairs coupled with the desirability of corporate representation in all matters affecting the federation or well-being of the Connec-

## John Fiske

ticut colonies as a whole. It is a well-known historic fact, that out of the experience of the practical working in unison in the Connecticut colonies or towns of these two forms of political association — an experience which clearly demonstrated that separate communities could harmoniously preserve their autonomy in local affairs while federated for mutual protection and welfare — came the Connecticut Compromise, which in the memorable Constitutional Convention of 1787 was a vital factor in the formation of the Constitution of the United States, and gave to that immortal document its two most distinctive features — equal representation of States, coupled with a representation of the people as a whole.

By the middle of the eighteenth century Middletown had grown to a population of nearly five thousand. It was larger than Hartford or New Haven, and was the most important town in Connecticut. The growth of the New England colonies had by this time developed an active shipping trade with the West Indies whereby New England's agricultural products and her fisheries were exchanged for such staple articles as salt, sugar, molasses, and rum. The colonists had also ventured into the East India trade, and Middletown from its situation on the largest river, with prosperous-growing towns and well-cultivated farms on either side, with a commodious harbor easily accessible from the sea and contiguous to excellent facilities for



## The Middletown Environment

shipbuilding and repairs, was well situated to engage in these various lines of colonial commerce. Accordingly the town became between 1750 and 1775 a shipping port for the West and East India and China trade hardly second to any other port in New England.

This trade, with the shipbuilding which followed in its wake, was very prosperous, and together they brought much wealth to the town; they also diversified the occupations of the people. In 1770, among fifty persons registered as engaged in business on Main Street, seventeen were in one way or another — as merchants, shipowners, skippers, rope-makers, etc. — connected with the shipping of the port. What is particularly noteworthy in this record of occupations is the frankly stated fact, that a Captain Gleason and a Dr. Walker were slave-dealers.

This prosperous shipping business was almost wholly destroyed by the Revolutionary War. It revived somewhat when the war was over, but owing to the changed conditions of commercial intercourse with other nations that followed upon the establishment of the Government of the United States, and to the new spirit that entered into the commercial relations between the people of the respective States, Middletown was, by its isolation from the sea, heavily handicapped for meeting the new conditions in competition with the larger and more accessible ports of Boston, Providence, New

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York, and Philadelphia. Consequently, in 1840, the shipping business of Middletown was but a reminder of a former prosperity.

The manufacturing period of later years, involving corporate management and entailing large numbers of foreign laborers and trade-union associations, had not yet set in. The few industries that existed were small and had grown up with the shipping industry or were the outgrowth of local needs or of limited individual enterprise. In 1840 the town had not entirely differentiated itself from the country; and on market days Main Street, alive with farmers whose loaded trams gave ample evidence of the rich agricultural country, also testified to the existence still of barter trade between the farmer and the storekeeper or trader. It was, moreover, the day of stage-coaches, and the only means of public transportation to the interior, to Hartford or New Haven, to Providence or Boston, was by stages, and their arrival and departure were matters of no little interest in the daily life of the town. Then, too, Middletown was the county seat of Middlesex County and when the courts were in session another centre of interest was created; if a noted case was being tried, the whole town became interested in the result.

In this community in 1840 the people were well-to-do and the social life was as yet unstratified. The contrasts of great wealth on the one hand and of poverty on the other did not exist. The people

## The Middletown Environment

generally knew each other, as well as their family histories, and personal interests were freely intermingled. The descendants of the prosperous merchants, shipowners, and traders of the colonial days were numerous and among them were persons of education and character, who, with their moderate fortunes of inherited wealth well invested, and their comfortable style of living, gave a quiet, refining influence to the social life of the town. This circle had been increased by well-to-do families from other places who had been attracted to Middletown by reason of its delightful location, its well-shaded, beautiful streets, its healthfulness, and its many comfortable homes, so that in 1840 it was one of the most beautiful residential towns in New England.

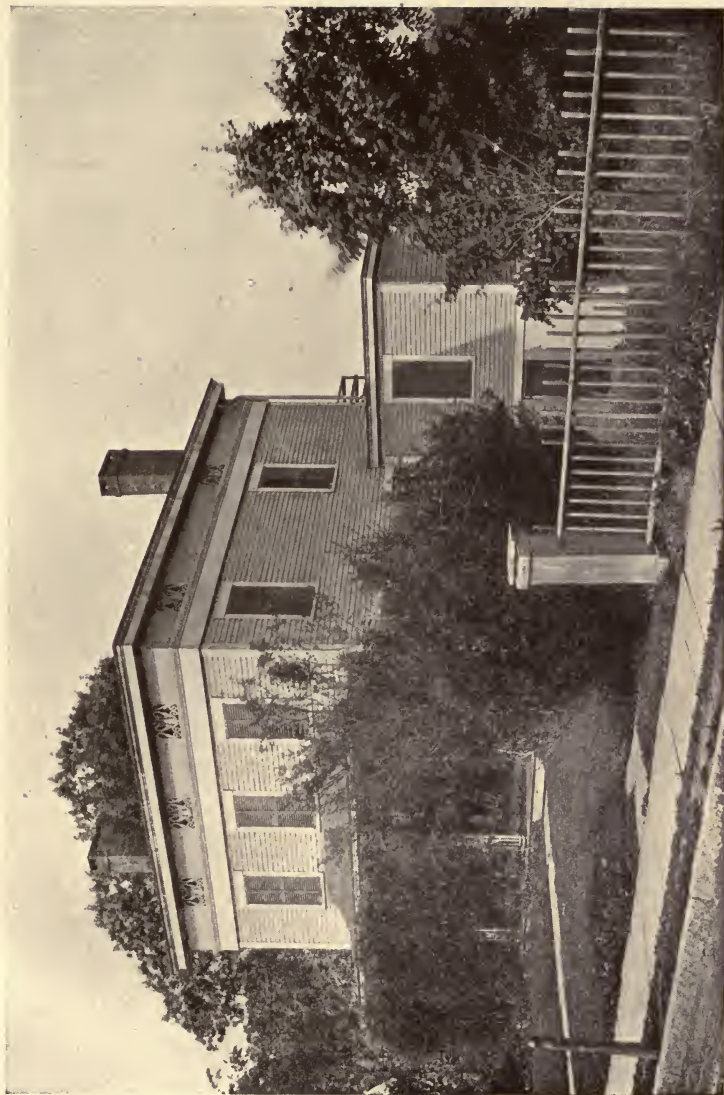
It can also be said that Middletown comprised a religious community of a distinctly New England character. The Sabbath was duly respected, and attendance at prayer meeting and church was universal. In the social life of the town, church membership was an indispensable prerequisite for social recognition. There were six churches — two orthodox Congregational, one Episcopal, one Baptist, and two Methodist — in which were presented four phases of evangelical faith and doctrine. Among these churches the Episcopal and the two Congregational churches were the more prominent by reason of the greater number and the social standing of their members. The preaching in all these churches was of the strictest evangelical character, and in the

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Congregational churches particularly the grim theology of John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards was emphasized more than the simple, humanizing religion of Jesus.

The Wesleyan University — a Methodist college — was also an important factor in the social and religious influences of the town, by reason of the number of students and the learning and high character of members of the faculty. In later years the University has greatly broadened in its ideals of religious truth, but at the period we are now considering, it was the express purpose of the institution to present knowledge bound in the fetters of a particular scheme of theology.

In this community of good citizens, among the remarkable men of that day, and in some respects the most remarkable, was John Fisk. He was town clerk and treasurer, clerk of the Superior Court, county treasurer and clerk of probate at the same time, — five different offices which he filled with ability and to the satisfaction of the public. The great and growing confidence reposed in him was shown in the fact that just previous to his death in 1847 he had been elected town clerk and treasurer for the fiftieth year in succession. He was in very truth a walking encyclopædia of the town's civic affairs. He was a member of the First Congregational Church and took part in all its activities. John Fisk was a great reader of good literature and was especially fond of the Waverley Novels, often



THE FISK HOUSE, MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT



## The Fisk Homestead

carrying one in his pocket so that when leisure moments came in the course of his official duties he could amuse himself by dipping into its pages.

Judge William D. Shipman, an honored member of the New York Bar, had occasion to practise in the Middletown courts at this period. Fifty years after he was a great admirer of the writings of John Fiske. In a letter to Fiske's mother, Mrs. E. W. Stoughton, anent her son's philosophical works, dated October 23, 1896, he gives the following picture of John Fisk, the old town clerk and the clerk of the Superior Court: "Whenever I see the name of John Fiske, I strike off the final 'e' in Fiske and my memory goes back to his great-grandfather when the latter was clerk of the courts in Middlesex County and clerk of pretty much all the municipal, judicial, and ecclesiastical organizations in Middletown. I recall his visage, his snuff-colored clothes, his gold-bowed spectacles, and the quiet way in which he swore the witnesses and did his other clerical duties, even in a case involving a death penalty, and then took a novel from his pocket and serenely read while great lawyers were contending at the bar."

John Fisk was moderately well-to-do. Being a frugal liver, he had managed to accumulate from the returns of his various public offices a small competence, and he lived in a modest way in a very comfortable house on Union Street. In 1840 he built himself a more commodious house

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on Hanover Street, a most desirable location, with fine spreading elms in front, and with ample grounds in the rear, over which there was an extended view down the broad, slowly flowing river with the eastern hills beyond. It was in his former house on Union Street that his granddaughter, Mary Fisk Bound, was married to Edmund Brewster Green on the 15th of September, 1840. It was to the Hanover Street home that their son, the subject of this memoir, was brought in the autumn of 1842 bearing potentially in his infantile brain the strong, virile traits of the Quaker and the Puritan.



## CHAPTER III

### THE FISK HOUSEHOLD — BOYHOOD AND EARLY EDUCATION

1847-1854

THE Fisk household in 1842 consisted of John Fisk, the town clerk, "a jolly, fun-loving old man"; his second wife, Olive Cone Fisk, "the dearest, heartiest soul in the world"; Polly Fisk Bound, John Fisk's daughter by his first wife and grandmother to the infant boy, "a little, alert old lady, very refined and beautiful"; and four sons, Henry, John, Charles, and Frederick. Charles was a civil engineer. It was an orthodox family of the liberal sort, and all the members attended the First or North Congregational Church of Middletown.

John Fisk, as has been said, was a great reader, and in the house were many books of a stimulating character to a young, inquiring mind. There were the Bible, with the standard orthodox Commentaries; "Pilgrim's Progress," that simple yet powerful dramatization of Christian character and experience, which has a place in English religious literature second only to the Bible; and that volume so consolatory to the believer in Calvinistic theology, Baxter's "Saints' Rest." For histories there were Josephus with its Christian interpel-

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lation, Rollin's "Ancient History," Goldsmith's "Greece," Froissart, Gibbon's "Rome," Robertson's "Charles V," with its masterly introduction of European history, Prescott and Hume. In biography there were Plutarch's "Lives"; the Lives of many religious worthies, including John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards; Sparks's "Life of Washington" was also there. In general literature there were the "Iliad," the "Arabian Nights," "Don Quixote," and the works of Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, and Walter Scott. To these should be added the textbooks of Henry Fisk on English and Latin grammar, mathematics, physics, chemistry, and astronomy.<sup>1</sup>

In this family and with these surroundings Mary Fisk Bound had grown to womanhood shedding the charms of her attractive personality over the entire household, and her early marriage left a sad void in the family circle.

Under the tender care of his grandparents, Edmund Fisk Green emerges for our notice, when about four years of age, a slender, shy, open-eyed, inquisitive boy, with an extraordinary memory and an insatiable desire to know about things. He seemed not to forget anything that came under his observation, and he had already learned to read, mainly by his own efforts. To see a book or a

<sup>1</sup> This list of books should be particularly noted; for, in the development of the mind whose unfolding we are to trace, nearly all of these works were put under tribute.

## Boyhood

newspaper excited his curiosity, and to have a person read from either using words, some of which he understood, excited him still more. When a story was read to him, he became as deeply interested in the process of reading as in the story itself — he wanted to know how the reader could tell just those words in the print. When it was explained, and he was shown how words differed from each other, he began working by himself — picking out words, and then running to his grandmother, or whoever would help him, to have them named. In this way he soon mastered quite a vocabulary of printed words, and then began to relate them as in speech. In fact, before any one had thought of teaching him his letters or sending him to school — there were no kindergartens in those days — he had taught himself to read, mainly through his own exertions. We shall see later that he learned music in much the same way. Furthermore, in these beginnings for the mastery of his native English language, we have foreshadowings of that deep interest in philological studies which was a marked characteristic of his mature years.

In these days of character-foreshadowings, we should note his great regard, let us say his deep respect, for books. As soon as he had learned to read, he began to look upon books as the most desirable of possessions; and his pride in such as came to him, and his thoughtful care of them, are prominent among the incidents related of his very early

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years. As the story of his youth unfolds, it will be noted how ready he was to sacrifice everything for books. They were always the chief measures of value in his mind.<sup>1</sup>

When Edmund was about three years of age his grandmother married Elias Lewis, a worthy citizen of Middletown, who, with Sallie, his daughter by a former wife, became members of the Fisk household. Mr. Lewis's daughter took great interest in Edmund and encouraged all his efforts to learn about things and to do things.

As soon as Edmund could read with understanding, everything in the way of print that came under his notice had to yield tribute to his desire to know what it was about; and then he was equally desirous of telling what he had learned. This twofold form of mental activity went out in every direction. He early began to observe the activities of people, and what he saw others do, he wanted to do himself. In these early years, therefore, he was interested in his grandmother's embroidery and was delighted when he could lend a hand, meanwhile telling what he had been reading about.

Among the incidents of this period of which he retained pleasant recollections were the semi-annual visits of Eliza Cotton, a sort of peripatetic boys' tailor for a few of the Middletown families. This

<sup>1</sup> This respect for books always restrained him from marking or in any way defacing them. In his Cambridge library the volumes that were his constant companions bear only the marks of respectful usage.

## Boyhood

was before the days of regular tailors for boys, or of ready-made clothing; and throughout New England there was hardly a town that did not possess one of these indispensable public servants. They performed two important social functions: they helped to clothe the needy, and being, as it were, the repositories of the social gossip of the town, they entertained their patrons with incidents in the lives, and particularly in regard to the clothes, of their neighbors, as interesting and as fully embellished with personal flavor as are to be found in the present weekly newspaper.<sup>1</sup>

Eliza Cotton was an exceptionally intelligent woman of good family, and for her own character she was greatly respected. She took great interest in Edmund, and he became very much attached to

<sup>1</sup> This peripatetic tailoring is one of New England's lost arts. James W. Brooks in his reminiscences of Petersham, Massachusetts, a town which is to figure quite largely in future pages of this work, speaking of one of this honorable guild of craftsmen, Mary Ann Howe, says:—

“How familiar to some of us her big shears, and goose, and pressing-board, and big steel thimble, that for many years went from farm to farm, to cut and stitch and press the clothing of the farmer, and his boys, at fifty cents a day. How her keen wits gauged his character and habits, as her tape took measurements of his tabernacle of flesh! An industrious and helpful being, the product of whose honest and ill paid toil was many a generous deed in life, and a handsome sum bequeathed at death. How rough her left forefinger where the needle pricked it; and what conscience went into the jerk of her linen thread as she drew our buttons home to stay—an altogether excellent woman—although it must be confessed, she wrought such a similarity of expression in the fore and aft of our trousers, as to remind us of the breeches of the little chap whose mother said, that when too far away to see his face, she could never tell whether he was going to school, or coming home.”

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her, looking forward to her visit with pleasure for two reasons, she was interested in his books and his reading, and she would let him help in her work. In helping her, he learned to sew with much skill. His interest in needlework was no indication of effeminacy in his nature or his tastes, but was prompted by his desire to know how to do what he saw had a useful purpose, and also to be helpful in the doing.

Another of Edmund's activities of these early years was his delight and facility in preaching to his grandparents and imitating their minister, the Reverend Dr. Crane, a preacher of the strict orthodox school who gave to his exposition of the orthodox creed a manner duly impressive. The remarkable thing about these personations was their accuracy in the collocation of words; whole sentences, which to Edmund must have conveyed but little or no meaning, were reproduced with great fidelity. These personations were not prompted by any desire to burlesque. His active little mind took in the religious exercises as a part of the reality going on about him, and back of all his expression and wholly unobserved by his elders, he was forming conceptions of God and Heaven and Hell, which, so far as we can get at them, reflect in their naïve truthfulness the materialistic anthropomorphic preaching to which he was an attentive listener.

He has given such direct testimony as to his con-

## Boyhood

ception, at this period, of God and His methods of judgment that his words are well worth quoting:<sup>1</sup>

“I imagined a narrow office just over the zenith, with a tall standing-desk running lengthwise, upon which lay several open ledgers bound in coarse leather. There was no roof over this office, and the walls rose scarcely five feet from the floor, so that a person standing at the desk could look out upon the whole world. There were two persons at the desk, and one of them — a tall, slender man, of aquiline features, wearing spectacles, with a pen in his hand and another behind his ear — was God. The other whose appearance I do not distinctly recall, was an attendant angel. Both were diligently watching the deeds of men and recording them in the ledgers. To my infant mind this picture was not grotesque, but ineffably solemn, and the fact that all my words and acts were thus written down, to confront me at the day of judgment, seemed naturally a matter of grave concern.”

Perhaps it was the death at this period, February 17, 1847, of his great-grandfather John Fisk, full of years and honorable service, and with the respect and esteem of the whole community for his upright character, that served to impress upon Edmund's mind such a vivid conception of God and his method of keeping account of the conduct of people here on earth.

In the ample grounds of the Fisk homestead Edmund had a plot of ground given him for his own

<sup>1</sup> See *The Idea of God*, by John Fiske, p. 116.

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cultivation. This garden was a never-failing source of interest, and in watching and tending the germination and development of plant life, he not only made himself acquainted with the more obvious facts of our common vegetable and flora culture: he also laid in a stock of direct personal observations of nature's processes which were of much value in later years when tracing the theory of Evolution from the inorganic in nature to the organic — that is, the beginning of life and its development through the vegetable and animal kingdoms.

It is noteworthy in these very early years that Edmund was an obedient, dutiful boy with an innate consideration for others. These traits will appear as distinct elements in his character as his life unfolds. We have simply to note them as active at the very beginning. Closely connected with these traits was another very pronounced one, which was a fitting complement to the others — a strong self-propulsion towards doing useful work. He seemed to find pleasure in his tasks. Never was it necessary to put pressure upon him. He was self-directed from the first. He was a remarkably healthy boy physically, and there was nothing morbid in his intellectual make-up. While he was not robust, he had no ailments. He loved outdoor sports, and was especially fond of rowing, and as soon as he could handle oars he had a boat on the river. In short, he early presented remarkable mental power in happy combination with a healthy, responsive, physical



## Early Education

organization — a combination that enabled him to find pleasure in both work and play; and when he did not have agreeable companions, he could work and play by himself.

Edmund began going to school when he was between four and five years old. He was sent to a private primary school kept by a Miss Wilcox, and he was so slight that he was sometimes carried on the shoulders of his great-grandfather Fisk. This was a school where very young pupils were inducted into the elements of knowledge after the methods of sixty years ago, when all primary education began with the presentation of the abstract symbols — in language, the letters with their combination in simple words; in mathematics, the nine digits with the four forms of arithmetical process, all learned mnemonically. Penmanship, oral spelling, composition, some reading, and a little geography were included in the course. This elementary schooling was continued for nearly two years, and Edmund proved an apt pupil.

But he did not confine himself to his studies. He early began to use them in enlarging his powers of independent acquisition. He was not content to limit himself to school requirements. When six years old he could read readily, and as in his home there were some of the great works in general literature, these were put under tribute by his inquiring mind. Even the dry textbooks of Charles Fisk were examined, "to see what they were like." At six, he

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began the study of Latin, under whose instruction does not appear; and at seven we find him reading Cæsar. History, language, and mathematics were his first loves, and before he was eight he had read Plutarch's "Lives," Rollin's "Ancient History," Josephus, Goldsmith's "Greece," "Arabian Nights," "Pilgrim's Progress," and had dipped into Shakespeare, Milton, and Pope.

We have seen that during this period his mother was engaged in teaching in New York City and Newark, New Jersey. Her visits to the Middletown homestead were frequent, and occasionally Edmund visited her. As soon as he had acquired sufficient skill in penmanship to express his thoughts in writing, letter-writing, telling his mother of his interests and what he was doing, became a source of great pleasure to him. Fortunately these letters have been preserved, and in them we have a record of his youthful development, a record of his studies, his reading, his amusements, his ambitions — all put forth spontaneously as it were, in the service of a dutiful affection, a record all the more valuable because of its naïve, unconscious truthfulness.

The first letter is of date March 17, 1850, when Edmund was nearly eight years of age. It is written on both sides of a half-sheet of letter paper, and with a bold, heavy hand. There are no erasures or blots on the sheet. It is the letter of a real boy, containing a mixture of local incidents, personal experi-

## Early Education

ences, domestic matters, and ancient history. His reference to Artaxerxes indicates that he had been browsing in Rollin's "Ancient History," or Goldsmith's "Greece," or Xenophon's "Anabasis." Only one word is misspelled — "witch" and "wich" for "which." The following is the letter *verbatim et literatim*: —

MIDDLETOWN, March 17, 1850.

Dear Mother —

There has been a terrible fire about a fortnight ago. Mr. Johnsons & Mr. Parmalees and Elliots, Mr. Storrs & a part of Mr. Putnams all burnt down and several other buildings got on fire. Grandmother lost all her magazines wich she had brought to Mr. Putnams to get bound, & yet I slept through the whole of it! I got a new "Gladius"<sup>1</sup> the other day out of the new house witch John is building. There are 12 men out there to work and every one of them is John. I am tired of hearing John all the time. It is all the time John you go and take hold of that end of the log, and John you go and take hold of the middle of the log and John you take hold of this end of the log and John you pry up the log and it is all John all the time. There were 4 Artaxerxes viz Artaxerxes Smerdis, Artaxerxes Longimanus Artaxerxes Mnemon and Artaxerxes Ochus. Don't you think this a bad letter? The other night Bridget said there was just enough oil to last that night the next night she said the same so I asked her what made her say there would be just enough for last night, and then say so again to-

<sup>1</sup> Sword.

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night. Bridget said oh I brought out the balance tonight.

We all send our love.

From your affectionate son,

EDMUND FISK GREEN.

It appears that a few weeks later Edmund was visiting his father and mother in Newark, New Jersey. At this time his father was pressing his claims for political preferment, and as he had promises of a substantial position in the government service in South America or on the Pacific Coast, he was hopefully looking forward to getting his little family together in a home of his own. This pleasant prospect in the mind of Mr. Green is indicated in a letter written by Edmund to his Grandmother Green during this visit. This letter is of special interest because of its self-revealing character. It clearly shows that Edmund had been dipping into his Uncle Charles's textbooks and that the pursuit of knowledge was assuming a dominant position in his mind. The letter is as follows: —

NEWARK, N.J., 19th *May*, 1850.

*My dear Grandmother Green —*

I am very anxious to see you and Aunt Arriana whom I have never seen. Father says mother and I will visit you with him before we go to South America. I am going to Connecticut on Wednesday with grandmother Lewis where I shall have a nice time cultivating my little garden. I am now 8 years old and have read about 200 vols of books on all



JOHN FISKE IN 1850 (EIGHT YEARS OLD)

(From a daguerreotype)



## Early Education

subjects, particularly on Nat. History, Philosophy, Chemistry, Astronomy, Grammar, Mathematics, and miscellaneous things. I have also read Spanish a little. I can't write very well but I shall improve by practice so you must excuse my first letter to you.

Give my love to Aunt Roberts and my cousins and tell them I hope to see them soon.

I remain, dear grandmother,

Your very affectionate little boy,

EDDIE F. GREEN.

In this letter all the words are correctly spelled, and the penmanship, while clearly legible, indicates the hand of a boy not yet brought into complete subjection to his thought. There is added to the letter in the handwriting of Mr. Green the following: "Ed has written the above letter without any assistance, and although he can't write very well, he can talk 'a few' with anybody."

When between eight and nine years of age — November, 1850 — Edmund was placed by his grandmother in a private preparatory school for boys in Middletown, conducted by Daniel H. Chase, a graduate from the Wesleyan University. The public schools in Middletown in 1850 were not what they are to-day, and in this school, which was of excellent repute, boys were prepared for business life or for college. It does not appear at this time that any definite aim or purpose in Edmund's education had been considered. The need of his receiving systematic schooling and the convenient

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location of the school were the reasons for placing him under the charge of Mr. Chase.

Edmund's regular studies at the beginning were English grammar, Latin and Greek grammar, arithmetic, algebra, geography, with attendant exercises in reading, spelling, penmanship, and composition. It is worth while to note in this list the entire absence of many studies which are now universal in primary education in both public and private schools, such as nature study, elementary physics and chemistry, music, art. The advantages of these latter studies Edmund did not enjoy until his college period and then only to a very limited extent. In view of the important work of John Fiske in interpreting to his time the truly humanizing studies, the thought arises, in passing, would the influence of his life-work have been greater had his early educational training been directed to these modern "humanities" as well as to language, history, and mathematics?

Edmund continued in Mr. Chase's school until April, 1853, and here he was brought into close companionship with boys of his own age as well as with boys much older than himself. His studies were the first consideration in his mind and along with them went an ever-expanding range of home reading. He readily made himself amenable to the school discipline and soon distanced his classmates both in deportment and in his studies. His proficiency and the regard he received from the teachers made



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the older boys jealous and they took various ways to annoy him. In some instances they combined to abuse him as only cowardly boys will when they find a boy younger and smaller than themselves. What grieved him most, however, was the defacing of his books. This persecution was carried into the school, until Mr. Chase assigned him a place where he could study undisturbed.

This persecution by his schoolmates tended to drive Edmund the more in and upon himself. There are no complaints in the letters. He is interested in telling only of what is of interest to himself. He is closely observant of what is going on in the town, and thoughtfully listens to the discussions of a question that then divided the people into two parties — the building of a railroad that should connect Middletown with other Connecticut towns as well as with the general outside world. There were some who strongly opposed the movement.

It is interesting to find that long before the days of manual training in education, Edmund had adopted this feature in his self-imposed educational course. This fact appears in the following letter, where the information is given, boy-like, along with matters of local interest:—

MIDDLETOWN, *Sept.* 17, 1851.

*Dear Mother* —

I have made a splendid shop out in the wood-house. First there is a large box set up on edge on that bench and nail down. Second there are posts

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set up and boards nailed across from post to post so that they form a roof and two sides which is all I want as the front is open and the box forms the 4th side. In the box are shelves to put tools on. Mr. Faxon is dead. Dr. Casey is going away and they are going to have his house for the great Central Bank. They have tore down the old hotel and are going to build up a new one in stone carve work. They have built up that place where the Great Fire was. They have tore down the County Bank and building it up in stone carve work. We all send our love.

From your affectionate son,  
EDMUND F. GREEN.

In this little shop Edmund found occupation for stormy days, and here he made many things. The near-by shipyards had many lessons for him, and beginning with a misshapen sloop he progressed in his miniature shipbuilding until he had made a full-rigged frigate with a full complement of guns — the guns being specially cast for him by his friend Mr. Wilcox, who owned a foundry, and who took much interest in Edmund's ingenuity and skill. This frigate was, indeed, a remarkable piece of skilled workmanship, and for it at a local exhibition, he received a prize. Among the treasures in his library at Cambridge none are more interesting than the few mementoes of this little shop — a miniature plane, a compass, and sun-dial.

John Fiske tells us, in later years, that it was largely owing to his visits to the shipyards and his

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making models of vessels that he early became interested in geography, astronomy, mathematics, and navigation — they were of interest because they were of service, they had to do with the sailing of vessels over the ocean.

At this early period his imagination was also actively at work. In one of his letters in the beginning of 1852 he tells of a dream he has had which he calls a "Castle in the Air." It is a boyish extravaganza, and is of interest as showing his growing proficiency in English composition, and also as indicating that he had been feeding his mind with the "Arabian Nights" and other fairy tales. At the close of the letter he tells his mother that at school two other boys and himself have taken the first prize. It is worthy of note that he puts the names of the other two boys before his own.

A few days later he writes and gives such an inventory, as it were, of himself and his studies — such a genuine boy's letter — that the letter is well worth giving in full: —

N.B. When you find a star after a word you must look at the bottom of the page.

MIDDLETOWN, Feb. 25th, 1852.

*Dear Mother —*

By my Geography of 1850 London is 2,520,000. I have 0 debits and 1200 credits. I went to Thads last Sat. and slid all day on the factory pond. Is there any *moral* to my dream? Next summer I want to study Surveying, Rhetoric & Psychology. To-

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day I worked out a very difficult proposition in Engineering 2 more in Surveying & 23 in Legendre of Geometry. I have got in Arithmetic to the cube root. Have you received Grandmother's letter about the worsteds? I have got three compositions on shell-fishes. If \* you look in my last letter you will see the 1st prize was Dickinson, Griswold and Green — but Dickinson and Griswold have now 1 Dr. each which leaves me the whole. My garden for 1852 is 55 ft. long and 31 ft. wide. We all send our love.

From your very aff'nate son,

EDMUND F. GREEN.

N.B. Mr. Cröfoot is dead and *buried*.

\* Feb. 20.

In the spring of 1852, as we have already seen, Edmund's father returned from Panama for a short visit. He and Mrs. Green came to Middletown and Edmund returned with them to New York City and saw his father sail for Panama, where he was soon to end his days. Edmund retained a delightful memory of this last visit with his father, and in after years always spoke of him with much affection and described him as a man of great personal charm.

There were persons in Middletown who, seeing this slender, open-eyed boy on the street, shunning the rough boys who took delight in persecuting him, thought him simply a little coward! If these persons had known the standing of this boy at school, had heard his interested, thoughtful inquiries in the shipyards, had seen him ingeniously at work in his

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own little workshop, had known something of the character and extent of his reading, and had they also been aware of the fact that all the time he was writing to his mother of the things uppermost in his mind — never alluding to the persecutions he endured — they would have formed a worthier estimate of him.

It is one of the fine characteristics of these letters, noticeable all the way through, that they are cheerful, hopeful letters. Edmund has something before him constantly worth striving for, and the letters are the record of this striving, with many incidents by the way; and while they were written solely for the eye of his mother, they give such a naïve mixture of knowledge and boyish expressions in gaining it as to make them of general interest as the record of the mental development of a healthy-minded boy, who loved knowledge and his mother in about equal proportions.

Here are some reflections derived from his studies as well as personal experiences in the pursuit of knowledge that are of interest as showing the workings of his mind. He is studying astronomy and he desires to inform his mother that "it is now about 5850 years since the creation. If a train of cars 30 miles per hour had travelled ever since, it would be 284,000,000 miles from Herschel. To reach him would take 1000 years. To reach Neptune would take 6522 years to come." His economical tendencies are manifested early and many instances might

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be given. For the Fourth of July this year — 1852 — he proposes to spend but twenty-five cents. But his crowning financial operation was his scheme for getting a copy of Playfair's Euclid, which his teacher had recommended him to study in place of Brewster's *Légendre* — a book he already had. The story should be told in his own words: —

“So after school what should I do but go poking into Mr. Putnams to ask the price of Euclid. One dollar was the Binomial that met my astounded eares. Terrible!!! I could n't buy the book as I had but 55 cents; so I left the store. The next noon I saw George Smith's skates (by the way he was turned out of school for being impudent to Mr. Brewer). At the sight of the skates, a lucky thought struck my head. After school, I took my skates and went up to Mr. Atkins and sold them for 46 cents. So I went poking into Mr. Putnams a second time and got the book, together with some drawing paper to make the figures on. So now I have to use all my instruments because there are some things to do which you can't do with anything else.”

During the winter of 1852-53 Edmund's studies appear to have been Greenleaf's *Arithmetic*, Perkins's *Algebra*, *Euclid*, Latin and Greek grammar, and *Cæsar*, with geography, English grammar and composition.

In April, 1853, the term closed, and Edmund's schooling with Mr. Chase came to an end. He did not get a prize at the close of the term, something unusual for him. He appears to have made a few

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warm friendships among the boys, and to have become much interested in outdoor sports. He gives his mother a description of the game of "roly-poly," which is particularly noteworthy for its clearness of statement and its good grammatical construction. He was interested in boating, and tells of trading off his old boat for one three times as large. We get glimpses of him in his little workshop, for he tells of making "a seconds clock which will go very well until the weight gets half-way down (about one foot) and then I can do nothing with it. I have taken it to pieces in hopes to put it together so that it will go somehow half decent." His penmanship has greatly improved. It is perfectly legible and begins to show something of that simple elegance that characterized the handwriting of John Fiske in his maturity.

For the six months from April to October, 1853, Edmund studied without instructors and the letters show that he was as faithful to his studies as when under school discipline. In one letter he says: "I study Cicero de Oratore Oratio, 1st Collectanea Græca Majora, Davis's Algebra. I have almost finished equations of the 1st degree. Flint's Geometry, I recite to Prof. Nobody." In this letter he sends an original "Greek Oration" which he particularly requests his mother "not to show to any one because it may have mistakes." The events of the intervening years have given this bit of boyish mental activity an especial value, and it does not

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appear as a breach of confidence, under the circumstances, to give this "oration" in facsimile. Greek scholars will appreciate it as the diversion of a lad eleven years of age, studying without direction.

In addition to keeping his mother informed in regard to his studies, Edmund tells her of the various incidents in his daily boyhood life — of his going to a magician's exhibition and his being called upon to take part in some of the tricks; of his having four shirts with bosoms and collars; a flowered satin vest made over by Eliza Cotton, with some help from himself; and of his grandmother's giving him a new broadcloth suit. He also tells of his forming a boys' club and of his being elected president; of his rambles in the woods, and of his wading in the beautiful Sabetha River; and, most important of all, of some gifts of books from his grandmother and from Mr. Lewis, by which his library is increased to one hundred and eighty-seven volumes. In his naïve record of these various incidents the beginnings of his art of narration are clearly observed.

In October, 1853, Edmund enters another private school in Middletown conducted by a Mr. Brewer, — possibly a teacher previously with Mr. Chase, — where he continued for six months. Shortly after entering this school there was an examination, Edmund's account of which gives us a further insight into his studies and his proficiency.



Πως μαχρὰν ὠφελίαν καταχρῆσθων ἠμῶν ὑπομῶν.  
Ὅσον ἀλλὰ σὸς διανοίας παραγορα κατὰ αἰξω δὲ ἡμῶν.  
Εἰς τὴν δὲ νῆξ ἑαυτὸν ρεῖ καὶ ἀχαλιενώσως σφάσας.  
Ναὶ οὐδὲν νοερερινυμ φρερὰ βασιλειόνος, οὐδὲν φυλαξοῦ  
οὐδὲν ονόμοια πόντων ἀγαθὸς, οὐδὲν βρῶν ἔχουτος  
ὅδε τόπος τετελιχομενιζοῦς, οὐδὲν ὡψ τὴν σφῶν δὲ ἑν-  
εῶν. Διαχαλὺρ τε εὐδα δέεδα οὐκ βελήσβα βατος.

Εἰ μὲν Φίος. Γρεῖν.

"GREEK ORATION" WRITTEN BY JOHN FISKE AT THE AGE OF ELEVEN  
(Facsimile)



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October, 1853.

*Dear Mother —*

This letter will be all about studies. We had an examination Thursday. I was examined in Greenleaf's Arithmetic; Perkins' and Loomis' Algebra; through 4 books Euclid; through Hedge's Logic; through 4 books Cæsar; 8 books Virgil; 4 Orat. Cicero and the Græca Majora; through the Latin and Greek Grammars; and last, but not least dreaded, through Greek syntax.

Mr. Brewer said I passed an admirable examination. I am reading Sallust which is so easy that I have read 48 chapters without looking in the dictionary. My school report was thus — 9 being perfection: Attendance 7: Arithmetic 8: Algebra 8: Composition 7: Declamation 7: Geometry 9: Greek 7: Latin 8: Logic 8: Deportment 9: Reading 9: Writing 9: — the most perfect report of all: none of the other reports were above 4. I have studied my Sallust this morning and have got 7 cr. making 54 in all. I guess I shall finish him in three weeks and then I shall take Livy. I am reading now about Jugurtha, king of Numidia, and his wars with the Romans: Sallust was governor of Numidia 40 years after, and so had excellent opportunities of knowing about it by the traditions of the people and by the records.

From your affectionate son,

EDIBUS F. GREENIBUS.

P.S. Mr. B. said I was a better scholar than he ever had before.

P.S. 2. If you will bring Anthon's Xenophon's Anabasis 1.25 I will value it more than the broad-cloth suit.

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Edmund was so earnest and faithful in his studies that Mr. Brewer cautioned him about studying too hard; evidently without much effect, for the letters bear witness to the great expansion of his mind in various directions, so much so that his school studies seem to have engaged the lesser part of his mental activities. No small portion of his spare time was given to translating Cæsar into Greek ahead of his translating the Latin into English. His reasons for this self-imposed task are characteristic — “It makes the translation into English easier”; and, “I like to see the Greek letters — they look so handsome.” He was fond of drawing maps, and read history with the maps before him, thus visualizing his historical acquisitions as much as possible. He committed to memory hundreds of dates of important events just for mental exercise. With his expanding knowledge he felt the necessity of having a systematic method of noting down for ready reference special subjects of interest as they came to his attention in his studies and in his reading. He therefore made a chronological record of important events from 1000 B.C. to 1820 A.D. as a sort of historical framework around which to group his historical acquisitions. This record filled a small quarto blank book of sixty pages. He also began an alphabetical commonplace book which he made out of some paper purchased with seventy-one cents given him by his mother for spending-money. This record and this commonplace book

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have not been preserved: the fact, however, that thus early, and of his own motion, he began to put his knowledge into order in his mind, and also to systematize his acquisitions, is especially worth noting in view of what we shall see later — his marvellous command of his wide and varied historic knowledge.

After studying with Mr. Brewer for about six months Edmund appears to have left the school (in April, 1854) and again to have studied at home without an instructor for about a year. During this period his mother visited Middletown frequently, and Edmund's letters are fewer than formerly, and less definite in regard to his studies and his reading. Nevertheless, in the few letters that were written we get interesting glimpses of his daily boyish life as well as evidences of his mental activity expanding in various directions. And here should be given in his own words the story of his purchase of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon.<sup>1</sup>

“By the beginning of 1854 I had read most of the *Collectanea Græca Majora* with the aid of Schrevelius' Lexicon in which the meanings of the Greek words were given in Latin. This I found very inconvenient and I longed for a good Greek-English dictionary; but my grandmother thought five dollars a great sum for so unpractical a luxury as Greek.

<sup>1</sup> From a manuscript note of John Fiske's, in the copy of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon in the Fiske Library at Cambridge, written in 1883.

## John Fiske

I then began to earn money. Among other things I learned that an Irishman, named Hennessey, would buy old bones at 37 cents a barrel. I picked up bones here and there till I had got five barrels which brought me \$1.85. In other ways I raised my fund till it amounted to about \$3.40, when my grandmother, seeing my determination, suddenly furnished the remainder of the \$5.00 and in June 1854 I became the jubilant possessor of this noble dictionary, which I have ever prized most highly, as I count the knowledge of Greek one of my most spiritual possessions."

A panorama depicting various incidents in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" came to Middletown at this time, and an illustrated poster of the exhibition was placed in the post-office. Bunyan's immortal work was one of Edmund's classics, and he studied this poster carefully as he daily came for the mail. So impressed was he by it that he made a reproductive drawing of it.<sup>1</sup> He managed by pasting together several small sheets of paper to get a sheet of goodly size, and then on his visits to the post-office he would fix the features of the poster distinctly in his mind, and on his return would draw them out on his sheet. His drawing is of interest

<sup>1</sup> Edmund's reproduction of this poster has been preserved and is now owned by Herbert Huxley Fiske. It bears the following inscription:—

"Early in the summer of 1853, when I was eleven years old, a panorama of Pilgrim's Progress came to Middletown; and while it was there, a picture representing the scenes of the allegory was hung up in the Post-Office and excited my intense interest and admiration, as Bunyan was one of my favorite authors. I used to stand before

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as showing the inherent tendency of his mind to grasp serious subjects, and also to render some account of its activity, while dealing with them.

He hears a lecture on metals, and also attends the Commencement exercises at the Wesleyan University of which he gives excellent, thoughtful accounts in his simple, lucid style. One letter of this period gives a bit of verbal self-criticism that is worthy of note as showing that in these early years he was awake to subtle distinctions in the use of words. He had given his mother quite an account of some military operations in the Crimean War, then raging, and he closed with this sentence: "If anything has been stated wrong it is (that I have) understated (it)." He then scratches out the words in parenthesis and adds: "I scratched out these words because the statement might be taken in a different sense from what I meant."

The only allusion to his reading during this in-  
the picture and study it every day on my way home from Daniel Chase's school. I presently tried to reproduce from memory its principal features. After making this sketch, I wished to introduce the human figures, but was not satisfied with my crude attempts to draw a man. So I decided to leave it for my mother, on her next visit to Middletown, to draw the men, and marked provisionally, with numerals, the places where they were to come. I intended afterward to fill out the minor details of shrubbery, etc., somewhat as already filled out to the left of Palace Beautiful. But with the pause thus necessitated, the work stopped, and was by and by forgotten. Now, after thirty-six years, finding it — folded, frayed and torn — among some old papers, I have had it mounted and framed as a keepsake for my son, Herbert Huxley Fiske, who is about the same age that I was when I made this sketch.

JOHN FISKE.

*Cambridge, June 6, 1889.*

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terregnum year is a remark in a letter of August 30, 1854, that at last he has finished Gibbon's "History of Rome."

The question had now arisen as to the direction of Edmund's future education — for college or for practical life. His decided predilections for knowledge, his remarkable powers of acquisition and memory, his self-imposed studious habits, and his good physical health, all united with strong, upright traits of character, seemed to demand a college education as their fitting complement. In the year 1854 Mrs. Green received a proposal of marriage from Edwin Wallace Stoughton, of New York City. Mr. Stoughton had been a warm personal friend of Mr. Green's, and he had known Mrs. Green for several years and greatly admired her. He was a self-educated man with a wide practical knowledge. He had a notable and impressive personality, which indicated great force of character. Without assistance he had won his way to a leading position at the New York Bar. He had a large circle of friends in other professions as well as in his own; and, enjoying an ample income, he sought to surround himself with the amenities of social life.

Mrs. Green was an exceptionally attractive woman in the full maturity of her powers. To her personal attractions were added many intellectual gifts. She had a keen appreciation of art in its three-fold forms of literature, music, and painting; at the



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same time she took a deep interest in the leading social and political questions of the day. In addition to these characteristics she possessed the charm of a dignified, gracious manner which placed every one at ease in her presence: in short, she possessed in a marked degree the endowments essential to leadership in refined social life.

Mr. Stoughton's proposal appealed to Mrs. Green. By his abilities and his triumphs over difficulties he had won her admiration; while his professional and social standing were assured.

But Mrs. Green could not forget her son and her duty to him. She longed to have him with her, and in addition to her devoted affection for him, she also felt a great responsibility for his educational bringing-up in view of the very extraordinary mental powers he had already put forth, coupled as they were with certain character elements — all of which gave promise, under proper training, of a mind of exceptional power on reaching its maturity. She took Edmund, young as he was, into her confidence. She assured him that her first duty was to him, and that any prospects that did not include his happiness as well as her own would not be considered by her. Edmund's ready response shows a remarkable maturity of mind for a boy twelve years of age. He told his mother of his great love for her and how it would grieve him to have any one come between them so that she should lose any of her love for him. But he did not want her to make

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any sacrifice for him. He was happy with his grandmother. His wants were few; and with a few years more of study he could take care of himself. He did n't need schools or teachers; he knew how to study by himself; in short, he showed, along with his manly consideration for his mother, the simple optimism of youth.

In the latter part of 1854 Mrs. Green accepted Mr. Stoughton's proposal of marriage. The question then arose as to Edmund's future home. His mother wanted him with her, now that she was to have a home of her own. The grandparents, however, were inconsolable at the thought of giving up their charge, having tended him through his infancy and early boyhood, just as he was entering on the most interesting period of his development, and they could not relinquish him without much sorrow. It is probable that the decision finally reached was largely owing to the wishes of Edmund himself. Much as he loved his mother, he did not wish to live in New York City. He hated its confinement, its narrow streets, and its noise. He loved Middletown, its quiet, its freedom, its nearness to the country where he could enjoy nature at his will. He dearly loved his grandparents, and their home was the only real home he had known. He wished to remain with them; and in his boyish way he pleaded to have his wishes respected. They were respected, and it was decided that he should remain with his grandparents.

## CHAPTER IV

THE MARRIAGE OF MRS. GREEN TO MR. STOUGHTON  
— THE CHANGE OF NAME TO JOHN FISK — TWO  
YEARS AT BETTS'S ACADEMY, STAMFORD — JOINS  
ORTHODOX CHURCH, MIDDLETOWN

1855-1857

MR. STOUGHTON and Mrs. Green were married at the Fisk homestead in Middletown in March, 1855. As it had been decided that Edmund should remain with his grandparents, it seemed eminently proper that his surname should be changed so as to express his identification with the Fisk family of which he was then the sole male representative. This being granted, and several of his ancestors having worthily borne the Christian name of John, — particularly his great-grandfather who had died in recent years leaving an honored name, — it seemed equally fitting that he should take this Christian name also. Accordingly he was given the name of John Fisk, and the change of name was duly legalized in September, 1855, by the Superior Court of Connecticut.

Henceforth in our narrative, therefore, the subject of this memoir will appear *in propria persona* as John Fisk.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The use of "e" in his surname does not appear until he reaches college in 1860. By an error in printing the Harvard Catalogue for

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Immediately following the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Stoughton arrangements were made for John's going to the Betts Academy, a well-established preparatory school at Stamford, Connecticut, in close proximity to his mother, so that she could visit him and he could visit her.

In April, 1855, the letters to his mother over his new name begin. The first letter, under date of April 26, relates mainly to his getting ready for going to Stamford. He tells his mother that he is going to take forty books with him, not including Lardner, which he will also take; that he has put all his nicely bound books from downstairs, and up garret, in order in his book-case. He also tells her that his grandmother has given him a large black trunk with his name on it; and that she has put one hundred dollars in the bank for him because he has taken his great-grandfather's name. He also tells of his closing up various boyish financial operations which leaves him four dollars to take with him, all given with the methodical accuracy of an official trustee. Then, too, he gives a list of the persons on whom he is to make parting calls, not omitting Bridget, an old family servant. The penmanship of this letter is very legible, and in appearance it reflects the characteristics of a mature mind, and yet he asks his mother to excuse his writing because he is so

this year his surname appeared as Fiske. As his ancestors had been free to use or drop the "e," according to their good pleasure, he took a like liberty and retained it.

## At the Betts Academy

“ecstatic.” That he takes pride in his name is shown by the evident practice he has given to the form of his new signature. It has a resemblance to the signature of his great-grandfather, who was a fine penman.

On May 1, 1855, Mrs. Stoughton took John to Stamford and placed him in charge of Mr. Betts, the principal of the school. One week later he writes his mother the following letter: —

STAMFORD, May 7, 1855.

*Dearest Mother* —

You promised me that you would come to see me within a week. By the time this reaches you it will be a week. I am very homesick and if you come up it will cheer me very much. Never mind your housekeeping affairs. I would have written you before but Mr. Betts reads all the letters the boys send, and I was afraid to write. But Mr. Betts says I may write just what I please. I have got my garden ready for planting. Walter and I sleep in No. 3. Each room has two beds in it; one single the other double. I am very comfortable. I have enough to eat, warm bed, and Mr. Betts is very kind, but still I have an irrepressible longing to see home. To see Grandma Fisk take naps in her rocking chair in the corner; to sit by the side of the stove in the dining-room writing; to sit with Julia Nichols and talk about the war;<sup>1</sup> and to see Grandma Lewis, Mr. Lewis, and Mary and Allen Griswold.

I am going to write to Grandma Lewis as soon as

<sup>1</sup> The Crimean War.

## John Fiske

I have finished this. I want to write a long letter but cannot find any more to say.

From your very affectionate son,

JOHN FISK.

P.S. Be sure to come Wednesday if you don't stay more than an hour. Oh, how I shall look for you Tuesday 8th. I am getting along very well with the boys. I shall plant musk and watermelons only. It rains very hard.

The letter to his grandmother is interesting in that it shows his dutiful consideration for all members of the family; and then the postscript! observe the fine feeling in it.

STAMFORD, *May 7, 1855.*

*Dearest Grandma —*

You must come down before the first of June. I cannot say but a few words. I am very homesick although surrounded with every comfort that heart can wish. If you do not write me a letter I shall not write you one. It seems as if I had been here six months instead of six days. Walter and I sleep together. I like it better than sleeping alone. Give my best love to Grandma Fisk, Mr. Lewis, Allen Griswold, Mary, Miss Julia and all.

From your affectionate grandson,

JOHN FISK.

The next morning he added the following postscript:—

“I am getting along very well with the boys. They are very polite and use no bad language. I did not mean to hurt your feelings by saying that I should not write until you wrote me.”

## At the Betts Academy

Looking at the originals of these letters, and observing the legible handwriting, their freedom from blots, or erasures, or misspelled words, as well as the generally correct punctuation, one can hardly realize that they were the easy product of a boy just turned thirteen years of age.

The Betts Academy was a well-conducted school of the period. Order and method prevailed under the influence of a genial religious feeling. John readily made himself amenable to the school discipline, and the following extracts from a letter to his grandmother, apropos of her visiting him, written after being in the school a fortnight, are of interest as showing his studies and his purpose to transcend the school requirements in his private study and reading. The pride he takes in his home library is also shown, as well as the distinct and orderly way in which he has the several works in mind: —

“I get up at  $5\frac{1}{2}$  o'clock every morning, am dressed and ready for prayers in 15 minutes. At  $6\frac{1}{2}$  o'clock we have breakfast. From 8 till 10 I study Greek. Then there is half an hour recess. From  $10\frac{1}{2}$  till 12 I study mathematics. From 2 till 4 Latin. At 6 o'clock we have supper. From  $7\frac{1}{2}$  till  $8\frac{1}{2}$  I study Latin Prose. From  $8\frac{1}{2}$  to 9 I read. The playhours are from 7 to 8 A.M., from 1 to 2 and from 4 to 6 P.M. Every Wednesday morning we draw. Every Saturday morning we speak or write compositions. Wednesday and Saturday afternoons we go of an excursion. . . . We have a library in the

## John Fiske

school-room with books for the use of the scholars. It is not one-third as large as mine though.

“If you look in my book-case in the china closet, you will find ‘Kuhner’s Greek Grammar’ bound in black cloth with a morrocco back; ‘Evenings with the Old Story Tellers,’ bound in blue muslin; ‘Johnston’s Natural Philosophy,’ bound in yellow leather, and ‘Second Book Practical Anatomy and Physiology,’ bound in green muslin, with red morrocco back. Please bring them. . . .

“I have ten hills of melons — five of each kind. Probably these will yield 20 or 30 melons.”

The real boy nature comes out at the close of this matter-of-fact letter where he says, “You want to know what you shall bring me; bring me ‘suthin good.’”

From the composition and penmanship of these letters it might be thought that their excellence is owing somewhat to the criticism of the principal of the school. It can be said, however, that in these particulars the letters are in no way superior to what had preceded them.

Subsequent letters show an increasing interest in his studies as well as in all the personnel of the school. His language teacher thinks him deficient in Latin and Greek, although he is the youngest boy in his class, and has already read the whole of Virgil, Horace, Tacitus, Sallust, Suetonius, several books of Livy, a dozen orations of Cicero, and some of his philosophical writings, with more or less of Ovid, Catullus, and Juvenal.



## At the Betts Academy

Mr. Betts, observing John's predilection for study over everything else, early forbade his studying during play hours. John's comment is, "Now having once got out of doors I hate staying in school as bad as the other boys." His accounts of the various amusements, of the Fourth of July celebration, and of the school excursions are models of simple, lucid narration. He early writes a composition on the sun and also one on Sir Isaac Newton. He reads Irving's "Knickerbocker's New York." His marks are very uniform, and remarkably high. One incident connected with his marks is worth giving in his own words as it shows how well balanced his mind was at this early age: —

"I am going to relate to you an incident which shows the bad results of idleness. Tuesday afternoon I talked to Charley Sterling in school thinking I would have plenty of time for my lesson. All of a sudden the class in Sallust was called. I knew nothing about the lesson and was simply obliged to look on. On Wednesday morning, Mr. Betts, when the lesson was called, he read off, 'John 7 $\frac{2}{3}$ .'"

John's first term at the Betts Academy closed the last of September, 1855, and he returned to Middletown to spend the vacation with his grandparents. It seems that the school vacations then were in the months of April and October. Two incidents in this vacation are of interest as showing a growing appreciation of his personal appearance and also that the idea of going to college is firmly

## John Fiske

fixed in his mind. For the first time in his life he is to have a tailor-made suit, of which he gives this brief but lucid description: —

“My coat is to be of black broad-cloth to come an inch below my knees. My pants and vest were done Saturday night. The pants are small black and brown plaid. Grandma thinks they are the prettiest I ever had. The vest is dark brown with narrow satin stripes cutting it into squares.”

His grandmother has given him a room for his study into which he has gathered his books and his various belongings, and the idea of going to college distinctly appears in his description of this room and its contents: —

“I have got the north bed-room for my study. I shall have it when I go to college. Before the east window is the large black rocking-chair; in the Northeast corner is the high table which stood in the upper front hall, and on it is the little book-case with 116 books. On the north side is the black sofa. At the west end of the sofa is a chair. Two chairs on the west side. In the middle of the room is the table which stood in the back parlor before the looking glass. It has got a red table-cloth on it; and my writing-desk, and blank books, and box of instruments and father's ‘*reliquæ poetica*’ are arranged on it so as to look as business-like and as much like Mr. Stoughton's table as possible.”

This description was accompanied by a very complete diagram showing the shape of the room and the precise location of every article referred to.

## At the Betts Academy

It is perhaps unnecessary to point out the unconscious logical arrangement of the details in this description, but what we should particularly note is the keen sense of order here manifested. This is a character trait which we shall see manifested in later years, in the orderly arrangement of his wide and varied knowledge. This room became his great pride, and his retiring place during a very important period in his intellectual development.

John's second term at the Betts Academy — November 1, 1855 to April 1, 1856 — does not appear to have been marked by any incidents of special significance. The latter part of November he thinks of writing to his Grandfather Green, but being perplexed as to how he should sign the letter, he does not write. His studies for the term appear to have been mainly given to Latin, Greek, and geometry, with an intimation that he might have had some textbook chemistry. Being near New York City his mother visited him often; hence the letters were not so frequent, nor were they as full of detail as when he was writing from Middletown. He mentions having written two compositions, one of sixteen pages on the Crimean War, and one of nine pages about the ancient Romans — a subject he confesses he "had not nearly exhausted." His marks during this term were exceptionally high. One week he was perfect in everything — the highest record ever attained in the school.

At the close of the term in March, 1856, the ques-

## John Fiske

tion arose as to his preparing to enter Yale in the following September. At this time there was no thought of his entering any other college than Yale. That he possibly could have entered as freshman was admitted, but as he was only fourteen years of age his mother decided against his making the attempt and so he returned to the Betts Academy in May, but with the purpose in his mind of entering Yale as sophomore the next year.

The following letter written to his mother a little later gives a glimpse at his studies, and also shows that he was going about his college preparation in a very definite, self-reliant way: —

STAMFORD, *June 25, 1856.*

*Dear Mother —*

In reply to your questions I can say that in my studies I am progressing about as well as usual. I am commencing the 2nd book of Virgil and the 3rd of Trigonometry and have entered upon a new Greek author, "The Death of Socrates," by Plato. I have written no poems this summer. Mr. Osborn says he thinks I can enter Yale next summer in the sophomore class, and as you had rather have me do that than enter freshman this year, I think I will do it. After the time of Henry Eno leaving here — which will be the last of next month, I shall commence the freshman studies, — Livy, Xenophon, Latin Prose Composition.

The letters to his mother and grandmother during this term show, in addition to a fine feeling of dutiful consideration, a growing breadth and serious-

## Religious Stirrings

ness of thought, while his simple, lucid style in his accounts of the various incidents of the school life continues as a very noticeable feature. The political contest that was then going on is reflected in the letters. This was the first Republican Presidential campaign under Frémont, with Buchanan and Fillmore as opposing candidates. The sentiment of the school was wholly in favor of Frémont, and we have this bit of political vaticination, which reflects somewhat the nature of the contest that was being waged: "If Fillmore or Buchanan should be elected we shall be ruled by Paddies, or Dutchmen, for the next four years."

And now we find John's mind beginning to be deeply exercised on the subject of religion. He had accepted the faith of his mother and his grandparents as a matter of course, and regarded the customary religious observances as quite in the natural order of things — matters that were settled and were to be accepted without question. Then, too, the Betts school, while not sectarian, was strictly evangelical in character, and attendance at prayers and church services was obligatory. Just what particular experiences roused John's religious feelings does not appear. It is a fair supposition that to his upright, well-balanced mind, religion came as wholly in the natural order of things; and that as his ideals of life enlarged he seemed to see in the Christian faith the complement to all positive knowledge — what was unknown to man was known to God,

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so that religion, the manifestation of man's faith in God, "who doeth all things well," was the fundamental part of all human knowledge.

Whatever may have been the direct, impelling causes of his religious feelings, certain it is that during this term they were so thoroughly roused that he went beyond the school requirements in his attendance upon the religious exercises: indeed, he went so far as to request his mother not to visit him on Wednesday or Friday evenings, as he had meetings on those evenings. A little later he formally joined the North Congregational Church in Middletown.

During this term he appears to have had difficulty with one of his eyes. He writes, August 18, 1856: "I have been putting my drawing into effect. I went with Mr. Betts about a month ago to survey a lot for a new church. I drew several large plans and maps for the deacons of the church. My eyes have troubled me very much in consequence." His school record during this term is, for deportment, perfect; while for his lessons, the average is  $91\frac{3}{4}$  perfect.

John's devotion to his studies and his ambition for an early entrance at college combined with his religious earnestness gave his mother grave concern over preparing for college at his early age. With his great desire for knowledge and his faithfulness to his studies, it was apparent that his physical constitution could not stand the strain he was willing to

## Joins Orthodox Church

put himself under, and that his ambition must be checked, at least for a period. Accordingly, toward the close of the term his teachers seriously advised him to give up his idea of entering Yale the next year as sophomore, to take things easier, to come back and take another term at the school and not try to enter above freshman. John accepted this advice — in part — and returned to the school in November for the winter term.

During these last two terms his visits to his mother and her visits to him were frequent, so that we get in his letters but few particulars in regard to his studies. Apparently they were confined to Latin, Greek, and English grammar, with readings and translations of the classics, arithmetic, algebra, and geometry. His reading is evidently quite excursive, for he asks his mother to bring him a copy of "Hudibras," which he wants very much; and he writes an essay on the "Habitability of Planets" and one on the "Augustan Era," in the former of which he made the point, familiar now, but new then, that Jupiter and Saturn, owing to their great size and slow refrigeration, are in a much earlier phase of development than Venus and the Earth. Then, too, he appears to have been dwelling upon the thought that the tracing-out of God's Providence in history would be a suitable work for his mature years.

On January 2, 1857, John writes his mother a letter of four pages, portions of which are of special

## John Fiske

interest as reflecting the profoundly serious character of his religious feeling, as well as marking a stage in his religious development. The letter opens with an excuse for not writing for some days because of illness. To use his own words: "I, John Fisk, have had the mumps! For a week my enlarged face rested upon a double chin." And here is a bit of adolescent moralizing, which shows how seriously his religious experience was affecting the whole order of his thought: —

"The old year has fled: those many happy hours which it has witnessed — that happy visit<sup>1</sup> are fled likewise. It has gone, all gone. Those lost opportunities can never be recovered: those hours of pleasure will never return: those scenes have fled and live but in the past. Oh, may this new year be the witness of yet happier scenes to you, as well as to myself dear mother; and to all dear to us. May we live so that in future years we may look back upon it as one spent in the service of the meek and lowly Jesus."

And this is his felicitation of the advent of the New Year: —

"Hail New Year! It welcomes me with a glad smile as it beholds me reading Cicero, Xenophon, and Ælian; and peradventure, dipping into Algebra, or poring over the rules of Latin composition. Farewell, O Virgil! thou hast been a source of pleasure as well as profit. Many a '9' hast thou given

<sup>1</sup> Evidently a reference to a visit from his mother, when he confided to her his deep religious feeling, and received her sympathy.



## Religious Development

me; never has the bitter '7' risen from thy pages to meet my unwelcoming eyes."

The letter closes in the following serious strain:—

"Mother, I wish you many 'Happy New Years'; and that we may meet to spend a happy eternity in Heaven is the prayer of your son,

"JOHN FISK."

The letters during the remainder of the term have but little general interest, save as showing his faithfulness to his studies and as reflecting somewhat the seething adolescent impulses that were coursing through his brain. His school record for the whole term was very high — the highest ever attained in the school — deportment, perfect: lessons, 353.85 out of a possible 380 as perfect.

At the close of the term there was the usual school exhibition, with speaking and prizes for both composition and speaking. John won the first prize for an oration on "Silent Influences" — the prize, awarded by three clergymen of Stamford, being for both the composition and the delivery. In a long letter to his mother John gives a graphic account of the exhibition and the awarding of the prizes. This letter is marked not only with all the felicities of style we have had occasion to notice in previous letters; it also shows an innate trait of character remarkable in a boy of his years — a clear sense of justice and a desire to do justice to others, and especially when unfortunate in presenting their

## John Fiske

claims. Although John was the hero of the occasion, — the youngest in the graduating class, having the highest school record ever attained in the school, and the winner of the first prize, — yet in his account of the affair he says as little of himself as possible, while he warmly praises his competitors and shows his greatest interest in the boy who failed through embarrassment: in short, he gives a clear idea of the excellence of his own performance by the generous praise he gives his competitors.

John received for his prize a copy of Cowper's "Works" in one octavo volume bound in morocco; he also received from his teacher, Mr. Osborn, "a Greek Testament, a cunning little thing with maps." These volumes he always prized as mementoes of his happy days at Stamford; and they remain to-day, in his library at Cambridge, among the cherished souvenirs of his educational period.

And thus, having just passed his fifteenth birthday, John's schooling at Stamford came to an end; he left the Betts Academy with the affectionate regard of his classmates, his teachers, and Mr. Betts; and he returned to Middletown, wearing, as he tells us, "a tall silk hat as an emblem of manhood."

## CHAPTER V

RETURNS TO MIDDLETOWN — PREPARES FOR ENTRANCE AT YALE — GENERAL READING — HUMBOLDT'S "COSMOS" — DAWNING RATIONALISM — MUSICAL DIVERSIONS — PASSES FRESHMAN EXAMINATIONS FOR YALE — DECIDES TO GO TO HARVARD

1857-1858

JOHN'S return to Middletown in April, 1857, was only to take up another phase of his educational training. His purpose was to enter Yale as sophomore the following September. In this purpose he had the approval of his mother, and he sought a tutor to review him in the freshman studies. In the course of his inquiries he heard of an unattached clergyman, the Reverend Henry M. Colton, who had recently opened a preparatory school for boys in Middletown, and who had an excellent reputation at Yale for scholarship, and also for his success in preparing students for the entrance examinations. John called upon Mr. Colton with reference to getting assistance in continuing his preparatory studies during the summer, and he gave his mother an exceedingly graphic account of the interview. In view of the subsequent relations between John and Mr. Colton, and also as an illustration of John's power of personal characterization at this early age, the letter is of particular interest: —

# John Fiske

MIDDLETOWN, *May 26th, 1857.*

*My dear Mother, —*

I went to Mr. Colton's on Saturday, and the substance of the proceedings is as follows after the usual preliminaries — statement of case, etc., etc., etc.

He has seven boys, all sons of nabobs. His terms are \$500. per annum for his boarders!!! and about \$40. for me until August 1st. Whew!!! He wished to know what course I intended to pursue with him — Latin, Greek, etc., etc., etc. I said I wished to review everything. He made some question about what I had studied, etc., — looked very profound!

Just then Dr. Taylor came in to see him about some hymns for the choir on Sunday. Glad to see me — son of Mrs. E. W. Stoughton, residing in New York — grandson of Mrs. E. Lewis in Middletown — residing with, and under care of his grandmother, etc., etc. To which Mr. Colton replied — "Oh!"

*Dr. T.* "He is quite young to go to college?"

*Mr. C.* "Oh! Ah! Ugh! not more than 18 or 19 I should say."

*Dr. T.* "He is only seventeen."

*J. F.* "I am only fifteen."

*Mr. C.* "Ha, Ha, Ha!!!"

Exit Dr. Taylor.

*Mr. C.* "Do you know German?"

*J. F.* "No, sir!"

*Mr. C.* "Do you know French?"

*J. F.* "No!"

*Mr. C.* "Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha!"

*J. F.* "Why?"

*Mr. C.* "Why!!! Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha!"

## Returns to Middletown

*J. F.* "Why should I understand French and German? they are not required." (You see I was beginning to get mad at his rudeness.)

*Mr. C.* (not heeding me). "Oh! you want to say I graduated when I was 19. You want to seem smart and precocious! You want to swell up and be big,— Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha!! etc., etc."

Well, after he had got through with his everlasting guffaws, he said I had no business to go to college (Yale especially) at 15; 't would kill me, wear me out, etc., tremendous hard time of it — and all that lingo. But you see he wanted to get me for a whole year or two. (Ah! thought I, you don't come that.) He is going to have a row-boat. His marks are from 0 to 300 — pretty minute system that. He is very liberal, etc., has had his 7 "nabobs junior" six months on twelve Greek pages!! Wants to do the same with me! Marks boys for sitting badly, for hesitating, for saying a word twice over; and spends more time I should think with his 300 marks than with his pedagogical duties.

He is not possessed of an extraordinary degree of politeness, though a very fine scholar; thinks he is just the smartest man in creation — self-made man, educated himself, etc. Talks all the time about himself, gabbles continually. Little weazen-faced man of about 35, hard brow, cold eyes, spectacles, high cheek-bones, light hair, shaggy eye-brows, no beard, small nose of no particular species; on the whole *rather* decidedly plain. Very pleasant face though odd way of speaking; very 'set' and can't be silenced: chilling repulsive feeling came over me when I saw him: and before I had talked with him five minutes I hated him like sixty. Very strange, be-

## John Fiske

cause he was pleasant as could be. He talked, taking it for granted that I did n't know anything, and seemed to have imbibed the idea that money was not an indigenous crop where I lived. When he thought I was 18 years old he was as civil as could be; but when he found I was only 15 he talked quite differently.

We have come to no agreement as yet; and I most ardently hope that I shall never have him for my boss. I would rather have Mr. Chase or "Mr. Squeers" 2000 times. His price is stupendous — perfectly alarming. \$40. for three months schooling! Mr. Chase would be only \$8. That was his price when I used to go to him. It can't be much more now.

At any rate I don't want to go to him if you had just as lief have me recite to Mr. Chase. I don't like *that* particularly; but out of two evils I would choose the least.

I guess you will get used to the beaver by mid-summer. Good-bye.

JOHN.

But John's dislike of Mr. Colton was overborne in the mind of his grandmother by Mr. Colton's reputation for scholarship and for his influence at Yale. Speaking of Mr. Colton's influence at Yale John writes: "Grandmother (Mrs. Nickleby like) was so elated at that, that she persuaded me to go to him — said she was willing to pay. So we went in the afternoon and fixed it up."

His first day's experience with Mr. Colton was indeed discouraging. He writes his mother: —

## Prepares for Yale

“Yesterday I went and with all his fine (?) teaching he has got a set of dunces. Oh, I thought, if he could only hear us at Mr. Betts! Why, such recitations as yesterday’s, would be considered at Stamford as reflecting shame on both school and teacher. Mr. Colton wants to see you and convince you of the *feasibility* of my staying out. Staying out of College and going to Mr. Colton’s!!!! I have no words to express my contempt and indignation at the proposal unless I repeat the significant particle. Bah!!!”

Three days’ experience in the school, however, brought a complete change in John’s mind in regard both to Mr. Colton’s methods of teaching and his own early entrance at college. The reasons for his change of mind are frankly given; and we have here a clear instance of his open-mindedness and his power of self-control which enabled him to face a very unpleasant situation with a course of action based upon sound judgment, and quite in opposition to what he had, upon imperfect knowledge, set his mind. The following extracts are from a letter dated May 30, 1857, to his mother: —

“I like Mr. Colton’s method more and more. He is without doubt a wise, kind, though very eccentric, man. But just think how different from what I am used to. I study three hours and a half upon one third of a page in Greek! What do you think? I have to give a flowing translation which is not always easy. I have to trace *every word* through its different phases and dialectic changes. I have

## John Fiske

to find and give the corresponding word in Latin, Hebrew, Sanskrit, German and sometimes in French; so that although I have only been with him three days, I can already see the beautiful and wonderful relations of these parallel languages."

We shall have occasion, in subsequent years, to observe John's great interest in comparative philology. Here we have to note the beginning of that interest. Having become a convert to Mr. Colton's method, John now takes under favorable consideration Mr. Colton's suggestion of postponing his college entrance for two years or more and giving the time to a broader and more thorough preparation than he had hitherto considered. Mr. Colton brought some strong arguments in support of his suggestion, basing them on John's extreme youth and his exceptional interest in his studies — two points which, united as they were in his case, would inevitably lead to excessive mental strain and bring on a mental break-down before he could finish a thorough college course. John repeats Mr. Colton's arguments, and then adds: —

"Suppose I should go to Mr. Colton a year or two and get well grounded in this thorough system of education, and then keep studying and teach school, and go to college when I am 21 or 22 years old and then take the valedictory and render myself immortal! for a Yale valedictorian is immortalized. I don't want to do this; but I think it is best. I have but one life to live and I cannot live too well. I cannot learn too much, nor take too high



## His Studies

a niche in the Temple of Fame. Now I am urging you to let me take a course which is disagreeable to me; but I do want to stand high in college."

How well the fine-tempered boy comes out in this paragraph! What a pity that he had no adequate preparatory or college ideal to turn to at this interesting period! He seems to have been left in the final determination to his own choice. The preparatory course for an early entrance at Yale was abandoned, and John put himself under Mr. Colton's educational guidance for an indefinite period and immediately settled down to his studies in his usual thoroughgoing way.

John gave an account some years later of this change of purpose with Mr. Colton with the results that flowed from it, and his succinct account has a fitting place here.

"I began reading with him (Colton) just for a few weeks until I could go to Yale and I got so much in love with his methods of scholarship, that I studied with him over two years and got steeped in Greek to the very ends of my toes, besides getting an excellent reading knowledge of German. I often wonder that I staid with him so long, for his manners were odious. He was cross, rude, unreasonable, ill-tempered, furious in his outbursts of anger — quite a savage — and I hated the sight of him: but I liked his teaching."

We have not the particulars of all his studies with Mr. Colton. It is evident, however, that he

## John Fiske

put himself into full conformity to Mr. Colton's requirements, and that he took up the study of German, algebra, and Euclid, in addition to Latin and Greek. He tells us in his letters that at this time he could read easy Greek like Plato or Herodotus at sight. His reading was not in scraps as boys usually read Greek, but he would take up an oration of Lysias and read it through; and the "Iliad" he would read continuously.

The latter part of July of this year — 1857 — he went to the Yale commencement, taking in Stamford by the way, and his account of the trip has all his felicity of style. Knowledge of his probable early entrance at Yale had preceded him, and while in New Haven he visited two college societies and he was "bored like sixty" to join them. What was of greatest interest to him on this trip was his hearing an address by Wendell Phillips, which he says was "perfectly splendid — one of the finest things I ever heard."

It was while John was settling down at Colton's that he became acquainted with George Litch Roberts, a junior at the Wesleyan University. Roberts was possessed of a strong, self-reliant character, and was John's senior by five years; but as both were earnest students, and as they had much in common in their ideals of the knowledge that was of most worth, as well as in their musical tastes and religious beliefs, this disparity of years was not felt between them, and their acquaintance ripened

## Interest in Music

into an intellectual companionship which, as we shall see later, had a strong, stimulating effect upon John's intellectual development as he came to maturity.

Another incident of this period must be referred to, as we are to see an influence radiating from it, which, permeating the whole of John's subsequent life, gave to it no small degree of its richness and fulness. A friend had left with his grandmother for safe-keeping a piano. John became greatly interested in playing upon it, and gave to this diversion a goodly portion of his spare time. Having a "good ear" he worked by himself until he could play such works as Mozart's Twelfth Mass, "just to see what they were like." He could find no encouragement in those days for learning the piano; and when in later years we are to see him finding his greatest solace from his intellectual labor in mastering its "wonderful harmonies," we shall do well to recall this early unpremeditated experience with a friend's piano.

The awakening of John's interest in music was coincident with the rise of his religious feelings, and having joined the choir of the North Church he sought among other interests to give his religious emotions musical expression. Accordingly at this period he composed a number of musical compositions, some of which are of a decidedly religious character. These compositions have been preserved, and are of interest, not only by reason of the neat-

## John Fiske

ness and the technical accuracy of their execution, but also by what they show of his musical proficiency, gained without any instruction.

At the opening of the year 1858 John was approaching his sixteenth birthday, and he reveals himself as in good health, enjoying physical exercise, and with his mind, free from any outside pressure, expanding in several directions. He is so well satisfied with Mr. Colton's methods that he has settled down to his studies with great ardor. In Greek, Latin, and German he is studying the grammatical construction and syntactical relation of the three languages; and to this end he is working simultaneously with two or more grammars of each language for the purpose of getting various views on essential points, and then discussing these points with Mr. Colton. In mathematics he is working with Euclid to the fourth book, and in algebra with the textbooks of Loomis and Peirce. He is delighted to find Mr. Colton so thorough; and in addition to his day study, he assigns two evenings a week to study purposes.

As the year progressed, Spanish was added to his language course, and he became greatly interested in "theming" — that is, in tracing out the origin and significance of words in the Greek and Latin languages, and their modifications and significations in the modern languages. Nearly every letter during the latter half of the year contains one or more of these themes.

## His General Reading

And here is a comment on the exercise of theming, not unworthy of a mature philologist, which he drops by the way: —

“Nothing like Theming to give one a broad view of language. It gives one the thoughts which lie in the mind, and which call forth words to embody ideas, and to develop the words into genera and species.”

John's language work leads to a study of the philological essays of Gibbs and of Key, and also to a careful reading of Davidson's and of Ladewig's Virgil. More than this, these philological readings reawakened John's interest in ancient history, and he reread Rollin down to Greece, and then he took up Grote's "History of Greece." That this historical reading was of a thoughtful character is shown by an incidental remark: —

“I am reading the sixth volume of Grote. He must be a genius, or he never could use such splendid language as he does in describing the Peloponnesian War. He seems to approach the grandeur of his model Thucydides — or, to use the new orthography, Thoukydidês.”

In mathematics during this year, John advanced in algebra to Maclaurin's Theorem inclusive; while in geometry he seems to have confined himself to working out a few theorems, some of which he gives, particularly one developed from the proposition of Pythagoras which was proposed for demonstration

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by the "Mathematical Monthly," and which he worked out himself, and "without once referring to Euclid." As a sort of mathematical diversion he read Sir William Hamilton's essay on "Mathematics."

Phrenology was a subject of wide popular interest in those days, and John became greatly interested in the rough-and-ready way of reading character inculcated by it. He read very thoughtfully Fowler's works on "Phrenology," then very popular, and immediately began to apply the "Theory of Bumps" to himself, to his mother, to his friend Roberts — in fact, to all his friends — in the interpretation of their characters. His phrenological readings are to-day very amusing, yet we must not forget that during the first half of the last century, phrenology played an important part in the development of what is now known as rational psychology.

John's miscellaneous reading during this year is not only a further illustration of his mental activity; it is also an indication of the high order of his intellectual tastes, for what a mind in the process of unfolding selects for its diversions reflects its inherent character or tastes no less than its positive activities. In addition to what has been given, his reading comprised Dickens's "Little Dorrit," "The Old Curiosity Shop," and "Barnaby Rudge"; Emerson's "English Traits"; Bayne's essays on Macaulay and Tennyson; Shakespeare's poems;

## His General Reading

Milton's "Lycidas"; Comstock's "Elements of Geology"; Hugh Miller's "The Testimony of the Rocks"; Humboldt's "The Cosmos"; and Mackie's "Life of Leibnitz."

That these works were read with a similar thoughtfulness to that which marked his study-reading, is shown in the letters. In speaking of "Barnaby Rudge," he says: "I think it surpassed by none of his other works. I don't know which of Dickens's works is the best, but I think they can never be surpassed." Of Shakespeare and Milton he says: "I think Shakespeare better than Milton, just as Homer is to Sophocles, or Virgil to Lucretius." He was so impressed by Mackie's "Life of Leibnitz" that he gave his mother a complete sketch of the life of the great philosopher, closely written on three letter-sheet pages, and without blot or erasure.

The most significant of his comments on his reading are with reference to Humboldt and his great work, "The Cosmos." We have here to note particularly a dawning interest in cosmic phenomena, and that he appears to have had a dim apprehension of the great discussion over "origins" that was soon to follow — that was already in the air; for we see him reading Hugh Miller, the orthodox champion of special creations, almost coincidentally with his reading of Humboldt's profoundly suggestive work. Of deep significance, therefore, in the life of John Fiske are the following questions

## John Fiske

which he puts to his mother at this time, with reference to Humboldt and to his "Cosmos": —

"Do you not consider Humboldt the greatest man of the 19th century, and the most erudite that ever lived? Does not the 'Cosmos' exhibit more vast learning than any other uninspired book?"

These questions of John Fiske, bearing date of 1858, are the first dawns that we find of the subject of Cosmic Evolution in his mind.

John's musical diversions are continued through the year. In view of what we are to see later these early musical experiences are worth noting. He joins a musical association of which Roberts is a member, and he reads Marx on "Musical Composition" and studies various oratorios. He begins the composition of an opera which he calls "The Storm Spirit," and gives an analysis of the theme, expressing the hope that during his vacation there may be some good opera or oratorio performing in New York City, that he may attend with his mother. He adds: "I don't want to attend any American opera after studying the works of Schubert, Mendelssohn, and their less distinguished Italian contemporaries."

In music, as we shall see, in literature, architecture, painting, and sculpture, his instinctive taste strikes true from the first — he demands the best.

And with all his interests, his religious duties were not neglected. "Something of a revival" was going on in Middletown this year, and John appears to have taken an active part in the various forms of



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service at the North Church. He and Roberts were members of the choir, he taught in the Sunday School, was interested in the Bible Class; and during the revival interest, he specifically assigned two evenings a week to the revival meetings, in the conduct of which he not only led the singing, but also took an active part in the speaking. In brief, he appears to have accepted the Calvinistic interpretation of the Christian faith without reservation; and in all his studies and in all his acts he seems to have been actuated by a sincere desire to conform his life to the highest ideals of Christian conduct.

At the opening of the year 1859 John had come to about the limit of Mr. Colton's philological and mathematical knowledge, while in his historical studies he had gone far beyond Mr. Colton; nevertheless, he continued to recite to him till July. His regular studies during this period were Greek, Latin, German, French, Spanish, spherical geometry, trigonometry, and conic sections. In his language studies he gave much time to theming and to the careful reading of classic writers in each language. In one of his letters he remarks: "I have just done with the first book of the 'Iliad.' Splendid but rather hard"; and again: "I am studying the 'Iliad' with the greatest minuteness through the first six books. I shall investigate the theme and history of every word. The remaining 18 books I shall read straight through." He also reviewed the freshman studies at Yale.

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The latter part of July he went to Yale and took the freshman examinations and passed very creditably, as appears from a letter of July 26, 1859: —

“I missed only one question and that was in arithmetic. A tutor asked me to find the present worth of a sum of money. I told him I was not prepared on mercantile problems. He smiled and gave me a sum in square root of decimals which I did. Another tutor asked me for the 3d Prop., 2d book, Euclid. I gave it, demonstrated it, and gave the schol. in algebra. Another examined me a long time in algebra — particularly in surds. I answered all his questions without hesitation, did the sums: he said, ‘You have a decided taste for mathematics, have n’t you?’ But the best of all was my examination in Greek by Prof. Hadley. I read two pages without stopping to look it over beforehand. He asked me to decline nouns, conjugate verbs, etc., etc.; then points in syntax, then euphonic laws; finally a lot of themes. Said he, ‘What does “hyperesias” come from?’ (This word means ‘hard labor’ and means ‘hypo’ — ‘under,’ ‘eiresia’ — ‘oars’). I answered, ‘As the Greeks must have had to work very hard in order to propel their immense triremes, I suppose they called anything done “under oars,” “hard service.”’ Said he, ‘That is sufficient for you, Mr. Fiske. I see that your preparation has been singularly fine!’

“Colton says that Hadley was delighted, and astonished at me. I have my certificate of admission signed by President Porter.”

Having passed the freshman examination at Yale so creditably, John now has a strong desire to post-

## Decides to go to Harvard

pone his college entrance for another year and to enter Harvard rather than Yale, because, as he says, "the course at Harvard is very different and very much harder," another reason being the more liberal intellectual atmosphere at Harvard. In pleading his case he says: "It is true that the instruction at Harvard is conducted with less strictness than at Yale. It is a bad place for a careless scholar, but unequalled in facilities for an ambitious one."

In his desire to enter Harvard instead of Yale, John had his way; and so his college entrance was again postponed and for another year—until September, 1860.

But John's desire to enter Harvard rather than Yale had its origin in quite other considerations than those arising from differences in methods of instruction at the two colleges. In fact, the change of college—the preference of Harvard over Yale—was only one of the effects produced by the great revolution that took place during the year 1859 in all John's inner life.

Before following him, therefore, in his preparation for and his entrance at Harvard, we must review his religious inquiries and experiences with their causes during this eventful year, for, as will appear, all his subsequent thinking was vitally affected by certain philosophical and religious conclusions he reached at this time.

We have seen that during the year 1858 John

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was pushing his inquiries in various directions, and particularly along the lines of physical phenomena and human history. We have also seen that, having accepted in all sincerity the Calvinistic faith of his family and of his Puritan ancestors, he had entered upon the observance of his religious duties with great earnestness.

Actuated by such a desire for "the knowledge that leadeth unto wisdom," the reading of Gibbon, Grote, and Humboldt could not fail to stir his thought in various directions; and nothing could be more in the order of his thinking than that, after converse with these stimulating and suggestive minds, in addition to his general knowledge of classic literature, he should be led to inquire, in the finest spirit of a Christian believer, into the foundations of the religious faith which he had accepted as embodying the highest truth vouchsafed to the human mind.

Certain it is that, at the opening of the year, he reveals himself as earnestly seeking light on certain religious problems that were engaging his thought; and that we may the better follow him through his own personal experiences in his search for religious truth, and the more clearly perceive the character of the religious faith he did so much to promote, we should get clearly before us the fundamental dogmas of Christian theology with their verifications, which he found confronting him as an ultimate philosophico-religious system at the opening of his

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inquiries, an implicit belief in which was regarded by all evangelical Christians as the essential part of all true religion.

Then, too, it is highly important that we get these dogmas, with their implied philosophic system, clearly before us at this stage of our narrative, not only because of Fiske's personal experience in emancipating his own mind from their baleful tyranny, but also because his emancipation was coincident with the rise of the philosophy of Evolution, — a philosophy based on science and "the sweet reasonableness of the human mind," — to the setting forth the religious implications of which we are to see him, at his maturity, giving the full measure of his powers as a co-worker with the most eminent scientists and philosophic thinkers of the time.

These dogmas of Christian theology, claiming to be the presentation of ultimate truth as to the Infinite Power back of the physical universe and of conscious man, together with the dealings of this Infinite Power, concisely stated were as follows: —

*Dogma I. The Bible a sacred Book. Divinely inspired by the Infinite Creator of the cosmic universe it contains His messages to man.*

The Old and the New Testaments contain the Divine Creator's messages to man, and also His covenants regarding man's Fall, his Redemption, and his future state.

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These Testaments are to be implicitly accepted by man as containing the highest truth. Submitting these divinely inspired records to criticism, in the light of science, or of historic evidence, or of reason, is infidelity; and shows a want of faith in the Divine Creator; and a disbelief in His method of creating and sustaining the cosmic universe, including His creation and subsequent dealings with conscious man.

### *Dogma II. The Infinite Creator a Trinitarian Godhead.*

The assertion of an eternal uncreated Trinitarian Godhead, existing from everlasting to everlasting; omniscient and omnipotent; just and terrible in judgment, yet most merciful and forgiving; the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth and all that in them is; composed of three Divine Persons in one: —

God the Father.

God the Son.

God the Holy Ghost.

The only verification of this dogma presented to human reason is Dogma I.

### *Dogma III. The creation by fiat of the physical universe by God the Father, and His direct personal care and supervision of it.*

The assertion of the creation of the inorganic physical universe out of hand in definite time by the omnipotent power of God the Father and its sustentation and control by His ever watchful care. This dogma makes the whole physical universe subject not to universal law, but to the temporary will of the asserted Creator.

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The only verification of this dogma presented to human reason is Dogma I.

*Dogma IV. The creation of the organic world of vegetal and animal phenomena out of hand by Divine fiat; their endowment with the property of life and its power of propagation.*

The assertion that the creation of the vegetal and animal kingdoms, with all their multifarious forms of existences, was done out of hand, in definite time, by the omnipotent power of God; and that he endowed these creations of His hand with the mysterious property of life, and its power of propagation.

The only verification of this dogma presented to human reason is Dogma I.

*Dogma V. The creation of man as a perfect being; his disobedience and fall; his condemnation; the total depravity of the human race.*

The assertion that God created, out of hand, Adam and Eve in His own likeness, as perfect human beings and as the progenitors of the human race; that Adam wilfully disobeyed God's express command; that God thereupon condemned Adam and his posterity to eternal punishment therefor — thereby establishing the total depravity of the human race.

The only verification of this dogma presented to human reason is Dogma I.

*Dogma VI. God plans man's redemption and salvation through His Son; the Covenant of Grace.*

The assertion that God the Father mercifully stayed His hand, and devised a scheme for man's

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redemption and salvation through His Son; who in the fulness of time was to descend from Heaven; was to be miraculously born into the world; and was to reveal God's complete plan, and give God's complete message to man. This Son was then to be crucified; was to arise from the dead and ascend into Heaven and resume His place at the right hand of God the Father in the final judgment of mankind. Only those who believe in the Divinity of the Son and His divine mission were to be saved.

The only verification of this stupendous dogma presented to human reason is Dogma I.

*Dogma VII. God chooses the Hebrew people as a special portion of the human race through whom to carry out His plan for man's redemption and salvation.*

It is asserted that God selected the Jews as a chosen people for the carrying out of His purpose; that He revealed Himself to them exclusively; that He gave them an inspired record of His creation of the universe and its creatures; that He gave them a code of laws written on stone with His own hand; that by inspired messages He prescribed how they should worship Him, as well as the main features of their social intercourse; that by many miracles He attested His watchful care over them, as well as His displeasure at their sinful acts; that, above all, He kept alive in their minds, through the inspired teachings of their Prophets, their belief that in the fulness of time their Messiah or Redeemer would come.

The only verification of this dogma presented to human reason is Dogma I.



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*Dogma VIII. Christ appears on earth as the Son of God and as man's Redeemer: His perfect life; His crucifixion; His resurrection; His ascension.*

It is asserted that at the beginning of the Christian era, Christ appeared in Judea as the Son of God; that He had a miraculous birth; that He was anointed with the Holy Spirit; that He led a perfect life; that He taught the doctrines ascribed to Him; that He performed miracles; that He was crucified; that He arose from the dead; that He ascended into Heaven.

The only verification of this dogma presented to human reason is Dogma I.

*Dogma IX. The descent of the Holy Ghost.*

It is asserted that the descent of the Holy Ghost took place at a Pentecostal festival; that it was a visible confirmation of the Divine mission of Christ; that it was an assurance to the Apostles that the Holy Spirit would henceforth be an ever-active Divine force in the world, tending to lead men to believe that God was still merciful; and to embrace Christ as their only means of salvation.

The only verification of this dogma presented to human reason is Dogma I.

*Dogma X. Resurrection — A Day of Judgment — Immortality.*

This dogma is presented as physical phenomena yet to come, in the working-out of the Divine plan for man's redemption and salvation. There is to be a Day of Judgment, when Christ is to appear in great power and glory, when the dead are to be raised

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and all mankind are to be judged in righteousness for conduct here on earth. The righteous are then to be separated from the wicked and awarded eternal joy in Heaven; while the wicked or the unredeemed are to be condemned to eternal punishment in Hell. Christ's resurrection and ascension are adduced as physical proofs of the dogma.

The only verification of this dogma presented to human reason is Dogma I.

*Dogma XI. The existence of Satan, an evil spirit in rebellion against God the Father, and ever active in endeavours to thwart God's holy purposes regarding man.*

Until recent years the existence of Satan as a rebellious spirit of superhuman power was asserted by Christian theology with hardly less positiveness than was the existence of God Himself. To the inspiration of Satan was attributed much of the crime and wickedness which afflict mankind; and fifty years ago Satan and his machinations to draw persons to his abode were not exceptional topics for pulpit discourses.

The only verifications of this dogma presented to human reason are Dogma I and Milton's "Paradise Lost."

*Dogma XII. Heaven and Hell.*

It is asserted that Heaven is God's holy dwelling-place somewhere beyond the conception of the human mind; where the Redeemed of earth are to enjoy the Divine Trinity in company with the holy angels forever; that Hell is a place somewhere set apart where the unredeemed of earth are to suffer

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endless punishment in company with Satan and other evil spirits.

The only verification of this dogma presented to human reason is Dogma I.

Professor Eucken has well said: "There is a tremendous logic about the development of these dogmas which cannot be broken in the middle: he who wants one cannot refuse the others."<sup>1</sup>

These dogmas were venerable in their antiquity, and in their origin and historic development they were a connecting link between the philosophico-religious systems of the ancient and the modern world — in fact, it was claimed that they embodied and transcended all the higher phases of ancient philosophy. Considered by themselves these dogmas presented a mighty drama of existences wherein God, the physical universe, organic life, conscious man, virtue and sin were all accounted for; and wherein man's religious and moral duties in the conduct of life with their rewards and penalties were distinctly set forth — the whole presenting a complete and rounded philosophico-religious system embracing all existences with the Ultimate Cause and teleological purpose underlying the whole.

This mighty drama was presented to human reason as resting upon one fundamental fact — which must in no way be questioned — the fact that the Bible, the sole authority for the scheme, was a divinely inspired Book and contained God's mes-

<sup>1</sup> *Eucken and Historical Christianity*, by E. Hermann, p. 107.

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sages to man, and hence transcended all other knowledge. During the Christian centuries great thinkers had beaten these dogmas into shape and had related them for ready comprehension by the common mind until they had become, as it were, integral parts in the consciousness of the Christian world, while upon them had been organized a vast system of ecclesiasticism through which the spiritual relations between God and man enshrouded in the dogmas were presented to imagination and to religious faith in the most impressive forms of architecture, literature, music, and art.

It is becoming somewhat the fashion, in these later days of science and new religions, to look with a feeling akin to supercilious disdain upon these dogmas and to credit them with but little good in the moral and intellectual development of mankind. We may admit the gross anthropomorphic as well as the mythical character that pervades them; the bitter persecutions and the terrible destruction of human life that have attended their promulgation as a system of religious faith may all be admitted; yet it must be conceded that these dogmas have enshrouded far beyond any other religious system a religious truth of the utmost significance; a truth which was dimly apprehended in the ancient civilizations, and which philosophic thinkers of all ages have recognized as lying back of all experiential knowledge; a truth which by its majestic spiritual import held European society together

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during the turbulent period of the Middle Ages and which modern science is now confirming as the ultimate truth of all cosmic phenomena — the existence of an Infinite Eternal Power from whom all things have proceeded; whose Divine nature is reflected in the universe of material things, but most of all in the moral consciousness of man, and that this Eternal Power is ever further revealing itself through the moral progress of the race. Now, it is an inevitable corollary to this ultimate truth of science — the revealing of the Infinite Divine Power through moral man — that between the Divine Creator and the individual human soul there is, and always has been, a direct spiritual relation which is strengthened as the cosmic knowledge and the moral life of man broadens.

Viewed in this light these dogmas have borne an important part in the intellectual and moral development of mankind. During the long period in which man was slowly stumbling forward with his scientific knowledge to a rational conception of the physical universe, the conscious human mind, and the Infinite Eternal Power lying back of both, these dogmas enshrouded this great religious truth: that between this Infinite Eternal Power and every individual soul there exists a direct spiritual relation which is ever working to greater fulness of individual life — a truth which man's arts, in their varied forms of architecture, painting, sculpture, literature, and music, fully confirm.

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With the progress of modern science, this great religious truth has been undergoing a steady process of dogmatic denudation; and as this denuding process has gone forward, the great enshrouded truth has ever come forth in a clearer light as of vital significance to the intellectual and moral well-being of mankind.

During the middle period of the last century there came a number of culminating discoveries in the physical, the biological, the psychological, the philological, and the sociological sciences, accompanied by results in Biblical criticism, which entirely discredited the dogmatic assertion of the special Divine inspiration of the Bible, thereby completely annulling the binding force of the Christian dogmas as ultimate truth.

The nature and the full philosophic bearing of these discoveries will appear a little later when we come to consider the philosophy based on the doctrine of evolution. In 1859 the Christian world was discussing these discoveries, with the results of Biblical criticism thrown in, mainly from the viewpoint of dogmatic theology; and thus a new phase was given to the long contest between theology and science.

In this contest the most eminent theologians took a hand. They saw that they were facing a more serious issue than ever before, and they rushed with the utmost vehemence to the defence

<sup>1</sup> See vol. II, chap. xx.

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of the Christian dogmas as the embodiment of Divine truth. They were unsparing in their condemnations of the new revelations of science and in Biblical criticism as the height of infidelity, as deliberate attempts to invalidate the truths of revealed religion.<sup>1</sup> In the crusade against these new forms of infidelity no terms of objurgation were too severe against such fair-minded investigators as Lyell, Hooker, Asa Gray, Huxley, Tyndall, Wallace, Darwin, Mayer, Faraday, Joule, and Helmholtz; or against such rational critics as the authors of "Essays and Reviews," Matthew Arnold, Buckle, Renan, and the Tübingen School; or against such noble religious teachers as Channing, Emerson, Theodore Parker, and Bishop Colenso. In fact, the immediate effect of the new revelations of science and of Biblical criticism was a hardening of the theologic heart against all scientific knowledge and against any questioning of the special Divine inspiration of the Scriptures, resulting in an emphatic reassertion of the old dogmatic claim that there was, and must ever remain, a broad line of demarcation between the sacred truths of theology and the experiential knowledge derived from soci-

<sup>1</sup> People whose memories go back to fifty years ago can recall sermons by scholarly clergymen, in which it was seriously maintained that the palæontological discoveries attesting man's animal origin and great antiquity were but evidences of the adroit work of Satan in creating these fossils, and so distributing them as to confuse men's minds in regard to the Divine truth of creation revealed in Genesis. Happily the days for such presentations of Divine truth no longer exist.

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ology and science; in short, that the latter must ever be interpreted by the former.

John Fiske was seventeen years old when his rapidly expanding mind, eager in its search for truth, was brought within the circle of this profound discussion between dogmatic theology on the one hand and science and Biblical criticism on the other. It was not in his nature to do things by halves; and his religious feelings being as we have seen thoroughly aroused, and his inquiries showing him that the religious faith he had accepted rested wholly upon these dogmas as truths of the highest import, he could not rest content until he had brought them together and interrelated them in his own mind. When he had done this, when he had got them with all their implications interrelated as into a complete and rounded whole, it then appeared that the religion founded on these dogmas did not present as its vital elements the love of a Divine Creator "who doeth all things well," and ethical conduct among men as the essential condition for individual fulness of life, so much as it emphasized a belief in certain supernatural phenomena that were to be accepted wholly on faith. In fact, it appeared that the real religious elements — love to God and love to man — were so completely enshrouded in a series of unverifiable assertions in regard to God, the physical universe, and man, that it was not only impossible



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to bring the reasoning mind to bear upon them in any rational way; it also appeared as the purpose of the dogmas — if they may be said to have had a purpose — so to stifle the mind in its aspiration for religious truth that it should be forever restrained from seeking other light on the great problems of existence than that vouchsafed by the dogmas themselves.

The collocation of these dogmas, therefore, started trains of thought in John's mind in various directions. He saw more clearly than ever before why in Christian literature so much importance was attached to the dogma of the special inspiration of the Scriptures — the placing of the Bible in authority over and above all other sources of knowledge. He saw that this was done, not because of the intrinsic religious truth the Bible contained, — the love of God and the love to man, — but because such an alleged divinely inspired record of God's dealings with man was necessitated as a foundation for the scheme of Man's creation, his fall, his redemption through Christ, and the conditions of his future existence, as well as for the placing of the scheme beyond the reach of any criticism based on verifiable knowledge.

John's reason at once stumbled over this stupendous assumption of the Divine authority of the Biblical record, at this placing all other knowledge subordinate to it, at this begging the whole theologico-religious question at the outset. As he studied

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his Bible and brought under review his historic and scientific knowledge, and saw how radically the profoundly impressive scientific record of the development of the cosmos and its inhabitants, as interpreted by Humboldt, Lyell, and the biologists, differed from the crude, childish cosmogony of Genesis, and how the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations, which knew not the Christian dogmas, yet presented, as interpreted by Grote and Gibbon, some points of moral and religious advantage over Christian civilization, John's whole religious nature was deeply stirred by the manifest incongruities between the revelation of the Divine Creator as asserted by dogma and the verifiable revelation given by science and by history. He began to question in the very sincerity of his heart, "Is this Christian religion as set forth in these dogmas the ultimate measure of the Infinite Creator of the physical universe, of the human soul? Can it be true that this religion is a veritable form of worship and conduct instituted by the Divine Creator of all things for man's special behoof and salvation; is the human race under such a fearful doom; and do such portentous consequences to the eternal future of all mankind depend upon individual acceptance of the conditions of salvation as set forth in these dogmas?"

Similar questions have often arisen in the minds of sincere Christian believers, and Christian literature has many answers. John's answer was the complete emancipation of his mind from bondage

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to these dogmas, his firm grasp of the vital religious truth that they partially revealed, and his subsequent efforts to set forth this truth, not simply as consistent with, but rather as the necessary complement to the broadest scientific knowledge — in a word, his answer was his intellectual life as we are to see it unfold from this point.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Years after, in a conversation I had with Fiske in regard to these dogmas and the hold they had on the evangelical Christian mind down to the promulgation of the doctrine of Evolution, he said in substance: —

“I can never forget the feeling of revulsion I experienced when I first brought these dogmas together in my mind as an interrelated whole. I had received them from time to time as elements in the religious faith which I had accepted as Divine, without any question whatever. When, however, in my seventeenth year, I sought to bring my religious views under a rational interpretation, I found it was required that these dogmas should first be posited as the embodiment of all ultimate truth. I then tried to get clearly before me the scheme of cosmic creation and sustentation which these dogmas set forth; and what a mighty drama of Infinite and finite coexistences stood revealed! Both orders of existences appeared as inextricably immeshed in a mass of metaphysical assumptions, wherein science was disowned, where reason was discredited, and where blind, unquestioning faith was regarded as the only passport to true Christian knowledge. Fortunately science was then giving a nobler and a more verifiable knowledge in regard to cosmic creation and the meaning of human life, as well as yielding a far higher conception of the Infinite Power back of the cosmos than could be derived from these dogmas, and I was not long in freeing my mind from their benumbing influence.

“With more mature thought, I came to see the great spiritual truth enshrouded in these dogmas; and a wider acquaintance with the philosophy of history, led me to see that the dogmatic coverings of this great truth had been of immense service in its protection and its development while knowledge was slowly being organized through science, for its verification in human experience. And now the Christian world is beginning to see that religious and social progress consists mainly in the freeing of this great spiritual truth from the dogmatic wrappings it has outgrown.”

## CHAPTER VI

SELF-PREPARATION TO ENTER HARVARD AS SOPHOMORE — WIDE READING — BREAKS AWAY FROM CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY — SOCIAL OSTRACISM — LEAVES MIDDLETOWN FOR CAMBRIDGE

1859-1860

THUS far we have been tracing the life of John Fiske through his boyhood and youth under the influence of his family and his home surroundings, his elementary schooling and his preparation and his passing the examinations for entrance at Yale College. We have had frequent occasion to note his strong self-propulsion for knowledge, his orderly methods of study, his remarkable intellectual attainments, his high ideals of the life of a scholar, and his deep religious convictions. We are now to follow him into a broader field of experiences, and for the ensuing four years particularly we are to observe him as intellectually developing under three closely interrelated conditions: in his preparation for and as an undergraduate at Harvard; as a student of philosophy and religion in the new era of scientific thought then opening; and in his steadily widening social relations. To use Mr. Spencer's definition of life: we are to observe him during this formative period in his "continuous adjustment of

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internal relations to external relations." This plan of observing him will entail considerable particularity in regard to the external relations.

It having been settled in August, 1859, that John should enter Harvard instead of Yale, he determined to enter as sophomore or junior; and to prepare for such an advanced entrance, he planned for several months' study by himself in Middletown and then to finish with a tutor at Cambridge. His plans for his studies show the same orderly prevision we have had occasion to note in previous years. Each study had its hour and its time limit. In the required languages at Harvard he was already prepared; nevertheless, he took up Latin, Greek, and German with fresh ardor, and added Italian and Hebrew thereto; he also provided for persistent comparative study of the structural features of the several languages supplemented by careful readings in the classics of each. In mathematics he prepared to review his geometry and algebra, to go twice over the freshman requirements, and to anticipate some of the sophomore requirements, and to finish in Cambridge.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The following is a list of the textbooks and philological and classical works studied during this preparatory period: Becker's *German Grammar*, Key's *Latin Grammar*, Ollendorff's *French Grammar*, Xenophon's *Anabasis* (ed. Anthon), Xenophon's *Cyropædia* (ed. Owen), Virgil's *Aeneid* (ed. Ladewig), Sallust's *De Bello Jugurthino* (ed. Jacobi), Cæsar's *De Bello Gallico* (ed. Kraner), Fénelon's *Télémaque*, *Iliad*, lib. I-VI (ed. Anthon), Chapman's *Homeric Hymns*, *Cicero's Orations Selectæ*, Sallust's *De Conjuratone Catilinæ* (ed. Jacobi), Arnold's *Latin Prose Composition*, Part I, Eaton's *Elements of Arithmetic*, Day's *Algebra*, Euclid's *Elements* (ed. Playfair), Racine's *Les*

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Having thus laid out his preparatory course he writes his mother in a moment of gratulation: "How thankful for Harvard and self, instead of Yale and Colton."

While this self-imposed course was substantially carried out, it is interesting to note that by mid-winter, 1860, his scientific and philosophic reading had awakened in his mind the importance, in a truly philosophical education, of a knowledge of science in addition to a knowledge of the languages and mathematics. Accordingly he puts this question to his mother: "Would a scientific education be of advantage to me or not? This question I would like some experienced person to answer. I am inclined that way, though I love classical studies and find no trouble in them. A scientific course which includes the sciences and German would not interfere with my private study of Latin and Greek. I shall read all the works of antiquity anyway." He appears to have answered the question himself, and by a preparation in science which was not at all called for at Harvard at that time.<sup>1</sup>

*Frères Ennemis*, and his *Alexandre*, De Staël's *L'Allemagne*, Peirce's *Geometry*, Vergani's *Italian Grammar*, Gesenius's *Hebrew Grammar* (begun), Peirce's *Algebra and Trigonometry*.

<sup>1</sup> His scientific reading during 1859 and the early part of 1860 comprised the following works: Agassiz's *Principles of Zoölogy* and his *Essay on Classification*, Johnston's *Natural History*, Turner's *Chemistry*, Lambert's *Practical Anatomy and Physiology*, Lardner's *Astronomy and Physics*, Chambers's *Elements of Zoölogy*, Milne-Edwards's *Elémens de Zoölogy*, Cuvier's *Le Règne Animal*, Redfield's *Zoölogy*, Herschel's *Outlines of Astronomy*, Laplace's *Système du Monde*, Dalton's *Human Physiology*, Peaslee's *Human Histology*,

## Wide Reading

His thoughtful manner of self-study is indicated by his passing remarks anent his studies in the languages and in classic literature. Speaking of language he says: "It is the objective correlative to the subjective reason or mind"; and in speaking of the origin of languages we have this: "The similarities of languages do not prove that they all sprang from one primitive dialect." These remarks are indicative of his mental alertness in grasping significant points in his studies. But here is something that is distinctly self-revealing. He has procured a copy of Rawlinson's Herodotus containing the discoveries revealed by the cuneiform writings, and he is jubilant: "Just the thing," he says, "to read with Grote! How blest I am to learn such things before college! What a treasure to the mind is a critical and extensive acquaintance with ancient history! Grote is a philosopher; he lays open the Hellenic mind and traces beautiful thoughts and lovely guesses on every

Wilson's *Human Anatomy*, Duglison's *Human Physiology*, Gray's *Structural and Systematic Botany*, Darwin's *Origin of Species*, *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, Viery's *Philosophie de l'Histoire Naturelle*, Ampère's *Sur la Philosophie des Sciences*, Thompson's *Inorganic Chemistry*, Williams's *Principles of Medicine*.

In years to come, we are to see him discussing questions of the highest philosophic import growing out of the interrelations between the physiological and the psychological forces in the human organism. We may marvel at his ready command of the varied scientific knowledge involved in the discussions. We should note here, therefore, that in this self-directed scientific study and reading of this early period, we have the beginning of his scientific acquisitions; and the thing to be particularly noted is the fundamental character and the high quality of these acquisitions.

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page. His chapter on Socrates is perfectly enrapturing."<sup>1</sup>

John's preparation for Harvard was completed at Cambridge; but before entering upon that very interesting phase of his preparatory work, we must stop to note quite another phase in his life in Middletown during the year 1859 and the early part of 1860 from that of the preparatory student we have been considering.

We have seen that during the latter half of 1858 he was greatly interested in ancient history as portrayed by Rollin and by Grote, and also in the development of the physical universe as presented by Humboldt. During these months, therefore, while all this preparation, first for Yale, and then for Harvard, was going forward, questions of the highest import in religion and philosophy were engaging his mind.

Humboldt's "Cosmos" was one of the really great works of the middle period of the last century. Its encyclopædic learning, its lucid arrangement of subject-matter, its eminent fairness on controverted points, and its entire freedom from dogmatic presuppositions gave it the character of an impartial textbook of physical science; while its record of wide and rare personal experiences, all given in a graphic, easy-flowing style, secured for it a wide circulation among fair-minded readers throughout the world. It was a masterly summing-up of the

<sup>1</sup> See Grote on Fiske, *post*, p. 312.



## Humboldt and Grote

results of cosmic science, a presentation of the cosmic universe as "that which is ever growing and unfolding in new forms," and it came as a significant preparation for the doctrine of Evolution which was soon to follow.

John read this work with deep interest, and he could not but contrast the physical universe as presented by Humboldt accompanied by positive, scientific verifications, with the wholly different presentation given by dogmatic theology without any scientific verifications whatever. His questioning of the theological dogmas as the embodiment of all ultimate truth had its origin, therefore, in 1858 when he was reading Humboldt's great work contemporaneously with Grote's "History of Greece."<sup>1</sup>

This questioning once started in Fiske's mind could not be suppressed; the more he investigated and reflected, the greater seemed the variance between the positive, verifiable truths of science and the unverifiable claims of theology. And his historical reading perplexed him still more. Early in 1859 he took up Gibbon's "History of Rome," and Gibbon's fifteenth and sixteenth chapters in addition to Grote's portrayal of Hellenic civilization led him seriously to question the credibility of much of the Biblical history. The points of contrast between the Hellenic and the Jewish civilizations were great and showed much in favor of the former

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, pp. 84, 88.

## John Fiske

over the latter. If dogmatic theology was true, then the whole Hellenic civilization was foolishness, and its great exemplars, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, were expiating for misspent lives in Hell.

John's reason was staggered with such a confrontation, and he reveals himself during the early part of 1859 as in a greatly perturbed state of mind over his religious questioning and as earnestly seeking light. He was greatly encouraged in his search for truth by contact with two congenial minds — the Reverend John Langdon Dudley, pastor of the South Congregational Church, Middletown, and his student friend, George Litch Roberts.

Mr. Dudley, although the pastor of an orthodox Congregational church, was a clergyman of exceedingly liberal views for the time. In philosophic thought he was a sort of Fichtean Emersonian Transcendentalist, who was endeavoring to find points of agreement between the assumptions of Christian theology and the claims of the Transcendentalists of the innate existence in the consciousness of man of the Divine Immanence that makes for righteousness. Mr. Dudley was cheerily optimistic in his religious faith and saw the good in life. He was a great comfort to John at this time, for he had a sympathetic, appreciative feeling for the experience through which the latter was passing. We shall meet with him in years to come.

Young Roberts, as we have seen, had all of John's ardor for knowledge. He was also animated with a

## Religious Questioning

spirit of free inquiry, to such an extent that he did not acknowledge any subject as too sacred for the fullest investigation in the light of reason; in brief, he possessed the true critical spirit with perfect frankness in self-expression. John and Roberts were much together in their church relations as well as in their musical diversions; they also took long walks together discussing the subjects uppermost in their minds; and as their philosophico-religious interests broadened they grew into a close intellectual relationship which was stimulating and helpful to both.

John had another friend in Middletown who aided him much in his studies and his reading and for whom he always cherished a kind remembrance — Joseph Whitcomb Ellis. Mr. Ellis was an alumnus of Wesleyan University, and at this time he was a teacher of mathematics in the Middletown High School. He was a good mathematician, and was well read in science. He had a choice library which contained the mathematical works of Lagrange, Laplace, Goss, and Peirce; as well as representative works in science and philosophy. Mr. Ellis was a liberal-minded Swedenborgian in his belief, and to encourage John in his pursuit of knowledge he gave him the free use of his library — a kindness which was greatly appreciated.

It was in many ways unfortunate that at this period of his religious questioning John should have had dogmatic Christianity preached to him in

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its most repulsive form. His pastor at the North Church, Middletown, the Reverend Jeremiah Taylor, D.D., was in no sense a learned man, either in history or in Biblical criticism, much less in science. His sermons, therefore, partook of vigorous assertions of the divinity of dogma, combined with ignorant condemnations of the recent advancements in science and in Biblical criticism. These advancements in knowledge he alleged were only fresh devices of Satan to discredit the religion of Christ divinely revealed in the Bible.

John's fairness of mind is shown at this point. He was not ready to give up his Christian belief without investigation; and so we find him reading, in addition to a very broad course in science and history, such works in sound orthodoxy as Hugh Miller's "Testimony of the Rocks," Walker's "God Revealed in the Creation and in Christ," Walker's "Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation," Wayland's "Intellectual Philosophy," Isaac Taylor's "The World of Mind," Edwards on "The Will," Hickok's "Rational Psychology," Nelson's "Cause and Cure of Infidelity," Hopkins's and Alexander's "Evidences of Christianity," Alford's "Prolegomena to the Gospels," Campbell and Douglas on "Miracles," Watson's "Reply to Gibbon and Paine," and Bushnell's "Nature and the Supernatural" — the last then regarded as a masterpiece in the defence of Christian theology.

In his investigations John's mind appears to have

## Influence of Buckle

been centred on the Christian dogmas as a whole — on the theologic claim that they presented a completely rounded philosophical system of all existences; and it further appears that he early became impressed with the conviction that the defenders of these dogmas almost wholly ignored science, and rested their defences mainly on assumptions rather than on positive verifications. In regard to Bushnell's work he writes, a little later, "The rhetorical work of Bushnell, with its total ignorance of physical science, did more to shake my faith than anything else."

It was while thus investigating for ultimate truth — in May, 1859 — that Roberts brought him the first volume of Buckle's "History of Civilization in England." Few books published during the last century made such a stirring of philosophic and religious thought as this. Its laudation of science over metaphysics, its proclamation of the superiority of external or natural forces over internal or subjective forces in the development of civilization, its bold grappling with many accepted philosophic conclusions and religious beliefs, and its great display of learning, — all presented in a vigorous, attractive style, — fairly took by storm the unsettled condition of philosophic thought of sixty years ago, and set serious-minded thinkers to a careful reëvisagement of the philosophic verities that underlie human well-being. The book made a profound impression on the public mind, and the discussion it

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called forth was an interesting prelude to the far deeper philosophic discussion which came, a little later, with the publication of Darwin's "Origin of Species," with its philosophic complement, Herbert Spencer's theory of Evolution.

Fiske fairly devoured Buckle. The book stirred his thought to the uttermost. His own reading gave him great equipoise in weighing Buckle's arguments. In Buckle's main contentions he found much to dissent from as well as much to agree with. He finished the volume with a greatly clarified mind and with the conviction that it was "a great and noble book, written by a great and noble man."

Later thought has somewhat lessened the value of Buckle's contribution to the great discussion of which it was the forerunner. It had an immediate effect upon Fiske's mind, however, in two directions. In the first place, it led him to focus his thought upon the important part played by nature in the development of civilized man, and upon the need of a philosophy which should present the objective world of phenomena as revealed by science and the subjective world of human consciousness as revealed by civilization in harmony with some universal principle which could absorb both in unity or purpose. In the second place, it was the culminating influence which completely freed his mind from bondage to dogmatic theology. Two years later we are to see him writing an article on Buckle which

## Abandons Dogmatic Christianity

stands to-day among the best judgments upon this eminent thinker that have been published.

It was no easy matter for John to break away from the religious faith in which he had been bred, and which he had himself embraced in full credence of its Divine origin and character. Granting its assumptions, dogmatic theology gave the Christian believer something veritable to tie to. Denial of its Divine origin and character left the mind apparently without a positive hitching-post in the vast swirl of cosmic phenomena. That John fully realized the significance of the change, and that the breaking-away was attended with distress of mind, the letters bear witness. In this hour of trial he could not appeal to his mother or to his grandmother. They could not understand him. He could turn for sympathy only to his friend Roberts, who was passing through a similar experience; and both found comfort and encouragement in their broad-minded friend Dudley.

By midsummer Fiske's abandonment of dogmatic Christianity was complete, and the following remark in a letter to his mother in July is indicative of what was passing in his mind: —

“I must not try to write about the Trinity in a letter: I will tell you what I think about it when you come. If the system is true, orthodoxy, Unitarianism, and Swedenborgianism are alike false.”

His mother came to see him shortly after, and he opened his mind to her in regard to his change of

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religious views freely and frankly. He pointed out how unphilosophical and how unreasonable the orthodox scheme of theology appeared to him as a basis for religious faith; that the existence of a personal, triune Godhead as the first Great Cause and as a Divine Ruler was an anthropomorphic assumption; that the Mosaic cosmogony by which a universe was created by fiat out of nothing was unthinkable; that the creation of man — also by fiat — as a perfect being was opposed to all the teachings of science; that man's temptation, fall, and redemption through Christ had no valid historic verification; while the existence of a veritable Heaven and Hell, where the Divine Ruler eternally rewarded or punished mankind for its *belief* or *non-belief* in Him, had no justifiable basis in reason or experience. He assured her that with no honesty or sincerity of heart could he any longer believe in a religion based on such foundations — a religion which made such a monster of God and held such a frightful doom over the greater portion of the human race, a doom which included some of the noblest characters that have ever lived.

His mother could neither say nor do anything to oppose him. She found comfort, however, in his assurance that he regarded atheism as more unreasonable and unthinkable than dogmatic theology, and in the fact that his ideals of moral conduct were heightened, while his desire to prepare himself for service through a thorough course of col-



## Abandons Dogmatic Christianity

lege training showed no abatement whatever. Realizing, therefore, that if he was in error, he could be convinced of the fact only through his own experience, she let him go forward; but, grievously for him, without her sympathy or understanding.

Resuming John's personal experiences in Middletown, we find that during the latter part of 1859 the change in his religious views began to have effect upon his religious conduct. He no longer believed in the orthodox theology or the religious faith based on that theology. Out of filial regard for his grandmother he had retained his connection with the North Congregational Church, where he had to listen to such presentations of religious truth by Dr. Taylor as this: —

“But at this point of the discussion a scene bursts upon my vision: it is from the depths of eternity. A multitude of holy angels enter singing ‘Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty’ — but the scene changes. Envy enters into the breast of the mightiest of that angel host. He asserts his dominion against the Father. Consternation reigns in Heaven; but Christ sent by Jehovah hurls in holy wrath and Godlike vengeance that rebel host to hell,” etc.

Such crude expositions of “Divine truth” outraged all John's religious nature, and we can easily understand his indignant outburst in giving his mother an account of the sermon: “I wished some one had pitched him out of the pulpit in the same way.”

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Dr. Taylor's sermons reflected the religious unrest of the time and abounded with ignorant prejudice against what was termed "scientific infidelity," as well as with bitter invective against the rising school of "scientific infidels" who would discredit God's inspired messages to man.

John could not endure such preaching. He began to absent himself from the communion service, and finally he withdrew from church attendance altogether. He felt that with his disbelief in the Christian dogmas it was pure hypocrisy to appear as their supporter. He was supported by his friend Roberts. They acted together, and it soon became current throughout the town that young Fiske and Roberts, the two brightest young minds and the two most exemplary young men in the North Church, had turned infidels.

In a conservative, orthodox community like Middletown of fifty years ago, to be called an infidel was one of the severest terms of social reproach. There was charity for the moral delinquent, and even for the burglar, for they might be reclaimed by subscribing to the dogmatic orthodox creed; but for the infidel, the disbeliever in the creed itself, one who boldly denied the inspiration of the Bible and the Divinity of Christ, he had no title whatever to social recognition; he was to be regarded, in fact, as the foe of all social and religious order; and all the more dangerous if well educated and of unexceptionable moral character.

## Social Ostracism

John's pastor, Dr. Taylor, was greatly exercised at the outbreak of such a virulent form of heresy under his own preaching. He felt it not only a scandal to the orthodox Christian faith, but also an imputation upon his own faithfulness in presenting the dogmatic foundations of that faith. He must bestir himself. He called upon Mrs. Lewis, John's grandmother, to get more light upon the cause of John's "backsliding." This true Christian woman, firm in her belief that moral conduct is the real test of religious character, stoutly maintained that John could not be an infidel. "Why," said she, "he never did a bad thing in his life; and then, he is such a faithful student." "Yes," said Dr. Taylor, "that makes him all the worse. He does not believe in the inspiration of the Bible nor in the Divinity of Christ; and he has given up the church." Still she maintained he could not be an infidel; and in the innocence of her heart she took Dr. Taylor into John's library to see the fine collection of books he had got together, all of which she knew he had read.

Alas, to the heresy-hunter the exhibit was too conclusive! There side by side with books of sound orthodoxy were many ancient classics, and the works of Humboldt, Voltaire, Lewes, Fichte, Schlegel, Buckle, Cuvier, Laplace, Milne-Edwards, De Quincey, Theodore Parker, Strauss, Comte, Grote, Gibbon, and John Stuart Mill. Dr. Taylor had no praise to bestow upon such a collection of books in the hands of his young parishioner; and in

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response to the inquiry as to what he thought of them, he could only shake his head.

Shortly after, Dr. Taylor had an interview with John himself. John frankly stated his views in regard to the inspiration of the Bible and in regard to creation and the Divinity of Christ, with the reasons therefor. He also stated that to his mind the dogmatic presentation of God was belittling and vulgar, when compared with the conception of a Divine Creator and Sustainer which reason, informed by science, must postulate as the Ultimate Source of all things. Dr. Taylor was not equipped for parishional service against such views. He could only condemn them as rank infidelity. John then said: "You see where I stand. Why not expel me from the church?" Dr. Taylor replied: "That we cannot do unless you commit some gross act of immorality." "That," said John, "I pray God I may never do." Dr. Taylor then asked: "How do you explain your conversion?" John replied: "You will find that accounted for in Esquirol's 'Des Maladies Mentales.'"

Finding that John was not to be brought back to the church by any means at his command, Dr. Taylor resorted to the course usually pursued in such cases by clergymen with narrow minds. He began to decry John in the most unjust manner. There was hardly any epithet too opprobrious to apply to him. He was an atheist, an infidel, a blasphemer, a hypocrite, an immoral person, and

## A Religious Storm-Centre

finally he was a Unitarian.<sup>1</sup> As a result, this modest, scholarly youth found himself a religious storm-centre, as it were, in the orthodox community of Middletown, which swept reason, justice, and even common courtesy entirely out of consideration. Worst of all, it brought great distress of mind to his grandmother. At the church gatherings she was subjected to expressions of sympathy, made personally poignant by being accompanied by reflections upon the base conduct of John in turning against all the precepts of his Christian training. With his whole life before her as an open book, wherein on every page was written his dutiful consideration for others as well as his faithfulness to his studies, she could not understand how it was possible for him to become such a moral reprobate as Dr. Taylor had pronounced him to be.

In her sore perplexity she went to John and asked him if it was true that he did not believe in the Bible and in the Divinity of Christ. He told her that in the way in which the Church and Dr. Taylor presented the Bible and Christ he did not believe, but that in a far higher and nobler interpretation of

<sup>1</sup> I have never been able fully to understand just why it was that in orthodox communities of fifty years ago the name "Unitarian" had such an opprobrious signification. I recall that about this period I was visiting, in Western New York, the family of a Presbyterian deacon. The deacon's wife, a most estimable woman, told me, as a Bostonian, that during her girlhood she lived in Boston; and then, with much seriousness, she added: "I then attended Dr. Channing's church. I have since deeply repented; but I don't think it ever did me any harm."

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them he did believe. And then, as patiently and as simply as possible, he tried to explain to her his conviction that the Bible, although containing much of error and superstition, was still the greatest of books; that the real Jesus of history, although perverted to men's minds by the Christ of dogma, was still the noblest character that ever lived; while over all was a Divine Creator and Ruler, of whose wisdom, goodness, and power the human mind can form no adequate conception.

Accustomed to regard the positive, dogmatic assumptions which formed the basis of her religious faith as divinely inspired messages to man, the dear old lady could hardly grasp the implications or the meaning of this purer, more abstract faith; but she found comfort in John's assurance that his belief in a Divine Creator, "Who doeth all things well," and in upright conduct as the imperative condition for fulness of life, was stronger than ever.

Another incident in John's Middletown experience should be given, as it shows that at this early stage he was getting his mental acquisitions into order for effective use either in argument or for lucid exposition.

There was living in or near Middletown a retired orthodox clergyman, the Reverend Jonathan Ebenzar Barnes, D.D. Dr. Barnes was a contributor to religious magazines, and had published one or more articles in the "New Englander," then a distinctly representative organ of dogmatic theology,

## Controversy with Dr. Barnes

especially in its philosophic bearings or implications. Dr. Barnes had much local reputation as a scholar, and occasionally prepared students for college. His orthodoxy was sound. He knew John as a youth of good family and of studious habits. He had heard of his heretical opinions and of his withdrawal from the North Church. Out of his Christian feeling, he wrote John a friendly letter, in which, as an older scholar and a student of philosophy, he offered by correspondence to guide his steps through the "specious" mazes of the "Positive Philosophy" then current, to the goal he felt sure he would ultimately reach, "Christ and Him crucified," as the ultimate truth of all philosophy.

John was somewhat piqued at the tone of this letter, notwithstanding the evident good intention of the writer. Its quiet assumption that all knowledge, all philosophy outside of Christian theology was foolishness; and that he, in his eagerness for knowledge, owing to his extreme youth, was greatly in need of a friendly Christian adviser seemed slightly too presumptuous. Then, too, it would appear that John welcomed the receipt of this letter as a fitting opportunity to defend his heretical opinions. Accordingly, in answering Dr. Barnes, he not only stated his reasons for giving up the orthodox Christian faith, he also challenged Dr. Barnes to the defence of that faith. The letter is too long for insertion here. It was a remarkable production for a youth who had but just turned his

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eighteenth year. Its points may be summarized as follows: —

*First.* His faith was *not* shaken by the “specious” philosophy of the “Positivists”; he was convinced of the insufficiency of the “evidences” of Christianity long before he knew what “Positivism” was.

*Second.* He considers the “internal evidences” of Christianity as presented by its supporters, including the originality of its doctrines; the unique character of Jesus and its ethics. These points he analyzes with great clearness and impartiality, and he finds no satisfaction in them.

*Third.* He next considers the “external evidences,” the miracles, the prophecies, the historic record in the different books of the Bible; the argument from existing institutions and from the rapid spread of Christianity. He applies to the evidences adduced on these points the canons of logic and historic criticism and finds that they do not stand the test.

*Fourth.* He interrogates metaphysics, but does not find much to rest upon in “Kant’s negations or Fichte’s beautiful dreams,” or anything of the kind he touched. The metaphysicians appear to have neglected or ignored science, and to have established a cosmogony of their own in place of the well-established truths of science.

*Fifth.* He interrogates science. Here he finds rest; for in the verifiable phenomena of the universe he finds a revelation of its Divine Creator, written in hieroglyphics — the sacred language which science is daily translating into the dialects of mankind..



## Controversy with Dr. Barnes

The letter closed with this quotation from the early philosopher Thales: —

“ Πάντα πληρῆ θεοῦ.”

All things are full of God.

Dr. Barnes acknowledged the receipt of the letter and expressed himself as pleased at the evidences it gave of John's “industry.” He promised a full reply later. That reply never came.<sup>1</sup>

From contemporary evidence and from the fact that John's mind was too well balanced to accept any negative philosophy, it appears that at this time the ultimate problem of philosophy as the quest of reason, had shaped itself in his mind substantially as follows: —

- I. Granting the existence of the world of subjective phenomena as revealed in individual consciousness and as objectified in the various elements and phases of man's civilization;

<sup>1</sup> During this period — that is, the year 1859 and the first quarter of 1860 — of active searching for a new base for philosophic thinking we have John's record of reading the following works in addition to the works named on page 106: Grote's *History of Greece*, the last six volumes; Arnold's *History of Rome*, and also his *Later Roman Commonwealth*; Merivale's *History of the Romans*, Gibbon's *History of Rome*, Guyot's *Earth and Man*, Coleridge's *Religious Musings*, Bayne's *Essays*, Upham's *Mental Philosophy*, Ferrier's *Institutes of Metaphysic*, Schlegel's *Philosophy of History*, also his *Philosophy of Life*; Finlay's *Greece under the Romans*, Hallam's *Middle Ages*, Thompson's *Outlines of the Laws of Thought*, Fichte's *Nature of the Scholar*, and *The Destination of Man*; Hume's *History of England*, De Quincey's *Philosophical Writers*, several volumes of sermons and addresses by Theodore Parker, Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, and *Past and Present*; Lewes's *History of Philosophy*, Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, Paine's *Age of Reason*, Max Müller's *Survey of Languages*,

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- II. Granting the existence of the universe of objective phenomena as verified to human consciousness or mind through experience;
- III. Granting that the human mind has never been able to penetrate with any verifiable experience the causal mystery that enshrouds the world of subjective, and the universe of objective, phenomena, and their interrelations;
- IV. Granting that the creation or emanation of these two orders of phenomena out of nothing is an unthinkable proposition to the reasoning mind;
- V. What, then, as the very basis of philosophic thinking, must the rational mind postulate as the Ultimate First Cause back of all phenomena; and what must be its method of manifestation or revelation to the human mind?

To the solution of this problem John's intellectual powers were now fully roused, and he took up its solution as a quest for a higher and purer philosophic religious faith than he had known. This quest he took up at this early period with as sincere and lofty a devotion as ever animated knight of the Holy Grail; and it was pursued, in addition to his collegiate and legal studies and his subsequent literary work, without any intermission for the ensuing fifteen years, forming, as it were, a background to

*Vie de Voltaire*, par Condorcet; Comte's *Positive Philosophy*, Whately's *Elements of Logic*, Mills's *System of Logic*, Wallon's *Histoire de l'esclavage Ancienne*, Rousseau's *Confessions*, Comte's *Philosophy of Mathematics*, Newman's *History of the Hebrew Monarchy*, De Wette's *Introduction to the Old Testament*, Mansel's *Limits of Religious Thought*, Mackay's *Progress of the Intellect*.

## Social Ostracism

his intellectual life during this period. The ground he covered in this quest was immense, and his method of investigation, as we shall see, was remarkable for its fair-mindedness as well as its breadth; and it was an investigation which brought him to some ultimate philosophical conclusions which he embodied in his "Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy," published in 1874 — one of the most important philosophical works of the last century.

Meantime, while all this deep study was going forward and all this high thinking was taking shape in John's mind, his life in Middletown was most unhappy. Socially he was practically ostracized from homes where he had formerly been cordially welcomed. On the street he was shunned by his acquaintances, and was pointed at as the "Infidel of the North Church," while in his own home at his grandmother's, where all his life he had received affection and encouragement in his studies, he was not at all understood and consequently was without sympathy in his high purpose. His letters bear witness to his great mental perturbation and to the "dull and sunless days" through which he passed; and in the midst of it all he plaintively appealed to his mother to let him get out of Middletown, and be freed from the atmosphere of ignorance and religious intolerance which had such a depressing influence upon his mind.

His mother granted his request, and on the 18th of May, 1860, he left Middletown to prepare for his

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collegiate life at Cambridge under more congenial surroundings. He left with a saddened heart; for he could not forget that back of the persecutions of the past few months all the tender recollections of his boyhood and youth were indissolubly linked with the dear old town.

Just forty years after, Middletown celebrated the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of her civic existence. She chose for her orator on this memorable occasion the most eminent of American historians and one of the profoundest thinkers of the time, proud in the consciousness that during the period of his boyhood and his youth he too had trod her pavements: he too had breathed her air.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Longfellow's poem "Nüremberg" contains his beautiful tribute to Albrecht Dürer, as "the Evangelist of Art." In this tribute occurs the following line: —

"That he once has trod its pavement, that he once has breathed its air."

In borrowing the sentiment of this line, I have made some slight verbal changes in it, to fit the time conditions of the narrative as well as change of person.

## CHAPTER VII

### BOSTON AND CAMBRIDGE

1860

YOUNG Fiske arrived in Boston Friday afternoon, May 18, 1860, and immediately went out to the home of Mr. J. G. Bradford in the suburban town of Quincy, by whom it had been arranged he should be definitely prepared for the Harvard examinations to be held the last of August.

Fiske's first interview with Mr. Bradford revealed the fact that the latter entirely misunderstood what was desired. He supposed that Fiske was to be prepared for the freshman entrance at Harvard. When he found that a preparation for sophomore — and possibly junior — entrance was desired, he frankly said he was not qualified to give such a preparation; and he advised Fiske to seek a tutor acquainted with the requirements of the sophomore and junior examinations.

And thus, far from home and among strangers, young Fiske found himself at the outset of his new life thrown upon his own resources to meet a rather embarrassing situation.

The eminence of Mr. Stoughton at the New York Bar had given him a wide acquaintance with the leading attorneys and jurists of the country, and the

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charming personality of Mrs. Stoughton had added to this professional acquaintance social relations of the highest character. In Boston; Judge Benjamin R. Curtis, formerly Justice of the United States Supreme Court, and greatly honored for his dissenting opinion in the famous Dred Scott case, one of the most important cases ever brought before the Supreme Court, was the warm personal friend of both Mr. and Mrs. Stoughton — in fact, the two families were socially intimate. Since his retirement from the Supreme Bench, Judge Curtis had resumed active practice, and was at this time the most distinguished member of the Boston Bar. In his practice he had associated with himself his brother, George Ticknor Curtis.

Fiske in his perplexity bethought himself to apply to Judge Curtis for counsel. Accordingly, the next morning he found his way to Judge Curtis's office. He was received by George Ticknor Curtis, whom he describes as "a very stiff man, but quite good-hearted," who told him that the Judge was out of town for the day and advised him to pack up his things in Quincy, and to see the Judge in the evening. In the evening he called on Judge Curtis at his home, 32 Hancock Street, Boston, and what followed is best told in Fiske's own words in his first letter to his mother written the following Monday: —

"I found the Judge's house easily. Delightful man — received me with the kindest of welcomes,

## Consults Judge Curtis

and urged me to stay at his house. I declined at first, but as he urged me warmly I stayed. He introduced me to his nephew Greenough, a freshman, and to his daughters — the eldest, Miss Bessie, is a lovely girl. I felt at once perfectly at home with the family. Sunday morning I went to church with them at Kings Chapel — a Unitarian church retaining a part of the Episcopal service. I heard a Unitarian minister but no one could tell the difference. I supposed he was an Episcopalian until Miss Minnie (who is Miss Curtis number two) informed me. After church Miss Minnie and I took a walk to see the common and the mill-dam. In the afternoon I went to church with Miss Minnie. After church the Judge invited me to take a walk with him — we went to Long Wharf and to Faneuil Hall. The evening I spent talking about philology with Miss Bessie; she knows something of Latin, Italian, French, and German, and she delights in such studies.

“This morning the Judge very kindly went to Cambridge with me, and leaving me with Greenough to look at rooms, he called on President Felton to find a tutor for me. Meanwhile I examined the rooms in the house where Greenough was, and I engaged a study room for the summer at somewhere about twenty dollars. The room is one of the pleasantest in Cambridge and in full sight of the college. There is no table connected with it, but board can be had for from \$2.50 to \$4.00 per week. The Judge said on returning I could do no better, that is why I took the room. The Judge found a tutor, a resident graduate, named Bates, highly recommended by Felton. His terms are enormous — two

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hours a day at \$1.00 per hour; that will come to \$172.00 by Sept. 1st. It will be more than my tuition in college for the whole two years. I made no engagement with Bates but said I would call on Friday, at 12 o'clock. I did not like to make such a stupendous bargain without consulting you.

I returned here to the house of this most enchanting of men. I don't know when I was ever so fascinated by any one. Indeed, harmony and love seem to reign through the whole family. Never before was I treated with such kind attention; and to-morrow, I shall leave for Cambridge in love with all the family, from the Judge, to his representative of four years, who spent Sunday morning playing marbles with me on the carpet."

Fiske began his Cambridge life on Wednesday, May 23, 1860, in a house in Holmes Place kept by "the ancient" Royal Morse. The house was next door to the house which was the birthplace of Oliver Wendell Holmes. Both houses long since gave way to the more imposing buildings of the Harvard Law School. The letters give full particulars of his getting settled for a summer of efficient study.

Mrs. Stoughton readily assented to all John's arrangements and also to the engagement of Bates as tutor, and so on Monday, May 28, 1860, he began his definite preparatory studies. On the advice of both Judge Curtis and his tutor, he gave up the idea of trying for a junior entrance and settled down for the sophomore examination. His preparatory



## Visits George Ticknor

reading and studies were not at all exacting for him. They comprised: —

*Reading*: Peirce's "Analytic Geometry."

Smyth's "Differential Calculus."

Thompson's "Inorganic Chemistry."

*Reviewing*: Latin and Greek Grammar and Composition.

Latin and Greek prose and poetry.

Geometry, algebra, and arithmetic.

Early in June he received a visit from his friend Roberts, who was then balancing in his mind the choice of a profession — teaching or the law. They took counsel with Judge Curtis on this point. The Judge after "drawing Roberts out," strongly advised him to take the law<sup>1</sup> and recommended that he should also consult George Ticknor, the eminent Spanish scholar, who took great pleasure in encouraging young men to lives of professional usefulness. The Judge gave Fiske and Roberts a cordial letter of introduction to Mr. Ticknor. This was an introduction in Boston at that time of the highest social character. Fiske's account of what followed is of much interest: —

"Went up to Mr. Ticknor's study. Most splendid room I was ever in. Mr. Ticknor was most gracious — he advised George to be a lawyer. Then he talked with me — said I had better not get acquainted with the students — 'fast set of fellows'; more, he gave me full permission, 'since I was an

<sup>1</sup> Two years after Roberts entered the office of Judge Curtis.

## John Fiske

earnest scholar,' to come to his library whenever I choose and take away any book whatever which I wanted to read. *Was n't that a great favor?"*

The young men must have made a very favorable impression upon Mr. Ticknor, who was one of the most precise and unimpressionable of men.

Fiske's letters to his mother and to Roberts give full particulars of his activities during this preparatory period. He was delighted with his tutor's method of instruction, and he gave himself unreservedly to it. In addition he read widely and with exceeding thoughtfulness upon the philosophic problems that were working in his mind. We have to note that at an age when most young men would have found themselves pretty heavily taxed to prepare through the summer months for a sophomore entrance at Harvard, he was taking his preparatory work with the greatest ease and giving much the greater part of his time to philosophical studies.

In these studies his friend Roberts went with him hand in hand, so that we have in their correspondence a very high order of self-imposed thinking common to both young men. The few extracts from this correspondence which are to follow will show that, while indulging in the freest thought in religious and philosophic matters, they were as insistent upon upright conduct in all matters pertaining to social life, as are those who maintain that right living can be the product only of certain forms of religious belief.

## Settled in Cambridge

Fiske's early Cambridge letters to his mother tell of his delight in getting the choice books from his Middletown library into more congenial surroundings. He has weeded out the less desirable books and has made some additions, so that his library now numbers two hundred and sixty-six volumes, every one of which is identified with a bit of personal experience in his pursuit of knowledge. Conspicuous were a choice selection of the Greek and Latin classics, and a complete edition of the works of Voltaire. Beside these were the works of Gibbon, Grote, Humboldt, Lyell, Darwin, Buckle, Comte, Mill, Spencer, Mackay, Lewes, Lagrange, Donaldson, Emerson, Theodore Parker, and several volumes of Dickens.

He also tells his mother about the adjustment of his furniture and pictures. Over his mantelpiece he has a framed portrait of Humboldt and he has turned his "study table halfway around so as to face the portrait." He has also a portrait of Voltaire in the room. He has seen a full-length statuette of Goethe, which "looks very majestic, in other words very much like Goethe," and he wishes his mother would get it for his room — which she did.

Fiske's Saturdays were usually spent in "mousing among the book-shops in Boston," not only to keep in touch with the new books along his chosen lines of study, but also to see and handle any new or fine edition of a favorite author. He had a great fondness for fine editions of good books, — not

## John Fiske

*éditions-de-luxe*, but serviceable editions with good print and margins and substantial bindings. To him a good book was far more than a material object, far more than a product of mechanical processes. It was the latter into which had been breathed, as it were, a human soul. His tender regard for good books grew out of his reverent feeling towards them as distinct embodiments of man's spiritual nature.

In a letter to his mother of June 17, 1860, he tells of a visit to the book-store of Little, Brown & Company<sup>1</sup> and in speaking of the interesting books he saw there, he says:—

“I saw the works of all the English Positivists— they comprise some of the first men of the century:—

John Stuart Mill — his works	{	Logic, 2 vols. Political Economy, 2 vols. Philosophical Writings, 2 vols.
George Henry Lewes — “ “	{	Seaside Studies. Exposition of Comte. History of Philosophy. Life of Goethe. Physiology of Common Life.
George Grote — “ “	{	History of Greece, 12 vols.
Henry T. Buckle — “ “	{	Civilization in England.
Sir John Herschel — “ “	{	Outlines of Astronomy. Natural Philosophy. Essays.
Herbert Spencer — “ “	{	Principles of Psychology. Social Statics.
Alexander Bain — “ “	{	Senses and the Intellect. Emotions and the Will.

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<sup>1</sup> Little, Brown & Company's book-store and publishing house was at 112 Washington Street, and the firm was famous throughout the country for choice editions of standard English works.

## Interest in Positivism

Robert W. Mackay — his works	{	Progress of the Intellect.
		Progress of Christianity.
Charles Darwin — “ “		The Origin of Species.
Sir Charles Lyell — “ “	{	Works on Geology. The
		greatest living geologist.

“In Germany, to omit lesser names, the Positivists enumerate among their number that of Humboldt and also Ehrenberg — probably the first living zoölogist. In France there is Comte himself,<sup>1</sup> Robin the first anatomist, Littré and Bérard and Pouchet, three of the greatest physiologists, and Verdeil, perhaps the greatest chemist. So it seems at present all departments of science are under the control of Positivism. What does it mean? No previous instance in the history of thought can be found of so many great thinkers uniting under the same standard. I did n't know but you might like to know who the great men are to whose school I belong.”

This extract is of interest, not only as showing the wide range of Fiske's thought at this time, but also as reflecting somewhat the confusion which prevailed in the scientifico-philosophic thought of the period. The philosophic speculations of Auguste Comte were, during the middle period of the century, much in evidence, and were presented with some original and striking suggestions regarding the progressive development of human knowledge. Furthermore, it being claimed that these speculations were based on positive science, and as scientific investigations in various directions were opening lines

<sup>1</sup> Comte was not then living, — he died in 1857.

## John Fiske

of thought in direct opposition to established religious and philosophic beliefs, there was much confusion of thought in the general situation, with a very prevalent disposition to regard the advancements in science as in harmony, if not identified, with the claims of the Positive Philosophy of Comte. In fact, the Comtean philosophy was credited with too much on the one hand, while science was debited with too much on the other hand. It was a false kind of double-entry. It appears that at this time Fiske was more or less in sympathy with the Comtean philosophy. He had studied the Positive Philosophy of Comte with great interest and much care. It does not appear that he had given much, if any, attention to the later sociological vagaries of Comte. In the years to come, we are to see him battling vigorously to defend the doctrine of Evolution — which was charged with Comtean characteristics — against any affiliations with the Comtean philosophy.

In the latter part of June, on one of the Saturday excursions to Boston referred to, Fiske found in the "Old Corner Book-Store" of Ticknor & Fields, the original prospectus of Herbert Spencer's system of philosophy, the publication of which, in quarterly numbers, to be sold by subscription, was announced. In view of what is to follow in the development of Fiske's own mind and in his personal acquaintance with Spencer, the following extracts from the letters are of special interest.

## Enthusiasm over Spencer

Writing Roberts under date of June 24, 1860, he says: —

“Oh, George, my soul is on fire! (to use a favorite expression of Horace), for Herbert Spencer is about to execute a gigantic series of Positive books on which he has been at work for years. I will try to get you a printed notice of them before sending this. He cannot finish them unless he gets subscribers enough to sustain him. My name goes down tomorrow — subscription only \$2.50 per year. There will be about ten volumes comprising Organic Nature. There is Biology, Psychology, Sociology, and Morality. Language comes in, too, and the ‘Religion of Science’ will also be treated. George, if I were you, I would put down my name, for every one counts. Mill’s name is down, so is Herschel’s besides Buckle, Lewes, Grote, Mackay, Newman, Froude, Darwin, Lyell, Hooker, Carpenter, Bain, De Morgan, Lieveking, Morell, and many others whom I do not think of.”

Writing the same day to his mother he expresses his enthusiasm over Spencer’s undertaking thus: —

“I will try to get you a notice of Herbert Spencer’s gigantic series of works—a perfect library of Positivism. You will see all about them in the notice. I hope Mr. Stoughton will subscribe. I consider it my duty to mankind as a Positivist to subscribe; and if I had \$2,000,000 I would lay \$1,000,000 at Mr. Spencer’s feet to help him execute this great work.”

Little did he dream in these moments of exultation over this announcement of Spencer’s great

## John Fiske

work that in the years to come he was to be brought into close personal relations with him in the working-out of the latter's philosophic system; and also to become the chief interpreter of its spiritual implications.

The letters, and particularly those to Roberts, show not only great mental activity outside of his preparatory studies; they also show the wide range of his interests under his new surroundings. In the letter of June 24, which contains the above reference to Spencer's undertaking, there is the following passage: —

“I am slamming into German and find ‘Kosmos’ much easier than Lessing. If you ever get ‘Kosmos’ get the German edition. It is splendid, but the translation murders it. I am reading Boccaccio and I find I have stumbled on one of the hardest authors next to Guicciardini. Machiavelli is one of the easiest Italian authors, he is so clear and precise. In Spanish I am reading Navarrete's ‘Veda’ Cervantes prefixed to his edition of ‘Don Quixote.’ The second volume of Lewes's ‘Physiology of Common Life’ is out and he goes into the cerebral part like the devil.”

Fiske is studying Sanskrit and dropping into Confucius, and in a letter of July 8 he says: —

“If you are going to be a lawyer, you will need to learn Sanskrit so as to read the ‘Institutes of Menu.’ Nothing like going to the fountain head. . . . I am reading Confucius, and it is the most infernal piece of nonsense I have got hold of —



## Wide Range of Study

neither head nor tail to it. Shape it hath none distinguishable in member, joint, or limb. Though I have read in it for two evenings with praiseworthy diligence, I confess my ignorance of what it is about. The Chinese may understand it; I don't, for my brains are not celestial as theirs are."

And then follows this fine tribute to Humboldt's "Kosmos": —

"Ye Gods: what a book is 'Kosmos.' It is the Epic of the Universe. It would pay to learn German if that were the only book in the language. Every now and then Humboldt quotes some beautiful ode or sonnet of his brother William; e.g.: —

'Wie Gras der Nacht myriaden Welten keimen.'<sup>1</sup>

"What a line that is! The entire style of the work is grand and majestic. It is the poem of Positivism; though Peter Bayne says that Positivism chills the poetry in man's nature."

Fiske visited the Harvard Library, and was cordially received by the genial old librarian, Dr. Sibley, whose chief delight was rummaging among old books and papers for the chance of finding a volume or sermon or address not hitherto collected, and Fiske was given free access to the rare books in the library. It is interesting to note that he at once turned to the rare philological works. In an alcove given to philological and Asiatic books he found much to engage his attention. He tells Roberts that there were "books in Sanskrit, Persian, Prakrit,

<sup>1</sup> Like grass of the night myriads of worlds come into being.

## John Fiske

Arabic, Turkish, and all sorts." He itemizes from memory the following: —

"There was W. v. Humboldt's 'Ueber die Kawi-sprache auf der Insel Jawa,' in 3 vols. huge quarto: I am going to read it. They say it is the best philologico-ethnological work out. There was Diez: 'Grammatik der Romanischen Sprachen,' 3 vols.: I am bound to read that; it is the best grammar out, of French, Spanish, Portuguese, Norman Provençal, Italian, and Wallachian. There was Schlegel's 'Etudes sur les langues Asiatiques'; Lassen's 'Institutiones Linguæ Pracriticæ' and 'Indische Alterthumskunde'; Ritter's 'Erdkunde,' about 12 vols.; 'Mahabharata,' 'Ramayana,' and 'Rig Veda' in Sanskrit, bound in red calf. Also Klaproth's 'Asia Polyglotta,' and so many other books that I was driven nearly wild by the sight of them. I tell you your uncle goes into these books like the very devil. No use in being scared. I spend 2½ hours per day on German now, and it is coming by degrees. I shall read it readily by winter. Then I can take out Deiz, and old W. von Humboldt, and Grimm, and cram a deuced lot of philology into my cocoa-nut shell."

Among the subjects uppermost at this time in the minds of Roberts and Fiske was the early history of Christianity, a subject on which both had read widely and thoughtfully. They felt that no true history of this important period in human civilization had yet been written. But light was breaking. German scholarship and historic research had so clearly punctured many of the theologic dogmas of the Christian religion that many minds had begun

## Early Christianity

to think rationally on the historic development of Christianity, where they had hitherto accepted what they had been commanded or induced to believe. Nevertheless, there was very little tolerance for rationalistic views on this subject, and we shall see later that among the unfinished projects of Fiske's life — the one that was nearest his heart — was the writing of a popular history of the first five centuries of the Christian era. Bearing on this subject, if not the first suggestion of it, to the mind of Fiske is the following passage in one of the letters of Roberts, apropos of his reading Mackay's "Rise and Progress of Christianity": —

"I wish there was a good edition of the 50 apocryphal Gospels, the 36 apocryphal Acts, and the 12 apocalypses, together with a good critical history of the early Church. It would disabuse the public of their prejudices amazingly. I recommend the work for your consideration."

Fiske spent a Sunday with the family of Judge Curtis, and the Judge and Fiske got into a theologic discussion regarding which Fiske writes: —

"In a respectful way I used the Judge up — cornered him everywhere. The Judge seemed to enjoy it, and appeared puzzled at me. Finally he gave up, beaten, and ordered a bottle of ale and some crackers."

He had a conversation with the Judge about Agassiz, concerning which he reports to Roberts thus: —

## John Fiske

“The Judge can't say that Agassiz is a Christian — only a theist — that's all. I'll tell you a story Agassiz told the Judge about Arago. It seems that Agassiz, Arago, and several other scientific men were dining with the Murchisons. Says Lady Murchison, 'Now, M. Arago, what can be the reason that in France all your men of science, so learned as they are, invariably reject Christianity?' 'Madame,' said Arago rather drily, 'they never give any attention to such matters.' Arago's answer strikes me forcibly as showing how in France Christianity is all a thing of the past.”

The last sentence should be interpreted as referring to the opinion of Christianity among the scientists of France. The high ideals of scholarship held by both Fiske and Roberts is reflected in a passage in a letter of Roberts apropos of a remark by a person in Middletown who knew Fiske but slightly, to the effect that Fiske was somewhat conceited, and that he would get taken down tremendously if he entered Harvard above freshman. Roberts says:—

“I do not think you or any earnest scholar conceited. I would like to know if we both do not deplore our ignorance enough, and see a field broad enough to cure us of complacency at our present attainment.”

Only once during this preparatory period was Fiske interrupted in his studies. About the first of August the hot midsummer weather of Cambridge began to tell upon his physical strength, pushed as it had been in the support of his varied intellectual

## Enters Harvard

activity, and he was forced to take a few days' rest at Middletown. On the 10th of August he returned to Cambridge and resumed his studies; and so confident was he of creditably passing the entrance examinations that he engaged his rooms for the ensuing year and set about getting his things in order for an undergraduate three years' life at Harvard.

Thus, with his mind variedly occupied, the summer rapidly passed, and on Thursday, the 30th of August, 1860, Fiske presented himself for examination for the freshman and the sophomore entrances at Harvard.

The examinations lasted three days. They consisted of: —

Written exercises in

Latin Grammar and Composition.

Greek Grammar and Composition.

Geometry, Algebra, and Arithmetic.

Oral Examinations in

Latin Prose and Poetry.

Greek Prose and Poetry.

Geography and History.

The absence of all requirements in the sciences and in modern languages is noticeable.

Fiske passed both examinations creditably in all subjects, — he was one of six unconditioned, — and at the close he telegraphed Roberts as follows: "Sophomore without conditions. Please promulgate." To his mother he gave a detailed account

## John Fiske

of the examinations; and then he went down to Swampscott and spent Sunday with Judge Curtis and his family, by whom he was most cordially welcomed, and congratulated on the auspicious opening of his college career.

## CHAPTER VIII

### HARVARD COLLEGE

1860-1863

FROM what we have already seen it appears that young Fiske brought to Harvard a mind well stocked with an exceptional amount of varied, well-arranged knowledge, remarkable powers of application and acquisition, together with high ideals of scholarship and of personal character — in a word, he came fairly as a model student. To trace understandingly his development through the next three years it is essential that we become acquainted with the intellectual and social life that prevailed at Harvard during the period of 1860-1863. This is necessary inasmuch as the more important phases of Fiske's intellectual development took definite shape during this period, and in directions so opposed to the accepted academic thought, and owing to influences so entirely independent of the college, as to relieve us from measuring the student by the college, even if we are not led to some unflattering measure of the college itself.

The freshman and sophomore examinations through which Fiske so easily passed reveal how completely modern science and modern languages — the latter the necessary tools with which to

## John Fiske

master the former — were ignored in the entrance examinations, and even a cursory view of the academic course as a whole shows that at this time Harvard College as an institution of learning was still under the dominance of mediæval ideas of “what knowledge is of the most worth”; and that the great seething, virile thought of the nineteenth century, which was demanding of knowledge verities rather than speculation, which was placing new values on intellectual culture, values based on science and its application to social well-being, had as yet no properly recognized place in its academic course of instruction.

With these facts before us, and as we are tracing the intellectual development of one of the most illustrious of Harvard’s alumni, it is well worth while to take a brief glance at the academic course of study and also at the faculty — the governing body of the college — “as they were in themselves” at the time young Fiske was seeking knowledge at their hands. We shall find this diversion of much assistance in tracing our alumnus through his undergraduate experiences.

There were two Presidents of the college during the period — Cornelius Conway Felton and the Reverend Thomas Hill, D.D. For thirty years previous to his presidency, President Felton had been Professor of Greek at the college. He had written upon Greek literature, but he was not distinguished for scholarship. His administration was brief —



## The Harvard Faculty

less than two years. President Hill was a Unitarian clergyman. He had been President of Antioch College. He excelled as a mathematician. He was a sincere, devout man; and in the great discussion then opening between Science and Religion, he would have the former held in bondage by the latter. He was not a man of impressive personality, nor was he noted for scholarship or executive ability. He was a very worthy man, but he was singularly out of place as President of Harvard College. Neither incumbent left any marked impress upon the college.

The Classical Department, which comprised instruction in the Greek and Latin languages and literatures, was the best equipped department of the college. It was in charge of three Professors: the Greek, of William W. Goodwin, Ph.D., Eliot Professor of Greek Literature, and Evangelinus A. Sophocles, A.M., University Professor of Ancient, Byzantine, and Modern Greek; the Latin, in charge of George M. Lane, Ph.D., University Professor of Latin. For the Greek, there were two assistant instructors or tutors, and for the Latin, there were four.

While the study of these two languages was required in the first three classes, and was an elective in the senior class, and while a greater teaching force was given to this department than to any other in the college, we have to notice the absence of any adequate provisions for making students

## John Fiske

acquainted with classic history or literature while studying the languages; and classical philology, in the sense in which philology is now understood, does not appear to have been at all considered. One of the most significant points of contrast between the educational ideals of the Harvard academic course in 1860 and that which obtains at present, is shown in the provisions for classical instruction at the two periods.

Of the professors and instructors in this department much that is good can be said. Professor Goodwin was a young man who had studied at Göttingen under the eminent classical scholar Hermann, and he brought to his chair at Harvard a knowledge of the Greek language and literature quite exceptional at the time, as well as an enthusiastic love for the products of the Hellenic mind. The glimpses we get of him during the period under review are highly creditable to his scholarship and also to his influence, which was of an inspiring nature, upon the students. He appears to have been absorbed principally in his own line of work. Technically he was a Greek grammarian, and his influence during the last half-century upon the instruction in Greek at Harvard and throughout the country has been great.

The most distinct personality in the department — if not in the whole college — was Professor Sophocles, who, by reason of his Greek features, his flowing locks, his simple, quaint garb, presented a noticeable appearance. His manners, too, were

## The Harvard Faculty

unique — a combination of the courteous gentleman, the scholarly recluse, and the cynic, which caused him as an instructor to appear in various aspects. Many are the incidents related of his severely brusque and unjust treatment of students, partially atoned for by acts of courtesy, which show that a tenderness of heart was as genuine a part of his nature as was his love for his noble language. And he did love his Greek tongue! He seemed to know every Greek word, and its proper use, that has come down to us from the classic period, and his insights into the great masterpieces of Greek literature were the valuable parts of his teaching. He had no patience with indifferent students, but to those who took an interest in the Greek language and literature he was a great help, an inspiration. Often he was unjust in his judgments.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Lane was an excellent Latin scholar and he had a fine appreciation of Latin literature.

<sup>1</sup> The following incidents illustrate somewhat Professor Sophocles's manner of dealing with his students: —

A backward student called to explain his remissness and to assure the Professor that he did love his Greek study. "Then name two of your favorite passages," said the Professor. The student named one in the *Iliad* and one in the *Ædipus*. Professor Sophocles then handed him the books, saying, "Find those passages and read them to me." The student, in his reading, revealed serious errors. Said the Professor in his brusque way: "Young man, you do not understand Greek! You have no love for that noble language! You murder it! Enough. I want no more to do with you."

There was much complaint in the class of '63 that the Professor's marks were incorrect, and particularly in the cases of three students who were entitled to widely different marks. On complaint being made, Professor Sophocles replied: "I can't distinguish between you gentlemen. You must take your chances as to what you get."

## John Fiske

Although somewhat reserved in manner he was at heart of a kindly, genial disposition. While firm in his insistence upon the importance of technical drill, he sought to throw students upon their own resources in mastering the grammatical construction of the Latin language and also in interpreting the masterpieces of Latin literature. He was a clear and inspiring lecturer.

The department was fortunate in having as instructor Ephraim W. Gurney, sometime tutor, and later assistant professor in Latin. In the teaching staff of the college no one exercised a more stimulating, healthful influence upon the students than did Mr. Gurney. He was a man of broad culture, with a scholarly love for knowledge — not that of the pedantic sort, but of that knowledge which leadeth unto wisdom. He was an earnest student of the educational, and also the scientific and philosophic, problems of the time. He held his knowledge as a gift for distribution, and his method of teaching was through lending his torch to every one's candle.

It should be mentioned that, although not a feature of the Classical Department, instruction in Hebrew and other Oriental languages was optional to the senior class, the instruction to be given by George R. Noyes, D.D., Professor of these languages in the Divinity School. There does not appear to have been any demand for this instruction among the seniors. We shall see that Fiske, how-

## The Harvard Faculty

ever, was prompt to avail himself of it by taking up, as extras, Hebrew and Sanskrit, in his sophomore year.<sup>1</sup>

The Department of Mathematics was presided over by Benjamin Peirce, LL.D., Perkins Professor of Astronomy and Mathematics. There were three assistant instructors. Mathematics was a required study during the first two years and was an elective during the junior and senior years.

Professor Peirce was one of the leading astronomers and mathematicians of his time. He had a deeply reverent mind and possessing an active, fertile imagination the heavens were his dwelling-place no less than the surface of our globe. Having crystallized his thought into mathematical formulæ of the widest generality, he explored the vast realms of space and brought forth fresh evidences of the existence throughout the sidereal universe of immutable, ever-unfolding law.

Professor Peirce was one of the most important personalities in the intellectual and social life of the Harvard of his day. His strong features and his flowing locks of iron-gray hair gave him an impressive appearance, and he did not fail to attract attention when strolling through Harvard's classic yard. It was not an infrequent sight to see him and Professor Agassiz strolling through the yard together. His enthusiasm in his own line of work

<sup>1</sup> Fiske read the Bible in Hebrew with Dr. Noyes, who pronounced him the best Hebrew scholar he ever had.

## John Fiske

was great, and his ready command of his vast knowledge, combined with rare powers of exposition, made him an attractive lecturer, and gave to his conversation a peculiar charm. At times, it must be confessed, his enthusiasm in his sidereal excursions led him to soar beyond the grasp of the undergraduate mind. Even in such instances his greatness was fully admitted by his hearers.

Professor Peirce had accepted the theory of Evolution as the Divine order of creation, and in religious belief he was a theist akin to Channing and to Emerson. It may be said that his deep reverence for the Divine Power which he saw back of all the phenomena of the universe was so sincere that no one ventured to measure him with a doctrinal creed. Of him it was truly said: —

“For him the Architect of all  
Unroofed our Planet’s star-lit hall.  
Through voids unknown to worlds unseen  
His clearer vision rose serene.”<sup>1</sup>

The Department of History, one of the most important departments of the college, appears to have been sadly neglected. Henry W. Torrey, Professor of Ancient and Modern History, with one assistant, was in charge of the department. The instruction was limited to the freshman and senior classes. Professor Torrey was a very amiable man, but he had not the preparation essential for the head of this department at the college. It appears

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes.

## The Harvard Faculty

that, not unlike Mr. Wegg, he dropped into history "in a friendly sort of way." The character and scope of the instruction shows that the value attached to history in the general academic course was very slight. Better historic instruction is now given in the public high schools.

In the Department of Rhetoric and Oratory, the college tried to hide a really fine scholar and critic in the subordinate position of a literary pedagogue. The department was in charge of Francis J. Child, Ph.D., Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory. Professor Child was an authority on all matters relating to early European, and particularly to early English, literature; and besides, he was one of the best critics of general literature of the day. To Professor Child, with one assistant, was given the task of seeing that in all the classes the students' training in the use of English was consistent with a college course. He went farther. Beyond the formal exercises in grammar and rhetoric, he sought to make students acquainted with the resources of their native language as a vehicle of thought expression, thus lifting mere pedagogic instruction to the higher plane of philologic study. Professor Child was a most genial man. He read his certificate of professorship as an unlimited authorization to lend a helping hand wherever needed, and his life, therefore, was a constant overflow of assistance to students in many directions. In religious belief, he was broad-minded and without creedal limitation.

## John Fiske

He was short of stature and familiarly known by the students as "Stubby" Child, a sobriquet which he made synonymous with rare learning so that it became a veritable title of honor in the undergraduate mind. How Professor Child would have gloried in the provisions that are now given for the study of his noble English tongue at Harvard!

The Department of Modern Languages was under the direction of James Russell Lowell, Smith Professor of the French and Spanish languages, and Professor of Belles-Lettres. He was assisted by two instructors — one in French and one in German. Professor Lowell gave lectures and also personal instruction in Spanish and Italian. The slight value that was then put upon modern languages is shown not only by their absence from the entrance examinations, but also by the fact that in all the college classes their study was optional.

But slight as was the value put upon modern languages and literature in the framing of the college course of study, Professor Lowell made his lectures one of the most valuable, and to some of the students, one of the most attractive, features of the course. He was at the maturity of his rare powers, and his lectures partook of the nature of informal talks. He made them occasions for blending his ripe scholarship, his keen, illuminating criticism, his genial wit, and his profound thought, in a manner wholly his own: in truth, he happily illustrated, in his own case, how "language curtsys to its nat-



## The Harvard Faculty

ural king." People familiar with Professor Lowell's "Letters" and "Essays" — particularly his essays on Shakespeare, Dante, Lessing, Don Quixote, and on Modern Languages and Literatures — can readily imagine what intellectual occasions these lectures must have been. Their fame still lingers among the finer traditions of the college.

The provisions for scientific instruction in the academic course were in 1860 very meagre. The fact that the claims of science were entirely ignored in the entrance examinations is indicative of the low estimate that was put upon science as a subject in collegiate education. It appears, however, that its claims had some recognition in the academic course, although the methods of instruction were sadly deficient. There were provisions for instruction in what was designated as three Departments of Science: the Department of Physics; the Department of Chemistry and Mineralogy; the Department of Natural History, Anatomy, and Physiology.

The first of these departments, that of Physics, was in charge of Joseph Lovering, A.M., Hollis Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy. Instruction was given only to the junior and senior classes, wholly by textbook recitations and by illustrated lectures; there does not appear to have been any laboratory work whatever. Professor Lovering was painstaking and precise in all his work.

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He was not an original investigator, but a facile interpreter of the work of others. He was a clear, but not an inspiring, teacher. At a time when the fundamental conceptions of physics were undergoing a radical change it does not appear that he brought any intimation of this fact to the knowledge of his students.

The second of these departments was under the direction of Josiah P. Cooke, A.M., Erving Professor of Chemistry and Mineralogy. This department, as a practical feature in the academic course, had been created virtually by Professor Cooke. He was graduated in 1848, when no instruction in chemistry worth speaking of existed at the college. He had, however, much enthusiasm for this branch of science. He saw its great importance in the development of the industrial arts, and he prepared himself, mainly by self-study, to give instruction in it. In 1850 he was appointed to the Erving Professorship and he secured the placing of chemistry as a required study in the sophomore year and as an elective in the junior year — the instruction being by textbooks and lectures. By 1860 he had managed to get together a small equipment of apparatus for laboratory work. The study was still confined to the sophomore and junior classes and the method of instruction continued to be mainly by textbook recitations and lectures: laboratory work was given as an elective in the junior class.

Professor Cooke was an earnest teacher and was

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fertile in devices for utilizing his limited facilities for effective illustrative and laboratory work. It does not appear that in his instruction he paid any attention to the "Correlation and Conservation of Forces," a subject which in 1860 was engaging the thought of the scientific world, and the acceptance of which has been productive of great changes in the fundamental conceptions of chemical and physical phenomena.

Professor Cooke was a deeply religious man, and his lectures were permeated with a sincere desire so to interpret the principles of chemical and physical science that they should appear as but confirmations of the assertions of Christian theology.<sup>1</sup>

The third of these scientific departments — that of Natural History, Anatomy, and Physiology — had at this period hardly more than an incidental relation to the academic course. The instruction was mainly by lectures given to the three upper classes. In the junior and senior classes attendance was optional. Incidental as was the instruction in this department, it served to bring some of the

<sup>1</sup> It was the opinion of Fiske, often expressed in later years that "Joby Cooke" — as the Professor was known in the undergraduate life — mixed too much theology with his science for the good of either his science or his theology.

Here it is well to note that in 1860 and 1861 we catch glimpses of a young man reserved in manner, hovering, as it were, between the departments of mathematics and chemistry, positive in his teaching and a member of the faculty, who had already made a strong impression at the college. This was Charles W. Eliot, who, a few years later, as President of the college, was to reconstruct it from its foundations and place it among the great universities of the world.

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students into personal relations with three eminent men of science. These were Asa Gray, M.D., Fisher Professor of Natural History, one of the greatest of living botanists; Louis Agassiz, LL.D., Lawrence Professor of Zoölogy and Geology, one of the world's great zoölogists and geologists; and Jeffreys Wyman, M.D., Hervey Professor of Anatomy, of world-wide reputation as an anatomist.

These eminent instructors were greatly hampered in the presentation of their respective subjects by the absence of adequate facilities for illustrative and laboratory work. Two of them, Professors Agassiz and Gray, figured prominently, as we shall soon see, in the great controversy over the "Origin of Species," a subject which was then engaging the thought of the scientific and religious world. Professor Wyman, although not so conspicuous in the public eye, was an authority in his special subject of anatomy, which he had studied in its relations to all phases of organic life. His personal character was of the highest, and it had a fine, pervasive, ennobling influence in the intellectual life of the college. He was an Evolutionist in his philosophico-religious belief, but he was not disputatious in its advocacy. His life was well summed up by Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes: "He suffered long and was kind; he envied not; he vaunted not himself; he was not puffed up; he sought not his own; was not easily provoked; he thought no evil, and rejoiced in the truth."

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In all matters relating to instruction in the sciences, the difference between what obtained at Harvard in 1860, and what obtains now, is simply incalculable.

The Department of Philosophy was in charge of Francis Bowen, A.M., Alford Professor of Religion and Moral Philosophy. The instruction was confined to the senior class. The Department of Philosophy in a college should be the meeting-place where the instruction in the other departments is brought to focus around the ultimate questions of the physical cosmos, the human soul, and the Infinite Power that lies back of both. The wise direction of such a department requires not only a familiar acquaintance with the various departments of human knowledge, but also the possession of the philosophic temper, which enables its possessor to look with equanimity upon all phases of human thinking as adumbrating to some extent the truth regarding the above three questions, the ultimates of all knowledge. Professor Bowen was a Unitarian of the indeterminate religious belief prevailing at the period. He held firmly to the tenets of Christian theology save in regard to the Trinity, a dogma he seems to have ignored; and he sought to interpret the later developments of science as but confirmation of the claims of dogmatic theology. He was bitterly opposed to the doctrine of Evolution in any of its forms, and he found something

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atwist in the arguments of all its advocates. He was not an educated man in science; yet he delivered himself on scientific questions with the air of one who thought his judgment final, and that metaphysical vociferation would prevail over scientific demonstration. Holding an important position at a great epoch in philosophic and religious development, he appears as endeavoring to stifle, rather than as striving to stimulate and direct, the awakening thought of the period. The course of study in this department presents a noticeable assemblage of metaphysico-theological husks. In the undergraduate life of the college, Professor Bowen was known by the expressive sobriquet of "Fanny."

Religious instruction was given a place in the academic course. The instruction was given by Andrew P. Peabody, D.D., Preacher to the University, and Plummer Professor of Christian Morals. It was confined to the freshman and senior classes, and consisted of textbook recitations from Whately's "Lessons on Christian Morals and Evidences" and Butler's "Analogy and Ethics." Attendance at daily morning prayers, and at two church services on Sunday, was compulsory for all students.

Dr. Peabody was of the Unitarian faith, but between the assumptions of dogmatic theology and the affirmations of positive science, he seems to have found a sort of religious resting-place which did not put him in strong antagonism to either side

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in the religious controversy then raging, while it enabled him to draw support from both. This religious peace he sought to share with others. His was, indeed, a kindly soul. He recommended the study of the works of broad-minded, devout thinkers; he preached "the efficacy of good works" as of greater value in life than creedal beliefs; and he gained the affectionate regard of the students.

Before passing from the consideration of the academic course, we should take a brief glance at the "Orders and Regulations" of the faculty especially in regard to attendance at religious services by the students, for here we shall see the strong hold the "theological bias" had upon the most "liberal" college in New England.

We have already seen that daily attendance at prayers, and that attendance at two church services on Sunday, were compulsory for all students. We have now to note that non-compliance with these requirements was strictly noted, and more heavily penalized than were absences from, or failures in, recitations or lectures. For instance: a "Private" — that is, a private admonition — was given to a student for his unexcused absence from a *single* church service, while he could "cut" *six* recitations or lectures before being called to account. Again a "Public" — that is, a public admonition — was given to a student for *two* half-day absences from church services, while he could "cut" *twelve*

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recitations or lectures before being subjected to such punishment. And again: a student could be "suspended, dismissed, or otherwise punished at the discretion of the faculty," for being absent from *three* church services, while he could indulge in *eighteen* absences from recitations or lectures before receiving the severest censure of the college. Then, too, in the "scale of merit," attendance at prayers and church services played an important part. In the final summing-up of the term's record there were deducted from the total favorable marks *eight* for every absence from a lecture or recitation, while for "every absence from daily prayers" *two* were deducted, and for "every half-day absence from public worship," *thirty-two* were deducted; and in case a student received a "Private," *thirty-two* were additionally deducted; and if he gained a "Public," *sixty-four* were additionally deducted.

It also appears that a strict record was kept of "all tardinesses at prayers and Sunday services," and that this record was sent to the faculty at the end of each term, and that for every instance *eight* marks were deducted from the rank of the student so reported.

The strictness with which the conforming of students to the religious requirements was supervised is indicated by the following provisions in the "Orders and Regulations of the Faculty for 1860":—

"Every student obtaining leave of absence for Sunday must bring back a certificate from his par-



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ent or guardian or some other accredited person of his having attended church."

"Absences from prayers and Sunday services shall be reported at the Regent's office by the respective monitors every Monday."

"Whenever, in the course of any one term, any student's unexcused absences from prayers shall amount to *ten*, or his tardinesses at prayers to *five*, or his absence from church (half-day) to *one*, he shall be immediately reported to the faculty, and shall receive a private admonition."

From what will appear later, we should note that reading during church services was considered as an offence against "Good Order and Decorum." Then, too, the faculty were not unmindful of the propriety of dress on the part of students; as witness this provision: "On Sabbaths, on Examination Days, and on all public occasions, each student is required to wear in public a black coat with buttons of the same color."

A careful study of the "Orders and Regulations" gives the impression that in the minds of the faculty the greatest delinquency on the part of a student, and the one against which the heaviest penalties should be brought, was the neglect of religious services.

The enforcing of the "Orders and Regulations" with reference to religious services was in the hands of a "Parietal Committee" composed of the officers of the college living within the college walls. This Committee deputized many of its duties to mon-

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itors chosen from approved students of the senior class. Thus, under these provisions, a system of religious espionage was established throughout the college in behalf of requirements which instinctively aroused opposition, which made a virtue of hypocrisy, and which heavily discredited the value of scholarship honors.

Growing out of these religious requirements was a very noticeable sight to be seen at seven o'clock every morning — the rush of students to morning prayers. At the first stroke of the chapel bell, a motley throng of students was seen streaming through Harvard Square, out from Garden Street, and the purlieus of Kirkland Street, all surging into the college yard and all intent upon one thing: getting within the chapel door before the last stroke of the bell. It was, indeed, a motley throng: some were adjusting any old hat to locks of hair much dishevelled; some were putting on collars or tying neckerchiefs; some were getting into coats or adjusting discordant garments; some were making long coats, buttoned closely at the neck, "cover a multitude of sins"; some were hopping on one foot and lacing a shoe on the other; while here and there might be observed students, who, having paid due attention to their sartorial appearance, were proceeding leisurely to the chapel. In one sense the scene was intensely amusing. It was a very distinct presentation of some of the difficulties which surrounded the pursuit of knowledge at Harvard. In



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another and far deeper sense, the scene, as a whole, showed that the attempt to teach or inculcate religion by a universal, formal observance had made the observance ridiculous. Viewed in its everyday aspect, the call to prayers, with its penalties, had much more the aspect of a roll-call of the students for the purpose of bringing them under the eye of a monitor, to be checked off and counted, than as a summons to a religious exercise.

Reviewing the academic course as a whole and in the light of the "Orders and Regulations," the criticism of the college in 1866, by a distinguished alumnus, applies with even greater force to the college of 1860. At the inauguration of the new era at the college in 1866, the Reverend Frederick H. Hedge, D.D., gave an address before a triennial festival of the alumni and spoke of the then condition of the college thus: —

"The college proper is simply a more advanced school for boys, not differing essentially in principle and theory from the public schools in all our towns. In this, as in those, the principle is coercion. Hold your subject fast in one hand and pour knowledge into him with the other. The Professors are task-masters and police-officers — the President the chief of the college police."

As complementary to this state of things, in 1860, the college halls or dormitories were the Massachusetts, Stoughton, and Hollis buildings. These halls were hardly more than barracks: they were sadly

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deficient in sanitary provisions as well as without the conveniences of common life. Each student had to supply himself with water for all purposes from the pumps in the college yard; and water stood in the cellars of all the halls most of the time. It was not until 1860 — Fiske's entrance year — that gas was put into the halls and the yard lighted.

But the academic course of study and its interpretation by the faculty and instructors were not the only educative influences that were operative upon the broadly developing mind of Fiske during his three years of undergraduate life at Harvard. These three years comprised a portion of an eventful period in religious, scientific, and political thinking at Harvard, the results of which were more or less felt in all departments of the college, while they were prolific of much grave questioning on the part of thoughtful students. As the great activity along these fundamental lines of thinking had a powerful effect upon the expanding mind of Fiske, and as in subsequent years we are to trace his career as a leader in setting forth the philosophic import of these new lines of thought, it is well to take here a brief survey of three important questions — three fundamental subjects of thought, which, by the circumstances of the time, were, during his undergraduate period, thrust, as it were, directly into the very life of the college.

It should be stated that in the course of its de-

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velopment there had grown up around the college some professional and observational schools which were more or less incidentally related to the college, either as giving aid to the instruction or as offering post-graduate courses of professional study. These were the Harvard Divinity School, the Harvard Law School, the Harvard Medical School, the Lawrence Scientific School, an Astronomical Observatory, and a Museum of Comparative Zoölogy. These professional and observational schools, with the college proper, made up the institution known as Harvard University — the whole being under the executive management and control of the President of Harvard College.

The three questions referred to were of a religious, a scientific, and a political nature; and they were focussed at the college mainly through the incidental relations existing between the Divinity School, the Scientific School, and the Law School, respectively, on the one hand; and on the other hand, the college as an institution of learning, with a large body of inquiring students.

### *What is Unitarianism?*

The first of these questions may be stated thus: Is Unitarianism, as interpreted by the Divinity School, and as accepted by the college, consistent with the fundamental tenets of the Christian religion and the revelations of science?

For full fifty years the Presidents of Harvard

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College had been clergymen or laymen of the Unitarian faith. For over thirty years the Harvard Divinity School had been the headquarters of Unitarianism in America. Here the great preachers of the denomination had been trained: men like Gannett, Bellows, Furness, Emerson, Osgood, Dewey, Theodore Parker, James Freeman Clarke, Frothingham, Ellis, Huntington, Hale, and others. Its leading professors were Unitarians, and on the establishment of the Plummer Professorship of Christian Morals, in 1855, on an endowment from Miss Caroline Plummer, of Salem, Massachusetts, with its accompanying post of Preacher to the University, one of the most distinguished clergymen of the Unitarian denomination, the Reverend Frederick D. Huntington, was selected for the chair. Harvard College, therefore, was rightly regarded as a Unitarian college, and as such it was generally credited with admitting the utmost liberality of thought in all matters pertaining to religious belief.

In January, 1860, Harvard College, the Divinity School, and the Unitarian denomination were all startled from their state of religious complacency by Dr. Huntington's resignation from his professorship at the college, and from his post of Preacher to the University, followed shortly after by his becoming a candidate for orders in the Episcopal Church. Never before in this country did a change in any individual's religious faith and practice make such a profound and widespread impression upon



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the public mind as did this. The prominence, the abilities, the high character of Dr. Huntington gave much denominational significance to his action. It was a severe blow to conservative Unitarianism. It was hailed with great joy by the various evangelical denominations. But the reasons assigned for the change of faith went deeper than mere denominational lines. They were such as to bring under full review the binding force of the fundamental Christian dogmas in the light of modern science and historic and philologic criticism.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In an autobiographic article published in *The Forum* for June, 1886, we find a summary of Dr. Huntington's reasons for his change of religious faith:—

“It appeared to H. that beneath the shiftings on the current of speculation, there was a change at work in the whole doctrinal basis of the denomination to which he had belonged. Doubtless that the jejune self-interested moralizing of the Priestley and the English socinian school should be spiritualized by a lofty appeal to consciousness and insight under a direct power of the spirit of God, was an immeasurable gain. St. Paul proclaimed an eternal law when he wrote ‘Spiritual things are spiritually discerned.’ But Christianity is a revelation. Of that revelation there is a record. Its credentials, its history, the general and reverent consent of eighteen Christian centuries, its marvellous power over civilized peoples hardly less than miraculous, invest it with tremendous sanctions. There is no trace of anything like Christian culture apart from its authority. In open questions it has been, what there must be, a court of ultimate appeal. Hitherto H. had seen it so held in his own as well as in other Protestant bodies. Throughout the Unitarian and Trinitarian polemics, that appeal had been made with confidence by both sides alike. The main question was: What do the Scriptures teach and mean? It was a question of interpretation of documents, hardly a question of whether the documents were authentic and binding. . . . In the short space of twenty years the Unitarian press and pulpit virtually ceased to make a stand on the foundation which had been known as the Word of God. . . . He asked himself: Is there anywhere in ecclesiastical annals, an instance of so swift a plunge downwards in any association of people bearing the name of Christ, simply losing hold of

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Thus, during the period we are reviewing, 1860-63, *What is Unitarianism?* and, *What is its attitude toward modern knowledge?* were flung as vital questions into the intellectual life of Harvard.

Fiske, as might be expected, took a deep interest in this discussion; and as we are to see in later years that his mature philosophic thought found a ready welcome among Unitarians generally, it is worth while to pause a bit in our narrative, and take a glance at the kind of religious faith which, under the name of Unitarianism, Harvard was offering at this time to her students, accompanied by such penalties as we have seen for non-compliance with its formal requirements, penalties which were made to weigh so heavily against scholarly honors.

Just a brief chapter of ecclesiastical history. It was under the lead of William Ellery Channing that Unitarianism as a distinct form of religious belief became established during the early part of the last century — 1815 to 1825 — in New England. It came as a quiet protest on the part of a number of

the central fact of revelation? H. could no longer be content with a kind of Christianity destitute of a Christ in whom is all the fulness and power of God, without an inspired charter, without the law and inheritance and corporate energy and universal offer of the gifts and graces of eternal life, in a visible church."

That Dr. Huntington left the college with "strained relations" is evident from the curt mention of his resignation in the Annual Report of the President for the college year 1859-60: —

"Professor Huntington having resigned his place after five years of devoted service, his resignation was accepted at the close of the year, and a special arrangement was made with him by the President to perform or provide for the duties of the office until the end of the following term."

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sincerely religious minds against many of the dogmas of the Calvinistic theology. It grew directly out of the Calvinistic Congregational churches: many of these churches transforming themselves bodily into Congregational Unitarian churches. It was a change of religious faith, without a schism in the church organization.<sup>1</sup> With Dr. Channing, Unitarianism stood for the freest thought in religious matters and the widest toleration for religious beliefs. It affirmed the Divine Fatherhood of God and His creating all things good; it affirmed the innate goodness of the human soul as a part of the Divine Nature, and as possessing conscious reason as a means of knowing the good; it affirmed a belief in God's revelation of Himself: in the world of Nature; in the heart of man, inclining him to worship and to acts of brotherhood; and in the Bible — the last a special revelation of the Divine Will and Purpose; it affirmed a belief in Christ as a divinely inspired man sent as a type for humanity to model itself by.

The enunciation of this comparatively simple form of religious belief brought the Unitarians into a bitter controversy with their orthodox brethren

<sup>1</sup> People outside of New England are often confused by the fact that in New England both the orthodox or Calvinistic churches and the Unitarian churches have the same generic title of Congregational churches or societies. Even Theodore Parker's church had its legal title in the "Twenty-eighth Congregational Society." This anomalous condition of things has its explanation in the text — the original Unitarian churches or societies were simply Calvinistic churches or societies transformed as to their religious belief.

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over points of doctrine in the Calvinistic theology. The Unitarians were charged with leaving the vital elements of Christianity out of their scheme; some of their opponents went so far as to call them downright infidels. But in spite of the opposition the Unitarians steadily grew in numbers, and among them were the most cultivated people of New England; and they soon came to possess a controlling influence at Harvard College.

In 1825 they formed an Association for conference and mutual support; and in order the better to supply their denomination with pastors and preachers they established a Divinity School in connection with Harvard College. They wished to be known as liberal Christians, and by 1830 they had become a powerful religious organization in New England.

But they were not long in religious peace among themselves. Out from their own Association came two heretics, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Theodore Parker, men of the broadest culture, both breathing the same spirit of religious liberty and toleration; and both animated with the same love to God and man that the Unitarians themselves professed. But Emerson and Parker went further than their Unitarian brethren in their dissent from Calvinistic theology. They would have religion consist of heartfelt affirmations of the Divine Fatherhood of God revealed in all that exists; together with affirmations of the brotherhood of man, to be exemplified

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in upright conduct as necessary for the fulness of individual human life; these affirmations to be attended by no sacraments or binding formalities beyond the expression of grateful, cheerful hearts and upright lives.

Conservative Unitarians were shocked at the simplicity of these affirmations, and were frightened at the application of their boasted liberality to these progressives. Like their orthodox brethren of a few years before, they found themselves facing a heresy in their own midst which swept away all theologic dogmas and creeds whatsoever, and to which by their own principles they must extend complete toleration. Had Dr. Channing lived a few years longer, the course of events might have been different. Deprived of his inspiring leadership, the Unitarians lost faith in their affirmations as well as in the great principle of toleration. Accordingly, in the words of Lowell: —

“ They brandished their worn theological birches,  
Bade natural progress keep out of the churches,”

and began a retreat. They treated Emerson and Parker shabbily. By sugar-coating with mystical phrases the dogmas of Biblical inspiration, the miracles, the nature and office of Christ, and the Sacraments, the orthodox view of them was made more acceptable to timid souls. With a show of learning, German criticism of Biblical and ecclesiastical history as well as dogma was patronized, and was thought unsuited to the lay mind of New

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England. Much thought was given to speculative philosophy, with but little or no application to the social needs of the time. Science was well bespoken, and in its name the varied phenomena of the universe were presented as evidences of Divine creation and sustentation in conformity to a specially revealed will or purpose. In short, by eschewing Emerson and Parker, Unitarianism shut itself out from the great forward intellectual movement of the period, and about the middle of the century it became an eminently respectable, cultured, self-satisfying form of religious observances. Well might Fiske think, as he did, on his first attendance at a Unitarian Church, that he was present at an Episcopal service.<sup>1</sup>

It was between 1850 and 1860 that the scientific-philosophic thought of the nineteenth century broke upon all religious systems, bringing wholly new conceptions of the Divine First Cause and its mode of action in the universe of objective phenomena, and also in the world of subjective phenomena reflected in the conscious mind of man. The effect of this new movement in thought was the reconsideration of all religious dogmas in the light of positive knowledge and reason, and when Unitarianism, with its smug religious complacency, was brought under philosophic envisagement in the light of science and historic criticism, it was found that as a religious organization it had nothing tangible to tie

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *ante*, p. 131.

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to but the three fundamental points given by Dr. Channing: the loving Fatherhood of God, declared in all His work; the brotherhood of man, an essential condition for the fulness of life; and the utmost toleration of thought as absolutely necessary for attaining religious truth — all of which had been compromised by evasions.

There followed a notable parting of the ways: a movement backward as well as forward; and the backward movement had its culmination in the action taken by Dr. Huntington. And his was the action of a sincerely devout man, in whose intellectual make-up emotional sensibility had precedence over ratiocinative methods of thinking. He deliberately chose to set aside (if he knew them) the facts of science bearing upon man's origin and development, as well as the results of Biblical criticism as affecting the truth of a special Divine revelation, that he might give himself up unreservedly to an unquestioning belief in the fundamental dogmas of Christian theology. Of him this can be said, that into his interpretation of these dogmas he imparted such an ethical character and meaning as enabled him to become a preacher of social righteousness hardly second to any man of his time.

Many followed Dr. Huntington's example. In the forward movement, however, quite other personal influences were at work. From his quiet retreat at Concord, Emerson, wholly undisturbed by the religious perturbations of the time, was affirming,

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in words that have taken a place in the aphoristic wisdom of the race, that "the world is a temple whose walls are covered with emblems, pictures, and commandments of the Deity"; that "the faith that stands on authority is not faith"; that "reliance on authority measures the decline of religion, the withdrawal of the soul"; that "we can never see Christianity from the catechism; from the pastures, from a boat in the pond, from amidst the song of wood-birds we possibly may"; that "it is the office of a true teacher to show us that God is, not was; that He speaketh, not spake"; that "there is no pure lie, no pure malignity in nature. The entertainment of the proposition of depravity is the last profligacy and profanation"; that "Ought and Duty are one with Science, Beauty, and Joy"; and that "ineffable is the union of God and man, in every act of the soul." Over all was heard the resonant voice of Parker, as, like a prophet of old, with sublime faith, he cried out from his national pulpit in Music Hall — "On to reason and be a man, or back to Rome and be a chimpanzee."

During the period 1860-63 this fermentation of religious thought caused by Dr. Huntington's resignation was greatly intensified by events we are next to consider. This fermentation was surging all about the Divinity School, and permeated the whole intellectual atmosphere of the college, giving rise to much questioning on the part of thoughtful students and producing a discreet silence on con-



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troverted points by some members of the faculty. We are to see this negative sort of Harvard Unitarianism threatening Fiske with expulsion for opinions which a few years later he was called to expound to the college.

### *Darwinism, or the "Origin of Species"*

The second of the three questions referred to came before the public primarily as a scientific one — whence the origin of the varied forms of the faunal and floral life of the globe. The question was presented in the form of two rival theories: the first by Professor Louis Agassiz in 1858, in an "Essay on the Classification of the Animal Kingdom," in which the theory of special Divine creation of species was very positively asserted; the second, in 1859 by Charles Darwin, by the publication of his "Origin of Species," a work in which he suggested the theory of organic development under the principle of natural selection. He brought forward a remarkable series of original observations in support of his theory. Involved in the discussion of these two theories was the vital question, — the origin of the human race, — and as the conclusions of these two eminent scientists bore, the one affirmatively, and the other negatively, upon some of the fundamental dogmas of the Christian faith, there arose immediately a scientifico-religious controversy, world-wide in its extent, and in which the ablest scientists and theologians were engaged.

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In America, this discussion was centred in a measure around Harvard College by reason of the fact that two of the leading scientists in this country engaged in this controversy and representing the opposing sides were professors in the Lawrence Scientific School and instructors in the college — Professor Agassiz, one of the world's great zoölogists, and Professor Asa Gray, one of the world's great botanists and the firm supporter of the views of Mr. Darwin. The points of difference between these two eminent teachers as to origins of organic life were apparent in their instruction, while the larger scientific implications of their views as to "origins" were set forth in their public discussions.<sup>1</sup>

It is not in place here to enter into the full details of the Darwinian discussion. But inasmuch as it was an active element in the Harvard thought of the time, and inasmuch as the labors of Mr. Darwin were a very important contribution to the doctrine of Evolution, in the setting-forth of which Fiske was to take a conspicuous part in subsequent years, and particularly as in years to come we are to see Fiske in close friendly relations with Mr. Darwin growing out of their respective labors in behalf of Evolution, a brief presentation of the origin of the discussion is appropriate here.

The first half of the last century was a period of

<sup>1</sup> Professor Gray published a series of articles on the Darwinian theory in the *Atlantic Monthly*, which were so imbued with his wide knowledge of organic phenomena, and were withal so admirable in tone, that they were a great influence in favor of the new theory.

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great scientific activity, and it was specially marked by searching inquiries into the phenomena of organic life as revealed in the past and present condition of the globe. To this end the departments of geology, palæontology, embryology, zoölogy, ethnology, physiology, and botany were interrogated by able observers intent upon getting at the fundamental facts conditioning organic life, both in its particulars and in its widest generalities.

It is in evidence that these investigators at every stage of their inquiries found themselves face to face with a fresh and greater mystery — the mystery of origins. From the knowledge we now possess of these various investigations, we know that the idea of transformation or development in conformity to changed conditions of physical environment, an idea suggested by Goethe and Lamarck in the early part of the century, was not an infrequent thought in the minds of some of the investigators. This idea, however, being directly opposed to the accepted theory of origin by the direct, miraculous, creative action of Divine Power, and having no sufficient basis in observed phenomena to rest upon, was regarded by the leaders in science as untenable and by theologians as the height of infidelity if not downright atheism. But this opposition could not keep the broadening thought of independent inquirers wholly in subjection. Witness the anonymous publication of "Vestiges of Creation," a superficial book viewed from to-day, but

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a work profoundly significant of the unrest of the period.

In 1850 Professor Agassiz was rightly regarded as one of the great scientific men of the world. His contributions to science had been important and many. His zoölogical knowledge had been acquired largely by personal observations and was indeed profound. He had received from orthodox theologians the titles of infidel and atheist, because, as a geologist, he had denied as Divine truth the Mosaic cosmogony, and as a zoölogist the "one pair" theory for the origin of animal life. In 1855 he undertook a fresh classification of the animal kingdom on the basis of Cuvier's classification in 1817, with the additions that had since been made to zoölogical knowledge. This was a task commensurate with his wide knowledge and his rare powers of lucid exposition.

The first volume of this great work was published in 1857 and it contained an "Essay on Classification" which was a prolegomena to the whole work, in which Professor Agassiz affirmed, with great positiveness and much heat of argument, the direct and miraculous action of the Divine Creator in the origin and distribution of the animal life of the globe; and further, that this special form of creative action had existed through the vast periods of geologic time.

This essay was written in such a trenchant, aggressive style, it was so positive in its interpretation

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of observed phenomena, and was fortified with such a display of apparently supporting authorities, that the scientific world was roused to the consciousness that under a great scientific name Science and Theology were conjoined in giving a special teleological interpretation to the origin, distribution, and sustentation of all organic life. Professor Agassiz went so far as to invoke the aid of metaphysics by claiming that species had no material existence, that they were but objective representations of categories of thought existing in the Divine Mind.

Theologians of all orthodox creeds were delighted. In view of Professor Agassiz's uncompromising advocacy of special Divine creations, the charges against him of infidelity and atheism were overlooked, and he was hailed as the great champion who had at last enthroned a personal, miracle-working God upon a thoroughly scientific basis.

While Professor Agassiz was collecting the materials for his great work, another eminent scientist, an earnest, patient observer of the phenomena of organic life, one who had had exceptional opportunities for personal observations by extended explorations in various parts of the world, and who found himself sorely perplexed satisfactorily to account for the origin and distribution of the great variety of the earth's flora and fauna, had retired to Down, a quiet place just outside London, where he could, the while in communication with leading

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scientists, pursue his quest for a more rational explanation of the origin and distribution of the world's organic life than was afforded by the generally accepted theory of special Divine creations.

The story of the life of Charles Darwin during the twenty years he spent in brooding over the theory of organic development and natural selection with which his name is identified; the honest patience with which he sought facts from every possible source; the care with which he classified the facts and the fairness with which he weighed their evidence both for and against his theory; his correspondence with Sir Charles Lyell, the eminent geologist, with Sir Joseph D. Hooker and our own Professor Asa Gray, two of the most distinguished botanists then living, — a correspondence which shows how these leaders in science, starting in opposition to Darwin's theory, at last became converts to it, so that on its publication they became sponsors for it to the scientific world, — is one of the most interesting chapters in the whole history of science.

Darwin published his theory under the title of "The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection," in which he placed himself squarely in favor of the theory of Development or Evolution, as the method by which the world had been peopled with its varieties of organic life. The work was issued in 1859, just two years after the publication of Professor Agassiz's "Essay on Classification." The style was simple, clear, direct, and not in the

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slightest degree dogmatic in tone. The facts presented, however, were so significant, and they were so clearly and logically arranged, as completely to traverse the fundamental points in Professor Agassiz's essay; and further, the points that naturally arose against the theory of Development were so frankly stated and so dispassionately reviewed that no impartial mind could rise from a reading of the work without a respect for the author, even if unable to accept his views.

The publication of the theory made a profound impression on the public mind. It was bitterly attacked by theologians of all schools, as well as by scientists with theological beliefs stronger than their faith in the truths of science. On the other hand, it was cordially endorsed by scientists like Lyell, Hooker, Lubbock, Alfred Wallace, Asa Gray, and particularly by Huxley, the champion debater of the time, who came to its support well equipped with a knowledge drawn from the whole armory of science, and whose pen in the bitter theologic contests that ensued became as potent as the magic spear of Ithuriel.

And thus between the upholders of the theologic theory of special creations and the advocates of the theory of Evolution in regard to the origin and the distribution of the organic life of the globe, an issue was distinctly joined, perhaps the most important issue, in the long contest between Science and Theology.

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As we survey this conflict just half a century after,<sup>1</sup> what a transformation has taken place in all the higher phases of human thinking. The doctrine of Evolution has been accepted by science, causing the remodelling of nearly every one of its departments. Evolution has also given a scientific basis to sociology, the great benefit of which to the social and spiritual well-being of the race cannot yet be estimated. Above all, it is causing all religious creeds to remodel their dogmas so as to present their conceptions of the Divine Power back of all that is, consistent with the manner of unfolding Himself in the universe of material things, as well as consistent with the conceptions of his spiritual existence adumbrated in the ethical consciousness of man. And the one great work of the epoch, the one that rises above all others, and takes its place in the advancement of learning beside the works of Aristotle, the "Novum Organum" of Bacon and the "Principia" of Newton, is Darwin's "Origin of Species."

As we leave this great discussion, it is interesting to note that in March, 1860, shortly before leaving Middletown for Cambridge, Fiske records the consecutive reading of Agassiz's "Essay on Classification," Asa Gray's "Structural and Systematic Botany," and Darwin's "Origin of Species." In this record Darwin and his work appear thus: —

DARWIN, "The Origin of Species."

<sup>1</sup> This chapter was written in 1909.



## War Powers of the President

This putting the author's name in capitals was Fiske's way of indicating that Darwin was one of the great thinkers who were influential in shaping his own thought at this period.

### *The War Powers of the President*

The third of these questions grew out of a memorable exigency in our great Civil War struggle. It might be termed "The War Powers of the President." It arose primarily as a legal or constitutional question, but by the disturbed political condition of the time it soon became a political as well as a military question and thus was brought home to every citizen. It had its origin as a political question in the action of President Lincoln in issuing his Proclamation of Emancipation and military orders supplementary thereto for the suppression of the rebellion. These acts were immediately challenged by the opponents of the Administration at the North, on the alleged ground of their unconstitutionality, and a bitter political controversy ensued which for a time greatly endangered the Union cause. This controversy, aside from the great public interest in it, was projected directly into the intellectual atmosphere of Harvard College by reason of the strong divisive opinions regarding it which prevailed in the Law School: the Professor of Constitutional Law, Joel Parker, LL.D., bitterly assailing the President both privately and publicly, while the Professor of Commercial Law,

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Theophilus Parsons, LL.D., was vigorously sustaining him.

In view of the historic importance of this great discussion, and as we are soon to see the serenity of Fiske's student life greatly disturbed by it, and further, as in his mature years Fiske is to give us the best history we have of the growth and the establishment of the Constitution, a brief sketch of the events which brought this "Charter of our Liberties" to its greatest trial, and under his own observation, is in place here.

In the summer of 1862 President Lincoln found himself facing a critical period in his Administration. The partial victory at Antietam had not retrieved McClellan's terrible disaster before Richmond. There were divided counsels in the Administration, and the war languished. Hitherto the war had been conducted on the theory that the issue was simply and only a constitutional one — the protection of an abstract instrument of political organization and the enforcement of its provisions as interpreted by the people of the Northern States. No person, no one in rebellion in the Southern States even, unless a prisoner of war, had yet been deprived of his legal rights to person or property under the Constitution. The moral sentiment of the people of the Northern States, reflected in their opposition to slavery, was strong in the insistence that the institution of slavery, being the real cause of the war, should be made to suffer by the war. This anti-

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slavery feeling had very generally gone to the support of the President, at the same time urging with much impatience more aggressive measures against the "peculiar institution." But the Administration had a strong, unrelenting pro-slavery party at the North to contend with as well as with the Southerners in arms.

President Lincoln, by the summer of 1862, had come to see that the war as it had been conducted by the Administration had no clearly defined moral issue back of it, and that he could no longer find justification in continuing such a terrible conflict as he was waging against the people of the Southern States on the sole issue of an interpretation of the Constitution. He saw the necessity, for the salvation of the Nation, of getting the issue squarely on its merits as a moral issue — a conflict between the idea of freedom and the idea of slavery, and then uniting the moral and political forces of the North in support of his policy.

To this end he moved on his own initiative; and one of the finest chapters in all statesmanship is the history of his skill, his patience, his wisdom, his faith in rousing the dominant moral feeling of the North and focussing it in support of his Proclamation of Emancipation.

This memorable document was issued on the 22d of September, 1862, and two days later the President proclaimed the establishment of martial law and the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus*

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throughout the United States, as against any persons "guilty of any disloyal practice in affording aid and comfort to the rebels against the authority of the United States." These two proclamations, with subsidiary orders from the War Department putting them into effect, were issued as war measures; and while they served to unite the loyal people of the North in a more vigorous prosecution of the war, they stirred to greater activity than ever the opponents of the Administration who declared that the President's proclamations were not only unconstitutional, but that they were also subversive of the fundamental principles of republican government — in short, the Administration was more severely denounced than the rebels it was fighting.

Among the prominent citizens in the North who took this position of opposition to the Administration was Benjamin R. Curtis, of Boston, late Justice of the United States Supreme Court, of whose engaging personality we have already had some delightful sketches. Judge Curtis enjoyed the reputation of being one of the ablest judges that ever sat on the Supreme Bench. His knowledge of constitutional law was indeed profound, and he was not identified with any political party.

In this great crisis Judge Curtis, as an independent citizen, felt called upon to speak. In a pamphlet under the title of "Executive Power," addressed "to all persons who have sworn to support

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the Constitution, and to all citizens who value civil liberty," he reviewed in a respectful manner the President's war measures; and in language of great plainness and force, he pointed out how in his judgment the President, under the plea of military necessity, was subverting the Constitution, and establishing in its stead the supremacy of military law.<sup>1</sup>

This pamphlet was widely read and the independent position of Judge Curtis gave his views great weight in the public mind. His argument gave the Northern opponents of the President the semblance of a distinct constitutional ground for their opposition, and the issue was brought directly home to Harvard College by the prominence in the discussion of the two professors in the Law School already named. The contest waxed strong and furious. By one party, President Lincoln was branded as a tyrant who ought to be impeached; by the other, Judge Curtis and Professor Parker were branded as traitors who ought to be imprisoned.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Studying, in the light of to-day, this pamphlet and what followed, we see how clearly the loyal people of the North, in the darkest days of the war, saw the real issue involved in the struggle; and we also see how much wiser was President Lincoln, in his interpretation of his duty under the Constitution, than were the eminent jurists who found its provisions for the protection to persons and property of those who would destroy the Government stronger than its provisions for the protection of those who would save it.

It is said that when Mr. Lincoln had read Judge Curtis's argument, he remarked, in his pithy Rabelaisian way, "I never heard of a patient's acquiring a taste for emetics by being obliged to take one now and then."

<sup>2</sup> I recall attending public meetings in Boston at this time, and

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The students in the Law School represented both sides in this discussion, and as these students mingled freely, in the college halls and boarding-houses, with members of the junior and senior classes, the current opinions in the Law School, as well as the wide public discussions, had free access to the undergraduate mind. We shall soon see from Fiske's letters how deeply he was impressed by President Lincoln's action, and how closely the discussion we have been considering was brought home to him.

hearing Professor Parker denounce President Lincoln in the severest terms,—he was not given to moderate speech,—and if my memory serves me rightly, the feeling against him in Cambridge was so strong that his friends were apprehensive of some expression of public indignation.

## CHAPTER IX

### AN UNDERGRADUATE AT HARVARD

1860-1863

WE have seen that Fiske, just previous to his entrance examinations at Harvard, was so confident of passing them that he had engaged his rooms for the ensuing year. In view of the condition of the college halls many parents objected to placing their sons in such forbidding surroundings. Consequently there had grown up around the college a number of boarding-houses, all under the approval of the faculty, which, as living places, were by many students preferred to the college halls. Of these boarding-houses none had a better repute than the one kept by Miss C. Upham on the corner of Kirkland and Oxford Streets. The house gave a full view of the college yard, — Memorial Hall and Sanders Theatre did not then exist, — and it was within sound of the chapel bell, a very important consideration in the pursuit of knowledge at Harvard at this time, as we have already seen.

It was at Miss Upham's that Fiske had taken rooms. They were pleasant rooms and he found much pleasure in getting settled in them, particularly in getting his books and pictures in order. From the particulars he gives, his library must have

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been the most scholarly student's library in Cambridge.

And thus, very happily domiciled, on Monday, September 2, 1860, Fiske began his college life. He continued his letters to his mother and to his friend Roberts, and it is from these letters mainly that the following record of his undergraduate life is made up.

From what we have seen of Fiske's attainments, his methods of study and his ideals of scholarship, together with what we have learned in regard to the academic course of study, it is evident that this course did not present sufficient requirements to give a healthy, varied activity to his inquiring mind. Had he chosen to confine himself to the prescribed course and to work for honors, he could easily have gone to the head of his class. The honors secured by such efforts, however, appeared to him as temporary — they did not seem to him worth the sacrifice of better scholarship to be attained by broader study than was offered by the college course. Accordingly, he deliberately chose to do the necessary work for the recitations and examinations, and to concentrate himself upon his favorite studies of history, philology, literature, science, and philosophy, utilizing, as far as possible in these studies, the facilities of the college.

As his conception of an undergraduate life was quite an exceptional one, it is of interest to see how it was embodied in experience. This can best be



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done by seeing his college life grouped around certain centres of interest with which his mind was engaged during this period. These centres of interest were the following: —

- I. His collegiate work, and his class associations.
- II. His methods of study; the mass of his reading.
- III. His college and living expenses; his book purchases.
- IV. His visit to Emerson.
- V. His literary work.
- VI. His thoughts by the way.
- VII. He receives a "Public Admonition," with a threatened expulsion.
- VIII. The Civil War; its effect upon his mind.
- IX. His engagement to Abby Morgan Brooks.

We will take up these centres of interest in the above order.

### *I. His collegiate work and his class associations*

In regard to his collegiate work it can be said that he did not neglect any study; that he added Italian, Hebrew, and Sanskrit to the language requirements; that he stood high in his classes through the three years; that he creditably passed all examinations, and was graduated in 1863, the forty-seventh in his class. It should be said that his rank would have been near the head had it not been for his cutting prayers and church services, and some

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recitations and lectures. He failed of winning a scholarship in his first, the sophomore, year, simply through cutting prayers. In fact, the only serious dereliction of duty charged against him during the three years was a neglect of religious services.

The excellence of his recitations and the interest he took in his studies soon attracted the attention of some members of the faculty, and we find Professor Child reporting "that the breadth of his views was perfectly astonishing." In mathematics his proficiency is also noted, Professor James M. Peirce speaking of him "as a jewel of a mathematician"; while President Felton, writing to Judge Curtis, says that "Fiske is going to be one of the most distinguished in his class;" in support of his opinion he quotes Bates, the tutor in Latin, as saying that "Fiske was the best scholar he ever had."

But the best testimony to the high quality of his college work is the fact that he established cordial personal relations with several members of the faculty — relations that were continued after his graduation, that ripened into strong friendships which were terminated only by death. Among these may be mentioned his friendships with Professors Lowell, Child, Goodwin, Sophocles, Peirce, Gurney, Wyman, Asa Gray, and Dr. Peabody. From each of these professors he gathered much outside of and beyond their formal teaching; and in his mind these men stood in their personalities more than in their professorial relations for the Harvard College that

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he loved. Particular mention should be made of the friendship which was formed between Fiske and Professor Gurney during the college period. The letters bear witness to the existence of a far deeper feeling between them than that of instructor and pupil. In fact, Professor Gurney appears as *Fidus Achates*, and in this relation we have a reflection of him both as a scholar and a friend.

It does not appear that Fiske came into any personal relations with Professor Agassiz. The reason we can understand — Fiske's strong dissent from Professor Agassiz's theory of special creations in the organic world. This is to be regretted. Agassiz had such a vast fund of valuable zoölogical knowledge, he was also such an inspiring instructor, and with it all was such a lovable man, that Fiske lost much by not establishing personal relations with him while in college. Fiske was less inclined to listen to Agassiz during his college period, inasmuch as both Professors Gray and Wyman were opponents of the special creation theory — they were in fact advocates of the Darwinian theory of organic evolution. He did not establish any cordial relations with either Professor Cooke or Professor Bowen. He regarded both as more earnest in presenting pre-conceived theological ideas in their respective departments than in presenting the facts of modern science freed from metaphysical interpretation. It is evident that, in a respectful way, he sometimes questioned their conclusions. In chemistry and

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philosophy, therefore, his marks were lower than in other studies.

Among his classmates Fiske was generally liked, but his reserved, studious nature did not invite to close intimacy save with a few. He had a quiet frankness of manner in greeting his friends that was inviting; but he instinctively shrank from everything like boisterous conviviality. There was no suggestion of swagger or pretence about him, and his only dissipation was a pipe and a mug of beer. His studious habits, his excellent recitations, and ready command of his wide and varied knowledge, together with the impressions given by his library, soon made him a marked member of his class. It was not long before the first scholar in the class said to him, "Do you know, Fiske, that your translations in Greek are the astonishment of the class?" In mathematics his proficiency was no less marked. He soon went to the head of the class in this study, and the class feeling was reflected in the remark of a classmate who, on trying on Fiske's hat, said, "Tell you what, fellows, the reason Fiske has got such a big head is because he is such a thundering mathematician." From the records we find that his marks from the first were very high, nearly perfect, save in chemistry — and chemistry was a study he particularly liked. From his letters it appears that he regarded his college studies as mere play.

One or two incidents are worth noting by the way,

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as reflecting Fiske's ready command of his knowledge, as well as the prevailing undergraduate ideas of scholarship. At table a classmate put to him the following questions: The situation of Potidæa, Amphipolis, and Delium; the years of Socrates's birth and death; the circumstances of the battle of Arginusæ. Fiske answered clearly right out of hand, whereupon another classmate said, "What in God's name, Fiske, did you expect to learn by coming to college?" And the following is reported of a classmate who in subsequent years attained high professional honors. Fiske writes: "The other day, when reading over his Whateley's Rhetoric — cried out to me, 'Fiske, what the devil is an enthymeme?' 'Why,' said I, 'it is a syllogism with the major premise suppressed.' 'Well, what in hell is a syllogism?' was the hyperastonished reply. Great Zeus! I thought I should split! There 's a specimen of Harvard scholarship!"

Fiske's comments upon the student life displayed about him are many. His standard of judgment of his fellow students was their scholarship and their love of study. He writes: "Among the students here scholarship is held in disrepute"; "To study closely is considered disgraceful"; "The present senior class, having studied somewhat more faithfully than others, is called 'scrubby'"; "A good recitation is called a 'squirt,' and some fellows have undertaken to call me 'Squirty,' a name which has been fastened on to one of the mathematical tutors

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on account of his superior scholarship." He also gives this incident: "A poll student told me to-day that twenty pipes of tobacco a day would not injure a man as much as six hours of study. I asked that ignoramus if he considered six hours of study much? He replied he could n't say as he never studied over three."

How instinctively he made a fellow-feeling for scholarship the condition of intimacy with fellow-students is shown by a passage in a letter to his mother written about a fortnight after his entrance. The passage also shows his fine democratic feeling — that he was no respecter of persons, save in their love for knowledge. He writes: —

"I have found a nice man here named Ethridge, about 27 or 28 years old; entered Soph. with me. He boards with Dr. Gray at the entrance to the Botanic Gardens, and rooms in the Gardener's house. He is a plain, practical, common-sense man; perfectly simple, very diligent — quite a fun-lover withal. I like him on the whole very much. He is a good scholar but poor; speaks Spanish and Dutch; reads German and French. I went up to see him the other day and he showed me about the Gardens. I wish you could see them. Ethridge has studied Botany a great deal, and has a great love for it; is a real old Darwin man. He has been down to see me once."

In the college societies Fiske does not appear to have taken much interest. He was elected to the O.K. Society, but the letters contain only a brief

## Student Life

reference to this society and no reference to the other societies.

Athletics were not at this time regarded as absolutely necessary for a college education. Previous to 1860 football played in a ladylike sort of way was permitted; but at the beginning of the college year 1860-61 — Fiske's sophomore year — the faculty prohibited it. This caused much grief among Harvard's young knights of learning, and the letters give full particulars of how, on the evening of September 3, 1860, the class of 1863 gave expression to their feelings at the want of sympathy on the part of the faculty with the ideals of football education. It appears that the class buried their Idol with ceremonial rites in the classic Delta, the field of many a football contest. A procession numbering about one hundred and twenty was formed with officers, a chaplain, a coffin, pall-bearers, grave-diggers, and with muffled drums. All were dressed in mourning and the main body bore torches. They marched through the principal streets about the college and came to the Delta. Here a grave was dug. Then a funeral oration was delivered, and, as the coffin was lowered into the grave, the following dirge was sung to the tune of "Auld Lang Syne" :—

### THE DIRGE

Ah! woe betide the luckless time  
When manly sports decay,  
And foot-ball, stigmatized as crime,  
Must sadly pass away.

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*Chorus* — Shall Sixty-three submit to see  
Such cruel murder done,  
And not proclaim the deed of shame?  
No: let 's unite as one.

O, hapless ball, you little knew,  
When, last upon the air,  
You lightly o'er the Delta flew,  
Your grave was measured there.

*Chorus* — But Sixty-three will never see  
Your noble spirit fly  
And not unite in funeral rite,  
And swell your Dirge's cry.

Beneath this sod, we lay you down,  
This scene of glorious fight;  
With dismal groans and yells we 'll drown  
Your mournful burial rite.

*Chorus* — For Sixty-three will never see  
Such cruel murder done,  
And not proclaim the deed of shame: —  
No! let 's unite as one.

This important event occurred on the second day of Fiske's undergraduate life, and he became an interested participator in the ceremonies.<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding Fiske's intellectual tastes and studious habits he was by no means wanting in the

<sup>1</sup> College boating, while practised to quite an extent on the Charles River, had not developed into anything like its present status in education. Not unfrequently the class clubs entered the holiday regattas of the City of Boston. The boats of those days were quite different in construction from the racing-boats of to-day. President Eliot tells us they served for transportation as well as sport; and were so constructed that while they could conveniently take nine men into Boston, they could not with safety carry out more than six.

Fiske took no interest in football or boating. During his sophomore year he was quite faithful to daily exercise in the Gymnasium; but as his intellectual interests broadened in his junior and senior years his physical exercises gradually diminished.



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fine trait of comradeship, which in college life is manifested in class feeling. A memorable incident occurred in the first term of his sophomore year, which put his class allegiance to a severe test, a test which proved that it was of fine quality.

The incident grew out of an attempt at "hazing" by some members of his own class. It appears that eight sophomores took two freshmen to one of their rooms to introduce them to some of the unauthorized ceremonial mysteries attending collegiate education at Harvard. Another freshman ran and told the faculty — who were holding a weekly meeting — of the highly objectionable educational experiment that was under way. The faculty, or some of the members, led by the President, pounced upon the assembled sophomores and found them with the two freshmen imprisoned in a closet. The next morning the eight sophomores were suspended. So far, in the opinion of the sophomore class, the faculty were justified in their action. But the faculty went further, and forbade any public demonstration by the class in bidding the suspended men good-bye. This edict seemed to the class unjust and uncalled for; and as the suspended members were all very popular, the class decided to disregard the faculty edict, and as a whole to express their regard for the suspended members. This they did by drawing them in an open carriage to the Boston line. There, with much display of affection, they bade the suspended men good-bye and marched back past the Presi-

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dent's house to the college yard — Bowditch, the first scholar of the class, at their head.

In regard to this demonstration Fiske writes: —

“ Now this was only intended as an expression of sympathy with those who were sent away, called forth by their many excellent traits of character and their fine scholarship. Had it been some fellows, there would have been no such demonstration; but these were the cream of the class, respected by all and none of them ‘fast.’ No one disputed the justice of the sentence; or intended this as an insult to the Faculty. If such had been its aim I never should have joined it.”

And in regard to what followed he writes: —

“ Now I think the Faculty have begun to act shamefully. Bowditch was ‘summoned.’ He is the First Scholar, a grandson of the great geometer and a perfect gentleman. He made a speech to the Faculty, perfectly respectful and conciliatory in its tendency. It met with the manifest approval of some of the Faculty. But the President spoke up: ‘Mr. Bowditch, you have disgraced your illustrious name; you are no gentleman, sir, and all unworthy the name of scholar.’ ‘Mr. President,’ said Bowditch, ‘I came here to render an account of yesterday’s proceedings; not to be insulted.’”

The result was that Bowditch was suspended — a result brought about wholly by the efforts of President Felton and secured by his own vote — the vote of the faculty being *ten* for, and *nine* against his suspension.

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The verdict created intense feeling throughout all the classes. The sophomore class petitioned the faculty in a body asking that Bowditch be recalled or that the whole class be suspended — alleging that the whole class were equally guilty with him.

In time the excitement passed by and all the suspended members returned to the class. Fiske never regretted his action in the matter. We shall soon see that not long after, Fiske himself gave President Felton a still more memorable occasion for displaying his constitutional narrow-mindedness.

Early in his senior year Fiske was elected associate editor of the "Harvard Magazine" — a task which was a great bore to him, but one which he cheerfully undertook as an obligation to his class. During his editorship, he contributed the following articles to the "Magazine": "Ye Vital Principle," "A Very Old Tale," "Diatribes on Archbishop Whateley," "The Life and Teachings of Gotama Buddha."

There were several Emerson men and Theodore Parker men in the various classes, and there is evidence of much religious discussion among the students growing out of Dr. Huntington's resignation and the opening-up of the Darwinian question. We have glimpses of students coming from Agassiz's lectures enthusiastic over his "triumphant vindication of special creations" and of Fiske's quietly tak-

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ing Agassiz's own premises and bringing the argument right around in favor of the doctrine of Development or Evolution. In short, at the opening of Fiske's junior year, his fine library and his command of scientific knowledge gave him the reputation throughout the college of being a well-equipped Darwinian, and of holding philosophic views of a Positivist character — views that were at least open to suspicion. The undergraduate dissensions growing out of the Civil War will presently be considered by themselves.

In Fiske's life, as we are to see it unfold after college, we shall have frequent occasion to note his great interest in music — that music was, in fact, his chief means of diversion, and that he became, principally through self-study, proficient both as a composer and as a performer. During his college life, however, this deep harmonic element in his nature was wholly untouched by anything in the academic course. It was a matter of profound regret that his college course had no provisions whatever for making students acquainted with the artistic principles governing the higher forms of musical expression. His deprivation in this respect was partially remedied, however, by his acquaintance with Professor John K. Paine, which began at the time of Fiske's marriage in 1864, and which ripened into a lifelong brotherly friendship of the most ennobling kind. To know Professor Paine intimately was to enjoy the fruits of the ripest musical culture. We

## Methods of Study

are to see much of the effect of this fine friendship in the years to come.

### *II. His methods of study: the mass of his reading*

From his early boyhood we have had frequent occasions to note Fiske's great fondness for books and his passionate love of study. To read and to study were to him the most delightful of occupations and especially if we include composition as related to them or as their complement. The letters are full of the particulars of his devotions. Twelve hours a day, except Saturdays and Sundays, was his regular allowance for reading and study; and this generous allowance was often extended to sixteen hours or more when specially interested in any subject. He had a very clear method in his reading-study, and various hours were apportioned to specific subjects. Throughout the college period he was seeking the fundamental truths of science and philosophy, and the breadth or catholicity of his reading is a noteworthy characteristic, particularly when it is considered that this whole line of study-reading was self-imposed and self-directed. According to his usual methodical custom he kept an accurate account of his reading, and the mere mass of it was something extraordinary. During the three college years he read two hundred and thirty-three volumes containing nearly sixty thousand pages. Most of these works were on subjects requiring the deepest thought. Many were in foreign languages.

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All were thoughtfully read as the extracts from the letters we shall give abundantly show, and as the literary work of subsequent years clearly proves.<sup>1</sup>

His mother and Roberts were insistent upon his keeping up a regular course of physical exercise. He did play at exercise in the kind of gymnasium that was then attached to the college; but this exercise was not pursued with just the ardor he bestowed upon his favorite authors—Grote, Gibbon, Donaldson, Humboldt, Voltaire, Mill, Mackay, Darwin, Spencer, Dickens, Scott, Goethe, and many others.

### *III. His college and living expenses: his book purchases*

A student's college expenses are a very clear revealer of both his inner and his outer life. In Fiske's letters to his mother we have quite full details of his receipts and expenditures, so that we have in this account a pretty complete voucher, as it were, for the general uprightness of his undergraduate conduct. From this evidence it appears that the whole cost of his college education did not exceed six hundred dollars a year. This included his living expenses. There was absolutely nothing spent in dissipation of any sort. He gave his mother a pledge at the beginning that he would

<sup>1</sup> The rapidity with which he read was indeed remarkable. The letters make frequent mention of his reading from two hundred and fifty to three hundred pages per day in addition to his studies. As an instance, in one place he says: "I began Müller's *Dorians* to-night, and read ninety pages in about two hours."

## College Expenses

not drink wine or spirituous liquors and this pledge he faithfully kept. As has been said already, the extent of his dissipation was a pipe and a mug of beer. His aversion to dissolute conduct, which is a marked characteristic of the letters, was no less marked in his intercourse with fellow students. Yet such is the tendency of the shallow mind to think evil and to see evil even where it does not exist, Fiske the student, owing to the fact that he was a reader of Voltaire, Emerson, Theodore Parker, Buckle, Darwin, and other liberal thinkers, and that he sometimes cut prayers, had gained, at the opening of his junior year, the reputation in certain quarters of being a very objectionable young man. This opinion was undoubtedly heightened by reports of his wide knowledge and his liberal way of thinking. Fiske became conscious of this impeachment of his moral character, and in a letter to Roberts he says: "It is quite amusing to see that *I* have got the reputation of being a dreadful hard fellow, while other students who drink, gamble, and go about with women are pronounced 'only a little fast.' It shows the prevalence of superstition."

With the full particulars that we have of the unfolding of Fiske's life to the full maturity of his intellectual powers, it can be positively asserted that biographical literature presents *no* instance of a mind unfolding to high ideas and ideals with a sweeter, purer life than his.

And yet, in the mind of his mother, kind mother

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that she was, he had a great extravagance — a propensity to buy books. We have seen that from his early boyhood his love of books, and his pride in possessing books, was a dominant passion in his life — in fact, that books were his chief companions. The amount of his “book extravagance” during his college period does not appear to have greatly exceeded one hundred dollars — a college extravagance that most parents would gladly encourage in their sons. Yet, as in the first instance the purchases were books not in any way required in his collegiate studies and as some of them related to subjects regarding which his mother was not in full sympathy with him, she raised decided objection to what she felt was an impulsive act on his part. Let us not criticise her action. If she could not see the propriety of his purchases in this instance, her objection served to bring into clear light certain traits in his character which, if she could have seen them in their relations, would have appeared of far greater value than the cost of the books. The instance is worth giving. No sooner was Fiske settled in Cambridge, in June, 1860, for his examinations than he began to plan his future lines of study in science, philology, history, and philosophy in addition to his collegiate work. His letters to Roberts are quite full of the details of what was gestating in his mind. Falling in with one of Quaritch’s catalogues of rare books for sale, he ordered through Mr. Sever, the Harvard book-seller of that day, the following



## Visit to Emerson

works: Donaldson's "Varronianus" and his Greek Grammar, Wilson's Sanskrit Grammar, Bleek's Persian Grammar, Stewart's Arabic Grammar, Mill's "Logic," von Bohlen's "Genesis," Sainte-Hilaire's "Histoire des Anomalies de l'Organisation." When the bill came in September it amounted to forty-five dollars and his mother gave him a severe chiding for what she thought was a wholly needless purchase. Fiske patiently and dutifully pointed out how essential the books were to the lines of thought he was pursuing and the help they would be in giving him enlarged views in his college studies. He took his mother's chiding much to heart, and for months afterwards the letters show little economies, that he might recoup towards the bill. He even went so far as to propose giving up his dearly prized Thanksgiving visit to his grandmother, that "money might be saved towards that dreadful book-bill."

### *IV. His visit to Emerson*

One incident which occurred at the beginning of Fiske's college life, and was wholly unconnected with his college course, deserves a setting by itself, and should be given in his own words: this is his visit to Emerson. How greatly in the development of his own thought Fiske was influenced by Emerson has hardly been noted. When we come to the consideration of Fiske's mind at its maturity and with the evidences then at hand, we shall see that he re-

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garded Emerson as the true protagonist of Evolution; that he clearly "insighted" it as the Divine order of creation before science had laid the foundations upon which the doctrine could be established. We shall also see that Fiske was a free partaker of the Emersonian philosophy as a source of noble thinking pure and undefiled.<sup>1</sup>

Early in his sophomore experience Fiske made the acquaintance of Edward Dorr McCarthy, a very brilliant but erratic student, quite radical in his general views and acquainted with the leading radical men of the time. McCarthy was somewhat acquainted with Emerson, and about the middle of September he asked Fiske to join him in an excursion to Concord for the purpose of calling on Emerson. Fiske gladly accepted the invitation and the next day he gave an account of the visit, to his mother and to Roberts. The account of the visit is essentially the same in both letters. The following is the account given in the letter to his mother with a few words interpolated from his letter to Roberts: —

CAMBRIDGE, *Sept.* 16th, 1860.

*My dear Mother* : —

Yesterday I shall never forget. McCarthy was going to drive up to Concord to see Ralph Waldo Emerson with whom he is quite well acquainted, and to try to get a school for the winter. He came and got me to go too. We got to Mr. Emerson's

<sup>1</sup> See vol. II, chap. XXXVI. See also vol. II, chap. XXVII, Emerson and Herbert Spencer.

## Visit to Emerson

about 7 o'clock. The family were just through tea and Mr. Emerson was out. He soon came in and McCarthy introduced me. He welcomed us warmly and said he was going out to supper alone and we had better come out and take tea with him. He had just that winning, Judge Curtis like way which compels assent, and so we went out and took tea with him, while Mrs. Emerson and his daughters sat sewing at the other end of the table. He talked with us about all sorts of things: with McCarthy about Carlyle and other literary men; and with me about Bichat, Voltaire and Buckle. He says that Buckle is the master mind of the age; that Voltaire deserves all the praise that Buckle has given him, if not more. About Bichat he ran into raptures.<sup>1</sup> I did n't expect to find him booked on science, but I find him tremendously so. I was astonished not only at his learning but also by his wisdom and his goodness. I thought him the greatest man I ever saw.

But most of all he liked to talk about Carlyle. He showed us a daguerreotype which Carlyle had given him when he last saw him. He told anecdotes about Carlyle some of which were amusing. He said that Theodore Parker went to see Carlyle one Sunday evening, and found him alone over a great bowl of whiskey punch ladling it into his mouth with a tablespoon. "Why, Tom," said Parker, "what on earth are you doing?" Carlyle's face was radiant. "Why, I take a whole bowl of whiskey punch every Sunday night, Theodore, don't you?" said the old Scot.

We talked some time. Emerson's voice is a very

<sup>1</sup> Marie François Xavier Bichat, a celebrated French physiologist and anatomist, 1771-1802.

## John Fiske

deep bass. I felt as much at my ease as I would with an old acquaintance; there was something so charming, so simple and unaffected and exquisitely-bred about Emerson.

At last we got up to go, and Emerson said he was very glad indeed to have seen us, and hoped we would come and see him again. Of all the men I ever saw, none can be compared with him for depth, for scholarship, and for attractiveness, — at least so I think.

With this expression of youthful enthusiasm over his first meeting with Emerson, it is in place to note that in the years to come, we are to observe that in Fiske's personal contact with Nature in her quiet moods or in her grand and sublime aspects, with the world's masterpieces of literature, sculpture, painting, music, and architecture, as well as with other of the most eminent thinkers of his time, his own thought instinctively strikes true as to what is ennobling in nature, in art, and in human character.

### *V. His literary work*

At the close of Fiske's sophomore year, July, 1861, the *furor scribendi* was full upon him. The second volume of Buckle's "History of Civilization in England" had just been published, and the reading of it brought back a recollection of his reading of the first volume two years before and the effect produced upon his mind. Since then he had reread the volume twice, and had weighed well its general argument in connection with a wide course of his-

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torical and scientific reading, inspired by his acceptance of Spencer's theory of Evolution. Wider knowledge had led him to see serious defects in Buckle's contentions; and much as he admired some portions of Buckle's general argument, there were some points he desired to bring under a critical review. The publication of the second volume invited him to the task. Rather a heroic courage, this, entering the lists against one of the master minds of the age, by a youth who had only just turned his nineteenth year.

Yet was Fiske nothing daunted. The letters during the summer vacation of 1861 reveal him as in active preparation, reviewing his authorities. The latter part of September we see him in the midst of composition. On the 14th of October, — let us mark the date, — the article is finished. Before sending it to the "National Quarterly Review," where it was published in the number of that journal for December, 1861, he submitted it to his friend Professor Gurney, who was warm in its praise, assuring Fiske that "it was the ablest, most just, and philosophical review of Buckle that had been written."

Reading this article to-day we note the easy grace with which, in opening, he surveys the phenomena of political and social development as presented by eminent thinkers previous to Buckle; then we note the perfect fairness with which he states Buckle's contentions, and the frankness with which he

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assents to some of them. The significant feature of the article, however, is his firm grappling with Buckle's main contention, "Intellect *vs.* morals in the development of civilization," in which Buckle substantially affirms that all progress is owing to the growth or expansion of man's intellectual nature, while his moral nature remains stationary. Fiske takes a square issue with Buckle on this point; and, basing his argument on the law of Evolution, he marshals his wide knowledge of both science and history with great skill; and, to use his own words, he "bangs Buckle's argument all to pieces."

Throughout the article Fiske's respect for Buckle as a thinker of rare independence and force is apparent, and he closes with this fine tribute: —

"With respect to Mr. Buckle's work, an unprejudiced mind can have but one opinion. It is calculated to awaken independent thought, and to diffuse a spirit of scientific inquiry. Written in an easy and elegant style, it will be read with pleasure by many who would not otherwise have the patience to go through the subjects of which it treats. Thus, grand and startling in its views, impressive and charming in its eloquence, it cannot fail to arouse many a slumbering mind to intellectual effort. Such has its tendency already been, and such will it continue to be. . . . Whatever may be thought about the correctness or incorrectness of Mr. Buckle's opinions, the world cannot be long in coming to the conclusion that his 'History of Civilization in England' is a great and noble book, written by a great and noble man."

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This article was fully abreast with the Evolutionary thought of the time. Since his first reading of Buckle in 1859, Fiske had made a careful study of the philosophy of Auguste Comte, in the light of Mill and of Lewes; and he had also followed Spencer, so far as Spencer had developed his theory of Evolution. All this line of philosophic thinking based on science was known as "Positivism," and was supposed to reflect the philosophic vagaries of Comte. We shall see later the difficulties both Spencer and Fiske had in freeing the doctrine of Evolution from any implied affiliations with the Positive Philosophy of Comte. This article bears evidence of Fiske's study of Comte, but it has none of the vagaries of the latter. Nor has it any marks of juvenility. The argument is clear, compact, and logical in its arrangement, while the style is remarkably simple and easy in its flow. There is no suggestion of pedantry in it; no attempt at fine writing. In short, the article has all the marks of a skilled, practised debater. As such it at once appealed to Professor E. L. Youmans, the champion in this country of the doctrine of Evolution, and was by him sent to Spencer, as evidence that the light of Spencer's philosophy was breaking in America. We shall see later that both Spencer and Lewes were desirous of knowing who wrote the article.

Fiske's next literary effort was not until near the close of his senior year. By this time he was

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pretty thoroughly grounded in the theory of Evolution. Spencer had formulated a very substantial philosophic basis for the theory in his immortal work "First Principles," and it remained for the specialists in the various departments of science to gather impartially the facts from the two worlds of objective and subjective phenomena for collation and integration under this theory. What a new light was thrown upon, what a new impulse was given to, all branches of scientific inquiry by the promulgation of this theory is a story which belongs to the history of science to tell. Philology, as soon as scholars began to study language as a natural growth and not as a manufactured product, as soon as they had begun to see that its origin and development were largely conditioned by objective surroundings, took on a new character. It could no longer be regarded as a metaphysical study with no rational *raison d'être* back of it. Rather, it was seen to be a subject broadly open to scientific observation, and that it was related to other branches of science at many points. The middle period of the last century saw much stirring of philological thought in the direction of its scientific character and also of its scientific relativity. Fiske, as we have seen, in his boyhood days was deeply interested in philological studies; and we have had occasion to note his quick appreciation of philological works whenever he came in contact with them. When, therefore, he came to see the full implications of



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Evolution, and that language was a subject which presented a fruitful field for investigation under the illumination of this new scientific searchlight, he turned to his philological studies with greater interest than ever.

The letters tell us of his frequent dipping into these philological studies during his college days, and in the months of March, April, and May, 1863, while preparing for his graduation, we see him actively engaged in writing an essay on "The Evolution of Language." When the essay was finished he submitted it to Professor Gurney, who pronounced it "splendid." He then offered it to Dr. Peabody, the editor of "The North American Review," who promptly accepted it, and it was published in the "Review" for October, 1863.

In this essay Fiske took as his text the philological theories of Max Müller, Renan, and Spencer, and with the ideas of these thinkers as a basis, he reviewed the whole philological question as to the origin and development of language, undertaking to show that the growth of human speech has conformed throughout to a fixed regular law of Evolution.

After clearing away, as inconsistent with an attempt to give a rational explanation of language, the two alternate theories that "it was invented by an academy of mute philosophers, or that some superhuman instructor came down with grammar and dictionary and taught mankind the rudiments of

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speech," he gave a rapid survey of the results of philologic induction. These he claimed had established the fact that there were root words which were the ultimate constituent elements of all languages; that these root words were of two kinds: predicative, expressing actions or existences, and demonstrative, denoting locality. A rational system of classification was then seen to be that which recognizes as its basis a degree of coalescence between roots, and that this degree of coalescence was an index of a certain degree of integration. Integration and differentiation were then traced as prime factors in the development of language, not only in the coalescences of roots, but also in the concentration of syllabic sounds and in the increasing logical coherence of clauses. Moreover, the generation of dialects, the rise of parts of speech, the growth of widely divergent words from a common root, and the development of widely divergent languages from a common stock, were seen to be pronounced instances of differentiation or linguistic evolution. The external causes of the evolution of language were then considered, and emphasis was put upon coherence and stability in social relations — a stability implied in family relationships which are alike removed from Turanian nomadism and from Chinese immutability.

In the development of his argument the results of philological science seem to have been at his ready command. The ideas of Tooke, Schelling,

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Humboldt, Grimm, Bunsen, Bopp, Müller, Garnett, Donaldson, Becker, Renan, Rapp, Diez, and Spencer are cited so apropos and illustrative of his own thought that they seem to drop into place in his argument as a matter of course. This relieves the essay from the taint of pedantry. While immensely learned, the points are so clearly and logically arranged and the style is so lucid that any person acquainted with the declension and grammatical arrangement of words can readily understand the general argument.

The article was one which appealed, of course, only to scholars. One eminent reviewer said of it:—

“This is by far the most thoughtful and elaborate article in this number of the ‘Review.’ The author has something of the tone and trend of the ‘great reviewers’ in his style, and we are glad to see one who can leave the nervous, jack-o’-lantern style of our New England Transcendentalists, and talk like a man of some growth, stature and dignity.”

Professor Youmans was quick to detect the quality of the article; and we shall see a little later, how he sought out Fiske and induced him to open correspondence with Spencer.

Of Fiske’s contributions to the “Harvard Magazine” during his senior year, already alluded to, it can be said that they bear witness to his wide reading and the fertility of his thought. His “Diatribē on Archbishop Whateley” is an instance of how pungent he could make his criticism of theologic

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assumptions when fully roused, while his brief article on Buddha is a fine illustration of his fair-minded historico-religious criticism. He did not republish this article in his collected works because he intended to do the subject greater justice in a complete essay.

"Ye Vital Principle" is a brief undergraduate burlesque on the metaphysical manner of argumentation. It is of interest as showing that at this time Fiske's thought, even in its lighter moods, was centred around the ultimate questions of philosophy.

"A Very Old Tale" gives us a glimpse of the working of his mind in a humorous way in the regions of classic fable. This "Very Old Tale" and his "Class Supper Ode" are the only instances we have of his invoking the muse.

It is a little remarkable that Fiske, with his high order of thinking, his great familiarity with the masterpieces of poetry, and his rare musical gifts, should not have felt impelled at times to self-expression in poetic form. This apparent anomaly is in a great measure accounted for by the high poetic quality of much of his prose. We shall see later that in the expression of fine and noble feeling through the medium of elegant prose no writer of his time has exceeded him.

### *VI. His thoughts by the way*

There is a common saying, very much in evidence in some branches of industry, that "a good

## Thoughts by the Way

workman is known by his chips." Fiske's undergraduate letters are so full of fine bits of thought incidentally thrown off by him while "hewing to line," as it were, in his various studies, that a few examples of his thoughts by the way are in place, as showing how continuously and naturally and easily his mind was working with great themes.

His mother has asked him the meaning of "ham" in Petersham — a town we are to know a great deal about in the years to come. Fiske replies, quite incidentally, with the following interesting bit of philologico-historic information: —

"'Ham' means town or village. It is kindred with 'home' in old Teutonic. 'Hamlet' means a little village — 'let,' like 'leaflet,' a little leaf. Appended to the names of towns we have 'ham,' 'wick,' 'stead,' 'burg,' 'ville.' 'Wick' is from the Latin 'Vicus' — a village. 'Vicus' comes from 'victim' the participial of 'vivere,' to live, and is kindred with 'victuals,' 'vital,' 'vivacity,' and a host of words. 'Stead,' as 'Barnsted,' comes from 'stadt' — town, that which stands. 'Ipswich' — 'Ips' and 'vicus.' 'Burg St. Edmunds' — 'Burg' and 'St. Edmunds.' No use in filling a quire called up by association. Suffice that the ends of towns show the different conquerors of England.

Wick is Celtic.

Ham is Danish.

Sted

Stead } are Saxon.

Burg }

Ville is Norman French.

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“Language is a witness that cannot give false evidencè.”

Fiske is reading Lewes's “Life of Goethe,” and with it he is also reading Goethe's “Faust.” He writes:—

“I had no idea that Goethe was such a miraculous giant of intellect. His mind was clear and objective, almost positive. As a poet he must be placed almost on the level of Shakespeare; and his conception of the Law of Development in the organic world will place him in the first rank of scientific thinkers; while his universal learning could put to despair the most assiduous plodder Germany has ever produced. Lewes says, ‘Faust’ is the greatest poem of modern times; and I will say that I never before came across such a marvellous poem in my life. The metres in ‘Faust’ are magical; the most exquisite little short verses, light and airy as gossamer, are mingled with, or rather followed by, as the thought changes, massive hexameters which pound like the tramp of a thousand battalions.”

He is reading the Old Testament in Hebrew with Dr. Noyes, and his penetrating eye has caught an anachronism in the sacred record. He writes thus:—

“This week I found a Chaldee word in the Elohim document. There was no Semitic Chaldee however until after David. What could that Chaldee word be doing in a document written by the festive Moses? The Elohim is the earlier document you know.”

## Thoughts by the Way

There is much in the letters regarding his philological studies. He is reading Garnett's "Philological Essays," and he says: —

"Garnett's analysis of the verb is glorious and is based on an immense induction from the principal languages of both continents. He shows it to be simply a *noun* or other part of speech always in combination with a pronoun in an oblique case. This is said by Donaldson to be a great discovery and he proves it in regard to the Greek verb in Cratylus."

There are many references to Donaldson, the eminent English philologist and Biblical critic. In one letter Fiske says: —

"I have read nearly the whole of Donaldson's 'Varronianus' this week. It gives some most wonderful revelations as to the origin of the different original races, particularly those of ancient Italy."

Speaking of Donaldson's death in 1861, from overwork, he says: —

"I don't wonder at it, for I believe he had read every square inch of paper that had been dirtied by ink since the world began."

One of the important scientific books of the time, and one that has been of much influence upon the development of physical and chemical science during the last half-century was Grove's "Correlation and Conservation of Forces." This work Fiske read with great eagerness and he comments thus: —

"Grove's work is just the thing. He shows that heat, light, electricity, magnetism, chemical affinity,

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and motion can all be transformed into one another and are but manifestations of one and the same force. What I like best of all in the book is that the author entirely abstains from bringing in metaphysical ethics or entities. He writes in a positive spirit, and everything he writes is forcible and striking."

Fiske's comments upon President Felton's Greek scholarship are of interest, not only by reason of the latter's long service at the college as Professor of Greek, but also because we are soon to see him administering to Fiske a "Public Admonition." Fiske is reading Grote's "History of Greece" for the second time and in a letter to Roberts he expresses himself thus: —

"I am disgusted to see that Felton, in his notes on the 'Clouds of Aristophanes,' embraces all those old-fashioned Kronian ideas about the 'base principles of the Sophists' and the 'corruption' which they produced in Athens during the Age of Pericles and the Peloponnesian War. . . . He likewise amuses himself with blackguarding Klion and the Athenian constitution. . . . I consider Grote's chapters on the Sophists and on Socrates to be two of the best chapters I ever read."

In this same letter he gives quite a full sketch of the life and works of Voltaire, with the judgment upon him of Goethe, Humboldt, Carlyle, Buckle, and others. In closing he says: —

"When we consider the immense influence which Voltaire's writings have had upon the European



## Dogmatic Christianity

mind, we may perhaps affirm that he did more than any other single man to destroy (dogmatic) Christianity. It may be well however to remark that he never mentioned the Founder of Christianity except in terms of the deepest respect."

The very earnest public discussion of dogmatic Christianity at this time, occasioned by the resignation of Dr. Huntington and the publication of Mr. Darwin's great work, can hardly be conceived. This discussion was greatly heightened by the publication in England and America of a remarkable volume of seven "Essays and Reviews" by seven prominent English churchmen, in which there was given out a distinctly evangelical call for a more rational interpretation of Scripture and dogma, in the light of science and Biblical criticism, than had hitherto prevailed. Accordingly, we find Fiske giving much attention to ecclesiastical history, especially in its bearing upon dogma. The many bare-faced assumptions by Christian apologetics for the Divine origin of the principal dogmas of the Christian religion; the long and terrible struggle the human mind has undergone to free itself from bondage to these dogmas, together with the fact that through ecclesiastical intolerance belief in them was still enforced, made Fiske indignant that in these later days the love for knowledge and the search for truth should be held in subordination to belief in a dogmatic religious creed.

His conviction that the great body of Christian

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believers were ignorant of the facts regarding the origin and development of the Christian dogmas finds frequent expression in the letters. In a letter to Roberts he has occasion to refer to the Christian forgery of the account of Jesus in the eighteenth book of Josephus and to the opinions of the scholars of the first centuries of the Christian era regarding the doctrines of the early Christians (some extracts were given), and he says: —

“Of course, if Christianity had been anything in A.D. 80 or 90, Josephus would have spoken of it. The Christians must have felt the force of this, or they would not have forged a passage to suit themselves; and may we not infer from these extracts that Christianity was an insignificant thing in the 3d century when a man like Plotinus knew it only through one of its most heretical forms; while men of genius like Lucian and Porphyry rejected it with contempt — Porphyry showed up its shortcomings with an erudition unequalled until modern times. Dogmatic Christianity reigned supreme in the Dark Ages of ignorance; and the first heralds of the new dawn of the intellect — such as Abelard were heretics, and the men of three or four centuries after, such as Vanini and Giordano Bruno were downright infidels. Talk about its miraculous progress! When Plotinus in the 3d century had hardly heard of it; when Mohammed, one century after his death was acknowledged as Prophet from Delhi to Cordova; and when Mohammedan science and learning was all that kept the lamp of knowledge from expiring. While Christians were going through their mummeries to save their souls the Kalif Al

## Dogmatic Christianity

Mamum was observing stars and measuring a degree on the surface of the earth."

Many extracts from the letters might be given showing Fiske's bitter hostility at this time to dogmatic Christianity; and this feeling was intensified by the discussion going on about him, and as we shall further see, by his own college experiences. In later years, however, we are to see him give Christianity a place in his scheme of philosophy as embodying the highest phase yet reached in the development of the religious nature of man, and as undergoing a process of development to a higher stage of religious manifestation.

There are, of course, many references to Spencer in the letters. All are of interest as showing how readily Fiske's thought responded to Spencer's as the latter was unfolded, but three extracts must suffice the purpose here. In a letter to Roberts he says: —

"The 5th number of Spencer<sup>1</sup> concludes the explanation of the change from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous — differentiation — and the remaining numbers are to be taken up in explaining the change from the indefinite to the definite — integration. I see that the old fellow is gradually proving that the Law of Evolution is itself a corollary from the Persistence of Force, and consequently possesses the highest deductive as well as the highest possible inductive proof."

<sup>1</sup> Spencer was then bringing out *First Principles* in "Numbers."

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Again: —

“I read Spencer on the ‘Laws of Organic Form’ last night, but it was so *omnisciently* learned that I could barely understand it. He brought up as illustrations, nearly one hundred kinds of plants of which I knew absolutely nothing. He brought them in with such perfect coolness, and proceeded to argue from the way the leaves are cleft and the petals arranged in each kind, with such an apparent unconsciousness that other people did n’t know all the vegetables in creation that I began to think myself a block-head. However, though I did n’t know all the facts, I was enough of a naturalist to appreciate the argument; and he showed that same *amazing* power of thought, and that same inconceivable amount of learning he shows in whatever he undertakes to write about. I felt a sense of *awe* after closing the book as if I had been holding communion with Omniscience; and this I never felt when reading any one else. During a country ramble with Lewes in 1851, he, Spencer, happened to pick up a buttercup, and as he drew it through his fingers so as to alter the shape in a curious way, an idea struck him which he has since developed into one of the greatest discoveries of the century. In reading this one thinks of Newton and the apple.”

And again: —

“I am more and more persuaded that Spencer is the greatest thinker of this time. He has found the *summum genus*; he has made all the specific divisions and sub-divisions; and has not only pointed out the methods of constructing a Positive philosophy, but has also constructed one.”

## Publicly Admonished

In the letters are equally thoughtful references to Grote, Bunsen, Gibbon, Comte, Humboldt, Max Müller, Lyell, Calvin, Tocqueville, Dickens, Bulwer, Huxley, Tyndall, Herschel, Darwin, Agassiz, and others. The foregoing extracts are sufficient, however, to show the general tendency of Fiske's thought at this period, and how far and away it was beyond the college requirements.

### *VII. He receives a "Public Admonition," with a threatened expulsion*

And yet, notwithstanding his excellent scholarship and his exemplary personal conduct, Fiske was *persona non grata* to some members of the Harvard Faculty, who fain would have had students measured, not by their attainments and general uprightness, but rather by their religious beliefs and their observance of church services. Mention has been made of the reputation Fiske achieved during his sophomore year of being a pretty well-equipped Darwinian. He was also credited with holding the heretical opinions of Emerson and Theodore Parker, as well as being infected with the highly objectionable virus of Positivism.

The opening of his junior year, therefore, reveals him as a "suspect" with some members of the faculty who appear to have been apprehensive of his "silent influence" among the students. Accordingly, he was closely "observed" by the Parietal Committee for discipline on the slightest occasion. And the

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committee had not long to wait. In October, 1861, he was caught *flagrante delicto* in a high "misdemeanor." He was "observed" reading in church from a volume of Comte and was promptly "summoned."

Students had read in this church without censure for years, and Professor Goodwin said that Fiske was probably the least guilty of all. On answering the summons he was first questioned by the President in regard to his religious views. Fiske frankly stated his disbelief in many of the dogmas of Christian theology, and was equally frank in expressing his adherence to what was then termed, for want of a better name, the Positive Philosophy. He was then taken before the faculty and charged with disseminating infidelity among the students and with gross misconduct at church by reading during the service. The effort was made to interrelate the two offences by presenting the latter as the natural outgrowth of the former — a desire to show a disrespect for the Christian faith.

Fiske met the two charges in a manner characteristic of the fair-minded youth that he was. He had no apologies to make for his opinions; and he dissociated the two charges as having in his mind not the slightest relation to each other. He denied having in any way tried to influence the religious views of others; asserted that such an effort would be wholly against his principles; and that he respected the views of others as much as he wished his own respected. As to the misconduct at church

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he frankly admitted that it was unjustifiable; that if it had been meant as a deliberate insult to the Christian faith, it would have been also an insult to the college, and there could be no punishment too severe for such misconduct. He fully justified the faculty for calling him to account. He did the act unthinkingly, but that was no excuse; he had violated a regulation of the college; he apologized and assured the faculty there would be no repetition of the offence.

The President and Professors Bowen and Cooke were very bitter — Professor Bowen contending that the misconduct at church was not only a legitimate outcome, but was also a mild form of manifestation, of such reprehensible doctrines as were held by Fiske — and they wanted him suspended for a year. They would have carried their point had it not been for the very active part taken by several members of the faculty, and especially by Dr. A. P. Peabody, who maintained that it would be a disgrace to the college to suspend one of the best students simply for reading in church and especially after an ample apology had been freely made.

Fiske was let off with a "Public Admonition." He read no more in church, nor do we hear of charges against him of disseminating infidelity among the students; but we do hear of the prevalence of opinions very similar to his, all through the junior and senior classes, while they appear to have been rife among the members of the faculty itself.

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The most significant fact, however, connected with this church incident is President Felton's subsequent action. It appears that under date of October 16, 1861, he wrote Mrs. Stoughton, giving his version of the affair, — which does not differ materially from the foregoing account, — and closed his letter with the following courteous, but no less positive, admonition, as to the result which would attend her son's giving any further expression to his religious views while at college. He said: —

“Your son's good character in general, and his faithful attention to his studies, induced the faculty to limit the censure to a Public Admonition. I have only to add, that while we claim no right to interfere with the private opinion of any student, we should feel it our duty to request the removal of any one who should undertake to undermine the faith of his associates. I hope you will caution your son upon this point; for any attempt to spread the mischievous opinions which he fancies he has established in his own mind, would lead to an instant communication to his guardian to take him away.”

It should be noted that this church incident and this letter of President Felton to Mrs. Stoughton are coincident with Fiske's completion of his article on Buckle, which was finished, as we have seen, October 14, 1861. A cursory glance at that article, with its evidences of wide reading and deep thinking on some of the profoundest problems that can engage the human mind, shows how far and away



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was the thought of this upright youth beyond the minds of his instructors, who would fain have found in his "daily walk and conversation" reasons for expelling him from college.

It is a significant commentary on this letter of President Felton's, threatening the expulsion of Fiske if found guilty of disseminating Positive or Evolutionary ideas among students, that eight years later, in the first dawn of the new era at Harvard, Fiske should be officially called by the new President to expound these same ideas to the college.

### *VIII. The Civil War: its effect upon his mind*

And still the record of these eventful college days is incomplete. These well-preserved letters of fifty years ago, with their display of a noble love for learning, coupled with high ideals of personal character, show yet another phase of the life of this scholarly student which is of great interest to-day, as reflecting somewhat the terrible ordeal through which the Nation was passing.

We have already seen how the main issue in the great Civil War struggle was projected into the college life through the Law School: we are now to see how the undergraduate life was affected thereby.

The baleful effect of this fearful conflict was at the outset severely felt in the quiet, academic shades of Harvard. In the spring of 1861 every class experienced the sundering of class ties through the resig-

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nations of students from the Southern States, or by the departure of loyal students who resigned to join the Union Army; and Harvard's peaceful yard resounded with military preparations in response to President Lincoln's "call to arms." Harvard's noble Memorial Hall is an eloquent witness to the patriotism of her sons.

At the outbreak of the war Fiske appears to have been indifferent to the issues involved in the struggle. His youth and his scholarly tastes had precluded his taking an active interest in the political discussions which had preceded the war. He saw no vital difference between the contending political parties. Strongly anti-slavery in his own views, the political issues appeared to him mainly as questions of more or less slavery. The outbreak of the war, therefore, found him so deeply interested in the profound philosophic questions then coming forward, and so engrossed in his studies, that he was in great measure oblivious to the social, industrial, and political questions involved in the struggle.

This attitude of mind is not surprising, for the only direct issue presented by the Northern States or by the Administration was a political one — the saving of the Union under a Constitution which legalized human slavery. Fiske's friend Roberts, however, was alive to the deeper issues involved in the struggle, and in April, 1861, he wrote Fiske a very thoughtful letter on the two diverse forms of political and social organizations presented by the

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Northern and Southern States, in which he pointed out what might be expected in case the war should be prolonged.

Fiske did not reply to the political portion of Roberts's letter, but he did write giving full particulars of his reading. Roberts then chides him for his indifference to the condition of the country and the impending struggle; whereupon Fiske writes: —

“What fools people make of themselves about this confounded war! Why, I forget there is a war half the time. What's war when a fellow has 'Kosmos' on his shelf, and 'Faust' on his table?”

One is reminded by this sententious remark that a good portion of “Faust” was written when all Germany was engaged in the great Napoleonic struggle, and that Goethe has been subjected to much criticism for his apparent national indifference.

But with the whole nation aroused, Fiske could not long remain indifferent, and the events of the war soon brought his eminently philosophic mind to the realization, in the pithy words of Lowell —

“That civilization *doos* git forrid  
Sometimes upon a powder-cart.”

During the winter and spring of 1862, in full sympathy with the Union people of the North, he became an interested observer of the gathering of the Army of the Potomac under General McClellan for the campaign against Richmond. With a feeling of loyal pride he saw this magnificent army officered

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by the ripest experience and the best blood of the Northern States and thoroughly equipped with all the munitions for offensive warfare. Never before in human history was there gathered a nobler army for a nobler purpose than was this Army of the Potomac; and never before did an army go forth to combat with greater confidence on the part of its supporters in its ultimate victory.

With dismay Fiske saw this heroic army when within sight of Richmond caught in the treacherous swamps of the Chickahominy, where, divided by an impassable stream and without the possibility of concentration, it was attacked by a greatly inferior force and was compelled to fight defensively day after day, until, banged and beaten in detail, it was at last driven, after immense losses, to the shelter of its guns on the banks of the James, whence it was rescued by the naval transports.

It is impossible for the present generation to realize the effect of this disaster upon the people of the Northern States, accompanied as it was by an effort on the part of General McClellan to shift the responsibility for the disaster on to the War Department, and also by a letter from him to the President advising the latter as to the political conduct of the war. This letter was a strong pro-slavery document. Fiske became thoroughly aroused, and he expressed in strong language his opinion as to McClellan's incapacity, and his indignation at his attempt to "play politics" in the face of such a disaster.

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Three months after McClellan's defeat before Richmond, September 22, 1862, President Lincoln issued his first Proclamation of Emancipation, followed by more vigorous measures for the prosecution of the War. How these measures were received by many influential "constitutional" people at the North we have already seen. How they were received by the loyal people of the North is clearly reflected in the following extract from a letter of Fiske's, written September 24, 1862, two days after the Emancipation Proclamation:—

"What a splendid thing the President's Proclamation is. I am really enthusiastic about the war now. I feel as if we were fighting henceforth with an end in view. I hope that the fiendish institution of slavery, which has hitherto made me ashamed of America, is at last to fall. I always was a red-hot anti-slavery man in principle, but never cared much for the success of a war that was to leave us on this question just where we were before. I always felt that union was impossible without abolition. I think the Union cause is better off now than ever; and if this Proclamation takes effect, I shall consider homely 'Old Abe' the most glorious ruler we ever had. I am studying the war hard, *strategy* and everything."

Fiske's manner of studying the war strategy was characteristic of his thorough way of doing things. He subscribed to the "New York Daily Times." He then procured large maps of the various fields of military operations which he fastened to the

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walls of his rooms, and with pins of different colored heads he was able on his maps to follow the movements of the contending forces. Every evening after supper he took his strategy lesson.

But what is of special significance, in view of Fiske's future history of the Federal Constitution, and his subsequent thought as to its practical working, was his deep interest in the Constitutional questions that now arose from President Lincoln's exercise of the war powers of his great office.

In the autumn of 1862 the political opposition to President Lincoln was focussed around the candidacy of Horatio Seymour for Governor of New York; and the issue was the alleged usurpation of unconstitutional power by the President. This phase of the contest was brought directly home to Fiske, not only by reason of his warm personal regard for Judge Curtis, but also by the fact that the views of Judge Curtis were shared by Mr. and Mrs. Stoughton — and they were all heartily supporting Mr. Seymour. Fiske, however, did not waver for a moment in his support of the President; and in a letter to his mother, after expressing a wish that she would read John Stuart Mill's pamphlet on "The Contest in America," he says: "When next you see me you will find me full to the brim of war and politics — a fierce anti-secession and anti-slavery man."

Shortly after, he received from his mother a letter, in which, besides giving him her own views,

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she sent him a batch of the politico-constitutional literature of the day, in which the Administration was presented as a greater foe to the country than the Southerners in arms. Fiske's loyal indignation knows no bounds: and in a letter under date of November 3, 1862, — the day before the New York election, — he frees his mind. This letter contains one paragraph which to-day has a historical as well as a deep personal interest: —

“Oh, I cannot sleep in peace until I know the result of to-morrow's election in New York. If all were confided to our armies it would be well; but here is a great secession party arisen at the North, and calling itself Democratic! what shall we do? Just think of voting for Horatio Seymour and Fernando Wood! It is high time to suspend Habeas Corpus, when treason is rife in every dwelling. Much as I love liberty of thought and speech, it were better to have a despotism than this horrible anarchy. What is the use of getting up these immense armies of 600,000 men and building iron-clad fleets, if we are going to have a hornet's nest of treason growing here at home. I am getting discouraged. I hear treason and nothing else talked all the time. If Lincoln would hang the leaders of the Democratic party, and kick McClellan out of the army, it would be well; but such a result is too good to be hoped for.”

Some worthy people might say that the foregoing extract was rather an extravagant ebullition of a somewhat heated youthful patriotism. Neverthe-

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less, it reflects with great truth the terrible ordeal through which President Lincoln's Administration was passing, as well as the depth of feeling of the loyal people of the Northern States who were determined that the Nation in its entirety should live, and that the disgrace of upholding slavery should be removed forever from its Constitution.

From this time forward Fiske's absorbing interest in the success of the Union cause never lessened. He carefully followed Grant's campaign against Vicksburg, as well as the movements of the contending forces around Washington; and the letters give instances of sharp altercations with students of "Secesh" proclivities. To Mr. Lincoln's letters in 1862 and 1863 to various persons, defending his Administration, Fiske paid particular attention, regarding them as the best and clearest expositions of the war powers of the President under the Constitution that were called forth by the President's exercise of "Executive Power."

### *IX. His Engagement to Abby Morgan Brooks*

Still another phase of Fiske's life during his college days remains to be told. Not his study, not his writing, not his college rank, not his patriotism are the full index of his intellectual activities during this memorable period. No record of his collegiate life would be in any sense complete that did not include his romantic acquaintance with Abby Morgan Brooks, their engagement, and the ennobling



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influence of their betrothal upon the whole range of his intellectual activities during his junior and senior years. Briefly as this story must be told, it will be seen that it reveals an affectionate element as a marked characteristic in Fiske's intellectual make-up; and that this element is a fitting complement to his love for knowledge, in that it gives to the latter its finest zest — a desire to share its triumphs and honors with another.

There is further reason for this story here with much particularity of incident, for in the years to come we are to see this betrothal experience, of which we have such an interesting and faithful record, unfold and ripen into a domestic life of great richness and fulness, carrying with it, in ever-increasing measure to the very end, the fine, ennobling flavor with which it began.

At Miss Catharine Upham's, where, as we have seen, Fiske had taken rooms, there were a goodly number of boarders. Professor and Mrs. Child were there; and, in addition to a few undergraduates like Fiske, there were students from the Law School, as well as some young women attending Professor Agassiz's school for young ladies. Among the students from the Law School was James W. Brooks, of Petersham, Massachusetts, who, having been graduated at the Law School in 1858, was now pursuing some extra studies. The elder sister of Mr. Brooks, Abby Morgan Brooks, had previously been a student at Professor Agassiz's school, and

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had also boarded at Miss Upham's. She had many friends in Cambridge, and during the spring of 1861 she was much with her brother at Miss Upham's.

Miss Brooks enjoyed intimate social relations with Professor and Mrs. Child, and Professor Child had frequently spoken of young Fiske as one of the very best scholars in the college. He seemed to take pleasure in telling of Fiske's devotion to his studies, of how he economized his time, and especially of his library — a most extraordinary one for a student. Miss Brooks being with Professor and Mrs. Child one morning at prayer time, he took her to the window and said, "With the first stroke of the chapel bell, Fiske will start and you will see a race to reach the chapel door on the last stroke." Sure enough, the first stroke brought a rush from the house, and then, with rapid strides across the Delta, where now stands Memorial Hall, Fiske reached the chapel just as the last stroke announced the closing of the doors.

"This," said Professor Child in his genial way — "this is the devotion we see every morning."

Miss Brooks and Fiske, although they lived in the same house for several weeks in the spring of 1861, did not meet until the evening of June 11, at a lawn party given for Miss Brooks previous to her leaving for her home at Petersham. They then met casually, and Fiske was introduced to her. They had a pleasant general conversation of less than half an hour; and on her remarking that she was

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leaving the next day, he expressed his regret that he had not met her before, and the hope that he might have a further acquaintance in the autumn.

Miss Brooks was favorably impressed. Fiske was deeply so; and the impression with him endured. She was much in his mind during the summer vacation. Soon after his return in September he learned that Miss Brooks was planning to go to Chicago in October, with the intention of spending the winter there with her brother John. He was so deeply interested that he decided upon prompt action. He would go at once to Petersham, have an interview with Miss Brooks in her home, and, as a preliminary to a better acquaintance, ask for the privilege of a correspondence. Accordingly, he got a week's leave of absence from the college for the ostensible purpose of seeking a school for teaching during the winter, and on Friday, September 13, 1861, he set out for Petersham, by way of Athol — a pilgrimage which involved at its farther end, by reason of the train arriving too late for the coach, a tramp of nine miles on foot. The long tramp was without adventure, save that at a roadside watering-place he was accosted by some country folk, probably by reason of his somewhat blousy costume, with a question which reflects the agitation of the time — "Be ye a solger"? Fiske could only assure his questioners that he had no belligerent intentions.

The day was fine. It was one of those September days in New England when all nature seems at-

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tuned. The glories of autumn's rich foliage were just beginning to manifest themselves in the occasional burning bush, the scarlet maple, and the variegated tints creeping over the woodlands. As Fiske plodded the long rise of road from Athol to the high plateau of Petersham, every step forward was the revelation of an ever-increasing charm, until, as he reached the summit, he found spread before him a scene of indescribable beauty and of singular impressiveness, as on either hand the respective valleys with their ridges of wooded hills, just blushing with autumn's coming colors, rolled miles and miles away.

As Fiske moved onward he was profoundly affected by the beauty of the surrounding country, and as he approached Petersham, lying a little below him on the southern slope of the plateau, he stepped aside to survey the whole scene with this hamlet lying so quietly before him, its church spire gilded by the setting sun and rising so picturesquely among the trees, and to speculate upon what these surroundings held in store for him.

Could he only have known! In the years to come we are to see this temporary resting-place transformed in his mind into a veritable Mount Pisgah; we are also to see this romantic adventure ripen, in the midst of these beautiful surroundings, into the holiest of human ties. Further, we are to see these surroundings so made a part of his own life that they are to become a measure of nature's beauty in many

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Old-World places famous for their scenic charms, while they are also to serve as a fitting setting to some of the profoundest thinking that can engage the human mind.

Fiske was graciously received by Miss Brooks and the other members of her family — her mother, her brother James and sister Martha. At first he sought to disguise the purpose of the visit under the plea that he was looking for a school to teach during the winter. James Brooks, however, soon saw through this gentle subterfuge, and on his remarking "that there was n't much to call a young fellow to such an out-of-the-way place as Petersham unless he has some object of special interest in view," Fiske smiled, and frankly admitted, "That's just my case, Mr. Brooks!" His errand, therefore, was revealed and he remained in Petersham until the following Wednesday.

He saw Miss Brooks several times. She was very gracious, and his regard for her greatly increased. Just before leaving he asked for the privilege of a correspondence, and he accompanied the request with the assurance that there was not an act of his life that he was not perfectly willing she should know. Somewhat confused by the directness and the evident purpose of the request, Miss Brooks thanked him for his desire for a further acquaintance and told him she would be pleased to correspond with him were it not that she was under certain obligations that would prevent her doing so

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at present. Seeing his evident embarrassment, she delicately gave him to understand that she was not engaged to be married. Feeling that it would be impertinent to press for further explanation of the nature of her obligations, Fiske let the matter of the correspondence rest for the present. By her gracious manner Miss Brooks placed him at his ease, and on his leaving, she thanked him for his visit, telling him that she would be in Boston for a few days previous to going to Chicago, and that it would give her pleasure to see him there.

Fiske returned hopeful if not confident. What could be the nature of the obligation Miss Brooks was under? Was it a promise to some member of her family given to protect her from all "entangling alliances," or was it a bit of womanly tactfulness or reserve thrown out as a protection against a rather impetuous suitor? In either case he felt that he had made decided progress in his suit. He had enlarged his knowledge of the conditions, and he had announced his purpose, which had not been rejected. Further than this, he had found Petersham the most delightful place he had ever seen; that the Brooks family and homestead fitly represented the best type of the pure New England character; and that Miss Brooks, in her own home, appeared to much better advantage even than on the occasion of his chance meeting with her in Cambridge. He determined, therefore, to follow up his suit on the visit of Miss Brooks to Boston.



ABBY MORGAN BROOKS

(From a miniature made in 1861, shortly before her engagement to John Fiske)





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In the meantime her ideal in his mind is greatly heightened and becomes a fresh source of inspiration to his thought. He goes at his Buckle article, which we have already seen was under way, with renewed ardor, the while hoping that ere long she may read it and like it, and that he may be able to tell her that she was in no small degree an elemental force in its composition.

Just as he was leaving for his Thanksgiving visit to his grandmother, Fiske learned that Miss Brooks was spending Thanksgiving week at her brother's in Boston. He called upon her on his way to his train, but did not find her at home. He cut short his visit to his grandmother, and returned on Saturday of the Thanksgiving week. In the evening he called upon Miss Brooks and was cordially received. During the interview he asked if she was willing to explain the nature of the "obligations" to which she had referred in their conversation at Petersham. This she said she was perfectly willing to do, and it was arranged that he should call the next Monday afternoon for the explanation.

It is needless to say that Fiske was prompt in keeping the appointment, and it is quite probable that he "cut" a recitation or lecture in so doing. He found Miss Brooks knitting socks for the soldiers, a very general occupation then for loyal women, and he "lent a hand" in the unwinding of the yarn.

The "obligation" proved to be a promise to her brother John that she would not enter into cor-

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respondence with any gentleman without his consent. The evidence is abundant that Miss Brooks was under the thoughtful care of her brothers. In the course of the conversation, she told Fiske that she had thought much over his proposal of a correspondence since his Petersham visit, and inasmuch as her mother and her brother James had no objection to her engaging in it, she had decided to ask the consent of her brother John. They parted with mutual expressions of much good-will, not again to meet until Miss Brooks's return in the spring.

Miss Brooks was delayed in getting away by reason of the departure of her brother James for Paris as Vice-Consul with John Bigelow, and she sent Fiske a brief note in explanation. He responded by sending her a copy of his article on Buckle, then just published. On Christmas Day he received a letter from Miss Brooks in which she acknowledged the receipt of the article and expressed her profound admiration of it. Best of all, she told him that her brother John gave his cordial consent to their correspondence.

Fiske was supremely happy, and in his New Year's letter to his mother of January 1, 1862, he gave her the full particulars of his acquaintance with Miss Brooks, and he wished his mother "A Happy New Year" in nine different languages!

In replying to Miss Brooks's letter assenting to their correspondence, Fiske expressed his great

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pleasure at her approval of his Buckle article, and added, "More than one sentence in it was framed with the thought that you were one day to read it; and since you like it, what more could I desire?"

He proposed, for their better acquaintance, that they exchange confidences and tell each other what they had felt, studied, thought, done; and as an evidence of the strength and sincerity of his own feeling he enclosed a letter he wrote her on the evening of their meeting at Miss Upham's the previous June — a letter he had withheld. In this letter he asked for "an occasional" friendly correspondence, and then added: —

Something almost compels me to write this, though I readily imagine how assuming I may appear in doing so. But I can sincerely say that were the state of things now to exist, of which we read in fairy fable, and were some beneficent genii to ask me what boon of all I would soonest have granted me, I should at once answer this — that you might deign to bestow upon me the favor for which I have just asked. Should you think best to refuse this request, I beg you to think no more of it. I am yours, with deep respect,

JOHN FISKE.

In the exchange of confidences which followed, there are delightful passages of self-revealing on both sides. On his part he gives, in a simple, truthful way, charming sketches of his past life from his earliest boyhood; of his father, his mother, his grandparents; his Middletown life, his schooling,

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his religious experiences, his search for truth and his high ideals of scholarship, which are in accord with the presentation in the foregoing pages. Miss Brooks responded with equal frankness and gave an account of her life as a member of a cultured New England family in the midst of the pleasantest surroundings; of her educational training and the freedom of her mind from religious sectarianism or intolerance; and then, with fine womanly feeling, she expressed her appreciation of the upright, manly traits in his character, her deep sympathy with him in his aspirations, and her desire to follow him as far as possible in his scholarly pursuits.

Only a few, comparatively, of the fine passages in Fiske's letters can be given here. The letters as a whole are another witness to the uprightness of his character and the breadth of his knowledge, as well as to the fact that through his affections he was being stirred to still broader and nobler ideals of life and of duty.]

He spent his winter vacation in Middletown, and he gives Miss Brooks the following bit of evidence that she possesses rare magical powers:—

“I brought to Middletown, for vacation study, the text of the Hebrew Bible with the theoretic comments of several old tobacco, lager-beery Germans, a book on Hebrew syntax, a book on Sanskrit inflections, and several other highly interesting and profitable works of a similar stamp. Just for variety, I brought along Dante and a book on zoölogy.

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Ordinarily, I should have been engrossed in these interesting works; but since I have come within the radius of your attractive power, which extends more than 1000 miles, — the *attraction* NOT diminishing as the square of the distance increases, — I feel compelled to write to you rather than to study. So Q.E.D. you must be a magician of no ordinary power.”

Miss Brooks has given him a sketch of her educational training, and he comments upon it with such ripe judgment that we forget it is not a mature, experienced mind that is speaking: —

“I supposed you must have acquired a familiarity with French, and I am very glad to know that you have studied Latin and German. After all, my dear girl, you have hit upon those dialects which are most useful and most fraught with pleasure. I mean especially French and German, though I would not discourage the study of Latin for young ladies. Still, Latin has less charms for me than the others. I have got a thorough acquaintance with the grammar and structure of it and some little facility in translating; but from what I have seen of Roman literature I think it so dry and dull, so wanting in freshness and thought and feeling, that it seems *almost* a waste of time for a young lady to study it when she *might* be spending her leisure on German — a language of *eternal* freshness, beauty, and poetry. Of all the languages I have looked into, I know of *none* which possesses such intense and growing fascination, such exquisite beauty, such exhaustless wealth of learning, thought, fancy, and emotion as the German. I will make but one

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exception to this — the dear English, which, thank Heaven, we know already. But next to your own language you can learn no other which will so richly repay you as German.”<sup>1</sup>

Miss Brooks modestly told him that she had “a smattering of Latin, a little French and German, some geometry, a trifle of history, and more or less of current literature.” He responds: —

“That is very promising. Don’t laugh! I am in earnest. It looks chaotic to be sure, but the wand of the Positivist conjurer can bring shape and order into the mass. ‘A smattering of Latin’ is all you need for *my* purposes; ‘a little French and German’ can soon become much French and German; ‘some geometry’ can grow into a perception of the position and scope of mathematics and into wide views of space, etc.; ‘a trifle of history’ may develop, imperceptibly, into a knowledge of the unfolding of the human intellect in all ages and countries. I know I could do all this if I were with you. Besides, I could tell you ‘anecdotes’ of any or every science, which would be sweeter than fairy-legend.”

Speaking of his own linguistic acquirements he says: —

“I can’t *talk* in *any* language but my own; but I read in German, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Latin, Greek, and Anglo-Saxon. Then with hard study I can decipher sentence by sentence

<sup>1</sup> When Miss Brooks was studying Italian with Mr. Fiske during their engagement, he carefully preserved in his notebook all the Italian exercises written by her; the lessons came to an end with the reading of *I Promessi Sposi*, by Alessandro Manzoni.

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Dutch, Danish, Swedish, Hebrew, Chaldee, and Sanskrit; and there are some few which I have dipped into without doing much, either because they have little literature, or because I have no time for them — Zend, Gothic, Wallachian, and Provençal. Persian and Arabic I long to know, but I despair of ever having the time to learn them; there is so much to be done in other things. Before long anatomy, physiology, and kindred sciences will engross me, and I am afraid I shall have to bid a last farewell to philology.”

Even at this early age, he has a clear conception of the need of an underlying philosophy which shall unify all knowledge; hence this fine passage: —

“There are so many things to be learned, that at first sight they may seem like a confused chaos. The different departments of knowledge may appear so separate and conflicting, and yet so mingled and interdependent, as to render it a matter of doubt where the beginning should be made. But when we have come to a true philosophy, and make *that* our stand-point, all things become clear. We know what things to learn, and what, in the infinite mass of things to leave unlearned — and then the Universe becomes clear and harmonious.”

Fiske is greatly pleased to know that Miss Brooks wishes to follow him in his scholarly pursuits, and he tells her how he would have her follow him. The passage in which he tells her this is worthy of special note, in view of their intellectual companionship, as we are to see its future unfolding: —

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“Believe me, these pursuits are sweet and pleasant as no others are: they never weary, they never satiate. Yet for all that I would not have my darling a book-worm. I would not care to have her immensely learned and wise — do you appreciate and not misunderstand the feeling? I would have her ‘follow me,’ as she says, ‘in my pursuits.’ I would have her sympathy in them. I would impart to her the ideas which keep coming into my mind. Then I would love her *so* dearly, and honor and respect her *so* deeply and truly, that the thought of her — that her blest influence would keep me ever from the wrong, and call forth all that is best and holiest in me. God grant that it may be so.”

Such a correspondence (and these extracts indicate the character of the thought which imbued the letters) led, as might be expected, to an early engagement. On the return of Miss Brooks in March, 1862, she spent a few days in Boston and the engagement was announced. On her return to Petersham the correspondence is resumed and we have further revelations of her inspiring influence upon his mind. His thought turns to the means of gaining a livelihood for them both after his graduation, and very naturally, with his youthful optimism, he looks forward to engaging in some form of literary work. The following passage reflects his state of mind: —

“I am going to work now, and the thought of you will inspire me to new exertion. I am going to



## Engagement to Miss Brooks

study more thoroughly than ever the Hebrew language, history and mythology, and trace the confluence of ancient philosophies and theologies into the great stream of thought which issued in Christianity; then the rise, culmination and decline of dogmatic Christianity, till its forms fell away and the deep religion which lay beneath them was taken up by Positive philosophers and grew into the world religion announced by Herbert Spencer, the greatest of the sons of men! Won't it be glorious when I can pursue these studies with you by my side, and some day write a history of the religious development of mankind. I am confident that the happy time will come. No use in despairing. What a book I could write if you were sitting by me. 'On dira dans mille ans, "O, l'œuvre vive et tendre, brûlante encore!" Mais, c'est qu'elle était là!' Don't you believe it is so? I will show you some day."

At this time his friend Roberts had also become engaged, and the high philosophico-religious feeling that animates both young men finds expression in the following terms. After the departure of Miss Brooks for her home at Petersham, Fiske writes Roberts thus:—

"The last twelve days have been by far the happiest of my life. I know now what it is to be loved. I am at last SAVED. My religion is the religion of love. My God is the Eternal incarnate in my beloved. I hate this infernal college life of poll-debauchery which is going on about me, and look forward to the time when we shall together lead the life of the Eternal man."

## John Fiske

Roberts promptly responded:—

“It is with the greatest pleasure that I read your letter, and I again feel that we both have the same noble aims, the same ambitious purposes, the same religion, the same creed — but not the same Gods. For I perceive that this religion is polytheistic, considered socially; but considered with reference to the individual worshipper, monotheistic. This is the grand reconciliation of the past with the present—the grand paradox of the universe. Man pronounces a creed which is more mystic than the Nicene — a creed wherein not three only, but an infinite number of pure and holy Beings are confounded in the person of the Eternal Woman. But the worshipper finds his Saviour, his Redeemer, his Evangel in that one Divinity of his free choice, before whom there are no other Gods.”

Space forbids further extracts from these interesting letters. The ennobling influence which entered into Fiske's soul through his engagement to Miss Brooks is apparent during the remainder of his college life, broadening his sympathies and heightening his purposes, and in the years to follow we are to trace it as an enriching influence to the very end.

In closing the account of this episode in Fiske's college life, it only remains to be added that Peterham soon became endeared to him beyond all other places; that he made occasional visits to Miss Brooks which involved heavy penalties against his “honors” for recitations and religious services

## His College Rank

unduly "cut," while Petersham absorbed the principal part of his subsequent vacations. In the years to come, we shall see that in his personal calendar of memorable days, the 13th of September was always held in tender regard as the anniversary of his romantic journey to Petersham, when to him, foot-sore and weary, its beauties and its interests were first revealed.

And so, faithfully going through his college exercises, completing his essay on the "Evolution of Language" for the "North American Review," reading widely on scientific and philosophic subjects, following with great interest Grant's campaign in Mississippi as well as the movements of the contending armies around Washington, the while looking forward with radiant hope to the "large excitement that the coming years would yield" when he should be united to the object of his affections, Fiske's senior year at Harvard comes to its close, and on the 15th of July, 1863, he was graduated with his class, while the great Union victories at Vicksburg and at Gettysburg were echoing through the land.

At his graduation Fiske supposed that owing to his marks he stood near the foot of his class, and he did not care enough about the matter to find out what his rank was. Several years after, he was in the Dean's office overhauling the books, when he

## John Fiske

came across the records of his class and he writes his mother: —

“I found I stood 47th among 112 and my name ought to have been printed: eleven names were printed which stood lower than mine. The amount of my deductions for absences, etc., was above 5000. Omitting these from the amount, and calculating my rank on my marks *on my examinations* alone, I should have stood first for senior year, and fourth or fifth for the whole course. My average percentage for senior year was almost unprecedentedly high. But the measles spoiled it: I lost six weeks and never cared enough about it to make them up.”

## CHAPTER X

FAILS TO GET POSITION AS TEACHER OR AS TUTOR AT HARVARD — ENTERS THE HARVARD LAW SCHOOL — ADMITTED TO THE BAR — HIS GENERAL READING — OPENING OF CORRESPONDENCE WITH SPENCER — MARRIAGE

1863-1864

DURING the latter half of his senior year Fiske's thought was much given to the choice of a profession. Spurning the thought of being dependent upon his mother, and at the same time desirous of being married, the letters reveal the balancing in his mind of the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the two professions — law and teaching. Each was considered from two viewpoints — as a means of earning a livelihood, and as giving at the same time opportunity for the pursuit of his scientific and philosophic studies. The law was the choice of his mother, while his own preference was decidedly for teaching. Following his own inclinations, he secured before graduation commendations for his scholarship from Professors Peabody, Lowell, Child, Gurney, and Bowen, and also one from Mr. George Ticknor. He was somewhat surprised at getting a commendation from Professor Bowen, and he says regarding it: "Professor Bowen is a fellow who loves to argue and likes opposition, and

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he has taken quite a fancy to me because I pitch into him."

Thus equipped, the securing of a good position as instructor in the classic or modern languages, or in history, in a high school or in a well-established private school, did not appear to him as a matter likely to be attended with much difficulty. He also felt quite confident that his scholarship and the personal good-will of Professors Peabody, Lowell, Child, and Gurney would secure him a position as tutor at the college should he desire to begin teaching there.

We have seen that during the latter half of his senior year, he was busily engaged upon an essay on the "Evolution of Language" for the "North American Review." While finishing this essay, he sends Miss Brooks the following declaration of his purpose to push the teaching project as soon as the essay is off his hands: —

A MOVE SOON TO BE MADE  
A SCHOOL  
TO BE TAKEN

---

Wonders  
To be done

But without experience in teaching, the getting of a position as instructor that would warrant his being married was not a matter of such easy accomplishment as appeared to the student Fiske. His

## Choice of Profession

first contact with the conditions of practical life brought him to a distinct realization that "experience" was not wholly a philosophic term and limited to the theory of knowledge; but that it embodied something tangible, something negotiable in the interchange of social service which takes place when a person earns his living.

Before his graduation Fiske made application to Dr. Francis Gardner, the Principal of the Boston Latin School, and to Dr. J. D. Philbrick, the Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools, for any position as instructor in the languages or in history at their disposal. His letters of commendation and his modest, scholarly bearing secured for him courteous consideration; and it was while pressing his case in Boston that he learned of a vacancy in the High School in Charlestown, which had not then been annexed to Boston. It appears that he applied to the Committee of the Charlestown High School for the position in July. His application was well received. There were twelve applicants — all recent graduates — and he was made to feel that he was the preference of the Committee. He was much elated. The action of the Committee was postponed from time to time during the summer, and until early in September, when a fresh candidate appeared, — one who had had several years' experience in teaching, — and he was elected.

During the period of suspense Fiske was at Petersham and at Middletown, and plans for his

## John Fiske

marriage and for settling down to a life of strenuous labor as teacher, student, and occasional writer on the many philosophic questions that were engaging public attention, were much in his mind. It disappointed him greatly to learn — as he did during this period — that one line of teaching, which he felt sure he could fall back upon in case of necessity, was not open to him — professional work at Harvard College. He consulted Professor Gurney about applying for a tutorship. Professor Gurney frankly told him that his application would not be favorably received in the minds of some of the faculty; that his reputation as a pronounced Darwinian would preclude any consideration of his exceptional qualifications as a tutor.

It appears that during these few weeks of uncertain waiting and partial discouragement, he found a sort of solace as well as mental recreation in reading the Waverley Novels. He gave himself with perfect *abandon* to the charm of the "Scotch Romancer." After reading "The Heart of Mid-Lothian" and "The Bride of Lammermoor" he writes his mother thus: —

"I am almost or quite as much delighted with Scott as with Dickens. What a rich treat I shall have in the score or so of novels I am now going to read! In view of the delight now in store for me I am almost inclined to forgive myself for not having looked into Scott before. What a great writer he is!"



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The other reading he indulged in during this period was Spencer's "Biology," which was then appearing in numbers. He has secured a photograph of Spencer, and he gives his mother the impression the portrait makes upon his mind: —

"Spencer's face is a magnificent one. There is something not quite perfect about the mouth; but the eyes are like those of a lynx, and the grandest I ever saw. Taken all together, the effect of the head and face is as imposing as Newton's; while at the same time the expression is gentle, humorous, and lovable, in the extreme."

We also get from the letters of this waiting period other glimpses of the great Civil War struggle, particularly what followed in the wake of the decisive victories of Vicksburg and Gettysburg — how Boston and Cambridge were alive with rockets and candles; how the draft riots in New York made Fiske apprehensive for his mother's house there; how the draft was being enforced in Cambridge; how Fiske had escaped, while a "secesh" classmate who had ridiculed Lincoln and had jeered at "Mr. U. S. Grant," had been drafted; and how "Copperheads," believing that Lee would capture Philadelphia, had bought gold at \$1.45 which they were now selling at \$1.28.

Failing to get a position as instructor in a high school, and finding that he was *persona non grata* for a tutorship at Harvard, Fiske realized that he must look to some other profession than that of

## John Fiske

teaching as a means of support and that his marriage might be indefinitely postponed. He now turned his attention seriously to the law. All through his college course his mother and Mr. Stoughton had held before him the study and practice of the law as a proper sequence to his collegiate studies. He had, however, steadily refused to entertain the thought of giving up the pursuit of scientific knowledge in the very interesting era that was opening before him.

But now that he was graduated and found himself facing the question of a self-supporting profession, with the desire of being married uppermost in his mind, and with the profession of teaching not practically available to him, he turned to the consideration of the law as offering the best way out of the difficulties that confronted him. He reviewed the whole situation calmly, and after consulting with Professor Gurney and Judge Curtis, he writes his mother, under date of September 19, 1863, — two days after the Charlestown decision, — as follows:—

“As soon as I have thought things over a little and discussed with Abby, I want to come to New York, if it is convenient, and talk with both you and Mr. Stoughton. Writing is a poor means of communication. I am quite sure that my present views will please you and Mr. Stoughton; and Mr. Gurney thinks it of the first importance that I go to New York in person as soon as I have seen Abby. Don't telegraph for me, but let me take time and be mysterious for a few days. I think,

## Chooses the Law

perhaps, you will not be sorry at my failure, when you hear what it has brought me to."

After a full consideration of the situation with Miss Brooks, and with her hearty consent, he decided to accept the law, and he went to New York to see his mother and Mr. Stoughton.<sup>1</sup> He was received with special cordiality. His decision was highly commended, and he was encouraged to think that the law, in some of the higher phases of its practice, would afford ample scope for the employment of his eminently philosophical and judicial mind. That Mr. and Mrs. Stoughton were

<sup>1</sup> In this connection the following letter from Judge Curtis to Mr. Stoughton is of interest: —

BOSTON, *September 22, 1863.*

*Dear Stoughton,* —

Some time last spring we had a conversation about the choice of a profession for John, and I then told you, if I remember, quite decidedly that I did not think he had best study law. My reasons, I believe, were, that I thought he was better adapted for a teacher, a profession now of much importance and of increasing consideration. I have lately had some further means of judging, from intercourse with him and conversations with Roberts about him, and I think I ought to write to you and say that I believe I expressed too confident an opinion, and that I am inclined to change it. I should trust Roberts's opinion rather than my own. From conversation with him I suppose he is getting much inclined to study law. His friend, Professor Gurney, strongly advises it, and Roberts is very much of the same opinion. And having reflected a good deal upon it, I certainly should not dissuade him if I would be asked what my opinion is. I have therefore thought I ought to write to you and say that you should not be influenced by *anything* I have heretofore said to the contrary.

Yours always,

B. R. CURTIS.

E. W. STOUGHTON, ESQ.,  
NEW YORK.

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greatly pleased at the turn his thought had taken is evident from the fact that they made ample provision for his taking a two years' course of study at the Harvard Law School, at the same time assuring him that on his admission to the bar — for which the course at the Law School was a preparation — he should have their hearty assent to his marriage.

Fiske returned to Cambridge in a happy state of mind. He now had a definite purpose before him, the accomplishment of which was to take precedence of all other interests. His entrance at the Law School bears date of October 7, 1863.

As the Harvard Law School was at this time the leading law school of the country, a glance at its course of study and its requirements is not without interest. The course of study embraced "the various branches of the Common Law and of Equity; Admiralty; Commercial, International and Constitutional Law, and the Jurisprudence of the United States." There were but three instructors or professors, and the instruction was mainly by lectures. Students elected their own lines of study, could enter at any time and without examination; and upon the certificate and recommendation of the faculty — and on payment of all dues to the college — could receive, without any examination whatever, the degree of Bachelor of Laws. The only requirement was with reference to the degree, and this was that eighteen months' study of the law

## At Harvard Law School

should be the condition of its award. There seems to have been a genial "go-as-you-please" air about the whole school.

The letters to his mother give many incidents connected with his settling down to his new line of work — such as arrangements for convenient study, allotment of hours to his legal studies, his enthusiasm for these studies, his provisions for scientific, historic, and philosophic reading, as well as for incidental work. We will note a few of them.

During the latter half of his senior year we saw him writing his essay on the "Evolution of Language." The essay was published in the "North American Review" for October, 1863, and he received as payment for it the very moderate sum of forty dollars. This money he appropriated to his convenience in working, and he gives his mother the particulars as follows: —

"My desk came yesterday. It is the most beautiful piece of furniture almost that I ever saw. I take the more pride in it that it is peculiarly the fruit of my own brain. In the first place, I paid for it — within \$3 — by writing that article; and only, I designed the whole thing, leaving nothing to the cabinet-maker but to put my ideas into wooden shape. I take more pleasure in it than in almost any chattel I ever possessed."

In another place he tells his mother that he has "got a Worcester's Dictionary, for in reading law, a lexicon is an absolute necessity. I have occasion

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to use it at least two dozen times a day. I had no English dictionary before."

That he began his new line of work in his usual systematic way is shown by his general plan, which he gives as follows: —

"My plan is to study law from 8 A.M. to 4½ P.M., then go to the gymnasium and bowling alley till 6, and then have the evening for side study. As soon as I get a little more settled, I shall set apart some special time every week for writing letters."

What was the nature of his side study is partially revealed in the following incidental passage: —

"George<sup>1</sup> has been here all the afternoon and evening, and we have been discussing a little law, and reading together about Cause and Effect, and trying to ascertain the date of the passage of the Earth's perihelion through the vernal equinox."<sup>2</sup>

In the beginning, his comments on his legal studies are of interest, especially upon the classic "Commentaries" of Blackstone which came first in his order of legal study. In an early letter to his mother, he says: —

"Since Wednesday morning I have been steadily engaged on Blackstone, the first volume of which I shall finish to-morrow. Then I shall commence Story on Bailments and read it and Blackstone to-

<sup>1</sup> His friend George Litch Roberts.

<sup>2</sup> In a letter to Miss Brooks, referring to this astronomical calculation, he says: "We found the year, viz. 3987 B.C., but couldn't succeed in ascertaining the *exact day*."

## At Harvard Law School

gether. I am perfectly enraptured with Blackstone. I scarcely ever read anything so interesting in my life. I get so engrossed in it that I can hardly bear to leave it to go to bed. I am inclined to think that this notion of the law being 'dry' is all humbug, and that I shall find it as attractive as any study I ever pursued."

And a few days later he writes: —

"I have been working hard at law all this week — have got well along in the second volume of Blackstone, and by to-night shall be half through Story on Bailments. I have also read 'Rob Roy,' which probably closes my account with Scott for the present — barring his remaining 'Tales of a Grandfather.' I never knew what I was talking about when I professed a dislike for the law. The subject of 'Contingent Remainders,' is said to be one of the driest in the whole science, but from what I get of it in Blackstone I think it perfectly fascinating; and as for Bailments, it is as pretty reading as Trigonometry."

To Miss Brooks he writes in the same strain: —

"I am really getting in love with the law. My scholarly habits are beginning to tell. Instead of taking it up with a listless dilettante air like those fellows who don't know how to study, I am going right into it just as I have been wont to go into other things 'head over heels.' I think I have got into my true sphere now."

By the end of October Fiske is completely settled in his former student rooms, Holyoke Place, Cam-

## John Fiske

bridge, and is fully "squared away" in his attack upon the law, the while keeping up his scientific, historic, and philosophic studies; and at the same time watching with intense interest the movements of the contending armies in Virginia and eastern Tennessee.<sup>1</sup> From the letters we have these further glimpses of his state of mind, his surroundings, and his manner of working.

In a letter to Miss Brooks he says: —

"The day is perfectly divine, and the sunlight just beginning to creep in at the bay-window on the plants, looks so mild and dreamily beautiful that it makes me feel perfectly happy — like one of Tennyson's Lotus-Eaters. I think myself in that blessed land —

'In which it seemed always afternoon.'

"These beautiful October days are the pleasantest in the year to me. Now that I have begun to quote poetry, and since I am smoking my after-dinner pipe, let me quote Scott's exquisite lines about tobacco: —

'The Indian leaf doth briefly burn;  
So doth man's strength to weakness turn;  
The fire of youth extinguished quite,  
Comes age, like embers dry and white.'

And to his mother he writes: —

"I am all alone; nobody comes to hinder me, and so the coast is clear. I mean to make it a rule to read

<sup>1</sup> To Miss Brooks he sends diagrams of the military movements in the two fields of operation.



## Visited by E. L. Youmans

one volume of Law and one volume of Science or History every week, except when I write instead of extra reading. This can be done in 6 hours per day for Law, and 4 for Science. I am going to study like a biquadrated Joseph Scaliger."

But his quiet life as an isolated student at law was not to continue. His two essays — the one on Buckle and the other on "Language" — had attracted the attention of thoughtful minds in England and at Cambridge, and it may properly be said that the progressive thought of the time sought him out, and in two notable ways that had a marked effect upon his young, expanding mind. The manner in which his quiet student life was invaded is given in a letter to his mother, November 2, 1863. The letter covers five closely written pages, and evidently was written at different times. He writes:—

"I have a great deal to say and must be brief on each subject. Youmans, the author of the Chemistry, has called upon me. He got Buckle republished in this country, was attracted by my article, and tried to discover the author, but could n't. He knows Spencer, Lewes, Mill, Tyndall, Huxley, Bain, Lyell, Morell, and all the great thinkers. He told Spencer that my article on Buckle was the ablest one that had been written on that subject. Spencer wanted to see the article, and told Youmans to hunt up the author by all means. Lately Youmans saw my last article, found out who wrote it, and came out to see me. He wishes me to write to Spencer *at once* and says that both Spencer and

## John Fiske

Lewes want to know the author of the Essay on Buckle. He tells me to send Spencer both articles, and await a reply.

“Youmans manages the publication of Spencer’s serial. He is going to issue an edition of Spencer’s Essays and wants me to write an Introduction for it, which I have agreed to do — a popular thing, you know, about ten pages, for American readers.

“Youmans promised to send a copy of Draper’s work,<sup>1</sup> and if he thinks to send it, I think I can write an article on it in time for the April number of the ‘North American Review.’ Youmans came out and spent the afternoon with me yesterday, and George and I went in and took supper with himself, wife and sister at the Parker House.”

Fiske interrupts his narrative of Youmans’s visit to speak of the change of editors of the “North American Review,” and what the change signifies to him.

“The ‘North American’ has again changed hands. Peabody is superseded by C. E. Norton and J. R. Lowell. Norton has just sent down to me to come and see him at once, for he wants me to keep him supplied with critical notices and also to write an article whenever I have time. The ‘Review’ is going to give double pay, viz: \$2. a page instead of \$1.00. Of course I shall accept. I am going over to see him as soon as I have mailed this. I think I am being taken up in great style. Bully! is n’t it?”

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Intellectual Development of Europe*, by John William Draper, M.D., LL.D., Professor of Chemistry, University of New York.

## Visited by E. L. Youmans

That the visit of Youmans was a predominating influence in his mind, and that Youmans gave him much interesting information in regard to the personnel of his English friends, is evident from the closing paragraphs of this letter, where the following particulars in regard to Spencer, Lewes, and George Eliot are abruptly introduced:—

“Spencer is forty-two years old — bachelor. — Lewes is forty-six, married to Marian Evans; a big imperturbable Englishman; has written ‘History of Philosophy,’ ‘Comte’s Philosophy of the Sciences,’ ‘Life of Goethe,’ ‘Philosophy of Common Life,’ — (his *chef d’œuvre*) ‘Studies in Animal Life,’ ‘Seaside Studies’ — the last I have read two or three times — also a Spanish drama, ‘Ranthorpe,’ a novel, and several dramas. He is now writing a ‘History of Science.’ Mrs. Lewes has made \$35,000 off of ‘Romola.’

“Spencer has been a Civil Engineer by profession — has never been to college but is by all comparison the most learned man living. His power of concentration is so intense as to be dangerous, for it brings the blood rushing to the head so that he has to desist from work and go out and play. He is six feet high, rather slender, very graceful, prodigious head, quite bald, voice very melodious and rich; temperament very nervous and excitable. Youmans calls him the kindest and dearest old fellow that ever lived; says his conversational powers are absolutely miraculous; most magnetic man he ever saw. Takes great interest in our war and sides with the North. Gets mad if anybody says a word for the South! bangs into the London *Times* and the

## John Fiske

aristocracy for their course in the matter. Youmans says all the scientific men abroad are for the North. Nobody for the South but old fogies like Brougham."

Youmans was a very inspiring man. His life had been a struggle against obstacles that would have daunted an ordinary mind. Born into a family life where prudent living was a necessity, where good literature was common, and where serious thinking on questions of social life and duties prevailed, he early became imbued with high ideals of social serviceableness. Just as he was preparing for college he became afflicted with partial blindness, which at times became total, and which made consecutive, persistent study impossible. He never recovered from this affliction. Notwithstanding such a heavy physical handicap he struggled bravely on in his pursuit of knowledge; and at the age of thirty he had become, through his own exertions, one of the best-informed scientific men of his time. He then thought to put his knowledge to use; and through lectures, essays, and textbooks, he became, in a national sense, an "Interpreter of Science to the People."

In 1860 he was among the first persons in America to recognize the significance of the new school of thought rising in England and crystallizing around the scientific researches of Lyell, Huxley, Tyndall, Faraday, Grove, and Darwin, with its philosophic culmination in Spencer's Law of Evolution. Nor

## Visited by E. L. Youmans

was he slow to perceive the bearing of this thought upon theology, upon education—in fact, upon all the interests of social well-being. His wise counsels induced the eminent publishing firm of D. Appleton & Company to undertake the publication in America, on a copyright basis, of the works of these eminent English scientists. This led to a visit to England by Youmans in 1862 and to his personal acquaintance with the whole group of English scientists and thinkers who made the middle period of the last century the most memorable in the history of science. His intelligent enthusiasm won their respect, and he returned with assurances of their hearty coöperation in his efforts to make science a fundamental feature in the education of the people.

It was while engaged in various projects to this end that he fell in with Fiske's two essays mentioned above. He saw at once that here was an American scholar whose erudition was of full measure, and who was gifted with remarkable powers of lucid exposition. Youmans saw the need of such a thinker and writer properly to present the new philosophy of science to the American public, and he sought out Fiske, as we have seen.<sup>1</sup>

This visit of Youmans was the beginning of a warm personal friendship between the two men, which had no interruption until the death of

<sup>1</sup> In his endeavor to find the author of the two essays, Youmans made inquiry of a clergyman in Boston, and was told that "they were written by a young atheist in Cambridge, named Fiske."

## John Fiske

Youmans in 1887. In the years to come, we shall see them working side by side in the propagation of ideas common to both, with Fiske's fine tribute to the memory of his friend when that friend's hand was still. At present we should note two things: that this visit is the first substantial recognition of his thought that has come to Fiske outside his own personal circle; and also, that it brings to him direct personal knowledge of the group of English scientists and thinkers whose thought was so largely influencing his own, and in so sympathetic a way, that he feels that in support of the higher phases of his own thinking, friendly hands are stretched out to him across the sea.

Norton's request for contributions, and Fiske's visit to Norton, which followed at once, were only a little less gratifying to Fiske than the visit of Youmans. The "North American Review" had long been the representative organ of the best scholarship in America; and now that its editorial control had passed into the hands of such scholars as James Russell Lowell and Charles Eliot Norton, a personal editorial request for contributions was one of the most flattering recognitions an American scholar could receive.

In his call upon Norton, Fiske was received with such courtesy and marked appreciation that the call insensibly lengthened to a visit. The conversation ranged over a wide variety of subjects in classic and mediæval history, literature, and art; it also

## Visits Charles Eliot Norton

covered the general principles of criticism applicable to the interpretation of life both in the past and the present. In this delightful atmosphere, Fiske for the time being forgot all about the law, and yielded himself without reserve to the simple yet helpful way in which Norton bore himself as scholar, critic, and adviser. In after years Fiske referred to this visit as one of the most helpful incidents in his life. We shall see later that some thirty years after Norton also held a distinct and pleasant remembrance of this interview.<sup>1</sup>

These visits of Youmans to Fiske and of Fiske to Norton, occurring almost simultaneously, were significant events in the life of Fiske. He was not yet twenty-two years of age. His intellectual output had been but incidental in his college life, and yet it was of such mature character as to attract the attention of leaders of thought in England and America. His gratulatory remark, therefore, to his mother, that he thinks he is "being taken up in great style," was only the expression of a naïve youthful enthusiasm fully warranted under the circumstances. The letters are absolutely free from all

<sup>1</sup> As this paragraph is being written, — October 22, 1908, — the obsequies attendant upon the close of the life of Charles Eliot Norton — scholar, teacher, and eminent citizen — are being paid. Among the many tributes to his memory it is to be regretted that none can come from the scholar and historian whose advent into literature Norton so cordially welcomed forty-five years ago. What Fiske would have said of Norton to-day would have been a scholar's appreciation of a scholar, with a historian's estimate of eminent citizenship, expressed in language befitting the subject and the occasion.

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pedantic conceit. With his mother he is perfectly open and frank because he wishes her to share in every honor that comes to him.

From this time forward we have to recognize in Fiske's mind a growing sense of "touching elbows" in the great world of thought he saw surging around him, but before tracing further the interesting phase of his philosophical activities, we must follow him in his legal studies for the next few months, as they were the dominating consideration in his life at this time.

These studies, as we have seen, were given the complete right of way in his allotment of study hours, and in his letters to his mother and to Miss Brooks there is revealed a Boanerges sort of energy in his manner of pursuing them. To Miss Brooks he writes: "I am in the highest imaginable spirits: nothing agrees with me like a regular furious set-to at Books." He did not find the various legal textbooks as easy or as entertaining reading as the classical "Commentaries" with which he began. Yet no subject daunted him. All the required textbooks were taken up in order and plunged into with perfect *abandon*, their special points mentally digested and put in place in his orderly mind. His comments on some of the textbooks through which he waded are many, but most of them are without special interest to-day, owing to the changes that have taken place in recent years in the courses of study in the leading law schools of the country. It can be



## His Legal Studies

said, in a general way, that he took the "Commentaries" and the works on "Contracts" and on "Maritime Law" with delightful ease, hiving much philosophic thought therefrom; that while he regarded the subject of "Notes and Bills" as clearly presented, he yet found "that 1300 pages of endorser and endorsee, acceptor and payee, grantor, etc., etc., gets rather insipid before it is all read"; that he found the textbooks on "Real Property" "the very salts and senna of reading" — one of which so completely exhausted his patience that he characterizes it as "detestable: the style is clumsy, inelegant, ungrammatical, lame, feeble, muddy, inaccurate, systemless, metaphysical, ambiguous; while the thinking is but a little more lucid than the style."<sup>1</sup>

But no irritation over the subject-matter of his legal studies could check his steady progress to their mastery for the immediate end he had in view — his admittance to the bar and marriage. The two years' course of study at the Law School was de-

<sup>1</sup> To Miss Brooks he sends, in a playful way, the following extract from one of his legal textbooks — a bit of feudalism — as a sample of the "nice reading" he finds in his legal studies: —

"The tenant cannot in an avowry avoid the lords possessory right, because of the seizin given by his own hands. This writ does not lie for tenant in tail; for he may avoid such seizin to the lord by plea to an avowry in replevin. The writ of mesne lies when upon a subinfeudation the mesne lord suffers his tenant paravail to be distrained upon by the lord paramount. In such case, the tenant shall be indemnified by the mesne lord; and if he make default therein, he shall be forejudged of his mesnality, and the tenant shall hold immediately of the lord paramount."

## John Fiske

signed as a proper preparation for admittance to legal practice, and it was embodied in some thirty-seven volumes of legal lore. After six months' study Fiske saw that he could compass the course in much less than the allotted time — in fact, within nine months! This accomplished, he regarded his admittance to the bar assured, and then the way was clear to his marriage in the following autumn. With this plan in mind, and to guard against any misunderstanding of the condition attached to his marriage, he had the condition of his admittance to the bar distinctly reaffirmed by both Mr. Stoughton and his mother. This secured, he bent himself unreservedly to his legal studies for the next three months. His scientific and philosophic studies are much curtailed. His critical and essay writings are entirely given up, and he gives graphic pictures of his ploughing his way through such works as Abbott on Shipping, Stearns on Real Actions, Stephens on Pleading, Greenleaf on Evidence, Story on Equity Pleading and Jurisprudence, Long on Sales, Byles on Bills, etc. — the course closing with the eminently practical and entertaining work, the General Statutes of Massachusetts.

To be examined for admittance to the bar, it was necessary that he should be recommended to the examining board by some reputable lawyer. Fiske thought of Judge Curtis for a sponsor: but would the Judge recommend him on the basis of *nine months'* preparation? He sounded the Judge by

## Admitted to the Boston Bar

asking if it was possible to pass the examination with a year's study. The Judge very positively assured him it was not — such a thing had never been heard of, and the examination was much more thorough than formerly. Fiske saw he could get no assistance from the Judge in his project. Not at all disheartened, he took another method of approach. He got from Professor Parsons, of the Harvard Law School, a certificate of membership, attendance, general character and intelligence; and through his friend Roberts was introduced to Judge George White, of the Probate Court. Judge White, upon being told of Fiske's college training, his literary work, and his having taken the two years' course of reading at the Law School, very readily consented to propose him for examination and admission to the Boston Bar. What followed is best told in Fiske's own words, in a letter to his mother under date of July 13, 1864: —

“I was admitted to the Bar Monday morning. Last week Tuesday, I went into Court and passed an eight hours' written examination, answering every question at length, and correctly. There were 39 questions. I was then told to come in Monday, and learn the result. On Monday morning I was admitted, took the oath of office, and received my certificate — Judge Russell saying I had passed ‘a most excellent examination.’ I did not expect to be examined in writing, or on Tuesday; but supposed that the Judge would appoint some attorney to examine me orally, on Wednesday or Thursday.

## John Fiske

However, I am glad that it was in writing, on the whole, for I was thereby enabled to work up my answers into better shape. I felt dreadfully tired. I feel as if I could bid good-bye to Law with goodwill until October."

He duly signs this letter — "John Fiske, Attorney at Law."

The condition precedent to his marriage having been fully complied with, preparations for this important event in his life engrossed his attention to the exclusion of all else — save the reading of Scott's novels — during the remainder of the summer of 1864. Before following him to this long-looked-for consummation of ennobling companionship, we must return to the previous November and trace what followed from Dr. Youmans's visit to Fiske and Fiske's visit to Norton — in other words, take note of some of the things that Fiske did in those hours for side study he had so carefully reserved from his legal studies.

His letters and his record of his reading show that during the following winter and early spring his mind was as active along the main lines of scientific, historic, and philosophic thinking as ever — as active as though he knew not law. The following titles of some of the works he read show that he ranged over a wide variety of subjects, while his letters make it clear that he read thoughtfully, and always with a definite purpose. Among the works read were Huxley's "Man's Place in Nature";

## Side Study and Reading

“Authority in Matters of Opinion” and “Observation in Politics,” by Sir George Cornewall Lewis; Maine’s “Ancient Law”; Irving’s “Mahomet and his Successors”; the Korân; several volumes in Italian, including Vico’s “Scienza Nuova”; Mill’s “Political Economy”; Weiss’s “Life of Theodore Parker”; Youmans’s “Chemistry”; Draper’s “Intellectual Development of Europe”; Renan’s “Vie de Jésus”; “Autobiography of a Dissenting Minister”; and he read again the works of Spencer and of Buckle.

The breadth of Fiske’s thought at this time is indicated by his giving attention, in this “storm and stress” period of his affairs, to a seventeenth and eighteenth-century thinker like Vico. We have, however, a ready explanation in the fact that Vico was one of the first of modern thinkers to give a philosophy to history based on natural law. Vico’s place in modern thought was discussed by Fiske and Norton at the visit referred to, and Norton loaned Fiske his copy of the “Scienza Nuova.” Fiske’s comments on the work illustrate his thorough method of study. He says: —

“It is the driest, obscurist metaphysicalist book I ever got hold of. Confucius is a more lucid writer. ‘Mortgages’ and ‘Remainders’ are pleasanter to peruse. And still it has many capital ideas — some of them quite Maine-y-Cornewall Lewisy — enough to keep me from throwing down the book, even while I curse at its clumsy phraseology.”

## John Fiske

During the winter Fiske was giving serious thought to a rationalistic philosophy of human history, with the idea of embodying his thought in a review of Draper's "Intellectual Development of Europe." In his search for this philosophy he had better rewards than anything he found in Vico. One of the first thinkers of this period along the lines of ethical and jurisprudential evolution was Sir Henry Sumner Maine, whose profoundly thoughtful essays on "Roman Law" and "Ancient Law" were not only the most important contributions ever made by any Englishman to historical jurisprudence; they were also extremely valuable contributions to the doctrine of Evolution in its application to human society.

It might well be expected that the thought of Sir Henry Maine would find a hearty reception in Fiske's expanding mind. What really occurred is given in a letter to Miss Brooks written immediately after reading Maine's "Ancient Law." He writes: —

"I have passed through an Era, and entered upon an Epoch in my life. Thursday evening I began Maine's 'Ancient Law,' and read it all day New Year's, finishing it at exactly twelve in the evening. No novel that I ever read enchained me more. I consider it almost next to Spencer. It has thrown all my ideas of Law into definite shape. It has suggested to me many new and startling views of social progress. It has confirmed many new generalizations. I scarcely ever read a work so exceedingly

## Side Study and Reading

*suggestive*. In fact it *suggests* far more than it *says*. Almost every proposition in it may be made the foundation of a long train of thought. But what it hints at, what it expresses, is wonderful.

“He lays open the whole structure of ancient society; penetrates into the ideas of primitive men; discovers the origin of International Law; explains the notion of succession to property, and shows how wills arose; points out the origin of the idea of Property; shows the progress of the idea of Contract and of our moral notions of Obligation; shows how Criminal Law has grown up; illustrates the progress of men’s ideas of Justice; lays bare the whole structure of the Feudal System, and exhibits the condition of society in the Middle Ages; traces the history of Roman jurisprudence; shows up the social condition of India, Russia and Austria; explains the influence of Roman law on theology, on Morality and on Metaphysics; shows the way in which national thought depends on its language — O, my dear! it is perfectly GLORIOUS! I am going to read it over and over until I know it by heart.

“And I am going to get you so posted up that you can read it. Years of study are richly rewarded, when they enable one to experience such an intellectual ecstasy as I felt New Year’s day! When I came out to dinner and heard the fellows talking the small-talk — the *stuff* that people talk when they have nothing in them to let out — you can’t imagine how dreadfully low and worthless their pursuits and ideas seemed to me. O, my dear! there is nothing in this world like SCIENCE; nothing so divine as the life of a scholar!”

## John Fiske

It was with his review of Draper's work in mind that he also read at this period "Irving's Life of Mahomet and his Successors," and also the Korân, suggested by Draper's laudation of Saracenic science, social well-being, toleration, and culture, in contrast to the ignorance, squalor, immorality, and persecution that prevailed throughout Christian Europe during the Dark Ages. Fiske did not write his contemplated essay on Draper, but the thoughts he gathered while holding the subject in mind he utilized later in his essays on "Rationalism" and "The Laws of History." Here it is interesting to note the effect produced on his mind by the reading of the Korân. Writing to Miss Brooks he says:—

"I have nearly finished the Korân, and though it is a tedious piece of reading, requiring a great deal of patience and attention to wade through its intricate oriental sentences—yet I cannot help being amazed at its wonderful eloquence, its sublime poetry and its lofty morality, as well as its extensive knowledge of Eastern traditions.

"Mohammed must have been one of the most extraordinary men that ever lived to have composed such a book, without knowing how either to read or to write. That he did compose nearly all of it, can hardly be doubted. The work bears every evidence of genuineness. To any one that has read it, it is easy to see how the Arabians must have looked upon him as inspired, or even how he might well have deemed himself so, without having recourse to any of the old theories of his being an impostor.



## The Korân

“I expect to finish it on Monday; I am glad that I have read it; for I can now appreciate the history of the Arabs far better than before. Our ideas of Mohammedanism which we get from its enemies mostly, are extremely distorted and falsified. People don't scruple to lie about it. The Korân is continually accused of being sensual. On the contrary it is as free from sensuality as the New Testament; and far more so than the Old Testament. Its ethical tone is not quite equal to the New Testament; but much higher than the Old. On the other hand, as a specimen of sublime composition it excels the New Testament, but falls short of the poetic books of the Old. But when I consider it as the work of one man, and that an untaught man, then am I stupefied at the magnitude of the genius which produced it.”

The wide variety of his interests is reflected throughout the letters. Intellectually he seems to have been busy every waking hour of the day, and yet there does not appear to have been any hurry or confusion in the steady working of his mind.

He is guiding Miss Brooks in a course of reading in ancient history, and the following are among the suggestions he gives her; — they show how orderly his historical knowledge is in his own mind.

### “CANON OF BELIEF

“All Roman history previous to the invasion of Italy, by Pyrrhus, is largely myth, legend, and fable. Authentic contemporary records begin with Pyrrhus. This has been decisively proved by Sir

## John Fiske

G. C. Lewis since Arnold wrote. I do not mean that early Roman history is all false, but that it is very unreliable."

And here he counsels her in a way that reflects the scope and accuracy of his own historic knowledge: —

"Yes, read your Roman history next, if you like. As a general rule it would be best to read Greek history first; but it is *always best* to read what we feel most in the mood for. Study can't be governed by recipes.

"When you tell me how you are getting along, please tell me by the events, thus: 'I am in the reign of Henry VIII,' or wherever you may be in English history. Similarly in Greek and Roman history, where there are no reigns to go by, tell me at what war or other great event you have arrived. Any event or man mentioned at random will do, for I have them all tabulated in my mind."

And here we have a passage which reflects his deep feeling in regard to the Athenians and to Athens, apropos of Miss Brooks's reading in Greek history: —

"Their twenty-eight years' resistance to almost all the rest of Greece combined is one of the grandest things in history. I will quote the surpassingly beautiful lines of Byron to Athens in 'Childe Harold': —

'And still his honeyed wealth Hymettus yields;  
There the blithe bee his fragrant fortress builds,  
The freeborn wanderer of thy mountain-air;

## Literary Writing

Apollo still thy long, long summer gilds —  
Still in his beam Mendeli's marbles glare;  
Art, Glory, Freedom fail, but *Nature* still is fair.'

"Is n't that divine? Apollo is the Sun, you know. I think that one of the most exquisite things ever written. It brings the tears even when I write it. The history and life of Athens have always taken hold of my feelings intensely. Its career is one of the sublimest things in the world's history. Were n't you deeply interested in that glorious struggle with the Persians at Marathon, at Plataea, at Thermopylae and Salamis?"

We have had occasion to notice Fiske's keen appreciation of fine thought wherever found. In a postscript to a letter to Miss Brooks we find the following gem: —

"The Vedas, inculcating forgiveness, say: —

"'The tree withdraweth not its shade from the woodcutter.' —

"Is n't this splendid? Nothing in the Bible surpasses it in my opinion. The beauty of the figure is perfectly irresistible."

Fiske's literary writing during this period was limited to two review notices — Mill's "Political Economy" and Youmans's "Chemistry." Both were written for the "North American Review." The review of Mill was marked by a clear, mature handling of a very abstruse subject, and it was accepted with cordial approval by Mr. Norton. The review of Youmans's "Chemistry" Mr. Norton declined, because of Fiske's hearty commendation

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of the new views in chemistry which Youmans had introduced into his work, — views which then were not accepted at Harvard, but which have since been *universally* accepted and have fairly reconstructed chemical science. Fiske had no difficulty in getting the review accepted by the "Atlantic," as we shall see a little later.

But the most interesting feature of Fiske's life at this period was his growing interest in Herbert Spencer and the opening of their correspondence. His letters to his mother show that Spencer's personality — what he could learn of it — strongly impressed him. In one of his letters he expresses a wish that his mother would paint him a portrait of Spencer from a photograph which he sends her. Of this photograph he says: —

"The principal thing about the face is the expression of the eyes and that is given in the photograph to perfection. I think I had rather have a picture of him as good as my head of Galileo than anything else in the world almost."

He advises his mother to read Spencer's essay on the "Nebular Hypothesis," saying: —

"It is the greatest production of the human intellect since the Principia of Newton. With Laplace's own data he proves what Laplace could n't."

After the visit of Youmans, Fiske brooded much over the idea of writing to Spencer as Youmans had suggested. He hesitated, awed apparently by



HERBERT SPENCER



## Correspondence with Spencer

the thought of Spencer's greatness. In January he received a letter from Youmans in which the latter said that Spencer had read Fiske's essay on the "Evolution of Language" with marked approval; and again he urged Fiske to write Spencer without delay. After some further deliberation Fiske wrote Spencer the following letter: —

PETERSHAM, MASS., *February 20, 1864.*

*My dear Mr. Spencer: —*

I have known you a long time through your writings and have felt a strong desire to become personally acquainted with you, but the fear of appearing presumptuous has hitherto restrained me from taking any steps to secure that end. This apprehension has, however, been allayed by recently-occurring circumstances.

Early in November I received a visit from Dr. E. L. Youmans, of New York, who had heard of me as the author of two Essays; the one entitled "Fallacies of Buckle's Theory of Civilization," published in the "National Quarterly Review" for December, 1861; and the other entitled "The Evolution of Language," published in the "North American Review" for October, 1863.

Dr. Youmans encouraged me to gratify my long felt desire of writing to you, and advised me to accompany my letter with the two Essays just mentioned as the most appropriate means of introduction. Both articles have fared somewhat roughly in the hands of the Editors; and especially the latter one — several entire passages were omitted by the late Editor of the "N. A. R." — an exhibition of moral cowardice none the less reprehensible because

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born of Christian narrowness, and accompanied by Christian intolerance. The most important of these omissions I have inserted in manuscript, thus restoring the Essay, as nearly as is worth while, to its original form.

The first article, written when I was nineteen years old and had but recently become acquainted with your *Discovery*, marks a transitional phase in my thought. I was brought up in the most repulsive form of Calvinism in which I remained until I was sixteen years of age. My skepticism, excited in 1858 by geological speculations, was confirmed in the following year by the work of Mr. Buckle.

At the time when I reviewed Buckle I was just passing out from Comtism. During six months of incessant study and reflection my former idols were all demolished. Having successively adopted and rejected the system of almost every philosopher from Descartes to Professor Ferrier, I began the year 1860 with Comte, Mill, and Lewes. I then favored the scheme of acquiring a general knowledge of all the sciences in their hierarchical order as laid down by Comte, which scheme was eventually carried out. I first noticed your name in Mr. Lewes's little exposition of Comte early in 1860, and the extract from "*Social Statics*" there given led me to put down my name for "*First Principles*," before there could have been as yet more than a dozen subscribers.

It is unnecessary to enter into further details. The influence of your writings is apparent alike in every line of my writings and every sentence of my conversation: so inextricably have they become intertwined with my own thinking, that frequently



## Correspondence with Spencer

on making a new generalization, I scarcely know whether to credit myself with it or not.

I graduated at Harvard last summer and am now connected with the University as a student of Law. It is my purpose to occupy the leisure time left by my profession in working out a complete theory of the origin and evolution of Language after the manner sketched in my Essay on that subject.

Associated with me to some extent in my studies, and endeavoring to carry the same principles into Jurisprudence, is Mr. George L. Roberts, an attorney in the office of Mr. Justice Curtis.

If the articles which I now send meet with your approval, I can desire nothing better. Hoping sincerely that the encouragement and assistance which you have so long unconsciously given me, you will not think it unworthy to consciously vouchsafe,

I am, yours truly,

JOHN FISKE.

TO HERBERT SPENCER, ESQR.,  
LONDON, ENGLAND.

Spencer's reply was as follows:—

29 BLOOMSBURY SQ., W. C.,  
March 26, 1864.

*My dear Sir:*—

Excuse the delay in replying to your letter of February 20th. I have been so busy with a pamphlet that I have in hand that I have been able to attend to nothing else.

It is very refreshing to me to meet with so much sympathy as that expressed in your letter. The

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account you give of your intellectual progress from a narrow form of theology to wider beliefs is interesting; and the amount of labor and thought you have evidently gone through in the course of this change implies an unbiased search after *truth* very unusual — would it were more usual. It is a satisfaction to me to find that after traversing such wide and various fields of speculation as those you describe, you should express so decided an adhesion to the doctrines I have set forth. As your fellow-countryman, Emerson, remarks, "One's own beliefs gain in strength on finding that another's coincides with them."

Thank you for sending copies of the two essays with the manuscript additions. I had already seen the one in the "North American Review." After reviews of the ordinary unthinking kind it was pleasant to read a review which showed not only power of appreciation but also power of independent thought. Judging from the indications given in that article I doubt not that you will render important service in elaborating the doctrine of Evolution in its application to Language. By all means persevere; and encourage your friend Mr. Roberts to do the like in his department. The field is so vast a one that it requires more than one labourer to work in it.

The pamphlet named at the outset as having so much absorbed my energies since receiving your letter, is on the "Classification of the Sciences," with an appendix rebutting the current idea that I belong to the school of Comte. This will be issued here in a few days: and I hope will be issued in the United States some few weeks after you

## Correspondence with Spencer

receive this. I will request Professor Youmans to forward copies to you, and to Mr. Roberts.

I am, dear Sir,

Very truly yours,

HERBERT SPENCER.

TO JOHN FISKE, ESQR.,  
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.,  
U.S.A.

That Fiske was delighted to receive this recognition from Herbert Spencer — a recognition which, considering Spencer's habitual reserve, was remarkably cordial — the following bears testimony. The letter was at once shown to Roberts and was then sent to his mother in New York, with whom Miss Brooks was visiting, with the following hasty comments: —

“I have had a splendid letter from Spencer — hardly dare to send it by mail. Yet I will put it in with this. Give it to Abby to bring back with her when she comes. Treat it as carefully as if it were a scroll of Al Korân just *tumbled* from the Prophet's pen — which he did n't use, by the way, as he could n't write.”

Having by April fully made up his mind that he would prepare for the bar examination to be held in Boston in July, Fiske gave up all writing during the intervening time, and concentrated his mind upon his legal studies, as we have seen, with an occasional dip into his philosophical studies. His review of Youmans's “Chemistry,” which Norton declined,

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was readily accepted by the "Atlantic Monthly" and was published in the August number of that magazine for 1864 — thus becoming his first contribution to the magazine that subsequently came to regard him as one of its most valued contributors.

Reviewing Fiske's intellectual activity in its variety and its totality, during the nine months in which he was preparing for admission to the bar, one cannot but be impressed both by its quantity and its quality. His law reading speaks for itself. His general reading centering around the doctrine of Evolution reflects not only his own predilections, but also the philosophic trend of the time. An examination of the leading journals of thought during this, the middle period of the last century, shows most convincingly the great unrest that was affecting all phases of religious and philosophic thinking, arising from the then recent advances in science and their bearing upon all the interests of social well-being.

Fiske was not insensible to this great discussion. He could not be. He was surrounded by an atmosphere of doubt and speculation as to absolute verities, the like of which had never before occurred in the development of human thinking, and he was simply seeking for the truth. We shall soon see what these advances in science were that were producing such momentous changes in the development of human thought. At present we have only to note that

## His Marriage

the study of the law—even under the very exceptional conditions we have been considering—could not crowd out, could hardly diminish, Fiske's activity in the pursuit of his favorite studies in science, history, and philosophy. And this statement should be made—during these months of persistent, strenuous mental labor, he was cheered, encouraged, and sustained by the ever-considerate, sympathetic affection of Miss Brooks. The state of his mind just before his examination for the bar is reflected in this passage in one of his letters: "Tell you what, my dear, Petersham hills will look pleasant, if I am a member of the bar when I next see you."

Following his admission to the bar, the letters to his mother give interesting details of his and Miss Brooks's happy coöperative work in furnishing and arranging his student rooms at Holyoke Place, Cambridge, in which they were to begin, in a modest way, their wedded life. These letters show his ever-thoughtful consideration for his mother and his grandmother.

On the 6th of September, 1864, at 11.30 A.M., John Fiske and Abby Morgan Brooks were married by the Reverend Edmund B. Willson, assisted by Dr. A. P. Peabody, at Appleton Chapel, Harvard University, Cambridge. This was the first wedding in Appleton Chapel, and Professor Paine played the organ on the occasion.

## CHAPTER XI

GIVES UP LAW FOR LITERATURE—PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY—ESSAYS ON LAWS OF HISTORY—GROTE'S OPINION—CORRESPONDENCE WITH SPENCER—NEW ERA AT HARVARD—UNIVERSITY REFORM—BRYCE'S "HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE"

1864-1866

FISKE'S practice of the law was brief and uneventful. On his return from his wedding journey he sought office room with an established attorney, where, by paying a portion of the rent, he could have a desk, and thus to some extent come into touch with professional practice. He had the good wishes of a number of influential friends, and Mr. Stoughton's extensive clientage required occasional professional work in Boston. After applications in a few directions he finally secured desk-room with Edward F. Hodges at No. 42 Court Street, where on the office door his name duly appeared as "Attorney at Law." He was afterwards in the office of David P. Kimball for a time. Desiring to obtain the degree of LL.B. from the Harvard Law School, he kept his connection with the Law School as student for another year, and took part "on the wrong side" in a moot case. In July, 1865, he received his degree.

He was as methodical in his practice of the law as in his literary work, and was faithfully at his

## Attorney at Law

office desk five hours a day. But clients were not forthcoming. Meantime he seems to have given himself largely to the reading of modern fiction as represented by the novels of Scott, Dickens, Hawthorne, George Eliot, Charles Reade, Dumas, Bulwer, Thackeray, and Charles Kingsley. This fiction reading appears to have been interspersed with quite a wide range of general reading in philology, history, science, and philosophy, and with very little law. His admiration for Scott and Dickens finds frequent expression, as well as his strong liking for Thackeray, Charles Reade, and George Eliot. Hawthorne he does not like at all, and he expresses himself thus — "Hawthorne's 'Marble Faun' and 'House of Seven Gables' are trash. 'Scarlet Letter' is bearable."

The record of his reading shows that the works of Spencer, Darwin, Mill, Lewes, and Lyell were read and re-read, while the letters reveal the fact that the whole tenor of his thought was centring around the evolutionary philosophy. And this fact seemed to enlarge his sympathies and interests in various directions, as a few extracts from the letters will show.

Fiske's historical reading included Prescott's "Ferdinand and Isabella," and "Philip the Second," together with Motley's "Rise of the Dutch Republic" and his "United Netherlands." Fiske comments upon Prescott and Motley as historians thus: —

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“I like Motley better than Prescott. He treats tyranny more disrespectfully. If a king like Philip II is a rake, a bigot, a burglar, an assassin, he calls him so, instead of his speaking of his ‘arbitrary and somewhat unscrupulous policy.’ While, on the other hand, his reverence for a great defender of human rights, like William the Silent, almost amounts to worship. Motley is a historian of the People. Prescott of Kings and Nobles: so that, although Prescott is a rather better writer, I consider Motley much more of a historian. Motley’s style is a little too jerky and mannerish, but it has vitality.”

His thought is turned to making a list of the men who should be placed in the first rank for intellectual power, and he is struck by the fact that “Florence has been the birthplace of four men of the first order of genius — Dante, Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo, Machiavelli; and Galileo, although born in Pisa, was of a Florentine family.”

Speaking of Shakespeare, he says :—

“I am angry because I am so ignorant of Shakespeare. I have thought of beginning at once and reading him through, interrupting Spanish history for the purpose.”

Writing of a translation of Goethe’s “Faust,” he says:—

“The prayer of Margaret to the Virgin is, in the German, one of the most heart-breaking things in poetry. I have never read it without crying aloud.



## Essay Writing

The translation is as good as it could be made; but not having been done by miracle, it necessarily fails to produce the combined effect of music and meaning, of sound and sense, which the German does."

Referring to his philological studies, he says:—

"Getting a lot of languages is like getting a lot of money. You have to keep at it all the time in order not to lose your acquisitions. A word has a tendency to slip out of one's head, much as a quarter has a tendency to crawl out of one's pocket-book. With sufficient digging and scrubbing, however, I suppose that both words and quarters could be saved and accumulated."

While waiting for clients and reading discursively in various directions, Fiske's thought was centring around questions pertaining to man's sociological development and the application to these questions of the doctrine of Evolution. Two subjects along the lines of historico sociological inquiry were brought freshly before him by the publication of Max Müller's "Lectures on the Science of Language" and Lecky's "History of Rationalism in Europe." He took these two works as texts for writing two essays, entitled "Problems in Language and Mythology" and "The Conflict of Reason with Bigotry and Superstition." Both essays were published in the "Christian Examiner," the leading organ of the Unitarian denomination.

The latter essay was first sent to Norton for the "North American Review." Norton accepted it

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with marked approval "as an excellent piece of work," but, after keeping it for several months, he returned it for some changes, which Fiske, as a careful student of mediæval and modern history, could not make. This essay is especially noteworthy for its fine spirit of critical equilibrium or tolerance throughout. Having occasion to review the whole history of Christian superstition, bigotry, and persecution, he writes not at all in the spirit of a partisan, but with the fairness of an Evolutionist, who saw, beneath the perturbations of European society from the beginning of the Christian era down to the present time, the steady unfolding of ever-higher ethical ideals, as well as of conduct based on those ideals; in other words, the slow but steady metamorphosing of Christianity itself through the evolution of its own ethical and spiritual content.

During this period of waiting, Fiske reveals himself to his mother through his reading, his thought, his writing as frankly as before his marriage. On July 21, 1865, his daughter Maud was born, opening, as we shall see, through parenthood, a fresh and deeply interesting phase in Fiske's character.

. Still few clients: and facing the future with a family on his hands, it appears that, during the autumn of 1865, thoughts of giving up the law and devoting himself to literature, science, and philosophy were forcing themselves on Fiske's mind. His experience of a year in an endeavor to unite the practice of the law with the pursuit of his favorite

## Gives up Law for Literature

studies had shown him that the task was a hopeless one, that they had nothing in common, and that one must be given up.

But he hesitated to give up a definitely formed purpose. He writes: "My obstinacy comes in and says, 'By George, I won't give up what I have once tried, unless I have to!'" And so, at the opening of the year 1866, we find him still in doubt as to his future course — literature and philosophy or the law. His predilections were all for the former, while his respect for the wishes of his mother and of Mr. Stoughton restrained him from decisive action. But his mother and Mr. Stoughton were not unobservant. They saw his desire to respect their wishes and the uncomplaining way in which he had entered upon a course of professional life that had for him but few attractions; while his letters revealed the great activity of his mind along the new lines of thought which science was now opening for human consideration. His mother and Mr. Stoughton, therefore, clearly saw that any form of professional life that would compel him to give up his favorite studies would be a perversion of his remarkable intellectual powers, and they readily acquiesced in his proposal to give up the law and concentrate himself upon a literary life, with whatever results the future might unfold.

This decision having been reached early in 1866, in the spring of this year Fiske took his little family for a while to his grandmother's home in Middle-

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town, Connecticut, where amidst the scenes of his youth he could quietly get his thoughts into order and make a beginning upon the various literary projects that for some time had been shaping in his mind.

In the first place, he seems to have made a careful inventory, as it were, of his intellectual property, to see where his mental capital was most advantageously invested for productive working. He realized that while he had a fair grasp of the general principles underlying the physical, chemical, and biological sciences, he was not an original investigator in any one of them. He saw that his chief acquisitions were in the mathematical, the historical, and the sociological sciences, with a decided taste for philosophic science; that is, the science of the sciences — the ultimate postulates of the human mind as to the origin and destiny of the phenomena of the physical cosmos and human consciousness, as well as to the reality that lies back of all cosmic phenomena.

This survey of his intellectual equipment was accompanied by an equally thoughtful survey of the historical and sociological sciences, wherein it appeared that the record of human history was still to a large extent under bondage to certain theologico-historic assumptions which denied to the various historic periods all causal sequence, and made them the unrelated, mysterious workings of a Divine personality whose methods of dealing with

## The Doctrine of Evolution

humanity were forever inscrutable to the reasoning mind. Fiske's chief acquisitions were in these sciences, and he had been a careful student of Vico, Lessing, Herder, Comte, Mommsen, Grote, and Buckle in their efforts to free the historic record of civilization from its bondage to theologic dogmas. Further, he was familiar with the recent advances in the ethnological, the philological, and the economical sciences, wherein the existence of some deep-seated physico-sociological laws governing man's relations to the cosmos and to his brother man were clearly adumbrated. Again, he had come to the acceptance of Spencer's definition of life — "the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations" — as the law of the organic world and the master key to all social phenomena. The doctrine of Evolution in its physical and sociological bearings meant to him the reënvigoration of human knowledge for the synthetic production of higher ideals of character and life than had prevailed in previous dispensations, and hence, the presentation of the bearing of this doctrine upon all the higher interests of humanity seemed to him to be his special vocation.

That Fiske clearly saw that his generation was passing through a memorable epoch in the unfolding of civilization, and that he realized what the doctrine of Evolution meant to the social well-being of the future, is evident from his letters and his essays, while those who enjoyed his personal

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friendship bear testimony to the radiant hope with which (in the face of much discouragement) he entered upon his task.

One thing should be specially noted here. Among scholars in America he stood practically alone in his advocacy of Evolution. The only scholar with whom he could have familiar converse on this subject was Professor Gurney, but he was too closely identified with the negative feeling prevailing at Harvard, in regard to the scientific thought of the time, to act other than as a friendly, conservative adviser. He sympathized with Fiske in his aspirations and his ideals, but he could not counsel Fiske to their advocacy. It is difficult at the present time to understand the bitter feeling the doctrine of Evolution brought forth at Harvard a generation ago. The doctrine was associated with Darwinism, or man's simian ancestry, and Agassiz stood forward as the great scientific champion of the theological dogma of special Divine creation. His word was law, in both science and philosophy; and as he had characterized Darwinism as but an ephemeral phase of English thought, and was active in championing the idea of special Divine creation throughout the organic world, the whole philosophic weight of his teaching was thrown directly against any rational philosophy of organic life, or of human history. Both were regarded as but the mysterious workings of a Divine will, and this Divine will was but an outcome from the finite mind of man. Hence,

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as we have already seen, the courses in philosophy and history were wholly unworthy of the college.

It is worth noting that at this time, while Fiske was preparing himself for a ministration a little later at Harvard which was to be one of the first steps in a significant change in all departments of the university, he was practically isolated in his thought from all the Harvard influences. And yet he was not isolated from the active world of thought that was surging around every independent, fair-minded thinker. Free to give his mind its natural tendency, he turned to the philosophy of history as offering, through the new light of Evolution, rich fields for exploration.

The first fruits of his intellectual freedom were two essays on the "Laws of History," in which he reviewed some theories of historical development recently set forth by Goldwin Smith, William Adam, John W. Draper, and Sir Henry Sumner Maine. He sent these essays to George Henry Lewes, the editor of the "Fortnightly Review," the organ of liberal thought in England, and they were promptly accepted. These essays were not republished by Fiske, for the reason that he used their main points in his subsequent writings. They are of interest, however, in tracing the development of Fiske's thought, by reason of the emphasis he put upon certain points which have since held no unimportant place in the philosophic discussion of history. These points were: —

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*First*, he asserted the existence of a universal law of life governing all organic phenomena — a law as operative in the development of human society as in the vegetable and animal kingdoms, a law which had been defined by Spencer as “the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations.”

*Second*, he claimed that human history should be regarded in relation to its origins, and also in regard to its wholeness as embracing a fundamental ethical content.

*Third*, he denied the volitional theory of history both in regard to its being the product of man's free will, or the product of a Divine Will, so long as the latter is limited to the finite conceptions of man—the Divine Will of theology.

*Fourth*, he postulated the existence of “an all-per-vading, all-sustaining Power, eternally and everywhere manifested in the phenomenal activity of the universe, alike the Cause of all and the inscrutable essence of all, without whom the world would become like the shadow of a vision and thought itself would vanish” — a power far transcending any possible conception of the human mind, and whose manifestations in human history are to be truly traced only by a careful and reverent study of “the conditions of co-existence, and the modes of sequence of historic phenomena.”

In his notes for the essays there appears the following fine passage which does not appear in his text: —

“Though the history of our lives written down by the unswerving finger of Nature presents motive and volition in an ever unbroken sequence, yet the



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detached fragments of the record, like the leaves of the Cumæan sibyl caught by the fitful breeze of circumstance, and whirled wantonly hither and thither lie in such intricate confusion that no ingenuity can enable us wholly to reconstruct the legend. But could we attain to a knowledge commensurate with the facts — could we reach the hidden depths, where according to Dante,<sup>1</sup> the story of Nature scattered over the universe in truant leaves, is lying firmly bound in a mystic volume, we should find therein no traces of hazard or incongruity."

In summing up the points in these two essays Fiske says: "Doubtless to many persons the views here maintained may seem all but atheistical. They are precisely the reverse. Our choice is no longer between an intelligent Cause and none at all. It lies between a limited Cause, and one that is without limit"; and he adds that the conception of a presiding Will, the product of the finite mind, "is a truly shocking conception."

We should note the distinction that Fiske makes here, for we shall see him emphasizing it again and again in the years to come. He does not deny the existence of God. What he denies is the power of the finite mind to conceive God. What he affirms is the existence of a Divine Being transcending the power of the human mind in any way to measure or to limit. What he denies is the existence of any

<sup>1</sup> Dante's *Paradiso*, xxxiii, 85: —

Nel suo profondo vidi che s'interna  
Legato con amore in un volume  
Ciò che per l'universo si squaderna.

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such limited Being as dogmatic theology has imposed on the Christian world.

The first of these essays attracted the attention of the eminent historian George Grote, who, in writing his friend Alexander Bain, under date of September 4, 1868, says: —

“The same number [“Fortnightly Review” for September, 1868] contained also an admirable article upon the ‘Science of History,’ written with great ability and in the best spirit by an American whose name I never heard before — John Fiske. I am truly glad to find that there *are* authors capable, as well as willing, to enunciate such thoughts. This article is the first of an intended pair: it contains the negative side exceedingly well handled. I scarcely dare to hope that the positive matter in the sequel will be equally good.”<sup>1</sup>

It was while engaged upon these essays that Fiske, through his friend Youmans, heard with profound sorrow of Herbert Spencer’s contemplated abandonment of the further development of his philosophical system owing to the want of sufficient support. Fiske was stirred to prompt action in Spencer’s behalf, and he sent to the “New York World” a brief yet remarkably lucid exposition of the philosophy of Spencer with the following earnest plea for its support: —

“One of Mr. Spencer’s eminent countrymen remarks that the closing of his series of works would

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Letters of George Grote.*

## Correspondence with Spencer

be a blow to English thought and a shame to English education. The disgrace would not be England's alone, but would fall more or less upon the whole civilized world. Mr. Spencer's discoveries, though the production of one country and one epoch are destined to become the heritage of all nations, and of all time and all are interested in seeing that they are not permanently brought to a close."

Fiske's thought at this time turned strongly toward Spencer personally. His deep interest in the latter's philosophy, his isolation in America as an advocate of that philosophy, together with the knowledge of Spencer's financial embarrassment in the publication of his work, all combined to produce in Fiske's mind a feeling of profound respect, if not veneration, for Spencer himself. The feeling of the two men toward each other and the difficulties under which they were both laboring in the propagation of their philosophical ideas are reflected in the sort of autobiographical letters that passed between them at this time: —

*Fiske to Spencer*

MIDDLETOWN, CONN., June 3, 1866.

*My dear Mr. Spencer: —*

I have allowed two years to elapse without writing to you, from a natural unwillingness to encroach upon your valuable time. At present, however, I have something to tell that may interest you. But first, let me say, that since my first letter to you I

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have graduated at the Law School, been admitted to the Bar, become a husband, and a father, practiced law a year, and abandoned the profession in disgust. I have made the discovery that I am, as regards my constitutional relations to my environment, an idealist and not a realist; and that in order to accomplish anything *worthy* I must not seek to quit my ideal world. I have therefore come to a quiet country town where I expect to stay (alone with my books and family) until some philological professorship or other place, which "practical" men cannot fill shall take me away. I shall devote much time to acquiring a thorough knowledge of Sanskrit and Greek, as the basis of future labors; and hope from time to time to write articles, as a means both of mental training and of material support.

At Dr. Youmans's request, I recently wrote for "The World," a New York paper, a short exposition of the Law of Evolution adapted to the comprehension of newspaper readers. There is nothing remarkable in the article, but as it relates to your philosophy I send you a copy. I also sent copies to Mr. Mill and Professor Huxley, neither of whom I have the pleasure of knowing but who as I thought might be interested in it by reason of its subject.

To come to what I had chiefly in mind in beginning this letter — I hope to publish next year a volume of essays illustrative of your philosophy, entitled "Essays of Evolution," unless I can find a better title. It will consist of the following essays: I, the Evolution of Language; II, Language and Mythology; III, The Evolution of Written Language; IV, The Laws of History; V, Buckle's

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Theory of History; VI, The Positive Philosophy; VII, Ancient Science; VIII, The Influence of Rationalism. I wrote number VIII six months ago, but the Editor of the "North American Review," after enthusiastically accepting it, has returned it unpublished. It will, I trust, appear elsewhere before long and then I will send you a copy. Number IV is nearly finished and I have offered it to Mr. Lewes for the "Fortnightly." The rest all exist in embryo, except number VII, in which I may include some remarks on Mr. Lewes's Aristotle. Number V, which I think I sent you, will be greatly improved. Into number VI, I wish to introduce some considerations respecting your true relations to Comte and Mill. It seems to me that a book of this sort will not be wholly without *raison d'être*, even though it may contain but little that is absolutely new under the sun.

May I ask if you know of an English periodical which will publish an article on Positivism? I hardly dare apply to the "Westminster"; and in the "Fortnightly," also, the ground is taken up. I shall be obliged to depend to a great extent on English reviews, for the Editor of the "North American" looks askance at everything written from my point of view. It is indeed almost impossible to deal with him, and all the other periodicals here are, I grieve to say, orthodox (except the "Christian Examiner," which is pecuniarily poor).

The proposed abandonment of your series of works has filled me with consternation and sorrow, but I cannot bring myself to contemplate that abandonment as final. I live in the hope that the

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present state of things will sometime be changed and that your scheme will be ultimately completed. Whatever can be done in my humble way to excite interest in your work will always be cheerfully done, and as I grow older, I trust that I shall be able to do more than at present.

With all the deep affection and respect of a disciple, I am, my dear sir, very truly yours,

JOHN FISKE.

*Spencer to Fiske*

88 KENSINGTON GARDENS SQUARE,  
LONDON, *June 19, 1866.*

*My dear Mr. Fiske: —*

Your letter, received the other day, gave me much gratification as one coming from so active a sympathizer was sure to do. I read it, however, not with a uniform feeling of pleasure; for some of the passages giving me an account of your personal affairs and prospects and intentions caused me some regret. Judging from my own experience I fear that you will meet with much difficulty in getting an adequate demand for the kind of writing with which you propose to occupy yourself. Besides the very limited number of periodicals sufficiently liberal to admit articles of the kind you have sketched out, there is even among such liberal ones, a very general unreadiness to receive such articles, on the ground that they are unattractive to readers. As I have myself had ample proof in the case of the "Westminster Review," it frequently and I believe generally happens, that periodicals established for the purpose of propagating liberal opinions, but presently having to struggle for existence from want of sufficient support, are prone to subordinate their

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original aims to the cultivation of a light literature that will bring more readers, and while there comes to be a great anxiety to secure lively articles, the graver articles, having for their aim the diffusion of the ideas which the periodical specially represents, come to be looked at coldly, and to be postponed or declined in favor of articles of a more popular kind.

Possibly this state of things may be less marked in America than it is here: you have a larger public interested in advanced opinions. This aspect of the matter will I fear be unexpected and disappointing to you; for you appear to imply the hope that there may be a larger sphere for philosophical writings with us, than with you. This, however, as I have hinted, is by no means the case, and I fear there will be great difficulty in getting places here for articles of the kind you describe.

Dr. Chapman, the Editor of the "Westminster," who has all along been under pressure to make as much income as he can by it, has been in the habit of obtaining a considerable proportion of gratuitous articles — articles of the graver kind being more especially those for which he is least willing to pay. This, as you may suppose, is an obstacle in the way of those who have not established relations with him. I will, however, name the matter to him — mentioning more especially the article on the "Evolution of Written Language" as one which he might look upon favorably, because it gives some promise of facts of popular interest. The only other periodical besides the "Fortnightly Review" which occurs to me as a possible sphere is "Macmillan's Magazine." I will speak to Professor Masson on

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the matter if I can see him before leaving town, and will read him the titles of the articles you propose — some of which I think he may consider available.

Thank you for the copies of papers you have been so good as to send me, as also for the labor you have bestowed on the clear expositions they contain, which will, I doubt not, be of great service in diffusing general and approximate conceptions. The volume you name would I think help very much to popularize the general doctrine as well as strengthen it by further illustrative matter. To the average mind the special applications to minor groups of the phenomena are more instructive than more general expositions; and are especially desirable as steps by which they may ascend to a comprehension of the whole. I hope, therefore, that you will be able to fulfil your intentions; and shall be heartily glad to hear that you make the book remunerative.

Respecting my own affairs to which you so sympathetically refer, you will perceive by the notice appended to the forthcoming number, that I have cancelled the notice of cessation issued with the last. An unforeseen event—the sudden death of my father—has changed my position so far as will enable me to continue my work without going on sinking what little property I possess; as I have been doing year by year ever since I began writing books. I shall therefore persevere as hitherto, and hope, indeed, after the completion of the present volume, to proceed somewhat more rapidly.<sup>1</sup>

Very truly yours,

HERBERT SPENCER.

<sup>1</sup> The references in these letters to the cessation by Spencer of his work on his philosophy and its resumption do not tell the whole



## New Era at Harvard

These letters are of interest as showing how difficult it was at this time (1866) to get any phase of the doctrine of Evolution before the public, even through the periodicals devoted to the propagation of liberal thought. Both Spencer and Fiske lived to see the day when anything they might write on the subject would be gladly welcomed by the leading periodicals and at the highest rate of payment.

In the meantime events were taking place at Harvard which were destined completely to change the ideals of education and the methods of instruction throughout the university. The recent discoveries in the physical and chemical sciences and their applications in the arts and the industries, the results of investigations in the physiologico-sociological sciences and their social import, the advances in historical, philological, and Biblical criticism and their bearing upon men's religious beliefs and ideas of causation, were bringing great changes in the vocations of the people and opening new avenues for scholarly research. They were also presenting human life in its sociological aspects as of supreme importance, as well as emphasizing, as never before, that the outcome of University education should bear directly upon the production of the

story. The month following these letters (July, 1866) Youmans called upon Spencer and presented him with seven thousand dollars in good securities, and a beautiful gold watch of American manufacture, as an expression of appreciation from his American friends. (See Spencer's *Autobiography*, vol. II, p.165. Fiske's *Life of Edward L. Youmans*, p. 215.)

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broadest efficiency in individual social serviceableness.

In a way, Harvard was not insensible to the onward trend of the deeper thought of the time. With men like Benjamin Peirce, James Russell Lowell, Asa Gray, Ephraim Gurney, Jeffries Wyman, Francis J. Child, William W. Goodwin, and Louis Agassiz as members of her staff of instruction, she could not be. Yet the best aspirations of her faculty were held in check or thwarted by a system of control wholly undemocratic in character, and which held the administration tied to mediæval ideals and methods of education which had been practically outgrown.

This year 1866 distinctly marks the beginning of a new era in the life of Harvard. As an outgrowth of her Puritanical foundation, the college had since 1810 been held in a sort of vassalage to an external ministerial and political control, exerted through a Board of Overseers. The duties of this Board were not well defined, nor were its prerogatives clearly established. Since 1851 the Board had consisted of the Governor of the State, the Lieutenant-Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Secretary of the State Board of Education, the President and the Treasurer of the College, and *thirty other persons elected by the joint action of both houses of the State Legislature*. The thirty persons elected by the Legislature were citizens of the State eminent in the professions and

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they represented more or less the local religious and political interests of the State. By virtue of its political creation and its vaguely defined duties, the Board assumed much authority; and often, through its affirmative and its negative action, proved a serious obstruction to needed changes in the conduct of the university, while the very nature of its local, political creation stood as a bar to any broad interest in the university on the part of its alumni.

In 1865 some broad-minded members of the alumni sought to break up this archaic ministerial and political alliance in the control of the university. They succeeded in getting an act through the Massachusetts Legislature on April 28, 1865, by virtue of which the State entirely withdrew from any further connection with the Board of Overseers, both on the part of its executive officers and through the Legislature. By this act also it was ordered, that, beginning with Commencement Day, 1866, all future members of the Board should be elected by the alumni of the college.

Accordingly on Commencement Day, July 19, 1866, the new method of electing the Board of Overseers was inaugurated; and as the alumni on this occasion held one of their triennial festivals, the orator of the day, the Reverend Frederick H. Hedge, D.D., an alumnus of the class of 1828, and a liberal-minded Unitarian clergyman, took the occasion of the coming of the alumni as an electorate

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into the government of Harvard as a fitting opportunity for offering some suggestions as to needed reforms at their *Alma Mater*.

Dr. Hedge was outspoken in his condemnation of the educational ideals and methods that then prevailed at Harvard. He described the college "as a place where boys are made to recite lessons from textbooks, and to write compulsory exercises, and are marked according to their proficiency and fidelity in these performances, with a view to a somewhat protracted exhibition of themselves at the close of their college course, which, according to a pleasant academic fiction, is termed their 'Commencement.'"

After this arraignment, Dr. Hedge pleaded for the abolishment of the whole system of marks and college rank and compulsory tasks, and for the freedom of a true university — freedom for the young men to select their studies and their teachers from the material and the personnel that was offered to them.

The address was an inspiring call to the alumni, now that they had become invested with no small degree of responsibility for the future conduct of the university, so to use their power that their beloved *Alma Mater* might "lay off the *prætexta* of its long minority, and take its place among the universities, properly so called, of modern times."

Fiske came up to this Commencement for his degree of M.A., and heard Dr. Hedge's address.

## New Era at Harvard

Shortly after I met him with Professor Gurney. Fiske was delighted with the address, and was full of enthusiasm for the possible development of Harvard, now that the shackles which had bound her to the past had been broken and her alumni had become a positive force in her government. In the course of the conversation Fiske expressed the hope that Dr. Hedge's address would be supplemented by a more detailed statement of what the reform at Harvard should be, and the ground upon which it should be based. Professor Gurney then said: "John, why don't you write such a paper yourself? You can do it." "Yes," said Fiske, "but I am not sufficiently known, and I don't know where I could get such a paper published." I then said: "There is no doubt but Mr. Fields would take it for the 'Atlantic Monthly,'<sup>1</sup> as he is greatly interested in this whole question here at Harvard, and has arranged to print Dr. Hedge's address in the next number of the 'Atlantic.'" Professor Gurney immediately said: "John, here is your chance. You are just the man for this task. You know the conditions here and what the nature of the reform should be. Go in and identify yourself with the new movement!"

The next day I brought the matter to Mr. Fields's attention, and he was only too glad to follow up in the "Atlantic" Dr. Hedge's address with such a paper as Fiske proposed. Accordingly I

<sup>1</sup> James T. Fields was then the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* and I was one of its publishers.

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arranged with Fiske for an article on "University Reform" of about ten pages. He sent me the article in November following, and Mr. Fields was so greatly pleased with it that, in paying for it, a substantial sum was added to the stipulated price. The article was published in the "Atlantic Monthly" for April, 1867.<sup>1</sup>

One cannot read this article to-day without being impressed by the clear insight with which Fiske viewed the various problems of University education that then confronted Harvard and the judicial fairness with which they were brought under consideration. He defined the object of university education to be the teaching of "the student how to think for himself, and then to give him the material to exercise his thought upon." He then adds: "When a University throws its influence into the scale in favor of any party, religious or political, philosophic or æsthetic, it is neglecting its consecrated duty, and abdicating its high position. It has postponed the interests of truth to those of dogma." His appraisal of the distinctive values of the mathematical, the scientific, the historical, and the classical studies, and his adjustment of them in a well-rounded scheme of University education, were very clearly set forth, while his suggestions for introducing the elective system under the varied conditions of elementary education which

<sup>1</sup> My recollections in regard to this article are confirmed by Fiske's letters to his mother, written at this time.

## University Reform

so seriously handicapped every freshman class at Harvard, show the thoroughness with which he had studied this very perplexing phase of the general problem.

As might be expected, he emphasized the importance of providing for fine scholarship at the university, by establishing a course of post-graduate instruction. This, however, was not, perhaps, the immediate need of the college so much as the getting a right appraisal of the undergraduate studies, with good methods of instruction. He, of course, touched upon some of the police regulations by which the undergraduate life was so absurdly harassed, but in no unfilial way — these shortcomings were simply survivals of obsolete social conditions and should be quietly brushed away.

The argument and the whole tone of the article were admirably adapted to further the object for which the best friends of Harvard were then working — a reform and not a revolution in the conduct of the university. The article was widely read, and it served a good purpose in crystallizing opinion in regard to the nature of the reform. It distinctly identified Fiske with the new movement, albeit his well-known Evolutionary views—or his Positivism, as Darwinism or any phase of Evolutionary thought was then called — tended to make him *persona non grata* to some of the leaders in the movement.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This article, entitled "University Reform," is included in Fiske's collected works, in the volume *Darwinism and Other Essays*.

## John Fiske

The record of his brief literary sojourn in Middletown may well close with the following jubilant extract from a letter to Roberts concerning James Bryce's "Holy Roman Empire." This is another instance of his "striking true" in his estimates of the really fine things in literature. Under date of December 16, 1866, he writes: —

"Well, my boy, I have finished Gibbon at last, and have derived therefrom much healthful nutriment to my soul as well as to my notebooks; having made upwards of 400 notes on the 8 vols. But now, *O Ζεὺς Σωτήρ!* Yesterday and to-day I have had the greatest intellectual treat since I first read Maine.<sup>1</sup> I have one of the good old fits of enthusiasm upon me. Get, old fellow, out of the Athenæum, and read Bryce's 'Holy Roman Empire.' Cæsarism, Papacy, Feudalism, World-Empire, World-Church, Guelfs, Ghibellines, Territorial Sovereignty, mediæval philosophy, politics, religion — mediæval ideas generally — are all elucidated here as never before. It will clarify your ideas of history more than almost any book you ever read. And it is written in a charming style to boot. Worth reading once a year as we used to say of Mill's 'Logic.' Yes, sir, James Bryce, B.C.L., of Oriel College, Oxford, is one of the rising stars of the age. Do get it and read it; it can be read as quickly as Maine. By Jove, the rising generation in England is hard at work. I am eager to get hold of E. A. Freeman's 'Lectures on the Saracens.' I think of reviewing Bryce, using its principles to illustrate the late war in Germany."

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, p. 286.



## CHAPTER XII

THE REFORM AT HARVARD UNDER WAY — MOVES  
TO CAMBRIDGE — DOMESTIC AND SOCIAL LIFE —  
REVIEW AND ESSAY WRITING — DIVERSIONS —  
CORRESPONDENCE WITH SPENCER

1866-1868

MEANWHILE dissatisfaction with the Reverend Thomas Hill as President of Harvard was increasing. A most worthy man in the ordinary amenities of life, and well fitted for pastoral duties, he was without any high degree of scholarship and was lacking in executive efficiency. He was therefore singularly out of place as Harvard's chief executive at this very important period in her development. The first convocation of the alumni for the election of members to the Board of Overseers gave clear indication that in the new electorate, now invested with a large degree of responsibility in the conduct of the university, there was a very positive feeling that the first step in the way of reform was the complete breaking up of the current idea that the presidency of the university was a sort of perquisite belonging to the clergy of the Unitarian denomination.

The participation of the alumni in the government of Harvard started, therefore, at the very beginning, with ideas of reform in various directions.

## John Fiske

This was a development Fiske had not considered when he retired to Middletown. By the time he had finished his article for the "Atlantic," however, he was made aware by Professor Gurney and others of the rapid spread of the reform movement now that it had a *status* in the government itself of the university. He bethought himself, therefore, to return to Cambridge and establish a home in close proximity to the college, where he could be in touch with the friends of the reform movement and ready to lend a hand whenever needed. In this project he was encouraged by his friends in Cambridge. He also had the support of his mother and Mr. Stoughton as well as of Mrs. Fiske's family. Consequently the month of March, 1867, saw him very happily settled in a house of his own at 123 Oxford Street, Cambridge.

Fiske's domiciliation at Cambridge was coincident with the publication of his article on "University Reform" in the "Atlantic Monthly," and he was cordially welcomed by all the liberal-minded people connected with the university. Mr. Longfellow, Professors Lowell, Peirce, Child, Gurney, Gray, and Goodwin were very emphatic in their commendations of his article as well as cordial in welcoming him back to the social life of Cambridge.

It would be pleasant to linger over the letters of this period to his mother, in which he gives in a delightful way the details of the ups and downs



JOHN FISKE IN 1867



## Moves to Cambridge

attendant upon his youthful experience in home-building, where provisions for literary work and high philosophic thinking were made coincident and harmonious with the details of his domestic social life. In the midst of all, his second child, Harold Brooks Fiske, was born.

The letters give so many touches of a purely personal character, revelations of the finely tempered soul behind the scholar and the critic, that a few extracts are in place here. After getting his family settled in the new home he writes: —

“Our house is rather a *gem* in its way, being perfectly convenient — all the rooms being very pleasant and there is lots of sunshine coming into it. It is such a jolly feeling to be in a home of my own, and back among literary men, that I boil over with good nature all the time — don't get cross at *anything*, and so get credit for being a gem of a boy! When it is really only the result of circumstances. I have thus far been up at six o'clock every morning, and have done a good slice of work before breakfast.”

In a letter a few days later he reveals his æsthetic taste. His mother had given him a sum of money as a birthday present, and in acknowledging its receipt, he writes: —

“After some discussion and contemplation I resolved to put it into something — yea even into the *one* thing — which our house lacked, to wit: a picture for the parlour chimney-piece. So after a thorough inspection of the treasures at De Vries',

## John Fiske

Abby and I selected a magnificent engraving; viz. Benvenuto Cellini in his workshop at Fontainebleau, showing his newly-finished statue of Jupiter Tonans to Francis I and some members of his court. The group is very grand; all the separate pieces are portraits. Cellini stands in a noble attitude in the centre, pointing to the great statue elevated on the right; his sculptor's tools and a few unfinished works lie around. King Francis and his Mistress, the Duchesse d'Etampes, sit in carved, high-backed chairs to the left, gazing at the statue just uncovered. On the back of the Duchesse's chair leans Margaret de Valois, Queen of Navarre, and grand-mother of Henri Quatre. Behind her stands her husband Henri d'Albert; by her side, Catherine de Medicis, and her husband, afterwards Henry II. In the background is the Cardinal Jean de Lorraine, chief of the house of Guise. The faces are so good that I recognized most of them at once. Nothing could be finer than the *tout ensemble*; and nothing could have gone further to make our parlour pleasant and elegant."

From the very beginning of his daughter Maud's learning to talk, Fiske became a close observer of her linguistic development, and the letters are many that make mention of her naïve efforts to conjoin sound and meaning in her childish prattle. Let one instance suffice. He had already reported her use of the phrase "pick-a-wow"; he now adds:

"She has developed the phrase 'pick-a-wow' into 'peck-a-boo,' from which I think that 'pick-a-wow' was meant for picture book. I shall quote her

## Domestic Life

'puttaba' for apple, as it throws some light on the origin of language. She can say 'dear' and 'papa'; but putting them together makes 'dear-wawa.' Now this change occurs regularly in Welsh compounds, and throws great light on the consonantal structure of the Aryan languages."

Fiske's reading at this period, while as discursive as ever, was yet in its general trend related to modern culture, which, by the great advancement in the sciences, was assuming a new significance in his mind. His writing at this time was confined to book reviews, many of which were really essays, in which is shown the ready command he had of his wide and varied knowledge. The more notable among these review-essays were: "The Life and Works of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing," by Adolf Stahr; Longfellow's "Translation of Dante"; Alger's "History of the Doctrine of a Future Life"; Felton's "Greece — Ancient and Modern"; Youmans's "Culture for Modern Life"; Whitney's "Lectures on Language"; Matthew Arnold's "Celtic Literature," etc.

The quality of his review writing was such as to make it in great demand, and periodicals and journals like the "North American Review," the "Atlantic Monthly," the "Christian Examiner," the "Nation," the "New York World," and the "Boston Advertiser" were solicitors for review notices of important works; so much so that during the summer of 1867, Fiske writes: —

## John Fiske

“I am terribly busy to-night as usual, but must turn aside from work a minute to give you a bit of surprising news. You will be proud to hear that I have been elected a Member of the American Oriental Society. I was notified of it to-day by a note from Prof. Whitney (Prof. of Sanskrit at Yale). I was thoroughly surprised by it, not expecting anything of the sort for some years to come.”

“I have had my fill of book-noticing for one while; but the end does n't seem to have come. More work is offered me than I can do. I don't expect to make a business of this transient work: but it will do for a while.”

With his usual discursive reading and this review writing, and at odd times working upon the plot of ground that surrounded his house, the summer of 1867 was passed. The autumn found him well established in a home of his own, and free to work out the various literary projects that were germinating in his mind. His social surroundings were indeed pleasant. William D. Howells, recently called to the editorship of the “Atlantic Monthly,” was a near neighbor. Norton's delightful home was not far away. Longfellow, Lowell, Child, and Asa Gray among others had called, and had welcomed him and Mrs. Fiske to their homes: while Gurney, J. M. Peirce (son of Benjamin Peirce), N. S. Shaler, Chauncey Wright, William James, the psychologist, John K. Paine, the eminent composer, and his faithful Middletown friend, George L. Roberts, were frequent visitors. In this widely



## Wide Reading

cultured atmosphere Fiske found not only generous appreciation, but also much stimulating thought.<sup>1</sup>

The letters for 1868 reveal still further Fiske's simple, happy domestic life, his methodical way of working, his constantly expanding thought, his great productiveness, and his steadily growing reputation.

The expanding minds of his children and their childish ways are a constant delight, as well as of deep interest to him. We get charming glimpses of little Maud — especially of her incursions into his library, and her arrangements of his books according to her childish fancy instead of their subject order — and his treatment of her visits as pleasant episodes in his daily routine of work, rather than as troublesome interruptions.

Fiske's reading this year covered more than a hundred volumes in English, French, and German, comprising the latest thought along the lines of history, philology, physiology, the sciences, and philosophy, with a generous mingling of general

<sup>1</sup> One incident connected with this period is worth relating. Fiske and Chauncey Wright — the best of friends — while in agreement on the question of Darwinism, were in apparent opposition in regard to many points in the philosophy of Herbert Spencer. Their discussions were many and were often prolonged to a late hour. One summer evening the discussion had been exceptionally vigorous; and when Wright started for home, Fiske set out to accompany him a little way. Fiske walked to Wright's gate, and the discussion not being finished, Wright walked back to Fiske's gate. Not having then arrived at any concluding point, the two started again for Wright's home — and this gate-to-gate discussion was continued until the light of a new day forced its postponement.

## John Fiske

literature. Complementary in a measure to his reading was the production of some twenty essays or book reviews, the more notable of which were essays on "Liberal Education" and "Myths of the New World," published in the "North American Review"; and reviews in the "New York World" of Lewes's "History of Philosophy," Motley's "United Netherlands," Lessing's "Nathan the Wise" (in which Fiske's religious ideas are clearly indicated), Froude's "Short Stories on Great Subjects," Freeman's "Norman Conquest," Max Müller's "Chips from a German Workshop," Taine's "Philosophy of Art," and George Eliot's "Spanish Gipsy."

Some of these papers were republished by Fiske in his volumes of essays; all were characterized by a wealth of learning bearing upon the several subjects treated, and also by a spirit of judicial fairness in statement and discussion that reminds one of that master of critical style, Sainte-Beuve.

We have also to note that at this time there was shaping in his mind the project of a work about the size of the first volume of Buckle's "History of Civilization in England," to be entitled "Studies in Philosophy"; a work "that would be an illustration, though by no means a mere exposition, of the views of Mr. Spencer."

During the latter part of the year Fiske indulged in a bit of polemical criticism that attracted no little attention at the time, and which showed

## Essay Writing

his quality as a skilful debater. James Parton, a popular writer, had published a little book entitled "Smoking and Drinking," in which he sought to maintain the two theses, that the coming man would not smoke, nor would he drink wine. It was a very superficial work made up of illogical assertions and perversion of much physiological knowledge; yet it was warmly welcomed by anti-tobacco and temperance reformers, as a conclusive argument against the use of tobacco and of alcohol in any form or degree whatever.

Fiske's attention as critic, or public reviewer was called to the book; and, as in his psychophysiological investigations he had given much attention to the effects of narcotics upon the human organism, he thought the great importance of temperance in the use of tobacco and alcohol could be much more convincingly shown, through a clear and popular presentation of the laws of physiological action in regard to these two narcotics, than through the heated assertions of ignorant social reformers who denied all virtue to them whatever in pharmacology, and who saw in their use the source of all social ills. Accordingly he took Mr. Parton's essay under consideration, and applying to it sound physiological and pathological knowledge combined with common sense, he so completely shattered its contention that no rejoinder was attempted.

Fiske's essay was published by his friend Henry

## John Fiske

Holt, in a little volume under the title of "Tobacco and Alcohol: It does Pay to Smoke — The Coming Man will Drink Wine." The essay attracted much attention at the time, and Fiske received many commendations of it from leading members of the medical profession. In tracing the development of Fiske's philosophic thought, the essay is of interest as showing the wide diversity and accuracy of his knowledge.

Among his pleasurable recreations of the year, two are especially worthy of note, because of their high artistic character and his intense enjoyment of them. These were the Readings of Charles Dickens from his own works, and the presentation of a series of great tragedies by Edwin Booth and Madame Janauschek in combination. In his recreations as in his serious work Fiske's taste invariably asserted itself in demanding what was best. He instinctively guarded his mind against wasting itself on frivolous things. We have seen his great fondness for the works of Charles Dickens, whose various characters became in his mind familiar friends. The Readings by Dickens in Boston, in which (with his great mimetic power) he gave masterly personations of some of the characters he had created, was one of the chief artistic features of the season. Fiske entered into the enjoyment of these Readings with a full appreciation of their quality, as he found Dickens hardly less

## Diversions

great in the presentation of character through the dramatic art than in creating character through the literary art. As a result of these Readings Dickens's characters had a new birth in Fiske's mind. They became more distinctly Dickensized, and remained his faithful companions to the last.

Fiske was profoundly impressed by the dramatic genius of Janauschek. As a dramatic artist he placed her beside Mrs. Siddons. He gives a fine bit of critical appreciation in a description of her rendering of Lady Macbeth; but what is of greater interest is the account of a call he made upon her. Fiske had made her acquaintance in New York. Under date of November 4, 1868, he writes: —

“Yesterday I called on Janauschek. Had a most delightful time and staid two hours. For about half an hour we talked in German, and I succeeded in talking it very well. Then we changed to English which she has learned since April. Then we mixed up languages just as came handy, and so had a most charming talk. I found her to be very highly cultivated, her knowledge of things being by no means limited to tragedy and acting. Her talk was so entertaining, her eyes so bright and her face so full of expression, that I thought it about as great a pleasure to sit and talk with her as to see her on the stage. We talked about Greek tragedy, Shakespeare, Goethe, Corneille, German politics, mythology, and all sorts of things. I told her about Maud's strutting about with a tragic air and calling herself Janauschek, and she was exceedingly pleased at the idea. She professed herself to be

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crazy over children, and said she wished I would call again and bring *das kleine Mädchen* with me. Perhaps I shall if I can get time. To-night, Abby and I are going to see her in Mary Stuart."

I have reserved, as a fitting close to the record of this year, the following letter of Fiske to Spencer, as it has a sort of autobiographical interest.

OXFORD STREET, CAMBRIDGE,  
September 27, 1868.

*My dear Mr. Spencer: —*

Having for some time felt an inclination to write to you in reply to your letter of June 19, 1868, I am now stimulated to do so by the circumstance that I wish to ask a favour of you.

(Fiske asks Spencer to have sent to him two numbers of the parts of the "Biology," which he had failed to receive, and which he could not get in America.)

I am better able now than when I received it, to answer your letter expressing misgivings as to the possibility of my succeeding in a literary career. I could then only hope: I can now point to something achieved. I now laugh at the times when I dreamed of paying my monthly bills by means of money earned from English reviews. I soon learned that magazines alone would never give work enough to keep one from starving; and that in order to succeed, I must attach myself to a daily paper. I therefore made an arrangement with Mr. Marble, editor of the "New York World," to write for him *causeries* on literary and philosophical subjects as

## Letter to Spencer

often as I pleased. His terms were so generous that my ability to earn is limited only by my ability to produce; and that, in point of quantity, is about 300 columns, equivalent to two or three octavos per year. Thus, so far as money goes, I am certainly prospering. In March, 1867, I became the owner of a pleasant little house in Cambridge, and planted with my own hands the maples which I hope will shade me in my old age. I live in my library, walled with books, like a mollusc in his shell, writing six hours, reading six, and sleeping nine, all days except Sunday: always well, and hardly ever more than pleasantly weary; and have reason, therefore, to believe that I am "seeing my best days." The difficulty of doing anything elaborately and the necessity of constantly writing crude thoughts, occur to trouble me: but these things, with due economy of time, may by and by be changed. At any rate, my thoughts are always busy with philosophical subjects; and this is certainly far better than to be wasting one's strength, physical, intellectual and emotional in harassing law-cases.

I have published no magazine articles during the past two years except one on "University Reform," in the "Atlantic Monthly," April, 1867, upon which, I am proud to say, the University have seen fit to base several reformatory acts; and one on "Liberal Education" in the "North American Review" July, 1868. Of my two papers on the "Laws of History," after a delay of more than two years, the first has appeared in the "Fortnightly"; and when I behold every one of the gross typographical errors (such as would not pass unchal-

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lenged by the first proof-reader at our University Press, and which I carefully corrected on the proof-sheets in 1866) conscientiously reproduced, it is difficult to bear the sight with philosophic resignation, or wholly to refrain from the use of language having theologic implications. In the second of these papers on the "Laws of History" there are some speculations which, though too briefly stated, may perhaps interest you. In a future paper in the "North American" I hope to devote fifty pages to what I have said in the last six or eight of the second part of the present article.

I am eager to see your "Psychology" finished and your "Sociology" begun, and gladly hailed the appearance of No. 20 as an indication that you were again going to work with renewed health and vigour. It was with pleasure that I heard, some time ago, that you were coming to this country, and it is with disappointment that I see spring and autumn go by without bringing you. When you come, you will doubtless not fail to look at Cambridge; and I shall esteem it a favour if you will consider my house and myself entirely at your service, so long as you like to be about here.

Meanwhile, dear Sir, believe me,

Ever faithfully yours,

JOHN FISKE.



## CHAPTER XIII

A MEMORABLE YEAR TO HARVARD AND TO FISKE  
— ELECTION OF CHARLES W. ELIOT AS PRESIDENT—  
FISKE CALLED TO LECTURE ON THE POSITIVE  
PHILOSOPHY — ELIOT'S INAUGURATION —  
WIDE EFFECT OF FISKE'S LECTURES

1869

THE year 1869 was a memorable one in the history of Harvard and a very important one in the life of Fiske. In September, 1868, the Reverend Thomas Hill resigned as President of Harvard, and the year 1869 opened with the Reverend Andrew P. Peabody acting as President *ad interim*. There was much strife as to the professional character of the person who should be chosen to fill the vacancy; that is, as between a clergyman and a professional educator. Conservative people, impressed by Harvard's long line of clerical Presidents, would follow precedent; and all those friends of Harvard who wished to see a distinctly religious character maintained in the administration of the university, albeit that religious character was of the negative Unitarian faith of the period, would fain have a candidate selected from the Unitarian clergy. On the other hand, the newer life and fresher thought which were permeating the great body of the alumni had already gained several strong repre-

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sentations on the Board of Overseers, who saw a better state of things for their beloved *alma mater* only through the complete breaking-up of the clerical domination of the past, and the bringing of the University, in all its educational provisions, into line with the conditions of modern culture and social development. These representatives of university reform naturally sought a candidate for President among professional educators rather than among clergymen.

In December and January this Harvard Presidential canvass appears to have been in a sort of tentative stage of crystallization around two candidates, the Reverend Andrew P. Peabody, D.D., the candidate of the conservative party, and Professor Ephraim W. Gurney, the candidate of the reform party.

At the height of the discussion James Russell Lowell and E. L. Godkin, the editor of the "New York Nation," asked Fiske for a trenchant article for the "Nation," on the situation at Harvard, with special reference to advancing the candidacy of Professor Gurney. Fiske wrote the article, which was published as an editorial in the "Nation" of December 31, 1868, under the title of "The Presidency of Harvard College." It was an admirable article, well balanced against both toryism and radicalism, and holding even scales for rational reform.

In view of what took place a short time after,

## A Memorable Year

the following paragraph from this article is of interest: —

“To sum up, then: What we do not want is a mere business man, a fossil man, an ultra-radical man, or a clergyman. What we do want, is a man of thorough scholarship — not a specialist, not a mere mathematician, or physicist, or grammarian; but a man of general culture, able to estimate at their proper importance the requirements of culture, and at the same time endowed with sound judgment, shrewd mother wit, practical good sense. If such a man is to be found among those who have already taken a part in the management of the college, so that he will come to his new office with some adequate knowledge of the work before him, so much the better; he will be the better able to understand what the college needs. If he should also happen to be found among those who have been graduated within the past twenty years, he will be the better able to understand what the present time requires.”

The article made a great impression at Cambridge. It presented the whole situation so clearly and fairly that it practically killed the candidacy of Dr. Peabody, while it paved the way for a greater reformer than Professor Gurney.

Shortly after the publication of Fiske's article in the "Nation," there appeared in the "Atlantic Monthly" for February, 1869, the first of two articles entitled "The New Education—Its Organization"; the second appearing in the March number. These two articles comprised, first, a re-

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view of the recent attempts in this country to organize a system of practical education based chiefly on the pure and applied sciences, the modern languages, and mathematics, instead of upon Greek, Latin, and mathematics as in the established college system; and, secondly, a discussion of what should be the preparatory training of a youth who is to enter a scientific or technological school by the time he is seventeen years old.

Under these two subject divisions was clearly set forth the need of a high-grade technical education for the youth of America, to be developed harmoniously, side by side with, and out of similar preparatory schooling for, the broadest collegiate education. These articles were written by Charles William Eliot, Professor of Chemistry and Mineralogy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and one of the recently elected members of the Board of Overseers of Harvard College. They attracted wide public attention, and since they revealed the possession by the writer of a clear comprehension of the needs of higher education in the two fields of technological training and collegiate culture, together with a full knowledge of the various problems attending all higher education arising from the varied conditions of preparatory or secondary education throughout the country, attention was at once directed to Professor Eliot as a candidate for the Presidency of Harvard. There was much beside in his favor. He was an alumnus

## Election of President Eliot

of the class of 1853. He had been Assistant Professor in the Departments of Mathematics and of Chemistry. He possessed executive ability of a high order, and was in the prime of manhood. All these considerations, fused as they were in a personality marked by great force of character, made Professor Eliot particularly acceptable to the advocates of reform at Harvard, and after a short canvass, he was, on the 12th of March, 1869, chosen President of the University by the Corporation, and this choice was confirmed by the Board of Overseers on the 19th of May following.

Fiske, as may well be supposed, took great interest in this election, and although his predilections were strong in favor of Professor Gurney, he readily acquiesced in the choice of President Eliot. And he had not long to wait for the institution of great and wise reforms, in which he was to bear a part, in both the ideals and methods of education throughout the university.

Before entering, however, upon the significant changes which soon began at Harvard, and which were fraught, as we shall see, with great importance to the subsequent life of Fiske, we should pause to take a glance at his domestic and literary life during the first half of this year 1869. The letters reveal the same abounding delight in his home surroundings and especially in the expanding minds of his children — that we have noted in previous years. On the 10th of May, a second son,

## John Fiske

Clarence Stoughton Fiske, was born into his family circle.

The letters also reveal the high order of his thought. His reading appears to have been mainly of a philological character, while his productive writing was limited to three essays—“Ancient and Modern Life,” published in the “New York World”; “The Genesis of Language,” published in the “North American Review”; “Are we Celts or Teutons?” published in “Appleton’s Journal.” He also gave much thought to collecting material for, and preparing a volume on “Liberal Education,” as well as one on the “Evolution of Language.” But these two projects did not materialize—for, as we shall soon see, he had his mind and his hands full of work in another direction.

One incident of this period is worth noting as showing his growing reputation as a thinker and a writer. He received from responsible parties in New York an offer of the editorship of a free-trade journal at a salary of six thousand dollars per year. This offer he declined.

It was in June, while absorbed in the problems of language and their bearing on the doctrine of Evolution, and also while mulling over his projected volume on Education, that he received from President Eliot a call for a special service at the university which roused all the enthusiasm of his nature. It appears that President Eliot was preparing, among other things, to inaugurate his administra-

## Lecturer at Harvard

tion by bringing within the pale of the university provisions for the broadest interpretations of philosophy. To this end, while allowing Professor Bowen, from his chair of philosophy within the college, to fulminate at will against recent progress in philosophic thinking, he determined that under the auspices of the university undergraduates and all persons interested in philosophic discussion should have critically and fairly interpreted the "thoughts that move mankind" embodied in the leading philosophic systems — especially in the modern systems. Accordingly, he arranged for the academic year 1869-70 seven courses of university lectures on Philosophy, two of which were to represent recent philosophic thought — thought which had been particularly taboo at Harvard.

The first of these two courses in significance at the time was the one on "The Natural History of the Intellect," by Ralph Waldo Emerson. The significance of this course arose from the fact that ever since Emerson's famous address before the Harvard Divinity School in 1838, and while during the intervening years his thought had been a great illuminating moral force in the culture of the modern world, Emerson, as a philosophic thinker, had been *persona non grata* at Harvard.

The second of these two notable courses was one on what was then called "The Positive Philosophy." At this period the English Evolutionary school of philosophy had not been clearly differentiated

## John Fiske

from what was known as the Scientific or Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte. As the latter was first in the field and had found some favor in England, the rising Evolutionary thought in England, also based on Science, was by theologians identified with Comtism, and by them baptized with all the philosophico-atheistical vagaries that they read into the Positive Philosophy of Comte. The reader should bear in mind that this was in the year 1869, when the bitter theological controversy started by the publication of Darwin's "Origin of Species" and Spencer's "First Principles" of Evolution was at its height, and that Positivism in the public mind was the summation of infidel philosophy and included along with the vagaries of Comte, Darwinism and Spencer's theory of Evolution. President Eliot appears to have seen somewhat the opposing philosophical principles that were jumbled together in the popular conception of the "Positive Philosophy"; and it is a fair inference that he desired such an exposition of this philosophy as should clearly set forth both its Comtian and its English Evolutionary connotations. For this purpose he selected Fiske.

The high purpose and the moral courage of the new President could not have been better shown than in inaugurating his administration by these two acts — the summoning of Emerson and Fiske, with their respective subjects, into service at the University in the highest department of knowledge.



## Lecturer at Harvard

Fiske responded favorably to President Eliot's request, and his reasons for doing so are fully given in a letter to his mother of July 5, 1869. He writes:

"As you will see from the enclosed slip, I have been chosen as one of the university lecturers on Philosophy for the year 1869-70. The subject on which I have been especially invited to deliver a course of from 12 to 20 lectures, is Positivism. . . . Eliot invited me, and I accepted *sur le champ*, for it gives me a chance to elaborate the book which I have had lying in scraps for 4 years on this subject. There are two aspects from which this event may be viewed — the sentimental, and the practical.

"I. From the sentimental aspect it is worthy of notice, that only 8 years ago I was threatened with dismissal from college if caught talking Comtism to any one. Now, without any solicitation on my part, I am asked to expound Comtism to the college, and defend or attack it as I like. This shows how vast is the revolution in feeling which has come over Harvard in 8 years, and which is shown among other things in the election of such a President as Eliot. I silently regard this as a triumph for me, and the pleasantest kind of vengeance!

"II. Practically, this is a very great honour, and is considered so by every one — to be chosen as lecturer along with such eminent men as Emerson and Cabot. Furthermore, if I do myself credit in the lectures, my success for the future is almost certain. The days of old fogyism here are numbered, and the young men are to have a chance. I have a chance now to come out strong, as Mark Tapley says; and if I improve it I shall be sure to get into the college as professor before a great while.

## John Fiske

Eliot has a great liking for me now. He thinks my article helped to get him elected. He saw the best side of my college career. He never had any prejudice against me. He never gave me anything but a perfect mark in my recitations. Now he is prepared to be pleased with anything I may do. He expects me to do a good thing, and I must do it. It won't do to fail or only half succeed. Therefore I want to throw my whole force into this thing, and come out with brilliant success. No subject could have been better selected for me to treat! I have studied Comte off and on, for 10 years; have already mapped out a discussion of his doctrines; have a good many original views about him; have once believed in him, but do so no longer; so that I can criticize him without misrepresenting him; and the subject, moreover, is one of great variety, embracing questions of science, logic, philosophy, ethics, history and religion, so that I can bring almost all my reading to bear upon it. I don't want to have people say merely, that I did very well. I want to make a profound stir, and have people say: 'Well, now here is something new; these are philosophical lectures such as one does n't hear every term.' In short, I want to conquer a permanent position here; and I believe I can do it."

Animated with this high purpose, Fiske spent the rest of the summer in finishing some literary work he had in hand for the "New York World," in revising his essay on "The Genesis of Language" for the "North American Review," in reading Plato and two or three recent works on Positivism, and blocking out his course of lectures in his mind.

## Lecturer at Harvard

A good portion of the time was spent with his family at the delightful ancestral Brooks homestead in Petersham; and the letters give charming pictures of his sweet family life with his children in this beautiful old town, which, associated as it was with the tenderest feelings of his nature, he loved to call his home.

Early in September we find him back in Cambridge and fully "squared away" at his lectures. His method of work is of interest as revealing the firm mental grasp of his subject, and also the orderly way in which he held the wide and varied knowledge essential to his purpose at ready command. He first mentally blocked out the whole course of eighteen lectures with a distinctive title for each lecture. There is no indication whatever that he made any preliminary sketch or outline of any of the lectures. I do find, however, that he took into consideration the time at his command — the lectures were to begin October 26 — and that he made a careful computation of the quantity of manuscript to be prepared and the time limit to be given to the preparation of each lecture. The result was that a lecture must be written each week.

Considering the vast knowledge in the departments of science, history, sociology, and philosophy that had to be brought into order and made subservient to the end in view, this was a most extraordinary undertaking. So wisely was the whole

## John Fiske

scheme planned, however, so carefully had he measured his own powers, that the course was carried through without the slightest interruption. The lectures when delivered were marked by such a full, lucid, easy-flowing style of exposition, as gave no indication whatever of undue pressure or haste in their composition.

Fiske's article on "The Genesis of Language," to which reference has been made, was published in the October number of the "North American Review." In this article, after a brief survey of the field of philological discussion Fiske advanced some new views in regard to disputed points in the interpretation of linguistic phenomena. Starting with the simple juxtapositive form of objective words as the barbaric genesis of language, he traced, by a process of subjective elimination and integration, the gradual development, through the agglutinative languages, of the present highly complex inflexional or amalgamative languages. In brief, his article was an attempt to apply the principles of Evolution to some of the problems of philology.

Fiske sent a copy of this article, not only to Herbert Spencer, but also to Dr. J. Muir, an eminent Sanskrit scholar at Edinburgh, to Professor Max Müller, the distinguished philologist at Oxford, and to Michel Bréal at Paris, Professor of Sanskrit in the Collège de France.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> While this article was highly commended for its erudition, Fiske never reprinted it.

## President Eliot Inaugurated

Fiske's letters to his mother during October, while showing his steady progress with his lectures, give also an account of an occurrence at Harvard which has passed into history as one of the most memorable events in the life of the university, and from what we have already seen was an event of great significance to Fiske — the inauguration of President Eliot, and his inaugural address. As the delivery at Harvard of such a course of lectures as we are about to consider had been made possible through the action of President Eliot, Fiske's impression of the new President's inaugural address has a historic value as well as a personal interest here. On the 20th of October, 1869, he writes: —

“Yesterday President Eliot was inaugurated. Abby and I went to the Church. The music was perfectly sublime. I don't know when I ever heard anything equal to it. Eliot's Inaugural address was also very fine indeed. I never before heard a speech so grand and impressive. It lasted an hour and three quarters; and during all you might have heard a pin drop, save when the old arches rang with thunders of applause. We are going to have new times here at Harvard. No more old fogyism, I hope. Abby was moved to tears; and I felt 'the chokes come' many times at the grand ideas he put forth. We have got for President a young man and a practical genius. Everybody so far as I know, went away feeling that the light of a new day had dawned upon us. I had a very high opinion of Eliot before, but I had no idea of what was in him,

## John Fiske

till I heard him yesterday announce his views. In the evening I went to his reception.”<sup>1</sup>

Another incident connected with these lectures and related to the philosophic ideas they were to set forth is of interest here — the interchange of letters between Fiske and Herbert Spencer. Only the main points in the letters will be noted.

Under date of October 6, 1869, Fiske sends Spencer proof-sheets of his article in the “North American Review” on “The Genesis of Language” and he explains how he proposes to elaborate this in connection with his essay on “The Evolution of Language,” published in 1863, into a volume which should be an illustration of the law of Evolution applied to language. He tells Spencer this volume “will set forth results of philological as well as philosophical value, obtained by the application of your doctrine and method to a set of phenomena which you have not yet come to treat

<sup>1</sup> As the inauguration of President Eliot was such a memorable event in the history of Harvard, I give an extract from the charge of the President of the Board of Overseers, the Honorable John H. Clifford, as he placed the keys, the ancient charter, and the seal of the college in President Eliot’s hands, — these being the symbols and the warrant of the authority conferred upon him as Harvard’s official head, — and also President Eliot’s response.

President Clifford said: —

“When, sir, the far-reaching issues that are involved in the great trust now confided to you, and the influence its wise, faithful and efficient performance is to exert upon the country and the world are measured and understood; when we reflect that we indulge but a reasonable hope in looking forward from your period of life, that through this day’s proceedings your hand will be instrumental in leading the minds and moulding the characters of a larger number of the best youth of the country than were guided by any of your

## Correspondence with Spencer

in detail"; and he asks for any suggestions Spencer has to offer on his proposed task.

He then gives some particulars in regard to the course of lectures he has in hand — the circumstances under which he was called to deliver them, the ground he proposes to cover, and the difficulty he finds in the endeavor to give an interpretation of the philosophy of Evolution under the title of "Positive Philosophy," by reason of the various connotations of Positivism in the public mind. He calls for a new title for the new Evolutionary philosophy — one that shall differentiate it entirely from the "Philosophie Positive" of Auguste Comte. He does not think Spencer's proposed title, "Synthetic Philosophy," sufficiently generic.

This statement in regard to the lectures leads predecessors, — it is no exaggeration to say, that the ceremony surpasses in interest and importance any that accompanies the investiture of ruler or magistrate with the functions of civil government, however imposing or significant they may be. . . . Tendering you, therefore, the awaiting confidence, the cordial sympathies and the ready coöperation of the Fellows and Overseers, — in their name and in their behalf, I now greet and welcome you as the President of Harvard College."

President Eliot's response: —

"*Mr. President*, — I hear in your voice the voice of the Alumni welcoming me to high honours and arduous labours, and charging me to be faithful to the duties of this consecrated office. I take up this weighty charge with a deep sense of insufficiency, but yet with youthful hope and a good courage. High examples will lighten the way. Deep prayers of devoted living and sainted dead will further every right effort, every good intention. The university is strong in the ardor and self-sacrifice of its teachers, in the vigor and wisdom of the Corporation and Overseers, and in the public spirit of the community. Above all, I devote myself to this sacred work in the firm faith that the God of the fathers will be also with the children."

## John Fiske

him to refer to the great changes that have taken place at Harvard during the past eight years — since the time when, as an undergraduate, he was threatened by the President with immediate expulsion if detected in disseminating “Positive” ideas among his fellow students; whereas he has now been called to expound to the students from the lecturer’s chair these same “pernicious opinions.” He then tells how the change has been brought about, by overthrowing the clerical domination of the college and placing the governing power in the alumni, who, as an electorate, choose the Board of Overseers. Fiske concludes his statement thus: “So the university governs itself: the alumni elect competent men for Overseers, who choose a modern man for President, who appoints a Spencerian as lecturer—and this is the house that Jack built.”

Spencer replied to this under date of November 1, 1869: —

“I congratulate you, Harvard, and myself, on the event of which your letter tells me. It is equally gratifying and surprising. That eight years should have wrought such a change as to place the persecuted undergraduate in the chair of lecturer is something to wonder at, and may fill us with hope, as it must fill many with consternation.”

Spencer approved of Fiske’s proposed volume on language, and made some pertinent suggestions, but admits that he is hardly prepared to offer any



## Correspondence with Spencer

positive criticism. He finds Fiske's programme of his lectures inviting, but regrets the use of the title "Positive Philosophy," and fears that the confusion between Comtism and English Positivism will be worse confounded. He writes: "The scientific world in England, in repudiating 'Comtism,' repudiates also the name 'Positivism' as the name for that general aggregate of scientific doctrine to which they adhere." He then makes this suggestion: "Why should you not by using some neutral title avoid committing yourself in any way? Might not such a title as 'Modern Philosophy' or 'The Philosophy of the Time' or 'Reformed Philosophy' — or something akin, answer the purpose?"

The whole tone of Spencer's letter shows his appreciation of Fiske's growing power.

As both letters refer to the confusion of thought that then existed in regard to the nature and implications of Comtism, Positivism, and the rising philosophy of Evolution, a brief explanation is in place here.

For a number of years the "Philosophie Positive" of Auguste Comte had been in the field as a philosophy based on science, as a philosophy freed from all ontological metaphysics — in short, as the last word in philosophy. While it made parade of much scientific and historic knowledge, and while it contained many suggestive insights into the great universe of cosmic phenomena, as a philosophical system it was so overlaid with Comte's

## John Fiske

purely subjective ideas, and was withal so atheistical in its implications, that it met with the utmost hostility from the theological world, and only a limited, quasi-support from the scientific world. Positivism, therefore, in the public mind, was classed as a sort of scientific atheism.

About 1860 the philosophy of Evolution arose out of the discovery of the correlation of physical forces by Mayer, Joule, Helmholtz, the scientific labors of Darwin in tracing the origin of species in the vegetable and animal kingdoms, and the philosophic thought of Herbert Spencer, seeking for some universal principle underlying the whole realm of the cosmic universe. This philosophy presented the cosmic universe, including man, as forever unfolding, as evolving from a lower to a higher stage of phenomenal existence. It was also founded on science, and presented all knowledge as relative to human experience, as conditioned by human experience. It could not rest, however, on the relativity of knowledge as an ultimate datum, and it therefore postulated as its final ultimate the highest ontological conception that has been given in the whole history of philosophy — an Infinite and Eternal Being, far beyond the determination of science, far beyond the power of the human mind to cognize, as the source and sustentation of the whole cosmic universe.

This Evolutionary philosophy, by reason of its rising above and beyond all metaphysical onto-

## Evolutionary Philosophy

logical speculation, was not comprehended in its profound theistic implications by the theological folk. It was by them denounced as atheistic in character, and at one with the Positive philosophy of Comte — as in fact the Comtian philosophy in an English guise.

We shall see both Spencer and Fiske contending for years to come against this confusion of thought in regard to the Positive and the Evolutionary philosophies. At present we have to note Fiske's purpose, which was to show the completeness of a philosophy based on the doctrine of Evolution as an explanation of the Cosmos, and by contrast to point out the very serious shortcomings of the philosophy of Comte. He labored, however, under one serious disadvantage — alluded to by Spencer — a public misconception of the scope of his lectures. The title was a misnomer. They were called "Lectures on the Positive Philosophy": they were, in fact, "Lectures on the Evolutionary Philosophy *versus* the Positive Philosophy."

While Fiske's direct purpose was the setting-forth of philosophic doctrine, he was well aware that the religious implications of this doctrine would not find acceptance among the believers in a revealed religion, in a religion based on theological dogmas transcending scientific verification. He well knew that by such people the profoundly religious character of the Evolutionary philosophy would be entirely overlooked, and that he would

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come under severe condemnation as an atheist and an infidel. Yet he was not deterred from expressing his full thought; and the sincerity of his conviction that he was setting forth a Divine truth of a higher, more commanding religious character than any born of theological assumptions — a truth that would ultimately become universal among thinking men — was so strong, that it gave to his whole exposition a deeply reverent tone.

The lectures began October 26 and were continued to December 10, 1869. Ordinarily they would have passed without special comment beyond the collegiate circle. The audience, although appreciative, was small and not in the slightest degree revolutionary in character. Yet an explosion was at hand. Professor Youmans, in New York, ever on the lookout for opportunities to advance the Spencerian philosophy of Evolution, arranged, with Fiske's consent, for the publication of the lectures unabridged in the "New York World." The first lecture appeared in the "World" for November 13, 1869, with a little flourish of the editorial trumpet over the significance of such a course of lectures at Harvard. Immediately an alarm was sounded at what was called "Harvard's Raid on Religion," and a wave of bitter objurcation and denunciation broke forth from the religious and a portion of the secular press, against Harvard, President Eliot, Fiske, and the "World," in which it was charged that the institution and

## Effect of his Lectures

publication of these lectures was "part of a plan obtaining among free-thinkers to disseminate far and wide attacks upon the system of revealed religion."

This outburst of religious intolerance, so widespread and so virulent in character, fairly startled the quiescent conservative feeling in Cambridge into questioning as to what the new President would do to avert impending danger to Harvard from such an aroused state of religious feeling. But President Eliot apparently was not in the slightest degree disturbed. He appears to have accepted as a governing principle in the highest teaching of the university the wise saying of Jefferson, "All error may be safely tolerated, where reason is left free to combat it." He knew what Fiske was trying to do — that in a critical way, marked by thorough knowledge and great fairness, he was trying to rid the true Positive Philosophy of science of the unphilosophical vagaries of Comte and give it an interpretation in harmony with the English school of scientific thinkers — men like Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, Lyell, Mill, Bain, etc. Therefore, he met the situation with perfect composure, and in the midst of the hubbub, he took occasion to express to Fiske his approval of the lectures and requested their repetition the following year, with an additional course devoted more particularly to the presentation of the philosophy of Evolution from the English viewpoint.

## John Fiske

Fiske had much to cheer him, from his outside audience, against this wholly unreasoning theological rattle-t'-bang. The most significant of all the sympathetic expressions he received came from the everyday readers of the "World." I have before me as I write at least a hundred of the letters sent to the editor of the "World," and sent by him to Fiske; and they are indeed a revelation. They are from professional men, business men, and working men throughout the country, and they testify, by the varied interests they represent, to the great craving that exists in the public mind for the highest philosophic truth when presented with fullness, clearness, and honesty.

When the lectures were over, Fiske was tired. For over three months his mind had been at extreme tension, without any relaxation whatever. He had in eighty-two days written six hundred and fifty-four pages, quarto letter-paper manuscript, hardly looking into a book save to verify quotation or date. He writes thus: "I feel like a cat in a strange garret with my work done. I can actually take a nap in my hammock without telling Abby to come and rout me out in half an hour."

After a few days of absolute rest he went to visit his mother in New York. There he met many of his friends, particularly Professor Youmans, Henry Holt, the publisher, Manton Marble, the editor of the "World," Mr. E. L. Godkin and John Dennett, of the editorial staff of the "Nation," and several

## Effect of his Lectures

old classmates. He was everywhere received with marked appreciation, and Dr. William A. Hammond, late Surgeon General of the United States army, and an eminent alienist, gave a dinner in his honor, where to a company of distinguished scientists he was introduced as the expounder of the new philosophy of science.

Thus the year 1869, which opened with Fiske's plea for a new administration at Harvard that should place the university in line with modern progress, came to an end, having witnessed a series of changes at the university that more than realized his fondest hopes — changes which had called him to service of the very highest character in behalf of his beloved *alma mater*, the performance of which had placed him foremost among the leaders of liberal thought in America.

## CHAPTER XIV

RENOMINATED AS LECTURER AT HARVARD—SIGNIFICANT LETTER FROM SPENCER—TO DEVOTE HIMSELF TO THE PROPAGATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF EVOLUTION—ACTING PROFESSOR OF HISTORY AT HARVARD—STUDIES AND LITERARY WORK

1870

EARLY in January, 1870, President Eliot renominated Fiske as Lecturer on the Positive Philosophy for the academic year 1870-71, and the nomination was confirmed by the Board of Overseers without opposition. This fact, in connection with the wide interest aroused by his first course of lectures, led to a significant change in the whole tenor of Fiske's thought—gave it, in fact, quite a new direction and purpose. We have seen that ever since his graduation his thought had been concentrated mainly upon philological questions, in the endeavor to establish in the genesis and development of language the working of the law of Evolution—a purely scholastic piece of work.

The wide discussion which followed his lectures, even in their newspaper form of publication, and the request by President Eliot for their repetition and enlargement, brought to his consideration a far more important task than the tracing-out of



## Renominated as Lecturer

the law of Evolution in any single department of knowledge — a no less important task than the setting-forth of the theory of Evolution as a dynamic principle underlying all Cosmic phenomena, with its theistic, its ethical, and its religious implications.

It is true that some of these implications had been touched upon in the lectures recently given; but as the lectures were prepared without any definite purpose beyond combating the idea that the theory of Evolution was synonymous with the Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte, Fiske could not think of letting the lectures as delivered stand as in any way an adequate presentation of the doctrine of Evolution.

The response to his lectures, in the way of both condemnation and approval, was clear evidence to Fiske's mind that a presentation of the new doctrine, stripped of all "Comtism" and with its legitimate philosophical implications clearly set forth, was greatly needed; and during the winter of 1870 we find him giving serious thought to this important undertaking. He weighed the whole matter in his usual methodical way. He saw that such an undertaking would necessitate a thorough review of the sciences — particularly the historical and sociological sciences, as well as a careful review of the modern schools of philosophy in the light of recent advances in biology, ethnology, physiology, and psychology. He also saw, as conditioning the

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proper execution of such a task, the necessity of a visit to London, for he could not think of bringing out a work on such a subject without consulting with Spencer and the leading English scientists.

While considering this project, Fiske received the following significant letter from Spencer: —

37 QUEEN'S GARDENS.  
BAYSWATER, LONDON, W.  
February 2, 1870.

*My dear Fiske: —*

Our friend Professor Youmans has duly forwarded me, from time to time, copies of the "New York World," containing the reports of your lectures. Though my state of brain obliges me to be very sparing in the amount of my reading, and though, consequently, I have not read them all through, yet I have read the larger parts of them; and of the latter ones I have read nearly or quite all. This fact shows that they have produced in me an increasing interest. Taken together they constitute a very complete and well-arranged survey of the whole subject, which can scarcely fail to be extremely serviceable, especially when it comes to be repeated in an improved form, as I learn from Professor Youmans it is likely to be next session.

Into the latter lectures especially, you have put an amount of original thought which gives them an independent value. Indeed, in several of the sociological propositions you set forth, you have to some extent forestalled me in the elaboration of the doctrine of Evolution under its sociological aspects. I refer to the dominance you have given

## Letter from Spencer

to the influence of the sociological environment, and to the conception of social life as having its action adjusted to actions in the environment, which you have presented in a more distinct way than I have as yet had the opportunity of doing. When, some two or three years hence, you get a copy of the first volume of a set of doubly-classified Sociological Facts, which has been in course of preparation for upwards of two years by Mr. Duncan (who now holds the pen for me), you will see that I have made the character of the environment, inorganic, organic and sociological, a conspicuous element in the tabulated account of each society, with the intention of tracing the connexion between it and the social structure.

You have made out a better case for Comte than any of his disciples have done, so far as I am aware. Or, perhaps, it seems so to me because you have not joined with the more tenable claim, a number of untenable claims. If the word "Positive" could be dissociated from the special system with which he associated it, and could be connected in the general mind with the growing body of scientific thought to which he applied it, I should have no objection to adopt it, and by so doing accord to him due honour as having given a definite and coherent form to that which the cultivated minds of his time were but vaguely conscious of. But it seems to me as the case stands, and as the words are interpreted both by the Comtists and by the public, the amount of *correct apprehension* resulting from the adoption of the word will be far outbalanced by the amount of *misapprehension* produced.

## John Fiske

In so far as I am myself concerned, I still hold that the application of the word to me, connotes a far greater degree of kinship between Comte and myself than really exists. I say this not simply in virtue of a reason which you naturally do not recognize in the way that it is recognized by me. I refer to the fact that the elements of my general scheme of thought which you have brought into prominence as akin to those of Comte (such as the relativity of knowledge and the deanthropomorphization of men's conceptions), have never been elements that have occupied any conspicuous or distinctive place in my own mind — *they have been all along quite secondary to the grand doctrine of Evolution, considered as an interpretation of the Cosmos from a purely scientific or physical point of view.* You may judge of the proportional importance which these respective elements have all along had in my mind, when I tell you that as I originally conceived it, "First Principles" was constituted of what now forms its second part; that along with the succeeding volumes, it was intended to be a detailed working-out through all its ramifications of that conception crudely set forth in the essay on "Progress, its Law and its Cause," and that I subsequently saw the need for making such preliminary explanation as is now given in Part I (The Unknowable) *simply for the purpose of guarding myself against the charges of atheism and materialism, which I foresaw would most likely be made in its absence.*

If you deduct the doctrines contained in this part, and the doctrines set forth in the reply to M. Laugel, which were not consciously included

## Letter from Spencer

in my original scheme — if you conceive that as I originally entertained it, and still consider it, as essentially a Cosmogony that admits of being worked out in physical terms, without necessarily entering upon any metaphysical questions, and without committing myself to any particular form of philosophy commonly so called; you will begin to see why I have all along protested, and continue to protest, against being either classed with Comte or described as a Positivist in the wider meaning of that word. If you bear in mind that my *sole original purpose* was the interpretation of all concrete phenomena in terms of the redistribution of Matter and Motion, and that I regard all other purposes as incidental and secondary; and if you remember that a cosmogony as so conceived has nothing in common with the Positive Philosophy, which is an *organon* of the sciences; and further, that a Cosmogony as so conceived is not involved in that general Positivism that was current before Comte or has been current since; you will see why I regard the application of the word Positivist to me as essentially misleading. *The general doctrine of universal Evolution as a necessary consequence from the Persistence of Force, is not contained or implied either in Comtism or in Positivism as you define it.*

I have gone thus at length into the matter, partly because I want you to understand most fully the grounds of my dissent, which you probably have thought inadequate; and partly because it might be that in preparing your course for a second delivery, the explanation I have given may lead to some modification of statement.

## John Fiske

Hence it happens that when certain views of mine which are in harmony with those of Comte, are put into the foreground as implying a fundamental kinship which makes the same title applicable to both, the inevitable result is to exhibit, as all essential, these quite secondary views, which I should have been content never to have expressed at all; and by so doing to put into the background the one cardinal view which it has been, and still is my object to elaborate.

Pray do not suppose that in saying all this, I am overlooking the sympathetic appreciation which is everywhere manifested throughout your lectures, or the frequent passages in which you have seized the occasion to draw contrasts and to point out the essential differences. But I have gone thus at length into the matter with the view of showing you a ground for my dissent which you have probably never perceived.

I was glad to gather from Professor Youmans that your lectures were being favorably received. I should hope that the appreciation has continued to grow as you have progressed toward the end of your series. Let me add that I hope you have not suffered in health by the close application you must have entailed on yourself in preparing so elaborate a course of lectures in so short a time.

I am, very sincerely yours,  
HERBERT SPENCER.

The significance of this letter lies, not so much in what it reveals of Spencer's thought regarding Comte and the Positive Philosophy, as in what it reveals of Spencer's attitude at the time toward

## Letter from Spencer

the ultimate questions of all philosophy with their religious implications. This letter clearly states that he regarded these ultimate questions as of "incidental and secondary importance"; that in his scheme as originally planned they were entirely ignored; and that their consideration in his "First Principles" was an afterthought, introduced, not as necessary to his argument, but, as he says, "simply for the purpose of guarding myself against the charges of atheism and materialism, which I foresaw would most likely be made in their absence."

This letter is perhaps the clearest evidence we have of Spencer's wholly indifferent attitude toward the Christian religion, and especially toward the Christian conceptions of God and of the brotherhood of man. It has been felt by many that the implications of the doctrine of Evolution as presented by him completely sweep away the fundamentals of the Christian religion without leaving in their stead any tangible religious truth for the mind to grasp; that while destroying that which the Christian of whatever sect has for ages been taught to regard as the highest verity — a distinctly personal, knowable God — he offers in its place nothing but a vague intellectual generality or abstraction.

This letter, coming at a time when Fiske was giving serious thought to devoting himself to the exposition of the new doctrine, produced a cry-

## John Fiske

tallizing effect in his mind. He felt that Spencer was making a grave mistake in minimizing the religious implications of his great doctrine. In Fiske's mind these implications, with their bearing on the religious faith and social well-being of Christendom were by no means unimportant considerations, in that, rightly interpreted, they enlarged the Christian conception of God from a purely finite anthropomorphic conception to that of an Infinite Eternal Being incapable of being conceived by the human mind; a Being of whom the cosmos is but a phenomenal manifestation. And the subjective implications of the doctrine were no less ennobling, inasmuch as he found deeply implanted in the human consciousness a feeling of dependence upon, and aspiration towards, a Being or Power transcending finite experience, together with certain innate ideas of ethical conduct in social relations — the whole conditioning man's fulness of life, whereof his various civilizations are but the evidences of his progressive development.

And further, these philosophico-religious implications were of supreme importance in Fiske's mind; not only because they formed the highest aspect of Spencer's profound definition of life — "the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations"; but also because they were intellectually constructive in their nature, and prepared the way for higher and purer religious and



## Acting Professor of History

social ideals than had obtained in any previous system of philosophy.

While his mind was thus seething with these profound philosophico-religious questions Fiske wrote two articles, one entitled "The Jesus of History," and the other, "The Christ of Dogma."<sup>1</sup> These two articles were a clear, impartial summing-up of the results of New Testament criticism at the time; and were intended as a prelude to a work which had been near his heart since his college days, a work the preparation of which he was looking forward to amidst all his subsequent engagements with the deepest interest; a work to which he proposed to give the title "Jesus of Nazareth and the Founding of Christianity."

In this winter of 1870, therefore, Fiske decided that he would devote himself to the exposition of the doctrine of Evolution with special regard to its religious and social implications, as a most important task.

And yet with such a noble purpose he did not escape the relentless heresy-hunter. In January of this year Professor Gurney, the University Professor of History, was elected Dean of the Faculty; and President Eliot nominated Fiske to occupy Professor Gurney's chair for the spring term, as Acting Professor of History. It was a good test of the "liberality" of the Board of Overseers as well

<sup>1</sup> These two essays were subsequently published in his volume of essays entitled *The Unseen World*.

## John Fiske

as of Fiske's prospects of advancement at the college. The orthodox element in the Board of Overseers, chafing under the steady progress of President Eliot's liberalizing policy, was roused to opposition, and a vigorous protest to Fiske's confirmation was promptly made. It was openly charged that Fiske was a pronounced atheist, and the more dangerous because of his learning and ability. It was alleged that the Board had gone to the extreme limit of toleration in confirming him as Lecturer on Philosophy: to go further and sanction his occupancy of the chair of History, even temporarily, would be an insult to all the traditions of the college. The opposition was, indeed, bitter. Several members lost their temper, and vowed they would take their sons away from the college. The confirmation was referred to a special committee, who reported in favor of Fiske; and yet it required the utmost persistency on the part of President Eliot, supported by the very positive action of such broad-minded clergymen as James Freeman Clarke and Edward Everett Hale, — members of the Board, — to carry the nomination through. Fiske was confirmed, but by a bare majority.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The following letter from the Reverend James Freeman Clarke to his friend, the Reverend William R. Alger, is of interest here: —

JAMAICA PLAIN, *February 17, 1870.*

*Dear Alger:* —

I thank you for your note, and wish I had received it before the meeting of the Board of Overseers. I decided to recommend the Board to concur in the appointment of Mr. Fiske, for after reading the reports of his lectures in the "New York World" I saw that he

## Acting Professor of History

In the teaching of history Fiske found congenial labor. His specific task as Acting Professor of History was the interpretation of mediæval history to the senior class, and it was a great pleasure to him to come in contact with a group of fresh young minds in the exposition of one of his favorite studies. He met his class for recitation or lecture twice a week, and the class appear to have been greatly pleased with their instructor. Here are a few extracts from the letters:—

“*May 26.* Gave my seniors an extempore lecture yesterday on the services of the Catholic Church during the Middle Ages and they seemed to like it a good deal. . . . James Freeman Clarke witnessed a recitation of mine last week, and he seemed to like the way I did it. . . . To instruct 120 cheerful and gentlemanly fellows is not an unpleasant task. I shall be rather sorry to get through.”

“*June 8.* Had my last recitation Monday and was vociferously clapped and hurraed by the class for a good-bye and am invited to more

was no more of an atheist than Mansel was an atheist. I do not in the least agree with his philosophy, nor that of Herbert Spencer. I believe we can *know* God, though we cannot comprehend Him; just as we know a great many other facts which neither the understanding nor the imagination can grasp. The knowing, however, goes deeper than either. But if a man does not call *himself* an atheist, I shall not call him so; because from my premises *my* logic would lead *me* to that conclusion. So I decided to recommend Mr. Fiske, which made a majority of the Committee, and perhaps a majority of the Board on that side. I shall hope some day to know Mr. Fiske, whose vigorous and clear thoughts are very interesting to me.

Very truly yours,

JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE.

## John Fiske

'spreads' on Class-day than a man can go to in a month."

It was hoped by Fiske's friends that a better understanding of his philosophical views, and the demonstration of his rare qualifications for historical instruction would greatly mitigate, if not entirely overcome, the theologic prejudice against him at the college, so that he might at least be given the Assistant Professorship of History. But it should be considered that the controversy over Darwinism and Evolution was at its height, and that Positivism, Darwinism, and Evolution were jumbled together by the theological folk as the latest form of scientific infidelity, which not only antagonized common sense, but also insulted a divinely revealed religion by presenting man with his rational mind as descended (we should now say ascended) from a Simian ancestry. It should also be considered that the theologic dogma of man's special creation by Divine fiat was affirmed within the college as an ultimate truth of science by Agassiz, with all the weight of his great influence.

Fiske's pronounced Darwinian and Evolutionary views had the effect, therefore, of uniting all these influences into a bitter opposition to his holding any permanent position in the instruction at the college; and the opposition was so pronounced that President Eliot did not again nominate him.

Fiske's labors in the Department of History, for

## Studies and Literary Work

the spring term of 1870 were therefore the full extent of his instruction, but by no means the measure of his work at Harvard.

Notwithstanding his duties as Acting Professor of History and the claims of philosophy upon his thought, Fiske did not at any time neglect his classical or his philologic studies. In his mind these studies, along with music, appear to have been regarded as diversions, albeit to most persons the manner in which the diversions were pursued would seem a serious form of study. This personal characteristic, however, should be noted, — for it appears throughout Fiske's whole intellectual life, — he found a supreme pleasure in whetting his thought upon the intellectual masterpieces of the race, and tracing in them the development of language as a vehicle of thought expression. Of his classical reading at this time he writes: —

“I am getting to read Greek almost like English. I began the ‘Odyssey’ last Sunday, and at odd moments have read two thirds of it in five days. I believe there is no intellectual pleasure like that derived from reading the Greek poets. Divine old creatures.”

During the summer and autumn of 1870, Fiske's chief activities were given to writing a series of papers on popular mythology and superstition for the “Atlantic Monthly,” some book reviews for the “New York World,” and to studies in the history of music, with the purpose of writing an

## John Fiske

article on the philosophy of music. This article was never written; and as I look over the preparation for it, — bearing in mind his rare musical gift, — I cannot but express a regret that he never carried out his purpose. He greatly enjoyed writing the mythological articles, and they were warmly appreciated by Mr. Howells, then editor of the "Atlantic," — indeed, the letters reveal delightful neighborly interviews between editor and contributor during their preparation.

The book reviews for the "New York World" comprised such works as Proctor's "Other Worlds than Ours," Dalton's "Hereditary Genius," Huxley's "Lay Sermons," Lankester's "Comparative Longevity in Man and the Lower Animals," Darwin's "Descent of Man," and Gladstone's "Juventus Mundi — The Gods and Men of the Heroic Age."

These reviews were not mere "book notices." They were real reviews, and in the choice of subjects and method of treatment there is shown the steady broadening of the Evolutionary doctrine in Fiske's mind, with its application to a wide variety of subjective phenomena. The review of Gladstone's "Juventus Mundi" was in Fiske's best vein, and was a clear and scholarly presentation of the fact that while Gladstone, as a statesman, might notably succeed in holding a "fretful realm in awe," as a classical scholar, in the philological and historical sense of the term, he was sadly de-

## Book Reviews

ficient. Fiske showed the fairness and fine quality of his criticism by heartily commending Gladstone's classical enthusiasm amid his great public duties, as well as his "extensive and accurate knowledge of the *surface* of the 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey.'"

In common with all thoughtful minds Fiske was profoundly stirred by the Franco-Prussian War, then raging, upon which he comments thus to his mother: —

"The downfall of Napoleon pleases me much. He has been a fearful curse to France, killing her morally, while cheating her with an appearance of material prosperity. I hope this will be the last of the Bonapartes. The Prussian success does not surprise me unless by its wonderful rapidity and completeness. I had n't the slightest expectation that the French could withstand them. To understand how the best class of Frenchmen regard Bonapartism you should read Taxile Delord's 'Histoire du Second Empire.'"

On November 16, 1870, his third son, Ralph Browning Fiske, was born. And during this latter half of 1870, side by side with these varied interests, his second course of Harvard lectures, assigned to the spring term of 1871, were mulling in his mind.

## CHAPTER XV

SECOND COURSE OF HARVARD LECTURES — CORRESPONDENCE WITH SPENCER AND DARWIN — LECTURES ON EVOLUTION — PERSONA NON GRATA AT LOWELL INSTITUTE — ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN AT HARVARD — AGASSIZ ARTICLE — SAILS FOR QUEENSTOWN

1871-1873

THE year 1871 opened to Fiske with a task before him of no slight nature — the delivery of thirty-seven lectures on Philosophy, the last nineteen of which were yet to be prepared, while of the first eighteen many were to be materially revised. The lectures were to begin February 15, and were to continue twice a week until the 15th of June. The letters during January reveal Fiske as completely absorbed in thinking out the nineteen new lectures preparatory to their composition, and it is interesting to note what the “thinking-out” process was. It consisted of getting into his mind, first of all, through pure mental abstraction, a very definite conception of his object. This done, the writing out of his thought became to him comparatively an easy matter. I find no indication whatever that he made any sketch plan of the course, or that he even made any notes or references to authorities; and yet the lectures, when



## Second Course of Lectures

written out, fairly bristled with apposite quotations from authorities in all departments of knowledge. In fact, we have in his preparation for, and writing-out of, these Evolutionary lectures, another illustration not only of his method of working, but also of the thorough command of his wide and varied knowledge, and the readiness and logical force with which he could marshal it in the exposition of his ideas.

It was while thinking out these lectures on Evolution that Fiske clearly saw his way to weave into them, as a permeating woof of thought, three considerations of the very highest import in developing the doctrine of Evolution into a philosophical system. These were, first, the complete demonstration of the fact that there was not, nor could there be, any possible congruity between the Positive Philosophy of Comte and the philosophy of Evolution. Secondly, the positive, teleological, constructive nature of a philosophy founded on Evolution, in that it posits an Infinite and Eternal Being "everywhere manifested in the phenomenal activity of the Universe, alike the cause of all and the inscrutable essence of all, without whom the world would become 'like the shadow of a vision,' and thought itself would vanish." Thirdly, the identification of the religious implications of such a philosophy with the two fundamental elements of the Christian religion — love to God and love to man. On the first point Spencer and Fiske were

## John Fiske

in accord: the second and third points, as we have seen, Spencer regarded as of incidental and secondary importance.

The thirty-seven lectures were delivered precisely as planned — the last on the 14th of June. The audience was small, with a slightly increased number for the concluding lectures on Evolution, notably by a few clergymen and students from the Divinity School. While not large, the audience was a thoughtful and responsive one. The publication of the Evolutionary lectures in the "New York World" promptly followed their delivery. They were widely read; but their publication did not cause any such outburst of theological denunciation as attended the first series. The fact was, the theological folk saw that they had a new antagonist to face; one who was far from setting forth any Comtian or atheistical doctrine; one who was backed by the highest authorities in science; one who was in very truth presenting a higher, a purer form of theism than obtains in any Christian creed; and who was giving to existing ethical morality, on the basis of individual and social conduct, an origin and a binding force far transcending anything found in the assumptions of Christian theology.

Fiske was, of course, desirous of getting Spencer's opinions on several points in the lectures, and especially on his treatment of the sociological and religious bearings of Evolution. Accordingly, he

## Correspondence with Spencer

sent copies of the lectures to him, and from the exchange of letters that took place the following extracts are made.

Under date of September 29, 1871, Fiske writes Spencer:—

. . . After much incubation on the subject, I have come to think that you are right in refusing to accept the appellation "Positivist" in any sense in which it is now possible to use the word; and I can see many points of difference between your philosophy and that of the Littré school, which escaped my notice last year, and which are quite fundamental, albeit not very conspicuous on a superficial survey of the case. . . .

As the clear statement of the points of agreement and difference between your philosophy and Positivism is a matter of much importance, I hope that, if you can spare the time to look over the first part of lecture 18th, you will do so, and kindly communicate to me any criticisms which may occur to you. I should like also to know what you think of the term "Cosmic Philosophy" and "Cosmism." In the 19th lecture, the significance of these terms is still further illustrated.

Besides this I should like to invite your attention to lecture 11th on "The Evolution of Intelligence," and especially to lecture 17th on "Moral Progress." In the latter I have rudely sketched a theory of the transition from animality to humanity, from gregariousness to sociality, as determined by that prolongation of infancy which is itself due to the increasing complexity of intelligence. I do not know that I have been anticipated in this

## John Fiske

theory, and it seems to me to be a valuable contribution to the discussion of the origin of society. It would give me great pleasure to know what you think of it. . . .

. . . Before publication, I feel it very desirable to come to England, and talk things over with you and with Lewes, Mill, and Huxley. I should also like to secure an English copyright on the book. Always desirous of seeing you more than any one else in the world, I now feel that I can make "business" a legitimate excuse for leaving home for a few weeks. If I can possibly bring it about, I shall sail for England early in the spring.

In reply to your kind inquiries after my health and private circumstances, I may say, figuratively, that to the strength of a gorilla and the appetite of a wolf, I add the capacity for sleep of a Rip van Winkle. Having a wife and little daughter and three little sons to take care of, and having a strong "*goût du bien-être*," not to call it a taste for luxury, I may find it rather hard to get on. Still, I find that literary work pays better than I ever expected it would. This is partly due to the generosity of Mr. Manton Marble, proprietor of the "New York World," who has always given me unstinted space in his columns, and paid me at high rates.

Rumour tells me that you are in better health than usual, and ready to proceed rapidly with your work. I am getting very impatient to see the "Sociology," and the rapid appearance of the last four numbers of the "Psychology" I have hailed with unseemly and barbaric laughs of exultation. One of my dearest hopes is to see you finish the whole work, and then go back and insert the unwritten

## Correspondence with Spencer

portion on inorganic phenomena; and one of my most earnest labours will be to do what little I can in helping to secure for the results of your profound studies, the general recognition which they deserve, and are surely destined to obtain.<sup>1</sup> . . .

Hoping before long to meet you, I am

Yours faithfully,

JOHN FISKE.

The particular lectures in regard to which Fiske especially desired Spencer's criticism were those dealing with the evolution of human intelligence and the development of theism and of moral and religious ideals through the working of the unknown evolutionary principle of life — a principle which had been defined by Spencer as "the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations." In point of fact, Fiske's request was a courteous way of asking Spencer to define himself, on the subjects of theism and religion, more completely than he had yet done in the setting-forth of his philosophy.

Under date of November 27, 1871, Spencer replied: —

*My dear Mr. Fiske: —*

The packet of lectures safely reached me along with your letter. Thank you very much for them. Already I had read a good number of them with

<sup>1</sup> In Fiske's original draft of this letter he wrote, and then cancelled, the following: —

"I trust you will not tyrannize over later generations as Aristotle did; but I am sure they will rate you as high as he was rated in the Middle Ages."

## John Fiske

much interest (some of them brought by Youmans, and others sent to him), but several were missing, and I am glad to have a tolerably complete series. They cannot fail to be of immense service by presenting the general view in a comparatively moderate space. Beyond the advantage of brevity, however, they have the great advantage of being a coherent re-presentation of the doctrine as it appears to another mind, a re-presentation which cannot fail to be helpful to many. To the great value which your lectures thus possess in their expository character, has to be added the farther value they derive from the original thought running through them, which here and there elucidates and carries out the general doctrine to great advantage.

It is satisfactory to me to hear that the course is likely to be repeated in Boston this winter, and that you contemplate subsequently embodying it in a volume. Good arrangements can doubtless be made for you here, under the general system of international publication which Youmans has been doing so much to inaugurate. It will give me great pleasure to see you in England, and to do what I can toward furthering your aims. Mill, you will not, I fear, be able to see. He is now at Avignon and intends, I am told, to spend most of his time there henceforth; coming to England only for a few weeks, probably in the summer. But with the others you name, I shall have pleasure in bringing you in contact.

. . . I have not had time to read, or re-read those particular lectures, or parts of lectures to which you refer, for I have been recently pressed in finishing

## Correspondence with Spencer

some work that had to be done to date. Either soon, or else before you come, I hope to prepare myself to say something about them.

Meanwhile, respecting one of the questions you raise, — that of the title, — I may as well say what has occurred to me. To put my view in its most general form, I should say that a system of philosophy, if it is to have a distinctive name, should be named from its method, not from its subject-matter. Whether avowedly recognized as such or not, the subject-matter of philosophy is the same in all cases. If it is consistently interpreted as that order of science which unifies the sciences (and it has from the beginning had unconsciously, if not consciously, this character), then its subject-matter has all along been essentially the same. The speculations of the Greeks had reference to the genesis of the cosmos, just as clearly as the doctrine of Evolution has. And if so, it seems to me that the title "Cosmic" is not distinctive. It applies to the system of Hegel, of Oken, and of all who have propounded cosmogonies. The word expresses simply the *extent* of the theory, and may be fairly applied to every theory which proposes to explain all the arrangement of things — even though it be the theory of final causes. Having regard to this requirement, that the title for a Philosophy shall refer not to its subject-matter, which it must have in common with other Philosophy, but to its method, in which it may more or less differ from them; I continue to prefer the title "Synthetic Philosophy."

This and various other questions, however, we can discuss at length, when you come to England.

## John Fiske

Respecting the final revision of your lectures before publication, I would suggest that you should, if you can, obtain the criticisms of experts on the respective divisions of science dealt with. Here and there there are statements and hypotheses which seem to me open to criticism; while they are not essential to the argument it is *very important* to avoid giving handles to antagonists. In the popular mind, a valid objection to some quite unimportant detail of an argument, is very often taken for a disproof of the argument itself.

I am glad to have good accounts of your health and vigour. There is plenty of work to be done, and it is satisfactory to hear of one otherwise able to do it, who is at the same time physically strong enough.

Very sincerely yours,  
HERBERT SPENCER.

While the general tenor of this letter gave Fiske great encouragement, it left a tinge of disappointment in his mind, in that Spencer had evaded his request, for *particular* criticism on the lectures dealing with the application of the law of Evolution to the development of human intelligence, to theistic, to moral, and to religious ideals. He was further disturbed by Spencer's strong insistence upon "Synthetic Philosophy" as a suitable title for a philosophy based on Evolution — a title which seemed to Fiske neither generic nor in any way distinctive.

Two years later, we shall see these points again brought under consideration, when Fiske, in per-



## Correspondence with Darwin

sonal conference with Spencer in London, was revising his lectures for publication.

Fiske also sent copies of the lectures to Darwin, and the following correspondence ensued. As we have here two self-revealing letters: the one from a young man with rare mental endowments, seeking with the utmost sincerity of purpose the highest truths in science and philosophy; the other from one of the world's greatest scientists, wherein we see a mind serenely poised after a contribution to human knowledge of the very highest import, and ready generously to welcome fresh thought from whatever source, I give the letters entire:—

### *Fiske to Darwin*

HARVARD UNIVERSITY,  
CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *October 23, 1871.*

*Mr. Charles Darwin:—*

*My dear Sir,*— Since it came in my way, in discharge of my duties as lecturer at the university, to notice your discoveries in so far as they bear upon the organization of scientific truths into a coherent body of philosophy, it has been my intention to write and seek the honour of your acquaintance, forwarding to you, as a sort of letter of introduction the reports of my lectures.

A few days ago I met your two sons at dinner (who afterwards kindly called at my house) and I gave to Mr. F. Darwin the reports of a few of my lectures to transmit to you. I cannot however resist the temptation to write to you, and tell you directly how dear to me is your name for the magnificent discovery with which you have enriched

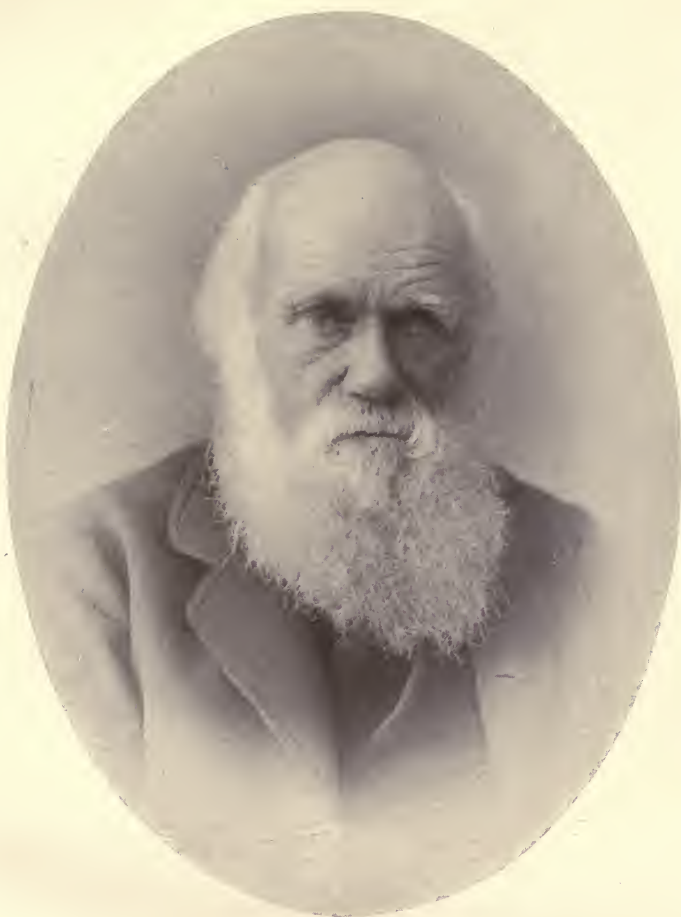
## John Fiske

human knowledge, winning for yourself a permanent place beside Galileo and Newton.

When your "Origin of Species" was first published, I was a boy of seventeen; but I had just read Agassiz's "Essay on Classification" with deep dissatisfaction at its pseudo-Platonic attempt to make metaphysical abstractions do the work of physical forces; and I hailed your book with exultation, reading and re-reading it till I almost knew it by heart. Since then "Darwinism" has formed one of the pivots about which my thought has turned. And though I am no naturalist, and cannot claim any ability to support your discovery by original observations of my own, yet I have striven, to the best of my ability, to point out the strong points of your theory of natural selection, and to help win for it acceptance on philosophic grounds.

There is one place in which it seems to me that I have thrown out an original suggestion, which may prove to be of some value in connection with the general theory of man's descent from an ape-like ancestor. In the lecture on "Moral Progress" (which along with others your son will hand you) I have endeavoured to show that the transition from Animality (or bestiality, stripping the word from its bad connotations), to humanity, must have been mainly determined by the prolongation of infancy or immaturity, which is consequent upon a high development of intelligence, and which must have necessitated the gradual grouping together of pithecoïd men into more or less defined families.

I will not try to state the hypothesis here, as you



CHARLES DARWIN



## Correspondence with Darwin

will get a clearer statement of it in the lecture. I should esteem it a great favour if you would, after looking at the lecture, tell me what you think of the hypothesis. It seems to me quite full of significance.

I am on the point of giving a few popular lectures in illustration and defence of your views. You will see from the papers, which I have sent you, that I am an earnest admirer of Mr. Herbert Spencer — a thinker to whom I am more indebted than I can possibly tell; and who has been so kind as to give me some of his personal advice and assistance by way of letters during the past seven years. I hope before next summer to visit England, and I count much upon seeing you, as well as Mr. Spencer and Mr. Huxley. Meanwhile and always, believe me, dear sir,

Yours with deep respect,

JOHN FISKE.

*Charles Darwin to Fiske*

DOWN BERKENHAM, KENT,  
November 9, 1871.

*My dear Sir:—*

I am greatly obliged to you for having sent me, through my son, your lectures; and for the very honourable manner in which you allude to my works. The lectures seem to me to be written with much force, clearness, and originality. You show also an extraordinary amount of knowledge of all that has been published on the subject. The type in many parts is so small that, except to young eyes, it is very difficult to read. Therefore I wish you would reflect on their separate publication; though so

## John Fiske

much has been published on the subject that the public may possibly have had enough.

I hope this may be your intention; for I do not think I have ever seen the general argument more forcibly put so as to convert unbelievers.

It has surprised and pleased me to see that you and others have detected the falseness of much of Mr. Mivart's reasoning. I wish I had read your lectures a month or two ago, as I have been preparing a new edition of the "Origin," in which I answer some special points; and I believe I should have found your lectures *useful*; but my manuscript is now in the printer's hands, and I have not strength or time to make any more additions.

With my thanks and good wishes,

I remain, my dear sir,

Yours sincerely,

CHARLES DARWIN.

P.S. By an odd coincidence since the above was written I have received your very obliging letter of October 23d. I did notice the point to which you refer, and will hereafter reflect more over it. I was indeed on the point of putting in a sentence to somewhat the same effect, in the new edition of the "Origin" in relation to the query — why have not apes advanced in intellect as well as man? but I omitted it on account of the asserted prolonged infancy of orang. I am also a little doubtful about the distinction between gregariousness and heredity. Memo. case of baboons.

When I have time and thought, I will send you description.

When you come to England, I shall have much pleasure in making your acquaintance; but my

## Lectures on Evolution

health is habitually so weak, that I have very small power of conversing with my friends as much as I wish.

Let me again thank you for your letter. To believe that I have at all influenced the minds of able men is the greatest satisfaction which I am capable of receiving.

CH. DARWIN.

These letters of Spencer and Darwin confirmed in Fiske's mind the wisdom of his purpose to devote himself to the exposition of the philosophy of Evolution, and he now sought engagements for a course of lectures presenting Evolution as a philosophic system, or for single lectures presenting special points in the system, such as "The Meaning of Evolution," "Evolution and Comtism," "The Nebular Hypothesis," "The Composition of Mind," "Darwinism," "Science and Religion," etc.

During the winter of 1872 he delivered the complete course of lectures in Boston, and he had reason to be well pleased with the manner in which they were received by a popular audience. The audience was sympathetic from the beginning, and two of the lectures he repeated by request. At the concluding lecture, the expressions of gratitude for the new light he had thrown on the deepest of all problems — man's relations to the Infinite — were so marked that Fiske was greatly affected thereby. Writing to his mother, under date of March 31, 1872, he says: —

## John Fiske

“My concluding lecture — on the ‘Critical Attitude of Philosophy toward Christianity,’ in which, as the consummation of my long course, I throw a blaze of new light upon the complete harmony between Christianity and the deepest scientific philosophy, was given Friday noon, and was received with immense applause. You ought to have been there. I suppose there was *some* eloquence as well as logic in it, for many of the ladies in the audience were moved to tears. Many were the expressions almost of affection which I got afterwards, and tokens thereof in the shape of invitations to all sorts of things, concert tickets, etc., etc. Abby and I held a regular levee for about an hour. Several people told me that their lives would be brighter ever after hearing these lectures; that they had never known any pleasure like it, etc., etc.; and as these things were said with moistened eyes, I have no doubt they came from the heart. To me it is a delight to have made so many friends. . . . The best effect of it will be to destroy the absurd theological prejudice which has hitherto worked against me, chiefly with those people who have n’t had the *remotest* idea of what my views are.

“I have long known that my views needed only to be known to be sympathized with by the most truly religious part of the community of whatever sect; that when thoroughly stated and understood, they disarm opposition, and leave no ground for dissension anywhere — and this winter’s experiment has proved that I was right.”

And yet, at this very time, while preaching this profoundly religious philosophy, and holding to a



## Lectures on Evolution

faith in the fair-mindedness of people that they would understand the highest philosophic and religious truth when properly presented, Fiske could not, because of his heretical opinions, speak before the Lowell Institute of Boston, an institution especially established for the dissemination of knowledge among the people.

It appears that President Eliot sought to have Fiske invited to give his course of lectures before this institution. He was not successful; and he gives the result of his effort in the following letter to Fiske: —

HARVARD COLLEGE,  
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.,  
27 March, 1872.

*Dear Mr. Fiske: —*

I have done my best with Mr. Lowell about a course of lectures for you, and on some accounts he would like to give you one. But public attention has been called to your religious opinions — through no fault of your own — and Mr. Lowell does not feel able to disregard in such a case the following expression of the wishes of the founder of the Lowell Institute: —

“As infidel opinions appear to me injurious to society, and easily insinuate themselves into a man’s dissertations on any subject, however remote it may be from the subject of religion, no man ought to be appointed a lecturer, who is not willing to declare his belief in the Divine revelation, of the Old and New Testaments, leaving the interpretation thereof to his own conscience.”

## John Fiske

I could not declare my belief in the "Divine revelation" of the Old Testament and I don't believe you can; that is, in the accepted sense of the words "Divine revelation."

I am very sorry for this obstacle to your progress; but I beg you not to be discouraged, and not to abandon faith in the force of scholarship, and sincerity, and in the real and ultimate liberality of this community.

Very truly yours,

CHARLES W. ELIOT.

To JOHN FISKE, Esq<sup>r</sup>.

In spite, however, of theological opposition, Fiske's reputation for fine scholarship, for fair-mindedness in the discussion of controverted points of doctrine, and for rare powers of philosophic exposition, steadily broadened. He was fortunate in his friendships. In New York his friends, Professor Youmans, Henry Holt, John R. Dennett, and W. P. Garrison (of the "Nation"), Homer Martin (the artist), Benjamin Frothingham (his classmate), and a few others, were active in radiating, as it were, from the Century Club—at that time the centre of literary, scientific, and artistic thought in New York—influences in his favor, as the chief exponent in America of the new philosophy of Evolution. The result was that soon after the close of his lectures in Boston, he was called to give four lectures in New York—one at the Century Club on the "Composition of Mind," and three on "Evolution" at the Cooper Union.

## Growing Reputation

The result was all that his friends could desire — to hear him was, in the court of reason, to be persuaded in behalf of his doctrine. And this, with the profound discussion over the origin of man opened up by Darwinism, drew to the consideration of his doctrine an ever-widening circle of thoughtful minds.

Personal honors were not wanting. While in New York William Appleton, the publisher, gave a "Cosmos Dinner" in his honor, and among the distinguished guests were William Cullen Bryant, Abram S. Hewitt, Dr. William A. Hammond, George Ripley (literary editor of the "New York Tribune"), Professor Youmans, and Dr. Austin Flint.

John Hay, then one of the editors of the "New York Tribune," also gave a dinner in his honor.

Meanwhile, the influence of Fiske's thought, unknown to himself, was spreading in the West, and he received a call from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for the delivery of the complete course of Evolutionary lectures with a guaranty of at least five hundred dollars for the course. The call was accepted for the following September, and its fulfillment became (as we shall soon see) a memorable experience in his life.

At this time Fiske had under consideration an appointment as non-resident Professor of History at Cornell University. President White of Cornell was in full sympathy with Fiske's philosophical

## John Fiske

views, and he very much desired to have the new university rising at Ithaca, New York, give recognition to the new school of scientific philosophy. Very properly, therefore, he turned to Fiske for assistance. Why Fiske did not accept an appointment which at the time would have been a conspicuous honor, was owing to a call to service in behalf of his own *alma mater*.

This call is set forth in the following letters to Fiske from Professor Gurney and President Eliot.

### *Professor Gurney to Fiske*

CAMBRIDGE, 18<sup>th</sup> May, 1872.

*Dear John* :—

I proposed to Eliot, some time ago, that you should be offered Abbot's place in the Library.<sup>1</sup> I am glad to say that he has taken to the idea more and more, and I dare say, has communicated with you.

As I had thought the matter over with care before proposing it to him, I hope I shall have a chance of talking about it with you, before you give an answer at any rate.

Very truly yours,

E. W. GURNEY.

This note was immediately followed by the offer to Fiske, by President Eliot, of the position of Assistant Librarian at Harvard College. The offer was cordially accepted, and in a few days Fiske

<sup>1</sup> Ezra Abbot was Assistant Librarian; but owing to the infirmities of the Librarian, John Langdon Sibley, Mr. Abbot had for some time been the Acting Librarian. He had tendered his resignation.

## Assistant Librarian at Harvard

had the pleasure of receiving the following letter from President Eliot: —

HARVARD COLLEGE,  
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.,  
29 May, 1872.

JOHN FISKE, Esq<sup>r</sup>.

*Dear Mr. Fiske:* —

You were duly appointed Asst. Librarian for the ensuing academic year by the Corporation on Monday last with a salary for the year of \$2500.

This appointment was to-day concurred in by the Board of Overseers, with one dissenting voice. You had better have a talk with Mr. Abbot about getting instructed in the work, after you have paid your respects to your official superior, Mr. Sibley.

Very truly yours,

CHARLES W. ELIOT.

This unsolicited appointment came to Fiske as a most gratifying surprise. And it came at a time of special need. While his philosophical lectures had greatly extended his reputation, they had taken a great deal of time from his productive literary work and this had brought him but very slight return. He was therefore somewhat exercised over his financial future. His new appointment gave an assurance of a modest and steady income, although it brought a round of exacting duties which left but little time for literary and philosophical writing, or for lecturing. It was the hope of his friends that this appointment would pave the way for his advancement to a professorship at the college.

## John Fiske

Fiske's work at the Harvard Library did not begin until October. During the summer he was busy getting settled in a new home at No. 4 Berkeley Street, Cambridge, and in finishing various literary matters,—among them getting his "Atlantic Monthly" mythological papers ready for publication in book form under the title of "Myths and Myth-Makers,"—and also in making himself acquainted with his duties as librarian.

On July 22, 1872, his second daughter, Ethel, was born.

The month of September was given to the delivery of his Evolutionary lectures in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I regret that I can make room for but a few extracts from the very deeply interesting letters to Mrs. Fiske, in which Fiske so graphically sets forth his experiences during this his first isolation at a distance from all his home surroundings.

On his arrival at Milwaukee he was cheered by the good prospect for his lectures. There had been a sale of over one hundred season tickets. He was especially pleased to find that the lectures were to be given in a Unitarian Church.

He gives his first impressions of Milwaukee thus:—

"There is celestial music of brass and reed bands. The city is very beautiful. I am ravished with the yellow Milwaukee brick. Never saw anything so picturesque for building material.

"No language can do justice to the beauty of

## Lectures in Milwaukee

the weather and the climate, the blue loveliness of Lake Michigan, and the cheery brightness of the city. The streets are lively here on Sunday; beer-shops wide open; and street music — quite European. I have Germans at my lectures, and am smiled on at the big beer-garden where a glass is ordered for the 'Herr Professor,' as I make my appearance about 4 P.M."

He meets two old friends, the Reverend John L. Dudley, formerly of Middletown, Connecticut, and a sort of spiritual adviser in his youth, when Fiske was passing through his trying religious experiences;<sup>1</sup> and his classmate Jeremiah Curtin. We shall meet with both these old friends later. Of the former he writes: —

"I should be lonely, and homesick, were it not for Dudley with his good old smile, and his dreamy talks about philosophy. The old fellow's black hair is getting plentifully streaked with gray; but he is the same dear old dreamer, myth-maker, and poet, that he always was. His house is quite a little garden of delights."

Of Curtin, Fiske writes: —

"Thursday who should call to see me but the world-renowned Jeremiah Curtin, with whom I spent all day Friday, and who left for Russia yesterday morning. Jerry is still on his muscle linguistically — speaks now more than 40 languages fluently, and reads about 25 or 30 more. During the past few years he has been exploring the by-ways

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, p. 110.

## John Fiske

of Slavonic Europe, and can now talk in every Slavonic language almost as readily as in English — so he says, and I have no doubt he can. I found him possessed of a very plethoric budget of amusing and instructive experiences.”

Here is a passage in a letter written September 17, which reflects the deep tenderness of Fiske's nature: —

“Eleven years ago to-day was the day I asked you to write to me up at Petersham.<sup>1</sup> O, if we only were in Petersham now (dearest spot on earth) with our precious little flock! I am eaten up with homesickness, and think if I can ever see New England again, I shall be content never to travel at all! I crave every word from home as a drunkard craves his liquor, and the kindest thing you can do for me will be to write a little almost every day, even if it is only half a page, so that only I may see an envelope directed by you, when I go for my mail. Do keep writing, and tell me about all the little ones — don't leave one of them out!”

And here is the record of the beginning of an acquaintance that deepened into a warm personal friendship which lasted to the end of Fiske's life: —

“Monday I was handsomely treated by a universally accomplished young man by the name of Peckham.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, pp. 245-48.

<sup>2</sup> George William Peckham, City Librarian, Milwaukee; President of the Wisconsin Academy of Arts, Sciences, and Letters; and author of several notable contributions to entomological science.



## Library Work

Of Mr. Peckham's many courtesies, of Fiske's pleasant meetings with many cultivated people, German refugees and Catholics among the number, and of the public interest in his lectures, which increased to the end, the letters make frequent mention.

Fiske returned from Milwaukee, by way of New York, stopping there three or four days to visit his mother and to receive the felicitations of his friends Youmans, Holt, Dennett, and others upon the favoring prospects that were opening before him.

Fiske began his official work at the Harvard Library the 1st of October, 1872. The Library at this time contained some 160,000 volumes with a great quantity of unclassified and uncatalogued material consisting of pamphlets and unbound volumes. For several years Fiske's predecessor, the eminent Biblical scholar and critic, Professor Ezra Abbot, had been engaged upon the great task of bringing this in many respects unorganized collection into condition for ready reference through what is now known as the card system of cataloguing, — a system then comparatively new, — whereby the whole collection of books and pamphlets was to be alphabetically catalogued by titles, and then these titles classified by subjects, and the subjects also alphabetically catalogued. Professor Abbot's work had been greatly hampered for want of assistants, and at the time of his resignation the cataloguing was greatly in arrears.

## John Fiske

Of his varied duties as librarian, Fiske has given such an interesting account in his published volume, "Darwinism and Other Essays," that I need not dwell upon them here, further than to say that the carrying-on of the cataloguing of the Library with the means at his command was a pressing need and one that he had to face. While he did not bring to his task any practical experience in the clerical routine work of the library, he brought something far more necessary to its practical needs, — a service wholly exceptional in character and without which the library would have been even more severely handicapped than it was during this period of transition to the great practical library that it is to-day. This service was his power of classification arising from his familiar acquaintance with the various departments of human knowledge, whereby he was enabled to carry on in some measure, although checked by serious obstacles, Professor Abbot's scheme of having the contents of the library classified and catalogued by subjects as well as by titles.

Fiske entered upon his duties with great ardor and soon brought himself in conformity with the routine requirements. He quickly mastered the conditions for the work of cataloguing, and planned for expediting the work; but just as he had got his plans ready for the consideration of the Committee on the Library there came the great Boston fire, November 9 and 10, 1872, by which Harvard

## Library Work

College met with a heavy loss in its invested funds. For a time, it seemed as though a material reduction in expenditures would have to be made throughout the college; and the letters reveal Fiske as facing not only the giving-up of his plans for expediting the catalogue work, but also the probable reduction of the present inadequate library force, with perhaps a reduction of salary for those who remained.

By the prompt action of the friends of Harvard, however, the current needs of the college were provided for by the raising of a generous relief fund, and the administration was relieved from the necessity of curtailing in any marked degree its existing very economical expenditures. Fiske's plans, however, for expediting the cataloguing of the library had to be postponed.

Obliged to suspend that portion of his work as librarian most congenial to him, Fiske soon settled down to the daily routine of supervising the clerical work of the library, and during the ensuing six months, — November, 1872 to May, 1873, — his literary work was entirely suspended save the writing each month of two or three pages of "Science Notes" for the "Atlantic Monthly." During this period two things worthy of note occurred — the publication of his book on "Myths and Myth-Makers," and the repetition of his lectures on Evolution in Boston. His Myths volume was his first book publication, and it was felicitously dedi-

## John Fiske

cated to his friend Howells.<sup>1</sup> The book was very favorably received both in America and England, and as we shall see later, it formed a very memorable introduction of Fiske to George Eliot.<sup>2</sup>

The repetition of his lectures in Boston in the winter of 1873 attracted a much larger audience than on their first delivery at Harvard, and they were attended with even more marked expressions of appreciation than were given to their delivery in Boston the year previous. Indeed, their close brought to him a tribute the most gratifying he could receive, and one that touched his deepest feelings.

Among his hearers in Boston was Mrs. M. A. Edwards, a lady of great refinement and intelligence, who became profoundly impressed with the importance of the religious implications of the philosophy of Evolution as presented by Fiske, and who saw a supreme act of social service in assisting Fiske to get his ideas before the public in published form. On hearing that Fiske was withholding his lectures from publication until he could make it convenient to consult with Herbert Spencer, Darwin,

<sup>1</sup> The dedication was as follows: —

TO MY DEAR FRIEND  
WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS  
IN REMEMBRANCE OF PLEASANT AUTUMN  
EVENINGS SPENT AMONG WERE-WOLVES  
AND TROLLS AND NIXES  
I DEDICATE  
THIS RECORD OF OUR ADVENTURES

<sup>2</sup> See *post*, p. 484.

## European Trip

Huxley, and other Evolutionists in England, Mrs. Edwards, with true womanly delicacy, sent a note to Mrs. Fiske enclosing a check for one thousand dollars, which she wished appropriated to the expenses of a journey to England for the revision of Fiske's lectures for publication in the light of the Evolutionary thought prevailing in England.

A most enthusiastic family council was at once held. The next step was to get a leave of absence from the college — and here, President Eliot met Fiske's application in the most cordial spirit, telling him he should "seize the opportunity by all means"; and to give Fiske ease of mind, he not only had his leave of absence granted, he also had his appointment as assistant librarian *made permanent*.

With every obstacle to his long-looked-for European trip removed, Fiske turned his thought to arranging a detailed plan of his journey. I have before me his itinerary of four and a half letter-pages in his clear, beautiful handwriting, in which, after a careful study of the European means of transportation, he projected a plan for every day's activity during the entire Continental journey. While the plan was not carried out in all its details, — he at first thought of visiting Greece and Constantinople, — the itinerary, as originally laid out, is a self-revealing autobiographic document, in that it unmistakably shows what were the dominant interests in European history and civilization in Fiske's mind, as he contemplated bringing

## John Fiske

a goodly portion of the physical features of the European continent under direct observation.

It is evident that he proposed to observe European civilization in the light of Spencer's law of life — "the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations." Hence we see him proposing to observe Nature with her external provisions for human life, together with man's utilization of her forces for convenient living as well as his artistic creations — especially his architecture — expressive of his spiritual life. And then, as supplementary to all these, Fiske longed to look upon places made memorable by great lives — lives which have left the human race their debtors. Hence in his original plan he proposed to look upon what remains of the physical and social environment of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, as well as upon the surroundings of Marcus Aurelius and Cæsar, of Dante and Michael Angelo, of Shakespeare and Newton, of Voltaire and Goethe.

As one of the principal objects of his visit to England was to consult with Herbert Spencer, as soon as he had completed his arrangements for sailing he advised Spencer of his projected visit by the following letter: —

HARVARD COLLEGE,  
CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *June 8, 1873.*

*My dear Mr. Spencer: —*

At last I seem likely to see you face to face. An unexpected and surprising stroke of good fortune

## European Trip

enables me to spend a year in Europe. I shall sail from Boston in the 'Olympus' August 12th reaching Queenstown, I suppose August 22d. I shall land there and run through Ireland and over to Glasgow; and my further plan is to go slowly through parts of Scotland and England, reaching London about the middle of October.

I should now like very much to know whether you are likely to be in Scotland or northern England in September, so that I might run across your path? Also when are you likely to return to London for the winter? When are Mr. and Mrs. Lewes likely to have returned to London? Mr. Darwin has invited me to visit him, at his place in Kent: am I likely to be able to accomplish all these things by reaching London about October 15th and remaining there till Christmas?

I intend to take a room in London and devote myself to completing and publishing my lectures in book-form. If this can be accomplished by mid-winter, I hope then to go to Italy, and thence in April to Germany and thence in July to Switzerland, returning to America in August — I should be glad to spend the whole year in England, but as I may not again have an equally good opportunity to visit the Continent, I feel that I ought not to let this one slip. During the past two years my health has suffered somewhat from overwork and monotony; and I think a good deal of variety for one year will bring back some of the youthful snap.

I count more upon seeing you than upon anything else connected with my journey; and I hope to get a few good talks with you without making too great demands upon your time.

## John Fiske

Youmans has just sent me a specimen of your Sociological Tables, and I am very much interested in it. I hope the "Sociology" itself is not to be long delayed.

With warm anticipations of the coming autumn I remain,

Ever faithfully yours,

JOHN FISKE.

In addition to arranging for the conduct of the work at the library during his absence, Fiske had two pieces of literary work to do before sailing — the writing of an essay on Darwinism, or "From Brute to Man," for the "North American Review," and an article on Agassiz for the "Popular Science Monthly." The letters reveal him tugging at his task during the intervening hot July days, cheered by visions of the Scotch Highlands, which he seemed to see near at hand. Both articles were finished on time, although work on the Agassiz article was continued till the last moment. Just before starting for the steamer he writes: —

"Chauncey Wright dropped in and solaced — or distracted my last packing moments with philosophy. But I fixed up my Agassiz article, in spite of him." Fiske's purpose in the Agassiz article was to show that Agassiz's opposition to Darwinism was individual and personal, was not based on a complete knowledge of Darwin's contribution to the great discussion, and was not in accord with the leading scientific thought of the time. Fiske duly



## European Trip

appreciated Agassiz's important contributions to science, and was by no means insensible to the charms of his rare personality; but he was deeply stirred at the wholly undue weight which the theological world was attaching to Agassiz's opinions, making him a sort of pope on ultimate scientific questions, notwithstanding the fact that the scientific world was against him. Hence Fiske was goaded into a criticism which, had he known the critical condition of Agassiz's health, he would have greatly modified. His object was to bring Agassiz's contention for the special creation of man by Divine fiat, which was then a vital religious as well as an important scientific question, under the broadest discussion.<sup>1</sup>

August 12, 1873, Fiske sailed from Boston for Queenstown, on the Cunard steamer "Olympus."

<sup>1</sup> The article was published in the *Popular Science Monthly* for October, 1873. Agassiz died December 14, 1873. Through his teaching, through his public lectures, and through his personal sacrifices in establishing his great Museum of Natural History at Cambridge, a monument to the very doctrine of Evolution which he condemned, Agassiz had won the hearts of the American people, who felt his death as a national loss. Under these circumstances Fiske's article was untimely, and so far as it was considered in America, was regarded as unjust. Quite a different opinion, however, in regard to the article was expressed in England, as we shall see a little later when Agassiz's position as a scientist was brought under discussion by some of the foremost thinkers and scientists of the time.

## CHAPTER XVI

DIVERSIONS — PIANO PRACTICE AND MUSICAL COMPOSITIONS — BEGINS COMPOSITION OF A MASS — PHILOSOPHIC THOUGHT AND RELIGIOUS FEELING — DOMESTIC LIFE IN CAMBRIDGE AND PETERSHAM

1871-1873

Now that we have seen Fiske set sail for England for the purpose of completing his philosophic task, before following him through his English experiences which made the visit a memorable epoch in his life, it is well to turn back and briefly note two forms of diversion which accompanied the phase of his intellectual life that we have been pursuing.

We have had frequent occasion to note his strong musical taste — we might say, his passion for music. It is evident that had he chosen to devote himself to music, he would have become distinguished in the musical profession. As it was, he became greatly respected by leading musicians, as a keen appreciator and critic of the higher forms of musical composition and rendering. It is interesting, therefore, to note that at this important period of his life, when he was grappling with the greatest of themes that can engage the human mind, his musical taste asserted itself, and in two directions—in piano studies for the mastery of

## Musical Diversion

the piano as a means for musical expression, and in musical composition.

Fiske's piano studies were an after-dinner diversion of an hour. He was aided in this practice by his friend Mrs. Alexander Mackenzie, of whose generous assistance he writes to his mother under date of March 2, 1871, thus:—

“ My amusements at present are limited to playing piano duets with the orthodox minister's wife, our warm friend, once a week. She is a most finished and artistic pianist, and it is about as useful to me as taking lessons. I felt much encouraged and flattered by the invitation. I take the hour between the close of lecture and dinner each Wednesday. We began with Mendelssohn's 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' and shall by-and-by take something harder. I learn much in this way, and am getting into the true way of fingering.”

And a little later he writes:—

“ We are now on Mozart's four-hand Sonata in D and several polonaises. I have mastered a Nocturne of Chopin all but two bars. If you ever see a concert programme with Mendelssohn's Meerestille Overture on it, don't fail to go and hear it. You would never forget it. It is one of the most marvellous pieces of harmony ever conceived. It is like the music of angels.”

Fiske became very proficient with the piano, so much so that he could readily extemporize upon it, and thus it became to him a great means of mental relaxation, of expressing feelings through harmo-

## John Fiske

nies and without words. He soon put his musical proficiency to service in giving form to his religious feeling. I find mention of two hymns composed at this time with these suggestive titles, "Come unto Me," and "A Hymn of Trust." The latter was in E major with modulation in C sharp minor, and he says of it: "I composed it last evening. It is good, I think."

Under date of December 24, 1871, he writes: —

"I have sketched the Qui Tollis of my Mass, soprano solo, semi-chorus, full chorus in D minor. I am trying to avoid my fault of too complicated harmony and excursive modulation, and so far feel more satisfied with it than with any of my older things. I don't know as I shall finish it, for a Mass is a long thing, and I get no time to write what I have already composed of it. Sometimes my head is bubbling and boiling with harmonies as I go about in the horse-cars or on foot."

A little later: —

"My Mass has spoiled, for the time being, my piano practice. I have scored the Kyrie and Gloria, and composed the Qui Tollis, Quoniam, Cum Sancto Spiritu, and got half-way through the Credo. The accompaniments bother me. I can hear the violins, clarionets, hautboys, flutes, trumpets, drums and organ coming in where they ought: the double-basses crooning, the cellos sighing, etc., but I don't know how to write for these instruments, and so shall have to be content with a plain organ accompaniment. Not much matter though, as I

## Composing a Mass

shall probably never hear it any way except with the ears of the imagination. Two or three musicians have examined the score as far as it has gone, and like it. John Paine says the melody and harmony are good, some of the themes grand — at any rate, a few bars per day of it serve for a relief to the mind.”

And still later he writes: —

“My Mass has got thus far: —

“1. Kyrie Eleeson — Chorus — Adagio.

“2. Gloria in Excelsis — Chorus, Allegro Moderato.

“3. Qui Tollis — Solos and Chorus Larghetto.

“4. Quoniam — Solo Allegretto.

“5. Cum Sancto Spiritu — Fugue Allegro Conbrio.

“6. Credo — Chorus — Allegro.

“7. Et incarnatus est — Chorale Andante.

“This makes just half of the whole Mass. The ‘Crucifixus’ — an alla breve fugue — is taking shape in my head. You will like this music even as sketched on the piano. Paine says, it contains much that ‘a great composer need n’t be ashamed of.’ The harmony is for the most part simple, and the general style rather *antique*. The ‘Cum Sancto’ is a very rapid and spirited fugue — a style which I always supposed beyond my reach — but I did it in one after-dinner hour — I don’t know how.”

In 1872 he was still at work upon it. On April 11, 1872, he writes: —

“I have finished my ‘Crucifixus’ and sketched

## John Fiske

the 'Resurrexit,' so that the Mass is two-thirds done."

The last mention of the Mass in this connection was February 6, 1873, when he wrote: —

"I am studying Cherubini on counterpoint, and am working at the 'Pleni Sunt Coeli' of my Mass — which I am making an elaborate fugue, the parts entering at regular distances and intervals, and working up into a tremendous climax with a long cantus firmus."

It may be said that there is a marked inconsistency here between Fiske's philosophical thinking and his musical feeling — that while intellectually he had no place for Christian dogma, yet in his heart he made the Eucharist the subject of his sublimest feeling and aspirations.

But there was no inconsistency. In his philosophical system Fiske regarded the Christian dogmas as outgrown symbols of religious thought and belief which had served their purpose — and a great purpose — in the development of man's religious thought; and he was so justly minded that he could survey with impartiality and with a sympathetic feeling, the centuries of Christian history when the Eucharist was the deepest, the profoundest expression of the religious feeling of mankind. His Mass was an attempt to give expression to this feeling in its historic, poetic sense, with all the enrichment he could give to it through the musical art. His philosophy and his Mass, therefore, were in accord

## Domestic Life

in this, that both affirmed the religious emotions as the deepest impulses of the human soul: the Mass was an attempt to give to this feeling an artistic, historic form. In the same sense he regarded the oratorios of Handel, Bach, and Haydn as the highest expression of religious emotion, and he could enter into the full enjoyment of the "Creation," the "Elijah," or the "Messiah" without thought of their dogmatic significance. There are many who recall occasions when the great oratorios were produced by the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston — how the profoundly impressive choral parts quite overcame him.

In Fiske's mind Christianity was the mightiest drama in human civilization: it was his rare gift that he could appreciate it with the feeling of the poet as well as with the critical judgment of the philosopher.

Fiske was preëminently a domestic man in all his tastes and feelings. His home was the centre of his life, his "earthly paradise." And the letters, while revealing the workings of his mind on the profoundest questions of philosophy, constantly bear witness to the tender regard and solicitude, the deep affection, he had for his wife and his children. The anniversaries of the main events in his courtship and marriage were never forgotten, and we already have had occasion to note how tenderly they were cherished if perchance he was away from his home. His patience with and his delight

## John Fiske

in his children, which have already been noted, reflected the happy poise of his mind in his intercourse with them. He delighted in their childish propensities to know about things, and he had a ready sympathy for them in all their little misfortunes. One of his chief delights was to picnic with them: if in Cambridge, at Spy Pond, a beautiful sheet of water a couple of miles or so distant; if in Petersham, in the many attractive places roundabout, such as Tom's Swamp, Philipston Pond, and "Cut-Supper" Wood, so called by William James; a beautiful spot, where he and the Fiskes were wont to tarry beyond the supper-hour. The picnics at Spy Pond were of special interest. They were usually made on Sunday. Apropos of this statement we have a letter to his mother of November 12, 1873:—

"Next Sunday Abby and Harold, Clarence and I are going to take a car to Arlington and then walk around Mystic Pond, a most exquisitely beautiful bit of country road of six miles. We shall take a basket of sandwiches and ale, and picnic under a giant oak tree and have a good time. Possibly the weather may turn cold and prevent us, but so far the season is warm and we hope to carry out this little November picnic. These little Sunday frolics with Abby and the children make up my greatest happiness. And how I bless the day when I can enjoy life with them!"

Partly for such excursions Fiske had had made from his own design a double perambulator, or



## Domestic Life

push carriage, large enough to take in two, and, if need be, three, of the children. Into this carriage he would pack Maud and Harold and sometimes little Clarence, and then pushing the carriage he would wend his way through the market gardens of North Cambridge and Arlington to the pond, supremely happy to put aside for the time being all the problems of philosophy to make himself one in the little world of his children's delights and imaginations. Occasionally his friend John K. Paine was one of the party, and on one excursion he met James Russell Lowell, who, looking at his precious freight, said in the vernacular of Hosea Biglow, "I wish they wuz every one on 'em mine."

And then there was the annual June visit to Boston of Barnum's Circus, which was looked forward to every spring by the little Fiskes with the fondest anticipations. One of my pleasantest recollections of Fiske is his appearance on one of these happy occasions with Maud and Harold on either side and little Clarence in his lap, and his own countenance — to use a Dickens expression — "one vast substantial smile."

This becoming a companion with his children in the little world of their concerns produced at times striking effects when the children, having been brought into contact with his larger philosophic thought, endeavored in a naïve, childish way to appropriate this thought to their own experience. Maud and Harold were not excluded from

## John Fiske

the library when intimate friends like Paine, William James, Howells, Chauncey Wright, Professor Gurney, or Roberts were calling, and when the conversation turned, as it often did, on the great problems of Evolution. The children were quiet, thoughtful observers and listeners; and reflections of the library discussions were not unfrequently taken upstairs and seriously applied to questions less complicated than that of Evolution. On one occasion a difference of opinion arose between Maud and Harold over some weighty matter in their experience, when the following argument was overheard: —

“Well, Maudie, I guess it was due to the eccentricity of the earth’s corbit.”

“No, Hally, I *think* it was due to the convaporation of Saturn’s rings.”

The fine poetic side of Fiske’s nature is clearly reflected in the following passage in a letter to his mother of June 19, 1872, in which he sketches his immediate home surroundings: —

“As I sit here at work and occasionally glance out of the window, I might imagine myself in thick woods. I cannot see the street or any other house — nothing but a little Gothic church spire over the tree tops. Still I get plenty of sunlight all day — it breaks in through the leaves. Though in the very centre of Cambridge the stillness is profound, almost like Petersham. The song of birds is almost the only sound which comes in from morn till night — little sweet twitters, with now and then

## Domestic Life

a distant cock-crow. It is a delicious place. Now and then I hear a little voice, and, looking out, see Maudie's flax, or Clarence's or 'Barley's' little red head down among the bushes; or perhaps Winifred Howells, reading to Maud under the apple-tree."

And now, August 11, 1873, the time had come when Fiske must leave his little flock for a whole year's absence. They were all in Petersham. The day before leaving he took them to drive to the various places made dear by associations. He left at six o'clock in the morning, and the parting was "sorrowful and heavy." His ride to the cars at Athol, nine miles distant, took him over the same road he had walked nearly twelve years before, on the occasion of his first, romantic visit to Petersham. As he came to the rise in the road, a short distance from the village, — giving an overlook of the village, — and which he had called Mount Pisgah,<sup>1</sup> as he said, "from here I got my first view of the Holy City," he turned to look back at a scene which was now familiar to him; and at once there came surging through his mind the series of events which had followed from that romantic adventure of September 13, 1861, and which had knit him to Petersham as the dearest spot on earth.

The next day, just after going on board the steamer, he sends a good-bye message to Mrs. Fiske containing this request: —

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, p. 246.

## John Fiske

"I must have a pickerwow<sup>1</sup> of basket-wagon, with yourself on back seat holding Ethel, and all the other babies artistically disposed. It will be better without me: for it will be as if I had just stepped out, and was looking at the rest of you. Don't forget to send this to me."

<sup>1</sup> "We shall see that this particular "pickerwow" was of much interest to Fiske's friends in England.

## CHAPTER XVII

VOYAGE TO QUEENSTOWN — VISITS CORK, BLARNEY CASTLE, LAKES OF KILLARNEY, AND DUBLIN — REACHES CHESTER — FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF ENGLAND AND ENGLISH PEOPLE — A HURRIED TRIP TO LONDON WITH HIS FRIEND HUTTON, THENCE TO LIVERPOOL — VISITS THE LAKE DISTRICT — EDINBURGH — SCOTCH HIGHLANDS — CATHEDRAL TOWNS — IPSWICH — CAMBRIDGE

1873

FISKE reached Queenstown August 23, 1873, after an uneventful voyage of eleven days. He made a few friends on board, and with the captain, McDowall, "a jolly old Scot who liked a pot of beer and a pipe," he soon established friendly relations. With the captain he usually had a good "chin-wag" after lunch or before going to bed.

At Queenstown he left the steamer for a trip through Ireland which comprised a visit to Cork, to Blarney Castle, to the Lakes of Killarney, and to Dublin. During this trip he surrendered himself completely to the beauty of the Irish landscape and to the charm he felt in the naïve characteristics of the Irish people. The letters show such penetrating observation, such keen appreciation of nature and life and human history, that it may be doubted if Ireland ever had a more sympathetic visitor. From the Imperial Hotel, Cork, he writes Mrs. Fiske, August 24: —

## John Fiske

"I got off at Queenstown and am doing Ould Ireland. This is a dear old quaint hotel, ever so comfortable. No words can describe my delight in the beauty and sleepiness of Ould Ireland and at the queer Corkonian Paddies. I laughed yesterday till I cried. How lovely the old walls covered with thick ivy! To-day our party, six in number, are going to Blarney Castle in jaunting cars. We go to Killarney to-morrow. I feel new life in my veins."

Fiske gives a delightful description of Cork, and he was intensely amused by the Irish in their own home. The slow deliberation that characterized all forms of social activity greatly impressed him. This is the first thing one notices, and coming in contrast with our Yankee hurry gives the impression that everything is slower than "stock-still." Speaking of the waiters at a sleepily served dinner he says: —

"You will never know what slowness is till you have visited Ould Ireland. Barley at dressing time is lightning compared with 'em."

Of his visit to Blarney Castle he gives an amusing account, and particularly of his attempt to kiss the well-known Blarney stone: —

"I prostrated myself, and Williams and Ingalls took tight hold of my ankles, and I got nearly out to the cussed thing, when all at once I became aware of the horrible distance between me and the ground below, and my head was turned, and I became sea-sick, and said, 'For God's sake, pull me back!' So they hauled me in, and I said, 'Blast

## The Lakes of Killarney

all beetling eminences henceforth, and let those kiss the Blarney stone who are willing to lean over a place higher than a church steeple with nothing to hold on to but their ankles.' ”

Fiske's most interesting experience in this Irish journey was his visit to the Lakes of Killarney. Many as have been the visitors to these lakes it may be doubted if their poetic charms ever had a keener appreciation than was brought to them by this young American who, fresh from the experiences of a nineteenth-century civilization, saw for the first time in the midst of nature's surpassing loveliness the ruined vestiges of a mediæval civilization which had passed away, and with whose history he was familiar.

How deeply, how profoundly he was impressed is shown in the following extract from a letter to Mrs. Fiske written at Killarney: —

“And now let me change the scene to fairy Killarney. Away ocean voyage! Away groves of Blarney! Off with you, into dim antiquity! For it is now August 27th and I have been at Killarney since Monday morning, and what I have gone through here just crowds a year into three days. It seems whole ages since I saw Blarney Castle. For this place is one that fascinates you like the wand of a fairy, so that minutes here are as good as months elsewhere. I used to think I knew what a fine landscape was; but now I give it up. Killarney beats them all, even Petersham. We got here Monday in time for noon lunch; and after lunch

## John Fiske

started for the Muckcross Abbey — a wonderful old place built in 1190, and now covered with ivy, with a gigantic yew-tree, 700 years old growing in the court-yard.

“I lingered and lingered here over the old graves, and the old hearth-stones, till my less romantic friends yanked me aboard of the wagon, and we proceeded to Dinis Island and there took a four-oared boat for the Middle Lower Lakes. I won't say anything about these lakes, for anything like an adequate description of them would fill quires of paper, and would seem like raving to any one who has not seen them. And now the climax. We did many things which I don't allude to, but to dear Innesfallen I must give a word or two. Of all the islands which God ever made this is the most sweet and truly heart-resting paradise. As I walked about the sacred precincts, I felt such thrills as I never felt before — the hoary old monastery, built more than thirteen hundred years ago, now fallen into the richest ivy-grown ruins, but with the outlines of every room and every fireplace still distinct; and the landscape lovely beyond everything my wildest imagination ever conceived — a perfect heaven on earth. Stupendous ash trees, — one of them 40 feet in circumference, and others but little less, — enormous beeches, with their dark iodine-tinted leaves, and their stems standing ten feet in diameter; amazing holly-trees of a size that would do credit to a New England maple; and round, above, below, and everywhere, the omnipresent ivy, with leaves four inches in breadth and the deepest of deep greens. And then the blue lake visible through every vista



## The Lakes of Killarney

whichever way you turn; and beyond, the grand Kerry mountains, like a dozen or twenty Monadnocks piled one upon another in desolate, awe-inspiring grandeur! And when amid all this wondrous glory of nature I sat down for a moment on the grave of an old friar<sup>1</sup>—dead more than a thousand years—and tried feebly to look about and take in all the miraculous picture—I felt the chokes come and the tears in my eyes, and I knew that words would be utterly powerless to describe any such thing, you must feel it to know it; but I will say that I never before had, and somehow can hardly hope to have again, such a moment as I felt in Innesfallen. . . .

“I wandered once more along the whispering aisles of this temple of loveliness. I sat down just inside the door of the ruined monastery where there was a bit of dry stone, and looked out at the gigantic ash-tree, and in my fancy filled the scene with the stalwart figures of those grand old monks—men of mighty placidity, begotten of trust in God—who in the days of the decrepit Roman Empire, built their refuge here, secure amid the deep lake-waters from sacrilegious attacks. All the long, long past, richly freighted with memories came rushing by me, as I sat listening to the soft dropping of the summer shower on the holly leaves, and to the song of the thrush—at my feet a grave where one of these heroes of Christianity had slept these thousand years.

“I waited till the sunlight came once more flickering through the leaves, and then took a last lingering look, and went away—

<sup>1</sup> He enclosed a fern leaf from the grave of the old friar.

## John Fiske

“Sweet Innesfallen! fare thee well,  
May calm and sunshine long be thine;  
How fair thou art let others *tell*,  
While but to *feel how fair*, be mine.”

From Killarney, Fiske went direct to Dublin — “a stupid ride of nine hours through a tame and uninteresting country.” He tarried but a couple of hours in Dublin, and then set out for Chester by way of Kingstown and Holyhead. He reached Chester in a rain-storm, weary after his Irish journey and fearfully hungry. He took a stroll about the town, it having “cleared up,” to get his English bearings. He strolled along the famous “Rows,” and also on the city walls, “and then moused around among the droll old dens of the town.” He also attended vespers in the cathedral, where he heard some good music. He was delighted with Chester, and his first impressions can best be given in his own words: —

“O Zeus, and all the other gods of Olympus, what an old place! I can’t try to describe it; and so before I leave, I shall send you a guide-book giving an account, and some views, of the town. I am supremely happy here, and shall explore it from the sole of its head to the crown of its foot.”

He tells of the good things he finds to eat, and adds: —

“I mention these little things to show you what an abundance of animal vigour the sea voyage, and the seeing of novelties have awakened in me.

## At Chester

I feel the blood bounding in my veins. I run up three flights of stairs, two steps at a time, to my room without puffing."

At Chester he found letters awaiting him and among them was a cordial welcome from his genial friend Laurence Hutton. Fiske's joy was great and he writes: —

"Glory Hallelujah! Hutton comes here to-day, and I have secured a room for him next to mine. He sails for America a week from next Tuesday, and till then he will be with me."

The two friends explored Chester quite thoroughly. They walked in nearly all the "Rows," through the market in the evening, around the walls, and visited Eaton Hall, the seat of the Duke of Westminster.

The letters show how keenly Fiske was alive to his new surroundings. What most impressed him at Chester was the sort of English homogeneity of all he saw about him. Hitherto in America he had seen the Englishman as he had seen the Irishman, the Scotchman, the Frenchman, the German, each isolated from his own social habitat, and more or less in antagonism with his surroundings. Here, for the first time, he saw the Englishman in his own social home with everything downright English about him. The buildings had a sort of uniform English character, the shop-signs all bore English names, the shopkeepers, the clerks, the officials, the servants were all English, save here and there

## John Fiske

a stray Scotchman or Irishman, who served by a little contrast, to emphasize the universal English character.

Fiske from the very first felt much at home in this English environment. Not only did its social homogeneity impress him; there was also a straightforward, outspoken, pay-as-you-go honesty in the social life as a whole which challenged his admiration. Of course he had to notice the many contrasts in speech, language, and social customs between this distinctly old and unified form of social life and the opposite, new, composite character of the social life of America. But the interest in his observations arises principally from the fact that he does not philosophize; he simply gives his impressions without other thought than to interest, for the time being, the persons to whom he was writing and whose main interest was in his own enjoyment.

Fiske did not fail to note the strong English propensity for good, substantial living, and the letters are at times quite appetizing from the relishing way in which he sets forth the beef, the mutton, the puddings, the ale, and the wholesome, savory manner in which they were served. The characteristics of the English system of railway transportation — so different from what obtained in America — he had to note, especially as he experienced, as all American travellers do, the annoyance of being tied to one's "luggage"; and he expresses the

## Impressions of England

opinion that "the Yankees can teach the English people a good many things about railway conveniences that they have n't yet dreamed of."

With his musical ear, so sensitive to vocal harmony, he notes much unpleasantness in the English speech. He says: —

"The English talk just as if they were Germans! So much guttural is very unpleasant, especially as half the time I can't understand them, and have to say, 'I beg your pardon?' Our American enunciation is much pleasanter to the ear."

Fiske's plan was to go from Chester to Liverpool, where he was to meet his sister-in-law, Miss Martha Brooks, who had been spending some time in Europe, see her aboard ship on her homeward journey, and then to strike north for Glasgow and Edinburgh, taking the Lake District on the way. But Hutton, who was also to sail for America in a few days, induced Fiske to change his plan, to run up to London for a few days and to get his first impressions of London with him. So they rushed from Chester up to London and took lodgings at 11 Craven Street, Strand, "a jolly and cheap lodging-house taken straight from Dickens's novels." Fiske found Hutton "the most delightful of traveling companions. He knows the economical ways of doing things. We had charming, cosy breakfasts together in our rooms, and then would sally forth about town, and meet at 6 P.M. to dine at some French restaurant — and so I have picked up a

## John Fiske

good many notions about London, and when I get back it will seem homelike."

Fiske found Miss Brooks in London, and together they visited some of the noted places and had several interesting walks about town. As this visit to London was for provisional observation mainly, he did not look up any of the people he was desirous to see, and the letters contain but a few observations upon what he saw. Of the chimpanzee at the Zoölogical Gardens he remarks that "he looks more like a man than a monkey, and I believe he would be called a man if he could talk." He got himself a suit of clothes at Poole's, the famous tailor, and remarks, "I shall not patronize Poole any more; for although the work is all done in the finest style, I *don't* like the cut."

After four days of these preliminary observations in London, September 5, 1873, Fiske, Miss Brooks, and Hutton set out for Liverpool, with the purpose of taking in Leamington, Kenilworth, Warwick Castle, and Stratford-on-Avon by the way. They visited these intervening places, but Fiske makes no observations upon them — he simply notes the fact to Mrs. Fiske that on Saturday, the 6th of September, "the ninth anniversary of our wedding-day, we drove to Kenilworth, then to Warwick Castle, and then to Stratford-on-Avon."

On the following Tuesday he saw Miss Brooks and Hutton sail from Liverpool for America, and then set out alone on his trip to Scotland by way

## The Lake District

of the Lake District, so well known on account of its many natural charms as well as from its identification with much that is finest in English literature. He gives quite in detail his coaching and hotel experiences while passing through this famous section of Great Britain's "tight little island," and summarizes his impressions of this District and of English landscape in general to Mrs. Fiske, as follows:—

"I had seen nine lakes, viz., Windermere, Esthwaite Water, Coniston Water, Brothers Water, Ulls Water, Rydal Water, Grasmere, Thirlmere, and Derwent Water—'some on 'em big and some on 'em little'—and I had acquired definite associations with ten villages; and so I thought the remainder would be more of the same kind.

"The Lake country is exceedingly beautiful, and some of it quite grand; and one can understand why Wordsworth, and Southey, and De Quincey, and others chose to live there, more thoroughly away from all civilization than one would now be in Tom Swamp. But it does n't bewitch me like Petersham. The only scenery that has fairly thrilled me is that of Killarney. Still there was one place on the road to Patterdale so much like Petersham, that it made me cry, for it seemed as if the basket-wagon with you and the little ones was *required* to make the scene complete and comfortable. The Lake country is more American in appearance than the other parts of England which I have seen. As for English landscape in general, it has all the monotony of a face which is perfect in beauty, without any play of expression. I say

## John Fiske

every moment, 'How lovely,' but it does n't charm or interest me one particle. Everything is deliciously clean. The roads are like the drives in Central Park; you never see old tomato-cans, cuttings of tin, piles of brush, etc., by the road-side; every hedge is fresh and thrifty, every field is like green velvet, every house is picturesquely and durably built, the stone walls are unexceptionable, the trees are dotted about in sweet confusion, there are flowers in all the windows, and ivy over all the walls; — in short, it is the cleanest, happiest, most smiling landscape conceivable; and the effect of about a hundred miles of it is to weary the eye so that you are glad to look away from it, and read your guide-book or the newspaper.

"I still say, give me New England for scenery. I can say that I see things in London that would make me like to live there; but I have n't seen any rural part of England which would tempt me to spend my days in it. I still swear by Petersham."

He visited Furness Abbey and makes this note: —

"Furness Abbey is fine for massiveness, but it is very inferior in architecture to Muckross, and lacks moreover the *tenderness* of the latter. I don't think much of its architecture. There are two styles patched together, and they don't harmonize."

Fiske reached Edinburgh Saturday night, September 13, weary from an all-day's journey, and fairly sickened by the disgusting habits of some drunken Scotch passengers. The next day was a rainy Sunday, and as all active life was suspended by reason of religious faith, his first impressions



## In Edinburgh

of the Scotch people were far from favorable. Writing to Mrs. Fiske in the afternoon, in the midst of the prevailing gloom, he gives free expression to his feelings: —

“Such a melancholy frowning set of people as the Scotchmen, of a Sunday, you never saw. This is a land where Puritanism still holds sway. . . . Asceticism and mental acuteness, drunkenness and thrift, somehow manage to get along together.”

But the next day brought an entire change of scene, with a wholly different state of mind, on his part, and the glories of Edinburgh found a keen appreciator. It was while under the spell of this fresh experience that he writes in the following strain: —

“The ancient rhyme goes: —

“‘Yankee Doodle came to town  
In his striped trowsers,  
Swore he could n't see the town,  
There were so many houses.’

“This remark of the acute and sagacious Y. D. will apply to most towns, but it does n't apply to Edinburgh. Here everything is on top of something else, and wherever you are, you can see a big town around you. Even when you get down to the bottom, the effect is not belied; for then you look up and see another huge town all around in the sky. Never before was such a stunning spread made with an equal amount of granite and mortar. First the New Town is built, in the coolest way, right over the roofs of the Old Town. And then both

## John Fiske

Old and New Towns have a way of running into two-storiedness on their own hook. At one place I actually found three tiers of streets one above another, and crossing each other on superb arched bridges, while the railway burrowed away down in the basement below all else. The effect is astonishingly magnificent."

Then follows quite a full account of the day's experiences from which we take some extracts: —

"This morning I got up with my cold about cured, and the sun shone bright, and the Sunday being over, the town relaxed its severe countenance. After breakfast, I started off afoot in a vagabond way, without any object except to bask in the glories of this glorious place, lit up by one of the most gorgeous September days that was ever seen since the earth began to rotate on its axis. A miraculous atmosphere, such as you don't see six times in a whole lifetime: a most brilliant sun shining through the loveliest, thinnest veil of mist, softening everything, obscuring nothing — just like one of Turner's gorgeous misty pictures, you know — that's the way it looked. I never got so much eye pleasure in a day before.

"First I walked (my brain running riot with musical phrases) up the Calton Hill, and ascended Nelson's monument; then I went to Regent's Terrace to see my Sanskrit friend Dr. Muir — but he was out of town; then I pegged along to Holyrood Palace and saw the portraits of all the Scottish kings — all the bloody, treacherous Stuart tribe — and the bed Queen Mary slept in, and all the scene of Rizzio's murder. . . . Cosy old rooms



EDINBURGH



## In Edinburgh

Mrs. Darnley had; I would n't mind living in them myself — and a grand old place it is — hoary with antiquity, long before Queen Mary saw the light. Not one of the long line of her Stuart ancestors whose 'pickerwows' I saw but has walked in those very rooms. And perhaps it has been the scene of more bitter tears and more atrocious villainy, than any other house now standing in Europe. — By the way, look in the 7th or 8th or 9th volume of Froude's "History of England" (I think it is the 8th) and hunt up his magnificent description of the murder of Rizzio and read it. It all came back to me this morning, and every one of the rooms was peopled for me with living figures. You will find Froude behind the piano, among the histories. Do read it *first of all*; it is a great piece of descriptive writing."

Then he walked up the Canongate, and High Street, crossed the Waverley Bridge, and roamed northward as far as he could; then he turned and roamed southward, never losing his way and never asking it, not even consulting the map in his pocket.

Fiske tells of going to the Castle, the Royal Institution, and the National Gallery, only to find them closed; and then, for want of something better to do he made himself seasick by going to the top of Scott's monument. While wandering, purposeless, about the streets he espied a "tram-omnibus" — a horse-car — and to use his own words:

"Happy thought — 'jerk the horse-car!' J. Bull is a sorry idiot in some things; but in the horse-car

## John Fiske

he beats us Yankees quite hollow. Here there are seats on top of the car where you can smoke and enjoy the view."

Accordingly he took the horse-car, not knowing or caring where it went, and was taken through streets he had not seen, out into the country, through lovely suburbs, and finally was brought back through still another part of the town and landed square in front of his hotel.

He gives the following incident as occurring during his stroll about town:—

"I met a Highland shepherd who had never been to Edinburgh before, and did n't know his way to the railway station. I had n't the remotest idea, but here was a definite object to walk for, and so I volunteered and led him along with his dog. He asked so many questions that I was obliged to own that I was an American, and a stranger in Edinburgh. By this time we had got close to the station and great was his astonishment — 'Ne'er been in Edinboro' afore, mon; weel, ye maun ha' hurd it verra weel descriabed!' "

And thus, after an eight hours' walk and a two hours' horse-car ride, he found himself "ripe for dinner"; and at 9.30 "ripe for bed, after a day never once to be forgotten."

The next morning Fiske set out for a week's trip to the Scotch Highlands by way of Stirling. Of this trip he gives a full account to Mrs. Fiske in a letter dated at Inverness, September 21, 1873. He begins as follows:—

## The Scotch Highlands

“What a week this has been! I came to see mountains and lakes, and by Jove, I have seen mountains and lakes, and *felt* 'em, I might say, in various ways.— Ben Ledi, Ben A'an, Ben Venue, Ben Lomond, Ben Cruachan, Ben Nevis, and I know not how many more of the Benjamin family—and as for the lakes they are like the long list of one's early loves, and which is the loveliest, I thought I knew when I had only seen the first one, but now I give it up. I have *sailed over* the following—Lochs Katrine, Lomond, Fyne, Linnhe, Leven Lochy, Oich and Ness; and I have walked or ridden by the side of Lochs Vennachar Achray, Leven, Etive, Awe, Tullich, Lydoch, and Eil. A good week's work! ! For simple loveliness give me Loch Katrine, for beauty and grandeur, Loch Lomond, for magnificence, Loch Awe, for awful sublimity, Loch Linnhe.”

It can be well understood that this letter is one of great interest. Fiske's observations, his emotions are depicted so simply, yet so graphically, that the reader fairly feels that he is making the journey himself. A few extracts must suffice to give an idea of his keen susceptibility to the beauty and sublimity of nature, so opulently conjoined, in this region consecrated as it were to human interest by Scotch history, poetry and romance:—

*Stirling Castle.* “I went all over the castle, from the ramparts of which there is one of the most magnificent views to be had on this planet. The whole Benjamin family in the distance; and an immense plain at your feet, through which winds

## John Fiske

the silvery Forth. In the midst of this plain the rock of Stirling rises sheer into cloudland, and on the very crest of this beetling eminence stands the castle. Below me on the right lay the battlefield of Stirling Bridge, where Wallace defeated the English in 1297 — so that they had to quit the castle. A little farther on are the ruins of Cambuskenneth Abbey. To the left is Wallace's Tower, and beyond that the battlefield of Bannockburn, where Bruce defeated the English in 1314. . . . Every portion of the field was entirely within view — and a soldier of the garrison pointed out to me all the strategic points so that the whole battle came back to my mind with great vividness. Then I went into the so-called Douglas room, where James II basely murdered William, Earl of Douglas, after inviting him to an interview, and furnishing him with a safe conduct — a crime which was regarded with abhorrence even in those fiendish times. I stood in the little bay window where the king stabbed him, and imagined how the servants came in from the little ante-room and threw the body out of the window while others below dug a grave in the garden and buried the great Earl like a dog."

*The Trossachs.* "At Callander I took the top of a coach for a superb ride of nine miles past Lochs Vennachar and Achray, with Ben Ledi and other Bens towering on the right. It was about 1 o'clock when we reached the Trossach's Hotel, which is famed for its cold *weal pie* (said Mr. Weller, etc.); and after a rather exhaustive experiment upon it, I can say it well deserves its reputation."

*Loch Lomond.* "The scenery about Loch Lomond,



## The Scotch Highlands

for combined grandeur and sweetness *surpasses anything else which I have ever seen*. There is nothing else here which a painter would set before it, though there is other scenery equally impressive in a different way."

*Loch Linnhe*. "Leaving the Bay of Oban, the steamer entered Loch Linnhe towards sunset. This is a very large lake hemmed in by giant mountains without a trace of vegetation, and the effect is *awfully* sublime. It was the greatest sight I ever saw — fairly overpowering in its weird solemnity. The lake was rough, and its water inky black, with savagely laughing white crests. I felt as if in the black domains of some terrible enchanter."

*An Experience at Ballachulish*. "After 26 miles of Loch Linnhe, we entered by twilight the beautiful Loch Leven, and stopped at Ballachulish, where I put up at the jolliest inn that I have found in Great Britain. There was an Englishman there who looked the very image of Manton Marble, so that I fell in love with him at once; and when he opened his mouth, it *was* Marble's voice that came out of it. Him I will call M. and his wife was of similar style to Mrs. Edwards; and they both looked at me ever so much, and by and bye we spake together, and they were cultivated and attractive people. M. said I would n't see anything of Glencoe in such a rain, but I said I had made up my mind to despise rain and flood, and so off we started. Rain? Floods? Far from it. Hailstones? By no means. It rained as if some archangel had accidentally tipped over the biggest water-butt in heaven, and sent it all down onto us 'to onct'; it did n't come in drops — the air was

## John Fiske

nothing but solid water, and we were like fishes at the bottom of the sea, and the floods ran across the road so profusely that I wondered they did n't float the coach, and wash us all into Loch Leven. The tempest was such that the driver turned back before we had got to the heart of the glen, and about noon we returned to the inn, where I sent my boots and my ulster to the kitchen to be dried, and went upstairs and changed clothes, and went down into the parlour, where there was a pretty good piano, and began to play with all the zest of a chap that has been famished for a piano for weeks and weeks. I began on the 'Squitch' and extemporised several variations on it, and was going along with great glory when I looked up and saw Mrs. M. seated in the bay-window with hood and water-proof on, looking intently at me, with tears on her cheeks, and then I became aware that there were a dozen people in the room. When I had finished there was a grand clapping of hands; and M. came up and said that was grand, and could I give 'em a dose of Mendelssohn? It was one of my good days, when I can get the cantabile out of a piano, and I played considerable of Mendelssohn, Beethoven, and Chopin, with genuine applause from all present; and then we all became very sociable, and passed a charming afternoon in conversation and games, and dined together like a family party."

*The Pass of Glencoe, and the way thither.* "It was a superb morning, and at 8 I started on top of coach for Tyndrum, through one of the grandest roads in Scotland. We coasted along the banks of Loch Etive, passed the ruined Dunstaffnage Castle,

## The Scotch Highlands

an old stronghold of the Campbells, passed the Brigg of Awe, — the scene of Scott's story of the 'Highland Widow,' — went through the wild pass of Brander, and approached the head of Loch Awe. Here several of us got down and walked two miles, while the coaches toiled up an ascending grade. It was a lovely walk. For magnificent scenery of the true New England type, Loch Awe surpasses anything I have seen!

“Resuming the coach, we passed through lovely Glenorchy, and then came upon a long stretch of very desolate moorland, with the giant Ben Cruachan in the background. Here some of us crossed a bye-path over steep moorlands, overgrown with heather, while the coach proceeded along the tortuous main road. I enclose a sprig of the heather which I plucked on this lonely spot. Here the scenery is not at all like anything you ever saw in New England. On every hand are steep mountains, rising almost perpendicularly, without one solitary tree to be seen — nothing but heather. The loneliness of the scene is beyond description. It is 'like a lone land where no man comes or hath come since the beginning of the world.' Everywhere barrenness, everywhere blank desolation. After a while we reached Tyndrum, which consists of one granite hotel superbly built in the pointed Norman style, and about two dozen nasty shanties. Here I changed coaches, and bore toward Glencoe. We passed pretty Loch Tullich, and halted at Inveroren, where I tried to see how much cold mutton I could dispose of in ten minutes; and then we passed Loch Lydoch, which is not especially interesting, and then our road lay through utter desolation —

## John Fiske

not a tree, not a house, nothing but mighty hills rising on every hand like icebergs in the midst of the sea. Towards dusk we entered the pass of Glencoe, where the scenery becomes terribly sublime; even the heather appears no longer, the great masses of jagged rock rise three thousand feet sheer up each side the narrow glen and stand like grim giants guarding some unearthly citadel. Here in February, 1692, about forty Macdonalds were foully and cruelly massacred by a body of English troops under Col. Campbell of Glenlyon, at the instigation of Sir John Dalrymple and the Earl of Breadalbane, who had a grudge against the Macdonalds. It was the most perfidious and atrocious thing, I think, that ever happened in Scotland, which is indeed a land of horrors."

*To Inverness through the Caledonian Canal.* "We were now on the famous 'Caledonian Canal,' which it is thus, and this is the reason of this thusness. Loch Linnhe, as the map will show you, communicates directly with the Bay of Oban. From Loch Linnhe, you pass into Loch Eil, along the banks of which we posted Friday night in our wagonet seeing just enough to see that we were losing a great deal. At the head of Loch Eil stands the village of Banavie. Now between Banavie and Inverness, there lie three magnificent lakes—Loch Lochy, Loch Oich and Loch Ness—and the art of man has joined these lakes with each other, and with Loch Eil at one end, and with the Moray Firth at the other, by a deep canal, so that an ocean steamer can go through the very heart of the Highlands from the Atlantic to the German Ocean. Only as some of these lakes lie high up in the mountains,

## The Scotch Highlands

your steamer has to be hoisted up from one lake to another by means of locks, and then let down again. It so happened yesterday that it was a superb day, bitter cold, with a very brilliant sun and no rain at all, — being the *third* rainless day since I landed at Queenstown. You can perhaps imagine how perfectly delightful the voyage was. Part of the time in a canal so narrow that we seemed to be sailing on land right between the most beautiful hills; part of the time ploughing through wild lakes bordered with forests of Scotch fir. It was more fairy like than anything else I have seen. First we passed by Ben Nevis, biggest of the Benjamins, his hoary pate covered with snow; then we sailed through Loch Lochy, which is sublime like Loch Linnhe, only less so; then we climbed into the lofty Loch Oich, away up in the mountains, and passed through exquisite wooded scenery, like that of Loch Katrine, only less so. Then we were lowered down through seven locks, during which operation many of us got 'out and took a walk. Our steerage passengers consisted of a great flock of sheep *en route* for Inverness to be slain for mutton — a circumstance which caused Paine's great chorus — 'He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, yet he opened not his mouth' — to run in my head all day. — No joke about it; such are the queer ways in which big and little ideas tie themselves together. One of these sheep had evidently made up his mind to commit suicide, for he jumped overboard in one of the locks, and was yanked up and rescued by a shepherd's hook inserted under one of his horns. He jumped overboard again, and was rescued by a rope, which was skilfully lassoed

## John Fiske

about his neck, though I should have thought it would have strangled him. Poor sheep! He must have been very desperate; for while we were in the last lock, he tried it again; and before he could be rescued the steamer sort of rubbed against the wall of the lock and crushed him. Exit sheep from this vale of tears!

“Then we entered Loch Ness which is twenty-six miles long and only a mile and a quarter in width, so that it seems like a river. It is more than 1000 feet deep. The scenery on it is very much like that of the Hudson River near West Point. At Foyers Pier we got out and walked a mile uphill to see the Fall of Foyers tumbling down 200 feet into a wild chasm, while the steamer waited for us. At 6 P.M. (of a Saturday) we reached Inverness, the capital of the Highlands, which is very likely the most northerly point I shall ever reach.”

Fiske was obliged to remain at Inverness until Monday morning, and he had an attack of real homesickness, as in his loneliness he pictured in his imagination his little home group gathered in the “obally” at Cambridge. He tells with what eagerness he is looking forward to getting a batch of letters at Edinburgh on the morrow, and there is a touch of tender pathos in his remark, “I hope that among them will be the ‘pickerwow’ of the basket-wagon and its precious freight.” He found occupation, during what he calls “this vile Scotch Sunday,” in writing the letter to Mrs. Fiske, from which the foregoing extracts are taken — it is a letter of twenty-four closely written pages, care-

## In Edinburgh

fully punctuated as to its meaning, and without *a single erasure or change of word.*

On Monday, September 22, 1873, Fiske left Inverness, by rail for Edinburgh. The weather was fine, and he found the scenery delightful — “exceedingly like Petersham.” He remained in Edinburgh four days “and got more in love with the city than ever.” He visited the castle, which he thought one of the grandest places he ever saw — standing on a beetling eminence more steep than that of Stirling. He wondered how the Earl of Murray in 1313, with thirty picked men, could have climbed clean up the side, and captured it. He went to the Advocate’s Library, about the size of the Boston Public Library, and thought that as to cataloguing they were way back in the Dark Ages as compared with Harvard. Next he went to the National Gallery, where he found “many splendid pictures by Rubens, Salvator Rosa, Rembrandt, Titian, Paul Veronese, Giorgione, Murillo, etc., and lots of English and Scottish masters.” He says, “I staid there ever so long, and was so stupefied with delight, that going out of doors seemed like waking up into a dull every-day world again.”

This was Fiske’s first experience with a large collection of great masterpieces of representative art, and it is to be noted that his appreciation strikes true in regard to them — he is overpowered by them.

## John Fiske

Wednesday was spent in a futile attempt to find an uncle of his friend Hutton, by an excursion to St. Andrews. He partly compensated himself by visiting the ruins of the cathedral and the castle which brought to mind the "eminent virtues" as well as "the somewhat acrid and irreverent temper" of John Knox. He also found much to interest him in the monument to the martyrs Wishart and his four associates.

Thursday he says: —

"I spent a long time in the University Library — about the same size as ours — and was so fortunate as to meet the librarian of the Glasgow University. Had a long talk with the two librarians. The more I see of these things, the more I appreciate the greatness of what Ezra Abbot has done" (for the Harvard Library).

At the library he found that his friend Dr. Muir was not away, but had moved out to Morning-side, one of the suburbs. Accordingly in the afternoon he rode out and called. Dr. Muir was out. He left his card and walked back to the city.

Friday he went to Melrose Abbey, which he says "is a superb ruin, worthy of all that has been said about it." Then he drove to Abbotsford. His comments upon this shrine for all lovers of true romance are brief: —

"Tell you what, my dear, Sir Walter Scott's library is a rouser. The ceiling is a beautiful specimen of oak carving. The house is a regular



## In Edinburgh

curiosity shop, and I saw so much that I will not try to tell anything about it."

But Fiske's last experience in Edinburgh was — to himself at least — the most interesting of all. Dr. Muir promptly acknowledged his call by inviting him to dinner Friday evening. What followed is given in a letter to Mrs. Fiske: —

"On returning from Melrose, I had just time to get out to his lovely villa before dinner. He is a very old bachelor and his niece Mrs. Lowe keeps house for him. He had invited to meet me Dr. Findlater, one of the first philologists in Scotland, Dr. Aufrecht who is one of the greatest Sanskrit scholars in the world, and who published many years ago a great work on the Umbrian language. I was at first overwhelmed at meeting so much erudition, all at once, and was afraid I should appear to be a — fool. But I got along very well. They all knew the Myth-book. Dr. Muir said it was '*the finest specimen of lucid exposition he had ever seen in his life*'; and he singled out one or two of my own particular points in a way that showed that he understood both their merit and their novelty. The others appeared to agree with him. Three more modest men, and three more consummate gentlemen, I never met. . . . The dinner was delicious, with some choice wines and the conversation was *ferociously* learned. We discussed the Sankhya philosophy, and all sorts of stuff, and Mrs. Lowe, having lived in India, also enjoyed it, or seemed to. I staid till after horse cars were over, and then Dr. Muir walked part way back to town with me."

## John Fiske

The next morning he left Edinburgh in a state of mind very different from that in which he entered the town a fortnight before. He writes: —

“I left Scotland almost tearfully, after two weeks of such exuberant happiness, as is rarely experienced this side of heaven.”

On his way to London Fiske stopped at the cathedral towns of York, Lincoln, Boston, Peterborough, Ely, and Norwich, and also at Ipswich and Cambridge, and in his letters to Mrs. Fiske we have quite full records of his impressions of the cathedrals of Boston and of Cambridge. The few extracts we can take from these deeply interesting letters show a mind as keenly appreciative of the beauty and grandeur of man's constructive arts as it was responsive to the beauty and sublimity of nature. The cathedrals gave him his first impressions of grand constructive architecture, and how he felt in the presence of these sublime creations he tells in many passages in the letters. Writing from York, he says: —

“After writing some ‘tezzletelts’ I went out again and attended vespers in the cathedral. This, you know, is one of the largest and grandest churches in the world. I believe it is the largest in England. The one at Ely is longer, but this beats it in area. It is a truly magnificent building — lovely and awful, solemn and sweet. It is like music to be in it, and if you go in of a Sunday afternoon you *hear* music too. The organ looks small — probably be-

## Visits Cathedral Towns

cause it is in such an enormous place; but when it opens its mouth, there issue forth such stupendous volumes of sound as take your soul right off its feet and float it up, away up, among the dim arches overhead. I never felt so full of inspiration as when the people were going out and the whole vast space was fairly shaking and trembling with harmony, as the organist worked up to the tremendous fortissimo climax of some ancient fugue. This alone was worth the whole voyage across the Atlantic — and the window-tracing is absolutely miraculous. I loafed around entranced till I got 'kicked out,' so to speak. One might spend a month in this holy place. . . . They are always tinkering it, to keep it fresh and vigorous; and indeed are repairing it now in one corner. But the finest windows are just as they were in the thirteenth century."

He sums up his cathedral impressions thus:—

"I have every reason to regard this tour among the cathedrals as a great success. If there is anything in England worth seeing, it is these gigantic and exquisite buildings. The sensation you get when inside of one is something that cannot be described — you must feel it yourself. I have now seen eight altogether, viz., Chester, Carlisle, Durham, York, Lincoln, Peterborough, Ely and Norwich. Of these the first two are not especially grand, though the east window of Carlisle is considered the finest stained window in the world. Durham, I only saw the outside of and that is exceedingly magnificent. Norwich is fine but inferior to Lincoln and Peterborough. York is considered the grand-

## John Fiske

est, but I think Ely rivals it. Its length is stupendous, and you get the full effect of this because the screen between the choir and the nave is of open work. Instead of a plain lantern in the centre there is a Gothic dome (the only one in the world) the effect of which is incredibly grand. As you look slantwise across this dome, taking in at one view the entire north transept with parts of the nave and choir—the effect is said to be unsurpassed by any other architectural effect in Europe. The finish of the interior (the carvings, etc.) is far more elaborate than that of the other English cathedrals. It would take a month to drink in the effect of all the curious carvings. At the east end of the choir, there is a superb shrine of carved marble, exhibiting six scenes from Christ's Passion—a marvellous specimen of sculpture, so exquisitely done that you could study it with a microscope and find it perfect:—still there are scores of figures, over a hundred I should say, in these six scenes. The whole is set in a frame-work of mosaics of precious stones—onyx and jasper, and lapis lazuli, etc. . . . The building was terribly defaced by the Puritans who smashed 280 statues in one of the chapels alone, and broke every pane of glass in the church. . . . At Lincoln, they tore up all the oak carvings in the choir, and substituted plain church pews and the effect of these in contrast with the grand Gothic pillars is odd enough. Fortunately at Ely, they left the oak carved seats and stalls, and they are very wonderful. . . . I have learned a great deal about Gothic architecture since Sunday, compared to the little I knew before from books. There is nothing like seeing things."

## At Ipswich

When Fiske had finished his cathedral observations at Ely, although in great haste to reach London, being in the vicinity of Ipswich he could not resist the temptation to spend a night at the Great White Horse Inn, made forever memorable in English literature by Dickens, as the house where Mr. Pickwick had the romantic adventure with the lady in yellow curl-papers. From this inn he writes his cathedral impressions just quoted, and appends the following brief account of the inn itself:—

“This old tavern where I am now writing was famous long before Dickens made it immortal. It has been standing here since thirteenth century, and has been the Great White Horse Inn all that time. It is a very ancient building with a paved court yard, and trees in the middle. It is the most picturesque tavern I have ever seen, and is alone worth the short journey to Ipswich. The house is so crooked I don't wonder old Pickwick lost his way in it. Dickens often stopped here, and there was once a 'boots' named Sam Weller. The cooking is very good, and my ancient brass bedstead with its fat feather bed is the most comfortable affair I ever slept on. We must give old England the first prize for home like and comfortable hotels, though as far as railroad travelling goes, I think no language can do justice to the intense feeling of contempt for the British intellect with which it inspires me. Anything more heathenish than an English railway train I have never seen. And they are slower than snails. That 50 miles an hour business is all a myth, except on the Irish mail and one or two other trains. Mostly they

## John Fiske

don't make over eighteen miles an hour; and they jolt equal to a horse-car off the track. And they are always, without any exception, 30 minutes behind time."

From Ipswich Fiske went to Cambridge, where he spent two days of rare intellectual enjoyment in visiting various points of interest in the university. He first called at the library, and introduced himself to Mr. Bradshaw, the chief librarian. Mr. Bradshaw received him with great cordiality, took him all over the library containing 300,000 volumes, and explained very fully their system of cataloguing, "wherein," he says, "I maintain that Ezra Abbot has beaten them out of sight."

Among the curiosities in the library, the telescope invented by Newton and used by him in his researches greatly interested Fiske. He says:—

"It looks as much like our Harvard telescope as a bark canoe looks like the steamer Olympus. The greater the wonder at what he accomplished. I never felt more like echoing the sentiment engraved on the pedestal of his statue in Trinity Chapel —

*'Isaacus Newton*

*Qui humanum genus ingenio superavit.'*"

After a delightful forenoon together Fiske was taken by Mr. Bradshaw to the latter's rooms in King's College for luncheon. Of this courtesy Fiske writes to Mrs. Fiske as follows:—

"Such luxurious college rooms I never saw. The

## In Cambridge

librarian is a senior Fellow of the college, has a man-servant of his own and lives like a nabob. We lunched on mutton-pie deliciously cooked, sweet bread and butter and celestial beer! There was a piano, also *fine* 'pickerwows,' bustuettes, and everything jolly. He had seen Stubby Child quite recently. He is rather a swell chap; quite a Don, you know; and perhaps more swell than profound, but very satisfactory in his good-breeding and kindness of manner."

Fiske explored the buildings and grounds of several of the colleges — King's, Trinity, St. John's, Corpus Christi, Pembroke, St. Peter's, etc., and he writes:—

"The buildings and grounds here so far surpass what we have got at Harvard, that there is no use in talking of them on the same day."

He left Cambridge for London Saturday, October 4, 1873, with the most delightful impressions floating in his mind of the whole university, forming in his imagination the fore-front of a perspective of the seventy-four towns and villages with which he had so recently established associations.

## CHAPTER XVIII

IN LONDON AGAIN — TAKES ROOMS NEAR BRITISH MUSEUM — CORDIALLY RECEIVED BY SPENCER AND OTHER EVOLUTIONISTS — ARRANGES FOR PUBLICATION OF HIS BOOK — DISCUSSIONS WITH SPENCER AND OTHERS — RELIGIOUS IMPLICATIONS OF DOCTRINE OF EVOLUTION — PERSONAL SKETCHES OF SPENCER, DARWIN, LEWES, GEORGE ELIOT, HUXLEY, LYELL

1873

FISKE'S delight in getting back to London was something like what he was wont to feel in approaching Petersham, only as he says "less so." He was in great spirits. He writes: "All these fine things I have seen have put fresh blood into my veins. I feel so wide awake and full of vim as I have n't felt before since the days when we first moved to Cambridge."

His first thought was to arrange for the publication of his book, and to this end he desired to consult Herbert Spencer first of all. Accordingly, Sunday, October 5, 1873, the next day after his arrival, he walked out to Bayswater, near the farther end of Hyde Park, Spencer's town residence, but only to find that he was away for a few days. While waiting his return, Fiske called upon William Ralston, an eminent Russian scholar, and assistant librarian at the British Museum. Fiske and Ral-



## In London

ston at once took a strong liking for each other, and by Ralston's advice Fiske took lodgings opposite the museum at 67 Great Russell Street. In the museum itself he was given every facility for carrying on his work. He gives the following description of his lodgings and his immediate surroundings:—

“My rooms look right out on the British Museum. I have a comfortable sitting-room and bedroom well furnished, with grate and gas, etc.; and have got a cottage piano on hire. I have my breakfast in my room and dine at a French restaurant near by and am living very comfortably on ten or twelve shillings per day *piano included*.”

He was pleased to find in the same house his classmate Jeremiah Curtin, still in pursuit of linguistic lore, and on his way to the Caucasus, which, Fiske remarks, “being the almightiest Babel of languages on earth, is a paradise for Jeremiah!”

On Thursday Fiske received a cordial note of welcome from Spencer. He called immediately and was very warmly received. Spencer entered heartily into Fiske's plan for an international publication of his philosophical work, and strongly recommended Macmillan for his English publisher. He also offered his good services if any way needed in the negotiation. But Fiske had no difficulty in getting his work accepted by the Macmillans and on precisely the same terms as he had arranged for the American publication with the firm of James R. Osgood & Co., of which I was then a member.

## John Fiske

With the question of the English publication of his work decided, Fiske settled down to steady work in revising his lectures and in the writing of a few new chapters in order to round out his Evolutionary thought into the desired philosophic form. He was engaged with this task for four months, and during this period kept his rooms at 67 Great Russell Street, which soon assumed in his mind — so far as any rooms away from Cambridge could — the nature of a home.

It should be borne in mind that at this time the sociological implications of the doctrine of Evolution, in their bearing upon current political, ethical, and religious thought, were under very general discussion by the leading English thinkers, and that Fiske in his work in hand proposed to bring these sociological implications more distinctly under review than any Evolutionist who had preceded him had done. Spencer, it is true, in his "Social Statics" and in his essays, had thrown out many fruitful suggestions along these lines; but his encyclopædic works, "Descriptive Sociology," "The Principles of Sociology," and "The Principles of Ethics," were still in embryo, while his foundational work, "First Principles," had left the thinking world in doubt as to the nature and realm of the Unknowable as postulated by him. Fiske, therefore, had a very definite object before him in this London visit. It was nothing less than the freeing of the doctrine of Evolution from all

## Cordially Received

kinship with the Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte, from all identification with atheism or materialism, while at the same time rounding it out into a philosophic system based upon science; a system consisting of affirmations as to the existence of Deity, accompanied by verifiable data regarding the cosmic universe, with man's place in it with his rational mind, as a unified, ever-developing manifestation of Deity. And it was for the completion of this important task that he desired converse with Spencer, Darwin, Huxley, Lewes, Tyndall, Hooker, Clifford, Lockyer, and a few others of the new school of scientific thought in England.

Fiske found himself on his arrival by no means unknown to a goodly number of the English scientific thinkers. His essay on Buckle, his articles in the "North American Review" and the "Fortnightly," together with the reports of his Harvard lectures, which his friend Youmans had widely circulated in England, had already drawn attention to him as an exceptionally well-equipped thinker, as well as a lucid expositor along the new lines of thought which the investigations of science were daily opening to view. Then, too, his trenchant article on Agassiz, published since he had left home, commended him to all the Darwinians in England: so much so, that, to his surprise, wherever he was introduced he not only found himself known, but people also very glad to meet him. Then his bearing was so simple and modest, his

## John Fiske

scholarship so broad and thorough, and his speech so unaffected and rich with well-digested thought that he gained the confidence and cordial coöperation of the group of eminent men whose assistance he so much desired.

The letters not only show how cordially he was received by the great body of the English Evolutionists; they also contain interesting particulars of the individual assistance rendered him. Professor W. K. Clifford, the eminent mathematician, rendered him a particularly valuable service, as Fiske says, "by punching through about six pages of my Nebular Hypothesis at once, and so saved me from getting into trouble hereafter." With Lockyer, the astronomer, he had several interviews and an evening's conference on the Nebular Hypothesis and Spectroscopic Astronomy. Of Darwin he sought particularly some information regarding peculiarities in the arrangement of leaves around the stem. He writes: "It was delightful to see what oceans of illustrations Darwin had ready, and how absolutely precise his conception of the case was and how simply and quietly he said what he had to say."

Fiske also had opportunities to ply Hooker, Tyndall, Crookes, Galton, Foster, Sir Henry Sumner Maine with questions bearing upon their special lines of investigation; while with Spencer, Huxley, and Lewes he enjoyed the freest possible converse extending over the whole period of his London so-

## Letter from Huxley

journal. With Spencer and Huxley he discussed very fully the various aspects of the doctrine of Evolution and its implications upon the future of philosophic thought.

In the midst of these memorials of earnest minds grappling with the profound mysteries of existence, it is pleasant now and then to come across a brief note—a mere scrap of paper—which, redolent of an abounding personality, illumines with a bit of delightful humor the whole Evolutionary surroundings.

We have seen that among Fiske's ancestors in Middletown there were four generations who consecutively held the office of Town Clerk, and that Fiske himself wrote a beautiful hand. It appears that during this London visit, he desired some information regarding *Amphioxus*, one of the lowest orders of vertebrates; and so he plied Huxley with one of his beautiful notes. Huxley, after answering Fiske's question, gives what lawyers would call an *obiter dictum* on the probable working of the Evolutionary process as applied to Fiske's handwriting, which is full of pertinent suggestions:—

*Huxley to Fiske*

*My dear Fiske:—*

*Amphioxus* is quite rightly said to have no brain. The anterior extremity of the nerve end, what represents the spinal marrow, is rounded off without any such differentiation as would give it a title to the name of brain.

## John Fiske

I did not expect you yesterday, knowing that Macmillan is wise in his generation, but we shall look for you on Sunday next.

What a pity you did not continue in the line of your ancestors. In another generation or two we might have had a *Homo Townclerkensis* whom the orthodox of the day would have declared to have been specially created in the latitude of Cambridge, U.S.; and they would have justly pointed to the difference between his handwriting and that of *my* progeny (all of whom write badly) as the best evidence of specific distinctness.

Yours very truly,

T. H. HUXLEY.

It was under these favoring conditions that the physical or scientific portions of his work were revised, that the sociological chapters were largely rewritten, and the chapters entitled "Matter and Spirit," "Religion as Adjustment," and the "Critical Attitude of Philosophy" were entirely composed.

Fiske's gratulatory feeling at being enabled to revise and finish his work under such happy auspices, finds frequent expression in his letters. In November he writes:—

"I am thankful to be over here doing this work, where there are so many ready and glad to help me."

And again in December:—

"This is what I always longed for, to be able to revise my book in England, where I can get good



THOMAS HENRY HUXLEY





## Discussions with Spencer

criticism and advice from competent men, before publishing; and now I seem to be getting my wish accomplished."

Among the many interesting people he met in London was the Reverend Moncure D. Conway, an American Unitarian minister who preached very liberal sermons to a very liberal and intelligent congregation at South Place Chapel, and who enjoyed the acquaintance of all the best thinkers in London. Conway and Fiske became very warm friends, and at Conway's earnest request Fiske occupied his pulpit for two Sundays, giving two discourses on Darwinism, which were received with marked approval.

Fiske's conferences with Spencer were many, and were of an exceedingly pleasant nature. During their conferences two incidents arose of some philosophic interest which are referred to in Fiske's work, but which are more clearly set forth in the letters. The first relates to Fiske's use of the word "Cosmic" in the title to his work, "Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy." We have already seen that while Fiske was delivering his lectures at Harvard under the title of "The Positive Philosophy," Spencer objected to the title "Positive Philosophy" being applied to the philosophy of Evolution, and that for his own system he had adopted the title "Synthetic Philosophy." In the latter part of December Fiske was nearing the completion of his work, and with the assistance of Huxley he had decided

## John Fiske

upon the following as his general title: "Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy based on the Doctrine of Evolution, with criticisms of the Positive Philosophy."

On submitting this title to Spencer, he at once raised objections, evidently the outcome of a feeling that Fiske was in a way giving a title to the philosophy of Evolution, a right or a duty that belonged to himself. Several letters passed: those from Spencer, although perfectly courteous in tone, indicate some degree of personal irritation; while the letters of Fiske are so free from all personal self-seeking in the matter, so direct in setting forth the implications of the word "Cosmic" in the sense in which he has used the term, so emphatic in his desire to clear the doctrine of Evolution from all affiliations with the philosophy of Positivism, and so frank in his acknowledgment of his great indebtedness to Spencer for thoughtful inspiration throughout the work, that Spencer gracefully withdrew his objections, remarking, "All that I wish is that it should be made clear that I did not myself adopt the word 'Cosmic' and do not think it desirable as a distinctive title." The controversy was conducted with such perfect frankness on both sides that its settlement left no feeling of rancor behind.

As the substance of this controversy is given by Fiske in the preface to his "Cosmic Philosophy," none of the letters are given here. It appears that

## Discussions with Spencer

Fiske had the cordial support of Huxley during the controversy; and that Huxley strongly opposed the title of "Synthetic Philosophy" when originally proposed by Spencer as a distinctive title for the philosophy of Evolution.

The other incident relates to Fiske's notable emendation of Spencer's phrase "nervous shock" into "psychical shock," in his chapter "Matter and Spirit." This emendation was an important one, and much has been made of it in subsequent psychological and philosophical discussion. Fiske says, in a footnote, that the emendation was *thoroughly approved by Spencer*. In a letter to Mrs. Fiske we have the particulars of the interview at which Spencer authorized the emendation, with just a glimpse at the personality of Spencer that is not without interest. Fiske says:—

"Spencer called yesterday, to see what had become of me. I had n't seen him for two weeks. When he came in, I had just been quoting and altering and mending a very important passage from his 'Psychology,' and apologising in a footnote for the liberty I had taken with it. Just as I had done this he came in and I read it to him, and he *told me to add in my footnote that he approved of my emendation and considered it a bully thing.*"<sup>1</sup>

Fiske then adds this pleasing incident:—

<sup>1</sup> This emendation was an important one and struck at a vital point in Spencer's philosophy, where he had unwittingly placed himself in the hands of the Materialists. Emphatic as he was in commending Fiske's emendation, it does not appear that he made any change in his text.

## John Fiske

"We went in a cab to St. James's Square and I sat by while he had his hair cut (what little he has got) and it tickled me to hear him tell the barber: 'Now hold your scissorrrrrs verrrrrtically, etc.'!!! It is positively wonderful the way he rrrrolls his rrrrs."

How diligently and with what spirit Fiske worked at his task we get glimpses from the letters in frequent passages similar to the following:—

"Next day I got up early and did 8 pages on religion, and worked like *thunder* the rest of the week. . . . To-day I have worked all day and have written 13 bran-new pages on 'Matter and Spirit.'"

In January, when he saw that the end of his task was near, he writes:—

"Oh, how happy I have been in London! I can never outlive it or forget it. It has been all solid pure unbroken happiness. But after all, Petersham, next summer, *will beat it!!!*"

And when he finishes his task on the evening of February 11, he writes at 10 P.M. in the following jubilant strain:—

"Glory to God!!!

"I have finished 'Matter and Spirit' and have been out (feeling hungry) to get a mutton chop and glass of beer in Tottenham Court Road. Glory Hallelujah! MY WORK IS DONE! This has been a profitable four months in London! To get that everlasting big book into shape has been no fool of a job; and it has been well done, too—O, sing Hallelujah!"

## Finishes "Cosmic Philosophy"

Here, as we make record of the finishing of his book, which was at the time the completest presentation of the philosophy of Evolution in its bearing upon religious thought that had been made, it is eminently fitting that we insert the following extract from a letter to his mother, written during his stay in London, in which he gives expression to the profoundly religious thought that underlies the whole of his philosophy. His mother had questioned the nature of the comfort his views had for aching hearts, for people in affliction, to which he replied:—

"As for the comfort which 'my science' has for aching hearts, the form of your question shows how little you understand what 'my science' is. If I were to say that my chief comfort in affliction would be the recognition that there is a Supreme Power manifested in the totality of phenomena, the workings of which are not like the workings of our intelligence, but far above and beyond them, and which are obviously tending to some grand and worthy result, even though my individual happiness gets crushed in the process, so that the only proper mental attitude for me, is that which says, 'not my will but thine be done' — if I were to say this, you would probably reply, 'Why, this is Christianity.' Well, so it is, I think. This, however, is my faith, and it is 'a faith which owns fellowship with thought,' as Miss Hennell says. The difference between the Christianity of Herbert Spencer, and that of Mrs. Pickett <sup>1</sup> is nothing but

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Pickett was a faithful family servant in Middletown.

## John Fiske

a difference of symbols. One uses the language of a man, and the other that of a child.

“But the germ of a faith which sustains Mrs. Pickett is something which Spencer has not got rid of, — it is something which mankind will never get rid of. Read Matthew Arnold’s ‘Literature and Dogma’ and you will see how little he cares for doctrinal symbols, how much he cares for the kernel of the thing. And when my ‘Cosmic Philosophy’ comes out, you will see how utterly impossible it is that Christianity should die out; but how utterly *inevitable* it is, that it should be metamorphosed, even as it has been metamorphosed over and over again.”

And so, with his task of composition finished, Fiske spent a few days in visiting Westminster Abbey, the House of Commons, Westminster Hall, and a few other places of interest which he had not had time to visit before; and in saying good-bye for a season to Spencer, the Huxleys, Mr. and Mrs. Lewes, Ralston, and Macmillan. On Wednesday, the 17th of February, he delivered the last of his manuscript to the printer, and in stating this fact to Mrs. Fiske he takes great pleasure in noting that the delivery was on the twelfth anniversary of their engagement.

On the 19th of February he left London for Brighton, and on the 20th he set out for the Continent, via Dieppe, Rouen, and Paris.

Fiske’s sojourn in London, however, is of gene-

## Personal Sketches

ral interest for another reason than the completion of his "Cosmic Philosophy" — his personal sketches of the eminent persons with whom he came in contact. Reference has been made to the reputation that had preceded him, and to the social attentions he received. The latter were indeed remarkable, and they began immediately upon his arrival. His cordial reception by Spencer, Lewes, Darwin, Huxley, and his genial publisher Macmillan, opened to him entrances to the highest intellectual and social converse that London had to bestow. He was given the full privileges of the Athenæum and of the Cosmopolitan clubs — two of the most select and distinguished clubs in London. He dined with the X Club, the most exclusive club in England. Darwin gave him a luncheon. Spencer gave him a special dinner with Huxley, Tyndall, Lewes, and Dr. Jackson. He was Huxley's guest at a dinner of the Royal Society. He was given a special dinner by the "Citizens of Noviomagas," a club of "jolly good fellows." And then, best of all, he was made an ever-welcome guest at the delightful home of Mr. and Mrs. Lewes (George Eliot), the Huxleys, and of his "bonny old Scot" publisher, Macmillan.

It was under these favorable conditions that Fiske had the pleasure of becoming personally acquainted, not only with all the persons named, but also with several others hardly less distinguished for their contributions to the science and

## John Fiske

the literature of the time; as, for instance, Sir Charles Lyell, Hooker, Foster, Clifford, Lockyer, Proctor, Pollock, Crookes, Galton, Max Müller, Tennyson, Charles Kingsley, Browning, Tom Hughes, Anthony Trollope, James Sime, Lord Arthur Russel, Lord Acton, and others.

Fiske's letters to Mrs. Fiske, to his mother, and to his children written during his London sojourn would fill a volume by themselves. They have been carefully preserved and abound with graphic sketches of the eminent people with whom he was brought into close personal relations in the working-out of his philosophic scheme. They also give full accounts of his social diversions, at the clubs, at the homes of Macmillan, the Huxleys, the Lewes's, of Trübner (the publisher), and others: and they also abound in rare and appreciative criticisms upon the musical entertainments he enjoyed. Then, too, the letters give expression to the ever-painful feeling in his heart at his isolation from his home — from his wife and his children. This feeling of isolation, combined with a feeling of sadness at having pleasures he cannot share with them, permeates all the letters like a sad refrain, revealing the deep tenderness of his nature, and giving to the letters a rare personal charm.

Space can be given to but a few additional extracts from these letters: and these extracts are limited to personal sketches of Spencer, Darwin, Huxley, Lewes, George Eliot, and Sir Charles



## Herbert Spencer

Lyell, because these persons, beyond all others that he met, had been influential in shaping the current of his evolutionary thought.

### *Herbert Spencer*

The reader, as he recalls Fiske's enthusiasm for Herbert Spencer during his college days, together with his efforts during the intervening years to interpret Spencer's philosophy, that of Evolution, to the American mind, will be interested in getting his impressions of Spencer's personality as derived from their intercourse during this London sojourn.

Fiske's first impressions of Spencer are given in two letters written October 13 and 17, 1873, the one to Mrs. Fiske, and the other to his mother, and the following is the merging, in his own words, of the sketches in both letters: —

“I called on Herbert Spencer last Thursday. He received me very warmly, and we walked back to town together. He is a ferocious walker. I would like to see him and James [Brooks] start out on a wager. He is built for travel. I dined with him on Friday, and narrated my projects and he took great interest. He is exceedingly refined and elegant in manner, and appears like the great man he is, though he seems overworked. He is at last getting a handsome income from his books. I shall see a great deal more of him. I told him all about my infancy chapter, and he says it is a *grand discovery*, and belongs entirely to me! He was very much wrought up by it, and had never *dreamed* of it before.”

## John Fiske

While this rather meagre presentation of Spencer's personality leaves much to be desired, it confirms in a marked degree the impression we have of him derived from a variety of sources — that he lacked the power of inspiring enthusiasm. But Fiske's veneration for him was so great, he could overlook his personal shortcomings in appreciation of his greatness, and in the following extracts we have perhaps the completest presentation of Spencer's personality that has been given. Writing to Mrs. Fiske, a little later he says: —

“This morning dear old Spencer came in to see me just after breakfast, and staid an hour. He does n't feel very well, having overworked during the summer, without much if any vacation; and he said to me that he would be darned if he would ever again undertake to do any work *on time*. ‘Dear me,’ I told him, ‘have n't you been making that same vow over and over again ever since you were 30 years old, and have n't you invariably busted it?’ Yes, he said, he was always vowing never to do so again, but his vows were *always* busted. . . . The old fellow was as charming as a magician, and we had an almighty fine chin-wag.”

In his account of the dinner which Spencer gave him, at which Huxley, Lewes, Tyndall, and others were present, and at which, he says, “we discussed pretty much the whole universe from cellar to attic,” Fiske writes to Mrs. Fiske: —

“Spencer was benign and admirable as always; and the reverence which all these men feel for him

## Herbert Spencer

was thoroughly apparent, in the way in which they listened to every word that came out of his mouth.”

And to his mother Fiske writes: —

“You don’t seem to know that Spencer is a bachelor. How he came to know so much about bringing up children I don’t know, except that such imperial common-sense as his cannot go far wrong on any subject. Of all the men I have ever seen he impresses me as the most remarkably endowed with good straightforward common-sense. . . . This illustrates what I have often thought, that a really good psychologist — a man who really fathoms all the processes of thinking and the methods of reaching conclusions — has an advantage over all other kinds of men. He gets down to the bottom of what they are thinking about. It is now getting to be generally admitted that in all human history, the only men to be compared with Spencer for insight into mental processes, are Aristotle, Berkeley, and Kant. And it is this wonderful insight into the mind which is the secret of that supreme common-sense which he shows in his chapters on Education, and in everything he writes.”

A little later he writes to Mrs. Fiske: —

“Then Conway and I went to Spencer’s. Spencer was down with his liver, and his stomach, and his back-bone, and caved-in generally, and disposed to be grouty; but he shook my hand in an unmistakably affectionate way, and evidently tried to be as jolly as he could. The more I see of the poor old fellow, the more I pity him from the

## John Fiske

bottom of my heart. He is so lonely and so curtailed from want of human sympathy. And I don't see how he is ever going to finish his work with his present health. He thinks it a wonderful day's work, if he can only keep at it from 9 A.M. until noon."

And again: —

"Yesterday I lunched with Spencer, and walked back through Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park with him. It was a beautiful day — warm as summer — and such a delicious grey-blue sky as I never saw before. I was wild with delight. But Spencer never seems to warm up to anything but *ideas*. He has got so infernally critical, that not even the finest work of God — a perfect day — is quite fine enough for him. So he picked flaws with the grey-blue sky, and the peculiar Turner-like light, and *everything*. However, he was very jolly, and we had a grand talk about primitive language, which he has got on the brain just now. His talk is very charming."

It appears that on one occasion, Spencer invited Fiske to luncheon at the Athenæum Club, forgetting that he (Spencer) had an important engagement. At the appointed hour, Spencer did not appear, and Fiske, on his return to his rooms, found a note explaining matters. Fiske sends the note to Mrs. Fiske with the following comments, and with an additional sketch of Spencer's personality:—

"Keep it [the note] as a relic. People would

My dear Mr. Tiske

My failing memory  
 often betrays me into  
 sad blunders. When  
 proposing to meet you  
 at the Athenaeum at 8,  
 I quite forgot that part  
 of my reason for coming  
 into town was an  
 engagement in the City at  
 that hour. Pray excuse me.  
 ever yours  
 Herbert Spencer



## Herbert Spencer

give a good deal for some such little scrap showing how Newton got his head overburdened and made an impracticable appointment with a friend. But Spencer is as wonderful a man as Newton, and this little bit from him is worth as much as the other would be. Poor old fellow! One can easily see that he labours under the weight of his mighty mind, and that the body protests against the quantity of work it has to do in keeping said mind a-going. Thus is the world made; you can't eat your cake and keep it. Books like 'First Principles' are made at the cost of terrible wear and tear of the nerves. But Spencer does n't show it in the same way that Lewes does. He does n't look feeble, but he looks tired. He is wiry, and tough, and athletic, and looks like a very strong man, tired. Lewes looks feeble. That is the difference. I can fear that Lewes may come in with his work half done, but I can imagine it more likely that Spencer may stick to it, tired as he is, for many a year to come. They are a wonderful pair, anyway, and either one of them would have been worth the journey across the ocean to see.

"I showed Spencer the basket-wagon 'pickerwow,' this morning, and also the 'pickerwow' of 'Tick' sitting on the cricket, and of 'Barl' with his hat and waterproof cape-coat on; and I told him how I used to go to Spy Pond with my babies, and he said he should like to be there, and *go along with us!* When I think how lonely he must be without any wife and babies, and how solitary he is in all his greatness, it makes me pity him, and feel very tenderly toward him. When I watched him intently examining the basket-wagon 'pickerwow,'

## John Fiske

I felt, though I did not say it—‘By Jove, that wagon-load is worth more than all the *philosophy that ever was concocted*, from Aristotle to Spencer inclusive.’ ”

*Charles Darwin*

Fiske's veneration for Darwin was hardly less than his veneration for Spencer. While he credited Spencer with being the first thinker of modern times to bring forward the idea of Evolution as the mode of manifestation of an unknown power underlying all the phenomena of the inorganic and organic universe, he recognized Darwin as having furnished the most indubitable proof of Evolution in the organic world by his epoch-making books, "The Origin of Species" and "The Descent of Man." Fiske's desire to meet Darwin, therefore, for converse on some of the points in the philosophy of Evolution he was working out, especially in its relation to sociologic man, was hardly less than his desire to meet Spencer.

He learned, however, that Darwin was in quite feeble health, and hesitated about asking for an interview, fearing it would be an intrusion upon Darwin's necessary seclusion. But as he settled down to his task, the desire to consult Darwin became so strong that he was induced to send the latter a note in which he stated his purpose in London and from which the following extract is taken:

"I have known and revered you so many years, that it would give me great pleasure if I could



## Charles Darwin

meet you and shake hands with you before leaving England. There are some subjects about which I would fain have a word or two of conversation; but as Mr. Spencer tells me that you are (like himself) feeling poorly at present, and as I know what a bore philosophy is under such circumstances, I shall seek for nothing more than to tell you face to face, how much I, in common with all thinking men, owe to you."

This note brought the following prompt reply from Darwin: —

DOWN, November 3, 1873.

*My dear Sir:—*

I am much obliged for your very kind letter. I am very glad of the nature of the work on which you are engaged. I see so few people that I had not heard of your presence in London. At the end of the week I shall be in London at my daughter's house, and I will on the following week propose your coming to luncheon, which is generally my best time, and I trust this may not be inconvenient to you.

I did receive the "Popular Science Monthly" and read your attack (an attack it was with a vengeance though properly admitting his great services) on Agassiz, with great interest. I have not received the "North American" and shall be very glad to see it, but I can order a copy for myself. Until we meet,

Yours very sincerely,

CH. DARWIN.

On the evening after the luncheon Fiske writes Mrs. Fiske as follows: —

## John Fiske

"To-day, I lunched with Darwin and Mrs. Darwin, Mrs. Litchfield (Darwin's daughter), Frank Darwin (whom I saw in Boston two years ago) and Miss Bessie Darwin, and Dr. Hooker, the greatest living botanist, and Mrs. Hooker. . . . Darwin is the dearest, sweetest, loveliest old Grandpa that ever was. And on the whole he impresses me with his strength more than any man I have yet seen. There is a charming kind of quiet strength about him and about everything he does. He is not burning and eager like Huxley. He has a mild blue eye, and is the gentlest of gentle old fellows. I think he would make a noble picture after the style of mother's picture which I call 'Galileo.' His long white hair and enormous beard make him very picturesque. And what is so delightful to see, as that perfect frankness and guileless simplicity of manner, which comes from a man having devoted his whole life to some great idea, without a thought of self, and without ever having become a 'man of the world'? I had a warm greeting from the dear old man, and I am afraid I shall never see him again, for his health is very bad, and he had to make a special effort to see me to-day. Of all my days in England, I prize to-day the most; and what I pity *you* most of all for, my dear, is that you have n't seen our dear grand old Darwin! I think we both felt it might be the last time. He came to the door with me and gave me a warm grip of the hand and best wishes, and watched me down the road till I turned the corner, when I took off my hat and bowed good-bye."

On the same day, November 13, Fiske wrote his mother as follows: —

## Sketch of George Henry Lewes

“Of course I have formed opinions of all these men, but it is interesting to see how they seem in the flesh. There is no doubt that Spencer is the profoundest thinker of all. But Darwin impressed me with a sense of strength more than any other man I have ever seen. Instead of Huxley’s intense black eye, he has got a mild blue eye, and his manner is full of repose. None of these men seem to know how great they are. But Darwin is one of the most truly modest men I ever saw. The combination of power and quiet modesty in him, is more impressive than I can describe. I regard my lunch with Darwin the climax of everything thus far.”

### *George Henry Lewes*

Next to Spencer and Darwin, the man Fiske most desired to meet in the prosecution of his work was George Henry Lewes. We have seen that when Fiske gave up the practice of the law to devote himself to literature, Lewes, as editor of the “Fortnightly Review,” the organ of liberal thought in England, cordially welcomed him as an unhampered contributor, with a more satisfactory remuneration than he had received at home. Then, beside this fact, Fiske had been a careful reader of Lewes’s “Life of Goethe,” his “Seaside Studies,” and his essay on Aristotle; while Lewes’s “History of Philosophy,” with its masterly analyses of the different schools of philosophy from Thales to Comte, had been familiar to Fiske ever since his college days as a sort of textbook of human thinking, illustrating one great evolutionary truth that —

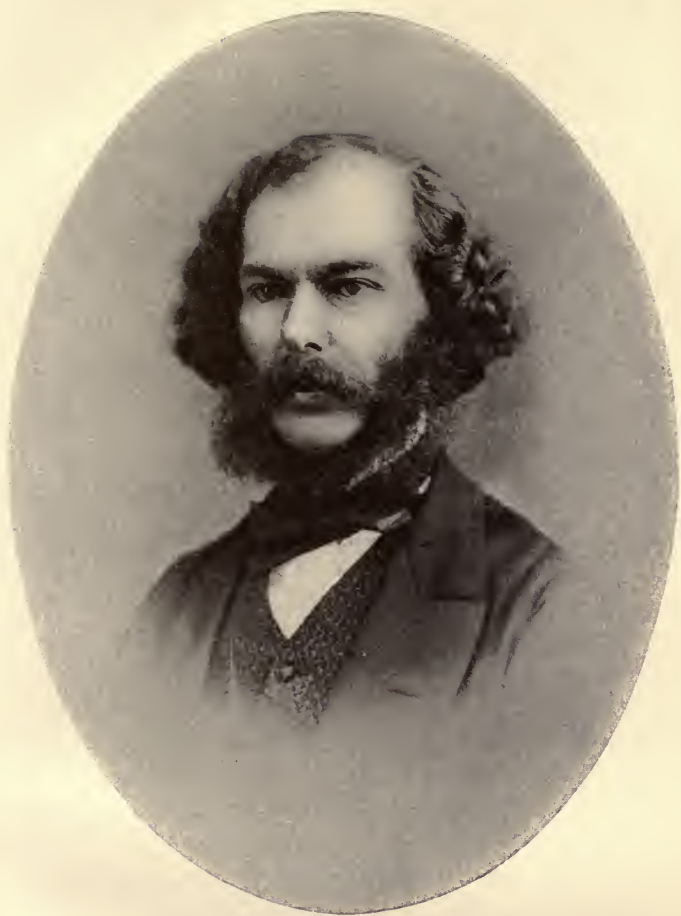
## John Fiske

“Through the ages one increasing purpose runs,  
And the thoughts of men are widen'd with the process of  
the suns.”

Fiske's first meeting with Lewes was by chance in the store of Trübner, the publisher, and under date of October 23 he gives the following graphic sketch of Lewes's personality: —

“Tuesday, I went down to Trübner's store in Ludgate Hill, near St. Paul's, and there I met Mr. Lewes. He looks very old and feeble for a man of 55; somewhat weazen, and little, like Ezra Abbot, and ever so homely — a great deal more homely than his picture. But when he opens his mouth to speak, he becomes transfigured in a moment. I never saw anything more winning than the beautiful and cordial smile with which he met me, and expressed his pleasure at seeing me at last. I had meant to say all that to him, but he forestalled me. His manners are *fascinating beyond all description*, and he took my heart captive at once. I never before saw a man who seemed so full of the divine indescribable something that makes a man different from common men — and all this in spite of his homely, and meagre and puny physique. I don't wonder that he captivated George Eliot. I think he is just the man that any woman would get in love with, who had an eye for the *spirituelle*. We talked about an hour, when he said he must run and catch a train to get home to his wife, for he had promised her not to stay more than three hours in the city.

“The work which he is beginning to publish is one of great scope, and will fill many volumes if



GEORGE HENRY LEWES



## Sketch of George Henry Lewes

it is ever finished.<sup>1</sup> But it was with a pang that I heard him allude to the probability of his never finishing it, for it seems only too probable. He said his wife called him her 'Mr. Casaubon'<sup>2</sup> and kept egging him on to publish and get rid of what he had got on hand anyway — the force of which you will appreciate if you read 'Middlemarch.' He is reading my Myth-book with his wife, and they like it much. I am at last to see the great George Eliot on Sunday, November 23, at two o'clock P.M. They will then have returned to town, and I am to lunch with them on that day. So you can then imagine Hezzy in clover. I am perfectly in love with Lewes."

Lewes gave Fiske, in sheets, a copy of his forthcoming book, "Problems of Life and Mind," and under date of November 18, Fiske writes Mrs. Fiske as follows: —

"I read Lewes's book, ('Problems of Life and Mind') in the sheets, and I consider his treatment of Kant one of the most masterly pieces of philosophical criticism I ever read. I told Darwin about it, and found that he has a great admiration for Lewes's straightforward and clean-cut mind. I have made up my mind that Lewes will have a permanent place in history as the critic of Kant, to say nothing of the other things he has done. What a comical old fellow he is! At *the* dinner the other day [Spencer's dinner to Fiske] I was say-

<sup>1</sup> A history of science, the first section of which was "Problems of Life and Mind."

<sup>2</sup> Fiske says: "Mrs. Lewes calls it Cas-aü'bon, with the accent on the second syllable, but she says a good many people of that name in England call themselves Cäs'äu-bön, with accent on first syllable."

## John Fiske

ing that very soon we should see Evolution taken up by the orthodox. 'To be sure,' says Lewes, 'for don't you see that Evolution requires an Evolver?' Huxley was telling about something I said in my Agassiz article, when Spencer blandly interrupted with 'What will Agassiz say to all that?' 'O,' said Lewes, 'he will say what Louis XIV said after the battle of Ramillies — *Dieu m'a abandonné; et après tout ce que j'ai fait pour Lui!!!*' "

### *George Eliot*

Fiske was no less desirous of meeting Mrs. Lewes — George Eliot — than he was of meeting Lewes. He had been a careful reader of her various books and regarded them as the products of a genius of the highest order. The wide variety of characters she had created into the world of literature, such as Dinah, Mrs. Poyser, Dorothea, Romola, Fidalma, Adam Bede, Caleb Garth, Felix Holt, Tito, Savonarola, and Zarca, he considered unexcelled in modern fiction; while he seemed to see through them all the reflection of a mind that was looking out upon the drama of human life, not with the pessimistic view of the theologic-dogmatist, but rather with an optimistic faith born of a belief in Evolution — "of a power within us, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness."

The story of the marital relations of Lewes and Marian Evans (George Eliot) is not in place here. Fiske gave to his mother the whole story, and in closing it he says: —



## Sketch of George Eliot

“My notions of these things are almost ascetically strict; but about this case I have always felt (knowing the thoroughly upright and noble character of Lewes, and presuming George Eliot to be no less so) that in all probability they did the very best they knew how; and there are mighty few people who are in a position to go pitching stones at them.”

We have seen that at his first meeting with Lewes Fiske was invited to luncheon with Mr. and Mrs. Lewes on November 23, shortly after their return to town. Fiske looked forward to meeting these two people in their own home with great anticipations; and on October 31 he writes to Mrs. Fiske: —

“Remember that on Sunday, November 23, I lunch with Lewes and George Eliot. Imagine Hezzy as hard as you can when that day comes around, and if George Eliot is half as bewitching as her husband, I shall no doubt have a day of it long to be remembered.”

On November 23, with the interview fresh in mind, he writes Mrs. Fiske as follows: —

“To-day, my dear, I have been to the Lewes's . . . And Ralston was there and there never was a room so dark that his presence would n't at once make sunlight in it. And 'Kingdon' Clifford was there, and several others — too many, indeed, for Mr. and Mrs. Lewes had to play hostess to so many that I could n't talk to her half so much as I wanted to.

“Well, what do I think of her? She is a plain-

## John Fiske

looking woman, but I think not especially homely. She is much better looking than George Sand. She is n't a blooming beauty, of course: you don't expect that at fifty-two. But her features are regular, her nose is very good, her eyes are a rich blue and very expressive, her mouth is very large, but it is pleasant in expression. Her hair is light and profuse, and she wears a lovely lace cap over it — and looks simple, and frank, and cordial, and matronly, and seems ever so fond of Lewes, and he ever so fond of her. I call her a real good, honest, genuine, motherly woman with no nonsense about her. She seemed glad to see me. She said when my Myth-book came to her (I sent her a copy last summer, as you know), she was sitting on the floor, fixing a rug, or something of the sort, and she got so absorbed in my book that she sat on the *floor* all the afternoon, till Lewes came in, and routed her up! She thought it was a beautiful book; but she had known me ages ago, when I first wrote to Lewes and sent things to the 'Fortnightly.' But she disagreed with me as to the unity of the Homeric poems. I found she was a strong Wolfian! Well, we had a hard battle over it — she and I. I never saw such a woman. There is nothing a bit masculine about her. She is thoroughly feminine. But she has a power of *stating* an argument equal to any man. Equal to any man, do I say? I have never seen any man, except Herbert Spencer, who could state a case equal to her. I found her thoroughly acquainted with the whole literature of the Homeric question; and she seems to have read all of Homer in Greek, too, and could meet me everywhere. She did n't talk like a blue-stocking



GEORGE ELIOT



## Sketch of George Eliot

— as if she were aware she had got hold of a big topic — but like a plain woman, who talked of Homer as simply as she would of flat-irons. She showed an amazing knowledge of the subject. But, you see, Hezzy is not a fool on the Homer-question. He knows every bit of the 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey' as well as he knows the 'Pickwick Papers,' and so he was a little too much for her. On the whole, she was inclined to beat a retreat before we got through, and said she was glad of some new considerations that Hezzy had presented on the subject — though, on the whole, I don't think I converted her.

"I never before saw just such a clear-headed woman. She thinks just like a man, and can put her thoughts into clear and forcible language at a moment's notice. And her knowledge is quite amazing. I have often *heard* of learned women, whose learning, I have usually found, is a mighty flimsy affair. But to meet with a woman who can meet you like a man, on such a question as that of the Homeric poems, knowing the ins and outs of the question, and not *putting on any airs*, but talking sincerely of the thing as a subject which has deeply interested her — this is, indeed, quite a new experience.

"On the whole, I enjoyed Mr. and Mrs. Lewes immensely to-day; and I think Lewes a happy man in having such a simple-hearted, honest, and keenly sympathetic wife. I call them a wonderful couple. Spencer thinks she is the greatest woman that has lived on the earth — the female Shakespeare, so to speak; and I imagine he is not *far* from right. My only sorrow is that the afternoon was not quite long enough; but I shall go there again."

# John Fiske

*Thomas Henry Huxley*

Huxley was one of the men Fiske was most desirous to meet. In Fiske's mind there were four men whose several labors had prepared the way for the theory of Evolution; but before a complete system of philosophy could be developed therefrom their respective labors must be correlated into one consistent whole. These were Spencer, Darwin, Lewes, Huxley. Of these four men Fiske knew Huxley the least, and only as an eminent zoölogist, a valiant defender of Darwinism, and as a bitter opponent of the Positive Philosophy of Comte.

Fiske first met Huxley at the dinner given to Fiske by Spencer, and next at the dinner at the X Club; and from this time forth the letters overflow with sketches of Huxley, and his delightful home surroundings. After the dinner at the X Club he writes to Mrs. Fiske: —

“Huxley seems to have taken a great fancy to Hezzy. He devoted himself almost exclusively to me during the evening, and we had one of the best talks that two poor creeters ever succeeded in getting up together. What a treat it is to meet with such a fine-tempered mind! and none the worse for having a handsome face to reveal itself through!”

And again he writes: —

“I am quite wild over Huxley. He is as handsome as an Apollo. His photograph does n't begin

## Sketch of Huxley

to do him justice. I never before saw such magnificent eyes. They are black, and his face expresses an eager, burning intensity, and there is none of that self-satisfied smirk which has crept into the picture. He seems earnest — immensely in earnest — and thoroughly frank, and cordial, and modest. And, by Jove, what a pleasure it is to meet such a clean-cut mind! It is like Saladin's sword which cut through the cushion. When we parted it was a heart-felt grip that I gave his hand, I can tell you. There is no doubt at all that he is a grand man, and a great man, too. There is nothing so pleasant as *seeing* these men after one has known them in a shadowy way so long. Reading their books does n't give you the flesh-and-blood idea of them. But once to see such a man as Huxley is never to forget him."

And a little later he gives the following account of a Sunday evening at one of Mrs. Huxley's "tall teas": —

"Then I went to Huxley's, where we had what he calls a 'tall tea,' i.e., on Sunday they dine early and have an old-fashioned tea at 6.30 with meat. Huxley's house is the nearest to an earthly paradise of anything I have ever seen. . . . After tea Huxley and I retired to his study, which is the cosiest I have seen in England, and had a smoke and the very best talk I ever had. Words can't describe what a glorious fellow he is. Darwin is the only man I have seen that equals him. Spencer does n't begin to. And then Darwin is a dear old grandpa, but Huxley is a younger man, not over 45 or 46, I think,<sup>1</sup> and so I feel more at home with

<sup>1</sup> He was forty-eight.

## John Fiske

him. He is very much interested in *the book*, and hopes I will add the chapter on 'Matter and Spirit' which I have been mulling for a year back. We had a splendid talk about the soul. . . . And when I left, Huxley said there would be a plate set for me *every* Sunday, as long as I stay in London, and it will be my own fault if I don't come and use it — in which Mrs. Huxley joined. And I must say, I never met more warm-hearted, loveable people in my whole life."

To his mother Fiske writes: —

"December 11th, I went to a great dinner of the Royal Society, as Huxley's guest. . . . My 'violent' friendship with Huxley began that evening. He attracted me wonderfully the first time I met him at Spencer's. But now I quite lost my heart to him. The next Sunday evening I began going to tea at his house, and now I go every Sunday evening, and am becoming one of the family. It is a lovely family. Mrs. Huxley is a sweet, motherly woman. . . . And Huxley is such an immense-hearted old fellow! Such a great, all-embracing sympathy about him! Such tenderness, such exquisite delicacy, such truthfulness, such a shrewd, sensible, clear head, such immense and accurate knowledge! And his great black eyes — as Charles Reade says, 'the eye of a hawk, with the eye of a dove beneath it.' I never saw another such a man as Huxley, and everybody warms up just so when I express my opinion of him. Sir F. Pollock told me the other day, that there was 'enough goodness in Huxley to make all England Christian, if it could only be parcelled out, and distributed around.' "



## Sketch of Huxley

The following note shows the cordial relations which existed between Fiske and the whole Huxley family: —

4 MARLBOROUGH PLACE,  
December 26, 1873.

*My dear Fiske: —*

I have a great mind to say that you will not be welcome at Sunday's "tall tea" in revenge for your entertaining any doubt as to the sufficiency of our general invitation.

But it would be too big a lie for a man who has not had the advantage of being brought up in a pious family. Also I am prepared to play third person competent or otherwise as the case may be.

Have you anything to do on New Year's Day? I mean to interfere with your dining with us. If not it will give us great pleasure to see you.

Any time these eighteen years, with hardly a break, Spencer and Tyndall have dined with us on that day, and we mean to hold high feast this year to contrast with the last two occasions when I have been wretchedly ill.

With the best regards and good wishes from all of us,

Believe me,

Yours very faithfully,

T. H. HUXLEY.

Fiske accepted Huxley's invitation to a New Year's dinner, where he had the pleasure of meeting Spencer, Tyndall, Michael Foster, and others, around Huxley's hospitable board.

These sketches of Huxley may well close with an incident in Fiske's own experience which he re-

## John Fiske

lated at one of the Sunday "tall teas" to the great amusement of the whole Huxley family. On one of his trips to New York, Fiske fell in with an Englishman who expressed much surprise at the great interest Americans seemed to take in the scientific thought of Spencer, Darwin, Tyndall, Lyell, etc. On Fiske's mentioning Huxley as one of the leaders in the new movement, the Englishman broke out: "What, 'Uxley! 'orrid old hinfidel! Why, we don't think *hanythink* of 'im in Hingland. We think 'e's 'orrid. You don't say you hadmire 'Uxley? 'E's perfectly 'orrid!"

### *Sir Charles Lyell*

Among the eminent men of science no one was at this time held in higher honor in England than Sir Charles Lyell, the venerable geologist, whose life was now drawing to a close after fifty years devoted to the advancement of geologic science. Fiske was perfectly familiar with Lyell's geological writings. They had been stepping-stones to his own comprehension of the cosmic universe. He was no less acquainted with the facts connected with Lyell's valiant stand in support of Darwin, on the publication of the latter's "Origin of Species"; as well as with his recantation of previous views in regard to the antiquity of man, occasioned by his acceptance of Darwin's theory of natural selection as a *vera causa* of the multifarious forms of the organic life of the globe.



SIR CHARLES LYELL



## Sketch of Sir Charles Lyell

In Fiske's mind Lyell appeared as one of the advanced guard of scientists, who, in the face of theologic ignorance and prejudice, had added immensely to the boundaries of human knowledge, while increasing in men's minds a reverence for the profound mystery that lies beyond. Accordingly, on the 22d of December, 1873, he paid his respects to Sir Charles by calling, being presented by his friend Conway.

Of this memorable interview he writes to Mrs. Fiske the same day as follows: —

“This afternoon Conway and I called on Sir Charles Lyell. Think what an event in one's life, my dear! Here is this old man whose great work was really done forty-four years ago, when grandma Stoughton was a little girl like Maudie, when Comte was a young fellow like Hezzy, and Darwin a boy in college, and Spencer a boy nine years old. Away back in those days he laid the foundations of a work so great and strong, that his name will hereafter hold the same place in geology forever, that Newton's holds in astronomy. Scouted at in the beginning, he has lived to witness his own immortality — to see all men adopting as self-evident the truths which he was the first to discover. A rare good fortune for a man! To see him was like looking at an age gone by. He is probably from 80 to 85 years old.<sup>1</sup> He cannot see much of anything, and walks with difficulty. He was glad to lean on my arm in getting to his easy-chair before the fire. We sat an hour before the bright fire in his lovely

<sup>1</sup> He was eighty-six.

## John Fiske

*obally*,<sup>1</sup> and talked about many things. His mind is as clear and clean-cut as ever — no nonsense about him. And such exquisite politeness! Such a well-bred, courteous, sweet old man! How tenderly he spoke of Agassiz (who had just died) and with how much appreciation of his son Alexander Agassiz, whom he hoped to see elected to his father's place. He had dim and amusing recollections of old Dr. Barratt, of Middletown,<sup>2</sup> but was not very sure on the subject. He was as keenly curious of all new things as a young man, but owned that he reads nothing now-a-days; and he said in a delicate way, that since Lady Lyell's death, he did n't get much of the good flavor of life. He reminds me very much of Darwin — the same gentleness, the same keenness of glance; the same precision of mind, the same kingly demeanour. It was a great event in Hezzy's life — a thing to tell the babies of years hence, when they have grown up. I am so glad to have seen the dear old man, and had him *lean* on me. He may die of old age almost any day.<sup>3</sup> And still his mind is just as young, just as *jolly* as ever. Conway did n't say much, leaving the field to me; but when we had got away, he broke out with his admiration, and our tongues ran pretty fast until we got to where our roads diverged.

And here these interesting personal sketches for the present must close.

<sup>1</sup> His children's nickname for library.

<sup>2</sup> A former pupil of Lyell's.

<sup>3</sup> He died February 22, 1875.

## CHAPTER XIX

HIS CONTINENTAL JOURNEY — HIS ORIGINAL PLAN AND WHY CURTAILED — HIS BRIEF STOP IN PARIS AND HIS HASTY RUN THROUGH FRANCE — HIS FOUR WEEKS IN ITALY — SWITZERLAND VIA MONT CENIS — LES CHARMETTES, FERNEY, GENEVA — ROUSSEAU, VOLTAIRE — IMPRESSIONS OF SWITZERLAND — DOWN THE RHINE TO BELGIUM — BACK IN LONDON — FAREWELL VISITS

1873-1874

FISKE's plan for his Continental journey, which he had worked out in all details before he left home, was a comprehensive one, and it embraced visits to the chief countries, and places of historic interest. The trip was to begin December 20, 1873, and was to take nearly eight months' time. The plan included a visit to Constantinople and Athens. To each country was allotted a definite portion of the time — one month was to be given to France; two months to Italy; three weeks to Constantinople and Athens; three and a half weeks to Austria; six weeks to Germany; one month to Switzerland; one week to the Rhine; and two weeks to Belgium and Holland. With what we know of his historic and philosophic interests, the underlying purpose of this journey, so definitely planned, is apparent. He wished to observe Continental Europe with all the concomitants of modern life, surrounded with the

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vestiges of the ancient and mediæval civilizations, out of which the present social and political conditions have grown.

It is to be regretted that this carefully planned journey was not carried out, for a series of letters from him, giving his observations under conditions which brought substantially all Continental history within his purview, would have been a permanent addition to literature — and he certainly would have written such letters. But his stay in England to finish his book had been prolonged two months beyond the allotted period, thus materially shortening his available time for the Continent; and besides, when he was ready to leave England, he had been over six months from home, and was terribly homesick.

This home-longing, this feeling of loneliness when separated for any length of time from his family, was a personal characteristic we have had occasion to notice in previous years, and we shall also have occasion to note it in years to come. On the present occasion this loneliness became almost a veritable disease, and his longing to get home became so great that it led him to cut down his Continental journey to a period of about ten weeks, a limitation of time which only admitted a hasty run through France, Italy, and Switzerland, a mere glance at the Rhenish provinces of Germany, with a very few days given to Belgium.

Then, too, no small portion of his time when not



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travelling was taken up with revising his proofs, writing the preface, and indexing his forthcoming work, so that his letters are not as full of "impressions" as might be desired. He took pains, however, to gather photographs, as far as possible, of the principal objects of interest to him, and on his return he consecutively arranged these photographs in an album, so that we have his journey, brief as it was, quite copiously illustrated, as it were, by his own hand. And it will be noted that he left England deeply in love with the English people, and their ways; and that throughout his journey he seemed to carry with him a sort of English social yardstick, filled out with subsidiary American notations, with which he measured the social life of the Continental peoples with whom he came in contact: in short, he gives, in a way, the impression of a highly cultivated American John Bull on his travels.

A word in regard to the free, colloquial style of his letters. It should be borne in mind, as has been noted in regard to his English letters, that they were written for the *privacy of his own family*, with *no* thought that they would ever be submitted for publication. Consequently, they abound with sobriquets of the different members of the family, together with familiar childish forms of expression, full of "local color" and well understood in his home. To remove these reflections of his happy home life, these evidences also of the tender work-

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ings of his own mind, from even the serious portions of the letters, would take from the letters themselves much of their individual character and charm. His story is best told in his own way. \*

Notwithstanding the rapidity with which he travelled and his greatly preoccupied mind, his Continental letters, and his photographs, reveal three subjective lines of thought called forth by his observations — his great interest in the remains of the ancient architecture and civilization; his profound admiration for Gothic architecture, and his *seeming* indifference to Renaissance architecture, and Renaissance painting. In these architectural predilections, we get another glimpse of his religious nature and the inherent catholicity of his mind which we have already noted in his musical predilections and creations. No philosophic aversion to Christian theology could close his mind to the beauty, the sublime spiritual impressiveness of Gothic art. It is a fair inference that in Gothic architecture, as in the great Christian oratorios, he saw, he felt, man's spiritual instinct of love and aspiration to a Divine Creator welling up from the very heart of the race, bursting through the bonds of dogmatic theology, and asserting the everlasting reality of man's religious nature. In Renaissance architecture he saw only a misapplied reflection of the greater art of ancient imperial Rome. As the Renaissance period was the beginning of modern civilization, a phase of civilization

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the foundations of which are laid in a form of social order, based on the democratic idea, which is yet in a process of development to the complete enfranchisement of man, he saw in Renaissance architecture only an attempt to give architectural expression to the new order of thought in an imitative, in a wholly incongruous way. His general unresponsiveness to Renaissance painting, I have noted in connection with his visits to the Louvre in Paris, and to the Uffizi and Pitti galleries in Florence.

The Continental letters begin with a brief one from Dieppe, wherein he gives a sketch of his last day in England, spent at Brighton, and where he found his greatest interest in the famous Brighton Aquarium. Here is one observation:—

“I devoted three full hours to the octopus tank! The octopus (cuttlefish) beats the chimpanzee all hollow. If the chimpanzee looks like a man, the octopus looks like nothing but the Devil. There are nine of 'em in one tank—absolutely diabolical monsters! I am going to write Huxley about the octopus.”

He was not at all seasick in crossing the Channel, and he found the temperature of France much colder than that of England. On his way to Paris he stopped four hours at Rouen, the richest of the cities of France, in mediæval architecture, particularly to see its three famous examples of the Gothic style—the Cathedral of Notre Dame,

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the Church or Cathedral of St. Ouen, — one of the most beautiful buildings in the world, — and the Church of St. Marclou. He did not make any notes on these fine buildings, but from the photographs he gathered of their special points of interest, it is evident that he was impressed with the differences between the English and the French rendering of the Gothic style. He wandered about, without a guide, until he reached Mont St. Catherine, one of the environs of the city, from which he had a general view which he briefly describes: —

“No pen could do justice to the magnificence of the view, comprising the old city, the two giant cathedrals, the winding river and miles of flat and rolling country round about, — all in a blaze of sunlight, and gorgeous tents of cloud.”

On reaching Paris, February 22, 1874, he went to the Hôtel de Rivoli, just opposite the Tuileries. His first impressions were forbidding: —

“I am up 6 flights of stairs in a bleak, inhospitable little room. Nobody in the hotel understands a word of English, except the proprietor. There is one German waiter whom I fall back on when I want an interpreter, for I can get along much better with German than with French. Everything looks bare and inhospitable here, after cosy old England. Instead of carpets, and warm fires, and chops and ale, they run to glass and gilding and sardines and claret. It is colder than in London, anyway. There is a bright sun, which is one good

## Impressions of Paris

thing; but the streets don't seem so cheerful as in London."

After two days' experience things look better, and on February 24 he writes:—

"Which I will now change my tone, and will not blackguard poor Paris. I am now writing out-of-doors (!) at a little round table in front of a café in a sort of triangular square just out of the Rue St. Honoré near the Louvre: before me, a glass of black Bavarian beer, which is better than claret, though not equal to the peerless Bass. I correct my proofs and write 'tezzletelts' [letters] in similar places, because there is no attractive place in-doors. I don't like it as well as an English fireside; but it is a new experience, and that is what I came here for. One can't have London everywhere, and so I will freely confess that Paris is very charming. I never could get to like it so well as London though. My tastes are out and out Teutonic."

Fiske spent nine days in Paris, chiefly, as he says, in tramping around and seeing things:—

"I saw the whole inside of the Louvre, and Palais de Luxembourg, Hôtel de Cluny, Sainte Chapelle, Notre Dame, Panthéon, and heaps else; and 'parcouried' the whole of the Boulevards in all directions, and geographized the town generally, and spent a whole day at Versailles — which is better than anything in Paris. I made it a point to walk up and down the Seine every day whatever else I did. The views on the Seine are exceedingly beautiful. The Seine is prettier than the Thames; but I prefer the grand views, up and down, from

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Waterloo Bridge, to anything here. There is a grandeur about London which one misses here, though this is more beautiful. Perhaps it looks a little like New York — I am not quite sure."

He seems not to have been specially impressed with the pictures in the Louvre. I find it difficult to account for this fact, as he was usually so responsive to great art in *any* of its forms of manifestation. He writes: —

"I have spent the whole blessed day in the Louvre, and have seen more things than I can ever remember. I revelled in the sculptures, and antiques, but was rather disappointed with the paintings. Did n't see anything comparable to the Raphael Cartoons at South Kensington."

Fiske's love of Gothic architecture, of course, took him to the Cathedral of Notre Dame and to "La Sainte Chapelle." He makes no comments on these historic buildings, but he sends several photographs of their details.

Of his visit to the great library he speaks thus:

"Of course I went to the great library in Paris, and got posted as to their tricks and manners. I think old Ezra Abbot knows more than the whole of 'em."

And here is a remark he drops by the way in his Paris letter: —

"The manners of the French are certainly very charming — especially the common people."

## Hasty Run through France

From Paris he went to Lyons, where he stopped one day, and tramped all over the town seeing the chief things, and where he also had a lovely little trip in a wee steamer on the Saone.

His next stop was at Avignon, where he was pleased to find the peach trees in blossom. One day was given to visiting the points of interest in this historic city, which was for nearly seventy years — 1309–1377 — the residence of the Popes of Rome and where remains of their palaces still exist. As notes for his “impressions” of this historic place he sent photographs of the remains of an old Roman bridge, as well as of the castle of the Popes.

At Avignon, being so near to Nismes, he turned aside to take a look at the many memorials of the ancient civilization which are here so well preserved. First he went to see the great Roman aqueduct, the Pont du Gard, probably constructed by Vipsanius Agrippa in the time of Augustus for conveying water to Nismes; and then he went to Nismes itself. And here he was for the first time in his own experience brought into direct contact with some of the impressive remains of the civilization of the ancient world with the history of which he was so familiar. Of his visit to the Pont du Gard and to Nismes he writes: —

“The Pont du Gard alone was worth coming to France for; but as I can’t describe it you must wait till you see the ‘pickerwow’ which won’t help you

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much. The country round about looks like Petersham, only far inferior.

"Next day I went to Nismes which is well worth seeing. You may believe I was beset by cicerones till I lost my patience and told them 'Allez au diable,' and finally lifted my umbrella at one of 'em whereupon they all *Allez!* Relieved of these pests, I serenely walked straight to the Amphitheatre — which is smaller than the Colosseum at Rome, but completely preserved. It is very fine. As I sat on one of the tiers basking in a southern sun (in about the latitude of Portland, Maine) and trying to imagine how an old fight would have looked, a real fight was kindly gotten up for my benefit. Some workmen, with trowels, etc., were making a few repairs in the arena. Which two of 'em began to call each other 'bête,' 'imbécile,' etc., and shrugged their shoulders until their heads were half hid, and pounded and clawed the air, and began to make allusions to each other's mother, when one of 'em threw his trowel at the other, and hit the other on the chin, whereat the *hittee* retorted by jabbing a big sort of trident into his assailant's forehead. Blood ran briskly; and the wounded man began to scream, when other workmen came up and separated 'em. Bah!"

From Nismes Fiske went to Florence by way of Nice, Genoa, and Pisa.

His first impression of Florence he gives in a letter to Mrs. Fiske of March 20, 1874: —

"If you want to know how Florence seems, read the first chapter of 'Romola,'<sup>1</sup> where the old chap

<sup>1</sup> The "Proem" to George Eliot's great novel *Romola*.



## In Florence

is standing on San Miniato. I have been there twice. Next to Edinburgh, and Oxford, it is the finest city I have seen. I have been around and seen the outside of almost every thing, and the inside of some things. To-day, I did the Uffizi, and to-morrow, I do the Pitti Gallery.<sup>1</sup> . . .

“ I can get along in talking without any trouble, for most folks *do* understand French after all, I find, and on a pinch I can talk Italian. My greatest achievement in linguistics, was yesterday, when I went to the Biblioteca Nazionale and found there was n't a man there who knew a word of English, except to read it!!! Well, darn you, said I, if you can't talk English, I'll talk French, which I did *glibly* for two hours, inquiring into all the details of their cataloguing, treatment of pamphlets, etc., etc., and getting some really good ideas out of 'em. But I could n't have talked French to them if they had understood English.”

Fiske remained in Florence thirteen days and he gives these further details of his observations and experiences: —

“ Visited the interior of San Marco, and the Annunziata. These churches did not impress me, though the outside of the Cathedral is superb. The Campanile or bell-tower by Giotto is the most perfect thing, the most beautiful building I have

<sup>1</sup> It seems impossible that, with his artistic nature and his historic appreciation, he could visit these galleries without being profoundly impressed. His graphic sketch of the Sacconi picture in La Certosa Monastery leads us to think that in these two marvellous collections of masterpieces of ancient and modern art, he must have been quite overpowered. Certainly his was the mind to appreciate the full significance of what is here gathered as representative of the highest products of human civilization.

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ever seen, and the bronze gates of the Baptistry, by Ghiberti, are marvellous beyond description. Altogether Florence is a wonderful place. . . .

“Sunday afternoon, I went out to La Certosa, a Carthusian monastery about two miles from the city. It was a gorgeous day. The monastery stands on a high hill from which you get a magnificent view of Florence, and all its surroundings. They are very strict there. No woman is allowed even to come and look at the premises. An old monk, with a coarse white dress that looked as if made of dingy crash, and which covered him from head to foot, escorted us around and showed us the things. In the crypts are some fine tombs by Donatello; and in one of the chapels a great painting, (though quaint) by Giotto. But what pleased me most was a painting by Sacconi, representing a thinker tired and overwhelmed with the mystery of the problem of existence, his book dropped from one hand which lies idly across the knee, while the other hand supports the cheek, the elbow resting on the table. His eyes are half closed, as if in profoundest reverie. All this is as realistic as if done yesterday — it is just like real flesh and blood. But up in the right-hand foreground, wrapped in a cloud-like mystery, are dim forms of archangels, their faces full of sublime sympathy, looking down upon the wearied thinker, while yet beyond is I-know-not-what in the colouring, something utterly mysterious, suggesting ineffable light, and glory like the triumphant final allegro of Schumann’s fourth symphony. Something that seemed to say — the riddle is hard, but behind the veil is an answer yet. I do not know what the painter intended,

## In Florence

by the picture, but this is what it meant to me. It quite overcame me and brought the tears. The painting was masterly, both in drawing, and in colouring. I do not know who Sacconi was, and no one seems to know unless it was one of the names of Andrea del Sarto, but this picture is hardly in his style, so they say. I have got a book at home, which I think will clear the matter up.<sup>1</sup>

“I saw the refectory, the rooms where Pius VI used to live, the cells where the monks live: there is a monk there now who has n't left his cell for 28 years except to step out into the enclosed garden. I lingered long in this garden, and found it hard to tear myself away. You know the little picture—‘Disce ut semper victurus, vive ut cras moriturus’<sup>2</sup> which I like so much. The same air of profound rest is all about this monastery-garden. In the centre of it is a lovely well, built by Michael Angelo, who seems to have been everywhere, and to have done everything, indomitable worker that he was. The monks make delicious chartreuse—and I bought a flask of it to bring home. . . .

“I drove to the cemetery where Theodore Parker is buried, and there I also saw the graves of Mrs. Browning, and Walter Savage Landor. Why Parker should have gone to Florence for his consumption, I cannot imagine. He might as well have staid in Boston. The Italian climate is excessively bad, for catching cold, and the Italians have a great deal of consumption, and bronchitis. . . .

“‘Hezzy’ is having an awfully good time here in Florence. It is a charming place. I spent a truly

<sup>1</sup> Carlo Sacconi was a draughtsman who lived in Florence about 1718. He prepared many drawings for Florentine Gallery work.

<sup>2</sup> Fiske had this line inscribed over the fire-place in his library.

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delightful evening last evening at Larkin Mead's.<sup>1</sup> He is one of the gentlest and sweetest fellows I ever saw. I am really enchanted with him. He looks just like Mrs. Howells. I should have known him for her brother, if I had stumbled on him in the interior of Australia."

This Florence letter contains a brief summing-up of his impressions thus far of his Continental journey: —

"How do I like the Continent on the whole? Well, it is all very pretty to look at, but beastly uncomfortable, inhospitable, cold, dreary, and gloomy. I don't cotton to the French people, or to the Italians. I feel lonesome all the time, and homesick for London; and to be honest, I don't enjoy this trip nearly as much as I did the trip to Scotland; for I love the Scotch."

In one of her letters, Mrs. Fiske had intimated that he had never seen Petersham in the resplendent glories of its October foliage; whereupon he promptly gives, from memory, the date and duration of every visit to Petersham, since his memorable first visit September 13-18, 1861, — twenty-four in number. To this list he adds these remarks —

"There, Mrs. Fiske, if you can diskiver any month of the year that is n't represented, you are smarter than Hezekiah. But by Jove, we will go up for a day or two next October, and see autumn

<sup>1</sup> Larkin G. Mead, an eminent American sculptor, lived in Florence. The wife of William Dean Howells was his sister.

## In Rome

leaves. The reason they don't have bright autumn leaves in Europe, is because they don't have maples of course! The woodbine, imported into England, turns just as bright red as at home. We can beat all Europe (out of its boots) on trees."

On March 24 he left Florence for Rome, via Perugia.

Fiske was in Rome four days, during which time he visited some twenty-five of the more noted buildings and places of interest. The list, of course, includes the Piazza del Popolo, the Corso, several churches, the Forum of Trajan, the great Forum, the Colosseum, the Tarpeian Rock, the arches of Severus, Titus, and Constantine, the palaces of the Cæsars and of Nero, the Marmentine Prison, the Baths of Caracalla, the Catacombs, the Appian Way, and the statues of Marcus Aurelius, Castor and Pollux, Michael Angelo's Moses, etc.

It appears from his records that his visits to these memorable places, buildings, etc., in this "Niobe of Nations," were devoid of any notable experiences. It also appears that his observations did not at the time stir his mind to much activity in the way of critical or philosophic reflections, yet we must suppose that it was intensely active in both directions.

The two bits of artistic criticism in which he indulged were in regard to the Catacombs and the works of Michael Angelo. Referring to the former he says: —

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“There is nothing interesting there except to say that you have seen them. The bug-a-boo feeling is perhaps the chief attraction. To be sure, there are frescoes — grotesque enough, too. I saw the whale casting up Jonah, — a very sea-sick looking monster.”

Fiske's first reference to Michael Angelo is in connection with his visit to the tomb of S. Pietro in Vincole, where he saw Michael Angelo's Moses, which he pronounces a “wonderful, wonderful statue.” And again, after visiting Sta. Maria degli Angeli, built by Michael Angelo out of a part of the Baths of Diocletian just behind, he says: —

“It is a grand church built by a great architect; but in architecture M. Angelo is surpassed by nameless builders of Gothic, as in sculpture he is surpassed by nameless Greeks. I am not impressed with Italian churches generally, they are too pagan, gaudy affairs. York Minster for me, before the whole of 'em, tho' I have n't seen *St. Peter's yet.*”

On March 29 Fiske left Rome with his friend Adkins — an English traveller he had met in Rome — for a six days' trip to Naples. He writes: —

“Left Rome at 9.40 and reached Naples at 5 P.M. Adkins and I were put into a double-bedded room, up one flight. It is a fine room with sofa, easy-chairs, large writing-table, etc., and Brussels carpet. I could easily throw a stone from my window into the sea. Magnificent situation, and the most comfortable hotel I have found on the Continent.<sup>1</sup> And

<sup>1</sup> Evidently the Hôtel d'Angleterre.

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why? Because it is patronized almost entirely by grumbling Englishmen, who *will have* what they want. Every one here is a Britisher except Hezekiah, and one Hindu — a Brahman, who took honours at Cambridge, about 1864, and is both learned and accomplished — speaking English with absolute perfection, and Italian and French very finely, besides many other languages. Handsome and elegant too, like all the Hindus I have seen. And there is an Englishman on his way home from India — a fine-looking man of Charles Eliot's style, and with such a musical voice that I sit after meals as long as he sits, in order to hear him talk. Also a big, rough-looking English captain, as gentle as a kitten.

“*Monday, March 30.* My birthday. Went, along o' my chum, Adkins, to Pompeii and spent the day there. And now, what's the use of saying anything about it except to tell you to read what Howells says about it,<sup>1</sup> and to say that it was the very greatest day I have had since I left home; and, like Howells, I swear to go again, and very likely shall not? There's no use trying to grow eloquent about it, for it is altogether beyond words. There is nothing else so wonderful or so solemn 'on the earth or under it.' I bought a little book of 'pickerwows' of it, and will explain 'em when I get home. My chum also, thought it was the greatest day of his life, and after dinner we smoked our pipes on the stone parapet by the sea here, listening to the sound of the waves and talking it all over.

“*Tuesday, March 31.* My chum left for Rome,

<sup>1</sup> *Italian Journeys*, by W. D. Howells.

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being tied by a circular ticket good for so many days. Poor chap! he is in Venice by this time. He said I was the best fellow he had ever seen, and he was very mournful at parting. Left alone, I hired a carriage (one-hoss barouche) for all day at 12 francs, and drove through the grotto of Posilipo to Puzzuoli, where I first saw the Temple of Serapis — which is a Greek temple with three great columns left standing. They have all been lowered into the sea by the sinking of the land, and elevated again, and you can see *where* the little beasts have chewed 'em! While I was examining this place, in came an elderly man with his wife and two sons about twenty years old, with very much the air of fine Harvard boys. The old gentleman got very sociable with me; and finally when I put up my umbrella to keep off the sun, I observed that I never had had to do such a thing before in Europe; whereat he was very much surprised at my being an American, and said he should have taken me for a typical John Bull. Which they are New York people, cultivated and pleasant, but I don't know their names nor they mine. It was agreed that our carriages should keep together, and so we kept on to the ruins of Cumæ — (Kymai) the oldest Greek city in Italy. Nothing left now but a bit of the citadel and the Acropolis, and a few scattered stones. From here the direct road to Lake Avernus lies through a tunnel, half a mile long, cut by Agrippa a few years B.C. We drove through, lighted by torches for which the lying, thieving rascal of a torch bearer, demanded three francs, and was glad to get one, when he found it was all he could get. Lake Avernus is very



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lovely, and with the vineyards and fields of wheat, and green peas growing on the slopes all around it, lighted up by intensest sunshine, it suggests Eden, much more than Hades.

“Near by is a hill, some 150 feet high, which was thrown up at one thrust by an earthquake in 1538. We did n't go into the Sibyls' Cave here, because it is bogus — the genuine cave is over at Cumæ. Passed Lake Lucrinus, and came to the sulphur-baths of Nero, where you go into a hole in the side of the mountain and boil in a brimstone atmosphere. Guides pestered us at the entrance; but having little tapers with us, the two young men and I went in, though I did n't go far for fear of catching cold on issuing forth. I will give a specimen of the Italian character. A guide pestered me till I told him (in good Italian) that I did n't want his services, and that he might 'allez au Diable.' He followed after me when I went in, and followed me out to the carriage, and demanded a fee for having showed me the place!!! I again gave him the same directions with emphasis, and told the coachman to drive on. The old fraud held with one hand on to the carriage and followed me a mile demanding the money that I owed him, until at last I ordered cabby to hit him with the whip, and you ought to have heard the fellow as he moved off. The party in the other carriage were similarly pestered.

“Next we reached the Capo d. Miseno, where a beautiful little boy conducted us into an old Roman reservoir, and afterwards up to a place which commands the Bay of Naples, just as Miantonomah Hill commands Newport. All the way up, I was beset with little beggar children, some of

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them as beautiful as cherubs, especially an angelic little girl, about the size of Maudietick, who ran along after me busily crocheting, and whom I offered two pennies for a kiss, but she would n't agree to it, whereupon I gave her the pennies *gratis*, 'perché voi siete bellissima,' as I told her, to the great glee of the other little girls, who evidently admitted her beauty, and felt a common interest in the compliment. Our American old gentleman said he would give a great deal to see me photographed with all those little brown youngsters around me. This was our farthest point.

"Returning, we stopped opposite the Temple of Hermes at Baiæ, for lunch, and my American friends called me to come and share their lunch, which I did willingly. I sat upon the box, and we did eat like Wardle, and the Pickwickians, at the review. During our lunch we were surrounded by Italians of every age and sex, who seemed highly interested in our proceedings, and kept offering us coral, and violets, etc.; and asking for pence, and making such a din that we could hardly hear ourselves talk. The American lady said it took her appetite away, and I could hardly blame her; but to get 'shut of 'em' (as Bridget would say) was impossible! The best fun was after we had finished. Scraps of bread and meat were handed to all, as to so many beseeching dogs, and then there was great clamour for the empty wine-bottle, which at last we gave to a little girl with a big baby over her shoulder, which she bore off the said bottle in the exuberant glee of triumph. We threw away the fragments of eggshells, and one chap began to pick them carefully up, though what he could do with

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'em he knows better than I. Poor wretches! they are poor because they are too lazy to work. They will lie in the dirt by the roadside in the blazing sun, and sleep rather than work. What can be done with such people; they have neither honesty, ambition, nor self-respect. The lowest Irish are far above the level of these creatures.

"After lunch, my friends drove directly back to Naples, but I went to the amphitheatre and Puzzuoli, which was overwhelmed by an eruption of Solfatara, and has been partially dug out. The inside is so complete that you have even the trap-doors where the lions came up through the floor; it is very interesting. Then I went to the now-dried-up Lake of Agnano and saw the Grotto del Cane or place where there is enough carbonic acid to kill a dog in two minutes, and where sulphurous acid comes smoking out of holes in the ground, which yields under your feet if you stamp on it. Last of all I visited the Tomb of Virgil. What do you think of that for 'A Day's Pleasure'?

"*Wednesday, April 1. Yesterday* I took steamer for Capri, touching at Sorrento. Went into the Blue Grotto of which I will only say that you go in by boats through an opening about two feet high in the side of the hill; and within, the water is a most gorgeous blue, and the whole cave shimmers with lovely blue, and it is a wonderful sight. I was more successful with it than Howells, who went in on a bad day.<sup>1</sup> We lunched at the *Hotel du Louvre*, on a balcony overlooking the bay — one of the most glorious landscapes in the world. Capri also has its share of beggars."

<sup>1</sup> See the charming description of Capri and the Capriotes in *Italian Journeys*, by W. D. Howells.

## John Fiske

The next day was spent in Naples, and was given to writing the letter to Mrs. Fiske from which I have quoted, to work on his proofs and on his index, and to strolling about the town and the museum. Here are a few additional extracts from the letter:—

“Naples smells fearfully, and so does Rome. Mother expected me to go crazy over Rome, but save for the antiquities, I think it is a disgusting place. I have seen quite enough of this country to know how lovely it is. Tell Mrs. McKenzie that I think of her here in Naples and fully agree with her as to the surpassing beauty of this country. The glory and beauty of this week at Naples I shall never forget. I don't say that it is better than England, or better than *Petersham*; but of its kind, it is certainly quite a garden of Eden. Naples, too, as a city, is more picturesque than Rome, barring only the Forum and the Capitol.

“My conversation now-a-days is a grand pot-pourri of English, French, German and Italian, so that I don't know what I am talking. I could talk Italian pretty well with another month here.

“Love to all the babies. I saw three little tots, aged 9, 7, and 5, paddling their own canoe on the Bay yesterday, and threw 'em a sou apiece, which they cotched 'em.”

Fiske had planned a visit to Sorrento and also another visit to Pompeii, but his home writing so intensified his home longing, his desire to set his face homeward, that both visits were cut out, and after a brief visit to Herculaneum he returned the next day, April 3, to Rome.

## Returns to Rome

His next letter is from Venice, wherein, under date of April 14, he resumes the story of his journey in a very jubilant state of mind: —

“O, my dear! Glory hallelujah!!! PREFACE WRITTEN!!!! Only 150 pages more to be indexed!!! Coming home right away!!!!!! What do you think of that?

“Did n't go again to Pompeii, nor to divine Sorrento, either. (Read Howells's 'Italian Journeys' for Pompeii and Capri. It is one of the most charming books that ever was written — a real work of genius, as you'll see if you ever see Italy, the fairy land.) Got eager to get homeward bound! Went to Herculaneum next morning, and felt richly repaid, though I can see why Howells was disappointed. Went in the P.M. to Rome. Saw a lot more things at Rome, and did the Capitoline Museum and Vatican. But the Sistine Chapel was shut all the time, and I could n't get in. The Pope is full of obstinacy in these days, because he has to play second fiddle to Victor Emanuel. Went to St. Peter's Sunday,<sup>1</sup> but the Mass was n't worth two cents. I don't see either the grandeur or the beauty of St. Peter's, and I would back York Minster against all the churches I've seen in Italy put together!”

After a stop of two days in Rome he went again to Florence, where he remained three days visiting his friends the Grahams and Meads. Of what he saw in these three days he makes no mention beyond a casual remark that he again visited the Uffizi Gallery. It is noticeable that, although on

## John Fiske

both his visits to Florence he went to this famous gallery, he does not mention impressions made upon his mind by the great collection of masterpieces of ancient sculpture and modern painting gathered there, while he had much to say about them when he reached home. He does not appear to have noted in Florence anything suggestive of Michael Angelo or Leonardo da Vinci, or Savonarola: yet with the varied contributions of these great workers to the world's thought, he was most familiar.

On his way from Florence to Venice, he stopped one day at Bologna. From Venice he wrote his mother, giving her some general impressions of his Continental trip thus far: —

“I believe this is the first time I have written to you, since I left London, and I have been very wicked, I know, but it is very hard to write letters when one is travelling fast, and I have hardly done justice, even to Abby. I have usually told her to send you my letters to her, and so have written less often than I should otherwise have done. I am beginning to get tired of Europe, and anxious to get home. It is eight months now since I left home, and it is a pretty long pull. And besides, I have found travelling on the Continent rather tame after my glorious days in London. I have n't found any trouble in talking French, and Italian, enough to get along comfortably; but it seems very lonesome and dreary to be where you don't hear English spoken. I don't see how the people *can* prefer the Continent to England. I am glad to have seen

## Some General Impressions

France and Italy once, but I would n't give a sixpence to visit either country again — not even to revisit Paris. They don't fascinate or draw me, though I enjoy everything I see very much — and especially enjoyed my 32d birthday, at Pompeii, more than any other one day in Europe. Rome, I enjoyed very much — more than I can tell until I have had more time to think about it; but what I enjoyed was ancient Rome, and the sculptures in the Vatican. In modern Rome I can see nothing attractive at all. St. Peter's is neither impressive nor beautiful to me — I think it hideous; and of the dozen or twenty famous churches I saw, none impressed me at all except St. Pauls-Without-the-Walls. I do like St. Mark's, though, here in Venice; and I don't know when I have more thoroughly enjoyed paintings than the Titians, Tintorettos, and Veroneses here in the Ducal Palace and the Academy — especially, on the whole, the Tintorettos. I have been here about a week, and rather hate to go away. I like Venice, on the whole, better than any other city on the Continent, so far, although I am very fond of Florence. It is delicious to go gliding about in a gondola in these quaint old canals; and I am not sure that I don't like the little canals with their labyrinthine twists and continual surprises, even better than the big one. I have got a most comfortable room, in a very queer German hotel just off the Grand Canal, about two minutes' walk from the Piazza. Did you ever see a richer building than the Ducal Palace, unless possibly the palace at Versailles? . . .

“I saw considerable of Larkin Mead; of course I like him very much — never yet saw a Mead that

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I did n't like. The same brightness, sweetness, and simplicity runs through the whole family.

"I go from here to Verona, and then to Milan and Como. Hope to be able to get over either the Splügen or the St. Gothard into Switzerland. If not, I shall go around by Geneva, through Turin. In choosing routes, I find that, whichever one I choose I am sure to enjoy it, but somebody else always assures me I ought to have chosen some other. I shall go down the Rhine from Switzerland to Belgium, and leave out central Germany altogether. I have seen quite enough for this time, and I want to get home! I am much more homesick than I was in London, for I am homesick for home, and for London too."

This letter he signs—"From a *Homesick Philosopher*."

Fiske remained in Venice but seven days, and a goodly portion of his time was given to putting the finishing touches to his book. The photographs he collected, however, show that he managed to see the points of greatest interest, although but few are mentioned in his letters.

His next letter is from Interlaken, dated April 27, wherein he resumes the story of his journey:—

"Since I left Venice, every day has been better than the other. Spent half a day at Verona and then went on to Milan. Went thrice to the Milan Cathedral and ascended the spire. The interior is in some respects grander than any other that I have seen; the façade is ruined by classical doors and



## In Switzerland

windows; otherwise the exterior is wonderfully light and beautiful, but not so grand as Lincoln or York. There are upwards of 2000 statues carved on it, — which will serve to give you some idea of the elaborateness of it. Went up the lake of Como, and stopped at Cadenabbia — beautiful place. Went over Lake Lugano and stopped at Luvino on Lake Maggiore, where I was the sole occupant of a big hotel with over 200 rooms. Those swindling Italians at Milan told me that the Splügen and St. Gothard passes were not open, and I was fool enough to believe them, although nearly every word ever yet told me, by an Italian, has been a lie! When I got to the lakes, I found I could get over easily, but I had left my portmanteau at Milan, and so had to go back. I concluded to go by Mont Cenis, and stop at Chambéry, and carry out the dream of my boyhood by seeing Rousseau's home at Les Charmettes. I enclose a picture, and think you will see why I like it — also, some flowers gathered there. I also saw Voltaire's château at Ferney — a much less charming place."

To Switzerland Fiske gave but seven days, and his route was from Mont Cenis to Genoa, thence, via Freiburg, Bern, Interlaken, and Luzerne to Bâle and Strasburg.

Two things are noticeable in his record of this portion of his Continental journey, notwithstanding the haste with which it was made — his interest in Les Charmettes, one of the temporary abodes of Rousseau during his vagrant social life, and his visit to Ferney, so memorable as the home of

## John Fiske

Voltaire, when as the "Squire of Ferney" he was the most important personage in Europe.

"The visitor to Geneva, whose studies had made him duly acquainted with the most interesting human personality of all that are associated with that historic city, will never leave the place without making a pilgrimage to the château of Ferney. In that refined and quiet rural homestead, things still remain very much as on the day when the aged Voltaire left it for the last visit to Paris, where his long life was worthily ended, amid words and deeds of affectionate homage. One may sit down at the table where was written the most perfect prose, perhaps, that ever flowed from pen, and look about the little room with its evidences of plain living and high thinking, until one seems to recall the eccentric figure of the vanished master, with his flashes of shrewd wisdom and caustic wit, his insatiable thirst for knowledge, his consuming hatred of bigotry and oppression, his merciless contempt for shams, his boundless enthusiasm of humanity. As we stroll in the park, that quaint presence goes along with us till all at once, in a shady walk, we come upon something highly significant and characteristic, the little parish church with its Latin inscription:— 'Deo erexit Voltaire'; i.e., 'Voltaire built it for God'; and as we muse upon it, the piercing eyes, and sardonic but not unkindly smile seem still to follow us. What meant this eccentric inscription?"<sup>1</sup>

Fiske regarded Voltaire as much the greater and much the more fruitful thinker. His estimate

<sup>1</sup> See Fiske's essay, *The Everlasting Reality of Religion*.

## Les Charmettes and Ferney

of these two diverse illuminators of eighteenth-century thought accorded with John Morley's, whose judgment upon them Fiske regarded as the fairest, on the whole, that had been given.<sup>1</sup>

Fiske's special interest in Les Charmettes arose from the fact that during the early period of Rousseau's social vagabondage it was his abiding place; and when, in his "Émile," he came to set forth his ideas of "Religion according to Nature" in the guise of a profession of faith on the part of a Savoyard Vicar, he drew upon the natural scenery about Les Charmettes for his inspiration, portraying the impressiveness of nature as a religious influence, with all his marvellous powers of exposition. The effect upon the perturbed religious thought of Europe of this fervid appeal to deistic religious sentimentalism is familiar to every student of the literature and thought of the eighteenth century, and Fiske's desire to take a glance at the nature surroundings identified with the production of this remarkable deistic polemic is readily understood.

Of his journey through Switzerland to Interlaken he writes: —

"Heard the organ at Freiburg (one of the finest in Europe) and spent half a day at Bern, a city of great interest to me, historically.<sup>2</sup> I like everything

<sup>1</sup> See Morley's *Voltaire*, pp. 4-6; Morley's *Rousseau*, pp. 5-7.

<sup>2</sup> Fiske probably refers to the history of Bern during the thirteenth century, when, after being declared a free imperial city by the Emperor Frederick II, it established a democratic constitutional government, out of which grew a legislative body of two hundred,

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about Switzerland. The people are neat and honest, the food is good, and you can get good cigars for two cents apiece! It is a great relief after the everlasting lying and thieving of Italy. I have n't seen any beggars either. However, it would n't be fair to blackguard the poor Italians too much. Switzerland has the advantage of having been a free country for 600 years.' In Italy you constantly meet troops of lazy little beggar children, often beautiful, but dirty as poison, holding out their hats for coppers. Here it is a relief to see little boys and girls on their way to school, with books and slates, just as in New England. In many ways it seems more homelike here than anywhere else in Europe. If I had got to live on the Continent, I believe I should choose some place in Switzerland."

He stopped at Interlaken to see the great Grindelwald glacier and also to take in Alpine scenery roundabout — and from Interlaken he writes: —

"I did n't break my neck on the glacier, though I seemed to come rather near it. The eight-mile ride, going and coming, was occasionally pokerish in aspect, but sound in principle, as the hoss was sure footed — a dear honest old hoss. The worst part was the glacier, which, I did n't have arctics on, and found it very slippery, and though I did n't go on the edge of any 1000 foot precipices, I went on the edge of some 50 foot ones, and did n't like it much. But it was a grand experience; to get away up between two big Alps was quite a new sen-

which formed the germ of one of the most remarkable oligarchies of modern European history.

## At Interlaken

sation: And then the Ice Grotto! which is fine! We had a truly superb day, only at noon it was hotter than Shadrach's furnace. After doing the glacier, I drove to Lauterbrunnen and lunched on fresh trout just under the Staubbach. Returned to Interlaken and walked up the Heimweh-Fluh through a pine grove very much like picnic grove [Petersham]. So I am awfully tired to-night and call this my very greatest day in Europe so far. At the Bear hotel, at Grindelwald, you are just at the foot of three giant mountains, every one of 'em over 12,000 feet high; and I shall never forget the sensations as I looked out of my bed-room window at 5 this morning.

"I don't know that Switzerland is more *sublime* than Scotland, for nothing can excel in sublimity Loch Linnhe, and Glencoe, and the awful moors by the King's House Inn. I don't know that it is more *beautiful* than Italy, meaning by beautiful 'what the eye admires.' And I don't know that it is any more *lovely* than Petersham — meaning by lovely what the heart clings to. But for sublimity, and beauty, and loveliness *combined*, I say that Switzerland is so far above all other countries, that there is no use in saying any more about it. To compare any other country with it is absurd. You must see it some time. We'll contrive to get a summer vacation over here and give two or three weeks to Switzerland."

It was with profound regret that Fiske here definitely gave up the German portion of his trip, especially his long-contemplated visit to Weimar; for, if there was one particular place on earth he longed to see, it was the one that for fifty years formed the

## John Fiske

social environment of the many-sided Goethe. He resumes the story of his journey at Cologne: —

“Been travelling like smoke — went from Interlaken to Lucerne over Lake Brienz, and ‘one hoss shay’ over the Brünig Pass. Splendid ride. Next A.M. got up at 4.30 and went the whole length of Lake Lucerne to Flüelen, omnibus to Altdorf; breakfasted there, and saw Tell’s statue. Grand statue, exquisite little town, magnificent lake, one of the grandest lakes I have seen. Returned by shanks mare to Flüelen, steamer to Vitznau, and halfway up the Rigi by railway. In summer, you pays 12 cents, and goes to the end of the road. Now, you only pay 6 cents and go halfway, and have to walk the balance. Made me puff; but it paid for the trouble. Sublime view, and far grander now than in summer, because there is more snow. Forty-six mountains, over 10,000 feet high, and nine over 12,000 feet. What do you think of that for a ‘pickerwow’? Also nine lakes, and a batch of country measuring 300 miles in circuit. It was a superb day, and I never saw so magnificent a sight before. The point where I stood was about 6000 feet high. Home again (to Lucerne) by steamer, loafed about town an hour by moonlight, and went to bed tired enough!

“Up at 5 next A.M. and went to Strasburg and had three hours there to see the Cathedral. The façade is very fine, but otherwise it was disappointing — far inferior to the English cathedrals. Saw also the remarkable clock there. Every woman in Strasburg carries a baby in her arms. Never saw so many babies before in all my life; had to pick

## At Strasburg

my way carefully to keep from stepping onto some baby or other, and crushing it! Went on to Heidelberg, and was too eager for tezzletelts to take benefit of *sleep* next morning, and so got up early and found a huge pile of letters at banker's from you, the bairns, mother, George, Paine (a lovely lovely letter), and Mrs. Ad<sup>ml</sup> Fanshawe. Also several 'Notices' from Dennett. Did the castle and university — especially library. Next day left at 8 A.M. for Worms. Saw the Cathedral (a second-rate affair), and the new Luther monument, which is sublime beyond description; one of the grandest things I have seen in Europe. Went on to Mayence and saw the Cathedral — a rather fair one; also some Roman remains. Went on by steamer down the Rhine to Bingen just opposite the town where the rats ate up Bishop Hatto.

"Read my Myth-book. Went to bed beastly tired. Got up at 4 this A.M. bright as a lark, and had a superb sail down the Rhine to-day reaching Cologne, at 2.30 P.M.

"The Rhine is not equal to the Hudson, and I think not equal to the Connecticut; but it is very lovely and romantic, and there's an old castle with forty-eleven legends to it, about once a mile. I shall bring 'pickerwows.'"

Here are his impressions of the cathedral at Cologne: —

"The Cathedral here at Cologne is unquestionably the grandest that I have seen externally; internally it is also absolutely perfect; but in impressiveness not quite equal to Milan. The French partly destroyed it in 1795 — but *they* (not the

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French) are restoring it fast. Six hundred workmen are at it daily — \$2,000,000 have already been spent upon it, and by 1880, probably, the grand towers, over 500 feet high, will be finished. As for stained glass, that is a lost art, and happy are the old Cathedrals like York, Lincoln, Carlisle (and Cologne) that still keep their matchless old windows — the most glorious things of beauty that the mind of man ever conceived. Ever since I saw the great east window at Carlisle, I have had stained glass on the brain.”

At Cologne Fiske indulged in visions of a few happy days in London before sailing for home.

“A week from this eve I shall probably spend at the 'orrid 'Uxleys', and it will be worth all the past ten weeks put together. I have had a magnificent journey; but *grudge every minute* lost from h'old h'England, and am satiated with sight-seeing, and *am homesick!*”

He was three days in making the trip from Cologne to London, the main incidents of which he gives in a letter from London of May 9, 1874: —

“O my dear! Hezzy's back in London! and in Bloomsbury, too, just around the corner from where I lived before.

“Left Cologne early Monday morning and stopped at Aachen (what the French call Aix-la-Chapelle), which, as you may not know, was the titular capital of the Empire<sup>1</sup> from 800 to 1793. Saw the cathedral and Charlemagne's tomb therein. Did n't see the Amsterdam Dutch, or the Rotter-

<sup>1</sup> The Holy Roman Empire.



## Down the Rhine to Belgium

dam Dutch, but rode through a part of Holland (and saw a little of various kinds of Dutch). Stopped at Antwerp, saw the cathedral, and in it the truly stupendous and amazing picture by Rubens — the 'Descent from the Cross' — also several other magnificent pictures by Rubens. Rubens seems to me one of the greatest of all who have held the brush, and I wish I had more time to study him. His 'Last Supper' in the gallery at Milan is immense in conception. By Jove, I am beginning faintly to realize what an amount I have seen and learned these three months.

"Went on to Bruges, and put up at a little one-horse Flemish tavern opposite the Belfry. All this was one day's work. It was 9 P.M. when I reached Bruges, and there was a grand May festival in the great square, which was brightly illuminated, and covered with little tents and booths. I was *awfully* tired, but this waked me up, and I staid out till 12 o'clock. O, how I wished I had the little ones there! If some little 'deils' I know, *had* been there, their wings would have flapped, I know. It was one of the richest and jolliest sights I have seen in Europe — Dwarfs and Giants, operatic performances, 'pickerwows,' hobby-horse-riding, games, trials of strength, etc. I went in for *everything!* laughing and talking with the people; tried my hand at a dead lift, both hands in front and lifted 60 kilogrammes — not quite my own weight (87 kilogrammes), but better than I thought I could do on a dead lift. Also mesmerism, clairvoyance, legerdemain, music — a regular carnival.

"Got up next morning at 7 and went about town a little, which many of the streets are canals, just

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as in Venice, but with common boats instead of gondolas. Went on to Ostend, and embarked at 10 A.M. Told the steward to wake me up in time to see the white cliffs of h'old h'England and then went to sleep and slept for four hours. When I got up we were approaching Dover, and could see the shore of France opposite just on the horizon. Gorgeous day. I was absolutely frantic with delight at setting foot on English ground again!

“Went to a beer-shop and drank the 'elth of h'old h'England in a bright pewter mug; and went on to Canterbury, and put up at the Rose Tavern, in Rose Lane — lovely little cosy inn, with white dimity curtains, and jolly little back-parlour, with one lump of cannel flickering in a wee grate. Sat down to a good plain supper of cold roast beef, and home-made bread, pickles and beer; and O how good things tasted!

“Spent all day Wednesday, till 4.30 P.M. in Canterbury — one of the loveliest towns on the face of the earth. Saw the inn where Chaucer's tales were told — an inn no longer, or I would have stopped there. The cathedral is very grand and beautiful, and the King's school so bewitching that I should like to have one just like it for Barl, and Lacry. I also saw St. Martin's Church where Christianity was first preached in heathen England, where Ethelbert was baptized, and where he and his queen Bertha lie buried.

“And, my dear, I always thought England lovely, but what shall I say of these country lanes in May? The beautiful green grass, the wild flowers, the budding hedge-rows, the air heavy with the scent of blossoms, the tinkling cow-bells, the superb great

## Back in London

Southdown sheep, the clean little cottages, with their windows all scarlet with geraniums, and the ivy drooping about their eaves. Other countries may be grander, but for pure delicious loveliness, give me an English country lane. No wonder the English poets love to sing of the beauties of spring — and no wonder they love nature so much that Taine does n't quite understand 'em. But *la belle France* is a poor country in comparison.

“Got up to London Wednesday evening, and next day found this room up here near the Museum, where I feel at home. Saw Trübner and Macmillan, and they were awfully glad to see me. Thursday evening called at the 'orrid 'Uxleys'. Huxley was out, but Mrs. Huxley and the children were all around the dining-room table, reading, and drawing, and cutting things out of paper. A general shout went up when 'Hezzy' was announced, and for about two minutes there was a deal of affectionate greeting and hand shaking. Took a cup of tea and spent the evening, and the young people could hardly be coaxed or driven off to bed when the time came, they were so much entertained by my adventures.

“. . . After getting my ticket, I called at Spencer's and found him out, and left a note for him. Went to Conway's and was warmly greeted. Went down to the Royal Institution to see Tyndall, and found him out, but saw Spottiswoode, who told me there would be a roaring dinner of the Royal Society the 21st, after which Tyndall will illustrate some new discoveries of his own on sound. That will be grand, and I am to receive a formal invitation. Was invited to a grand blow-out at Hyde Park Gardens,

## John Fiske

last evening, and had to get my trunk and unpack my dress-suit the first thing. Dined alone at the Criterion Grill-Room on Piccadilly, where they broil a delicious rump steak right before your eyes, and serve it piping hot, tender and juicy, with mealy boiled potatoes, a pint pot of unequalled beer, and a bit of cream cheese afterward — a truly royal dinner — for half-a-crown: never made a dinner like that on the Continent. I have learned that a plain steak, cooked that way, is far ahead of all the *filets aux champignons* you can get in France.

“After this *magnificent repast*, I went to the Royal Institution, and heard a lecture by Sedley Taylor, and saw Tyndall. Then went to the party at Hyde Park Gardens, along with Conway, and saw A. J. Ellis, the philologist, Mrs. Linton, who wrote the ‘Girl of the Period’ articles in the ‘Saturday Review,’ and many others. Got to bed at 1 o’clock, which is as early as one *can* do here in London.

“It bids fair to be a busy time the next fortnight. To-morrow, I spend the day at Macmillans, with hopes of much music. Monday, I go to the new Museum of Archæology, and dine at the Royal Institution with Tyndall. Wednesday, there’s a dinner for me at Conway’s. There’s to be a grand dinner for me also at Trübner’s — day not yet fixed. The ‘orrid’ Uxley is to let me know when he’ll have me. No doubt I shall dine at least once at Spencer’s. Next Saturday, I am to go to Debrow to see the Fanshawes, and Monday we are to go to St. Albans together. I shall probably return to London the following day. Besides this, Conway and I are planning a trip to Salisbury together. We propose to

## Back in London

leave next week Thursday for Winchester, and see the Cathedral and antiquities, go on to Salisbury and sleep at the Red Lion, famous all over England for beer and stewed eels; and go to Stonehenge next day, see the Cathedral, and return to London — *total, two days*. I grudge the time from London, but fear I shall never forgive myself if I don't see Salisbury Cathedral, the spire of which is thought by many to be the finest in the whole world. And besides all this, I *must* go to Windsor Castle, Richmond, and Stoke Poges; and also hear a debate in Parliament, if possible. Then there is the great exhibition of pictures now, and lots more things. You see I shall be gadding every minute from dawn till dewy eve, and *may* be I shall not write again except just a line before sailing — one steamer before. You know I am safe and among friends, and dreadfully stingy of time. Here I am writing to you, when I ought to be putting the finishing strokes to my Index so as to give it to Clay Monday, and get rid of the proofs of it next week — that job will fill up to-day.

“Now that I am back in London I love it more than ever, and I believe it would n't take much to make me willing to migrate here with all my traps, and stay here *ad infinitum*. You would like it too! It is a place that grows upon one more and more; and you can no more exhaust it than you could compass infinity. Other cities are great: this is without beginning, or end; no human mind can take it all in, and that is one reason why the sensation of *being* here never loses its strange charm.

“But, after all, I stick to Petersham! Good-bye for four weeks, two of which will be nearly gone when

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you get this. It will seem mighty good to get to work in the Library again. I feel equal to almost *hanythink*. With 'eaps of love h'all around.

“'Ezzy.”

Not all of Fiske's programme for the close of his visit to England could be carried out. His much-desired excursion with his friend Conway to Winchester and Salisbury had to be omitted, for the social courtesies extended to him were of such a cordial nature that he could not well refuse them, and they took up all his spare time. He saw his book, the production of which was the main object of his visit, completely finished, and he sent some last messages to Mrs. Fiske and to his mother, from which the following extracts are taken.

To his mother he writes, May 21: —

“I have had a great time since I returned to London. Spent two days at Debrow. Had a farewell Sunday at Macmillan's. Had a stupendous dinner party at Sherman's, Norbiton Hall, Surrey, at which among others, Gen. Pleasonton was present, and he and I staid all night there. Tuesday there was a grand dinner at Trübner's, and Wednesday at Conway's, and to-night I dined at Spencer's, with Masson, Bain, Lewes, and Clifford. It was a glorious evening, and Lewes was in his most bewitching humour. He kept us in a roar all the evening and Spencer and I fairly laughed till we cried, and my sides are still sore. He is an exceedingly droll man. Masson and Bain are not devoid of wit either, and their brrrrroad Scotch accent helps it.

## Farewell Visits

“I also had a grand dinner with Tyndall at the Royal Institution, in the room which used to be Davy’s and Faraday’s.”

To Mrs. Fiske he writes, May 23: —

“I am just going down to Macmillan’s to get a complete bound copy of my book to bring home — I pack up to-day. To-morrow, I lunch at Spencer’s, make a parting call on the little Oppenheims (at Trübner’s) and have a farewell evening at the ‘orrid ‘Uxleys’. Last evening I spent with Ralston, and he says that Huxley spoke to him about me in ‘terms of the *warmest* affection.’

“Lord Arthur Russell got me into the House of Commons yesterday afternoon, and I heard a great debate about nothing — tempest in a teapot. Saw Disraeli.

“I want you to meet me in New York — I shall be very much disappointed if you don’t.

“I weigh 192!!”

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Glory Hallelujah!!  
Book done!!  
Coming home!!!  
Love to the bairns!!!!  
Meet me — in New York!!!!

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Amen!

END OF VOLUME I











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