



THE LETTERS OF AUGUSTUS FITZGOBB TO HIS MA.

NO. II.

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MY VERY DEAREST MA:—Alas, alas, I fear your parental heart will have been sorely macerated by my long silence. But I swear it couldn't be helped. There is a noble line somewhere in *Eneid's* mighty *EPOCH*, "The Idiocy," which says aptly "*saeva necessitas*," or in a free interruption "it necessitates a sieve." I forget at this moment just how the quotation applies, but when it first occurred to me it seemed delightfully apt. But indeed, necessity compelled me to be silent. I have not been altogether in good health for some days. I cannot define my melody exactly, but one of my *extinguish* friends said that I was somewhat under the weather. If that be so, then I feel confident I got too far under, for it took me a long while to crawl out. Another said I seemed a little off my hash, but on considering the hash I repented that I had not got off it sooner; not that it appeared in any danger of breaking down under my weight, however, for its strength was truly appalling. Another, I grieve to say, came in and remarked: "Sorry to see you looking so seedy, old fellow!" I clapped my trembling hand to my hair, fearing he had detected some hay-seed therein; but recovering myself I bid him a severe good morning and blotted out his name from my vi-iting list. Last of all from him had I expected such an insult. I had taken him for a perfect gentleman.

Well, my dear ma, this little indisposition which has delayed my schemes attacked me after a long and pleasant evening with my new friends. It was something I believe, *entre nous*, in this Toronto water—perhaps from the sewers that empty into the Bay. At all events, there was a good deal of water drunk that evening, one way and another; and the result was that not I alone but several of my friends as well were carried home in a painful condition. For my own part my tongue was thick, and my lips felt a strange and terrible numbness; my knees refused to perform their legal functions, excepting those of prayer, to which they grew abnormally inclined; and all my ideas were confused—in fact I might say involved. On the way home I took a hydrant for Maria, and fell upon its neck in rapture. When I awoke next morning, would you believe it, dearest ma, my head was so large I could hardly keep it

from rolling off the pillow; and I was much troubled to think I might have to buy myself a new hat, though my old one is still quite good. My dearest friend, Fitz-London, a young duke, who is at present a bank officer in this city, came in to congeal with me over my ill health. He thought it arose from lemonade imbibed at the victorious Premier's banquet, a most ludicrous misunderstanding. I said there was no rejoicing in my head over its painfully enlarged boundaries, which caused him to reflect that soon, in better lands than this, some people would be dissatisfied. I reminded him, he thought, of a dear but discontented friend, a member of the British aristocracy, who died after a too hilarious evening, and, of course, went to heaven. Even then he was not contented, but was heard complaining bitterly in the morning because he thought his halo didn't fit. This cheered me, and in the course of a week I felt better.

As soon as I was quite well I set forth to interview the literary sovereigns of Canada, as I told you, dear ma, was my intention. I have been successful beyond my wildest hopes. I visited the *Globe*, the *Mail*, the Professor, the *News*, the *World*, the *Telegram*, the *Week*, the *Exchange & Mart*, the *Evangelical Churchman* and *GRRP*. It was an eventful day; I will tell you all that I can remember thereof. I changed my costume for each interview, to be thoroughly opprobrious, or perhaps I should say appropriate. So very much depends, dear ma, upon a first impression, as you taught me when you once discovered the imprint of my young nose in the centre of a pumpkin pie which I had been surreptitiously licking. I went to the *Globe* in garb of solemn black, with a chaste white tie at my throat, and a broad felt hat worn over a cap and bells. I was nicely received by the Deacon and the Presbyter, who, learning that I was an aspirant for the poetical editorship, at once put me a few questions from the shorter catechism. I thought at first to be witty; and when asked what was the chief end of man, I replied "consumption!" But the Deacon said he thought my answer was incorrect, and went out to consult the directors as to the truth of my startlingly new departure. On his return he said he was right,—my answer was wholly incorrect. This was a bad beginning, but it stirred me to keener effort. I was asked if I believed in the Hon. Edward Blake,—if John A. was Antichrist, or the Father of Lies,—if the N. P. was the White Elephant,—if the North-west was

on the eve of revolution,—if the new territory wasn't pretty near heaven, and much more desirable for purposes of settlement,—if the *Globe* wanted to be purchased by the Syndicate,—and if the *Mail* was not impulsive at times. To all these I gave a most emphatic yes; and I saw I had made my impression. "I think he will do," said the Deacon, turning to the Presbyter, "but you had better ask a few questions to test his special fitness for the poetical chair." Then the Presbyter inquired: "Have you read, or do you intend to read, Collins's *Life of Macdonald*?" "Never!" I ejaculated with pious fervor, and I saw my point was gained. He came over and embraced me, but put a few more questions at the same time. "Do you read much?" said he. "Nothing but the *Globe*, and Mackenzie's life of Hon. G. B.," said I. "In these is meat and drink for the intellect." "Do you like poetry, or in fact I may say do you understand it?" he continued. "By no means!" I replied decidedly, "save what Mr. Blake wrote in his youth." At this he smiled his approval, and whispered as he bid me goodbye—"We'll have an opening for you in a week. Your work will be light, and I hope you'll consider \$3,000 an adequate salary." I answered that I would be easily satisfied, and went away much belated—or is it *inflated* I mean? As I reached the foot of the stairs the joke I had made early in the interview seemed to penetrate them, and I heard them rolling round the office floor.

My next errand was to the editor of the *Mail*, who inhabits a lofty building often taken for the cathedral. For this interview I clad myself daintily, and carried a lily in one hand and a shillelah in the other. I felt some trepidation at first, but was affably received and listened to as I stated my aspirations. Then he asked me "What think you of Sir John?" "The greatest of men and statesmen!" I replied. "And what of Tupper?" he continued. "Boanergis!" said I. "And what of Blake?" said he. "Why, I never think of him at all!" I answered in a tone of hurt surprise. "What of the Ontario Government?" he persisted. At this I merely rolled up my eyes, and spread my hands before me in deprecation. I begged him not to mention the dreadful subject again. He seemed satisfied, and engaged me to write him a forcible editorial once a week. If I should develop any special talent in that direction, he said he would take me on as abusive editor, he being weary of that monotonous department. Thereupon I asked him why he didn't vary it more; but this amused him mightily. For two reasons he couldn't do it, he affirmed. In the first place, if he forgot to use the good old terms, to which his opponents were accustomed, they would certainly fail to understand, and might think he was coming round to their side. If, on the other hand, they should feel assured of his hostility, he did not hate them bitterly enough to put them to the pain of anything like a mysterious attack. Out of kindness and regard for their slowness of wit, he would continue to abuse his enemies in terms which he had taught them to comprehend. At length I concluded this agreeable visit, and as I moved to the door, the editor rose with a quiet chuckle, filled his ink-bottle from a carboy of nitric acid, and proceeded to indite with a toothpick an editorial on the Mowat Reception.

Of the other interviews, dear ma, I must write in my next letter. My overtaxed brain craves rest, and I know you would have me watch my brain with tenderest care. It is the brain on which your ambitious and mine are fondly centered—to say nothing of Maria's ambitions. I hope the dear girl is a comfort to you in my absence. How I wish you both could have seen me at "The Range," the call I paid after my interview with the *Mail*. But you shall hear all about it. Fitz-London has just called to take me out for a promenade, so