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"MANY SHALL RUN TO AND FRO, AND KNOWLEDGE SHALL BE INCREASED."—DANIEL xii. 4.

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## GENERAL LITERATURE.

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### THE HORRORS OF VOLTAIRE'S LAST DAYS. [CONCLUDED.]

We shall now exhibit the lurid light shed upon this awful narrative by Dr. Tronchin's letter to M. Bonnet. Of its genuineness there can be no question. M. Eynard, we conclude, found it, or a copy of it, among Tissot's inedited papers, to which he has had access. Dr. Tissot, we need not remind the reader, was an eminent physician at Lausanne, who during a great number of years, ranked among the highest in his profession, both in his practice and by his writings. He was born in 1728, and died in 1797.

Dr. Tronchin, who gives so terrible an account of Voltaire's death, was another eminent physician; many years Tissot's senior, and like him a zealous advocate for inoculation. He was a native of Geneva; was born in 1709, and died in 1891. He studied in Holland, under Boerhave. In 1756 he was sent for to Paris to inoculate the children of the Duke of Orleans, which was justly considered a most perilous undertaking; especially as the king had expressed displeasure at the experiment. He had however introduced the practice with great success in Holland and Switzerland; and ventured on the risk. The children did well; he was highly rewarded and honoured; and he rose to the highest dignities of his profession. But we must not any longer delay the insertion of his letter to Bonnet:—

"He had imagined that I would not see him, and this idea tormented him. In haste he wrote me a letter, perfumed with incense, in which he swears eternal esteem and regard to me. I visited him. 'You have been,' said he to me, 'my saviour, be here my tutelar angel; I have but one breath of life left, I come to yield it up in your arms.' He probably spoke the truth: they will kill him.

"If my principles, my dear friend, had required to be strengthened by any tie, the man whom I have seen become weak, agonize, and die before my eyes, would have secured them by a gordian knot; and on comparing the death of the good man, which is but the end of a fine day, with that of Voltaire, I should have seen the difference which exists between a fine day and a tempest: between the serenity of the soul of the wise man who ceases to live, and the dreadful torment of him to whom death is the king of terrors. I thank God I did not need this spectacle, and yet *forte olim meminisse juvabit*. This man then was predestined to die under my hands. I always told him the truth, and unhappily for him, I am the only person who never deceived him. 'Yes, my friend,' he often said to me, 'you alone gave me good advice; if I had followed it, I should not be in the dreadful state in which I am, I should have returned to Ferney; I should not have become intoxicated with the incense which has turned my head; yes, I have swallowed nothing but smoke; you can do me no more good. Send

me the physician for madmen. What fatality brought me to Paris? you told me when I arrived that an oak of eighty years old does not bear transplanting; and you spoke the truth, why did I not believe you? And when I had given you my word that I would set out in the invalid carriage which you had promised me, why did I not go? Pity me; I am mad.'

"He was to set out two days after the follies of his coronation at the theatre; but the next morning he received a deputation from the French academy, which entreated him to honor it with his presence before his departure. He attended in the afternoon, and was made President of the Society by acclamation. He accepted the office, which is for three months. He thus chained himself for three months, and of his promise given to me nothing remained. From this moment to his death, his days were only a gust of madness. He was ashamed of it; when he saw me he asked my pardon; he pressed my hands; he entreated me to have pity on him, and not to abandon him, especially as he must use new efforts to make a suitable return for the honor the academy had done him, and to induce it to labor at a new dictionary, like the *della Crusca*. The compilation of this dictionary was his last dominant idea, his last passion. He had undertaken the letter A, and he had distributed the twenty-three other letters to twenty-three academicians, many of whom greatly irritated him by undertaking the task with an ill grace. 'They are idle fellows,' said he, 'accustomed to stagnate in idleness; but I will make them advance.' And it was to make them advance that, in the interval of the two sittings, he took, at his peril, so many drugs, and committed so many follies, which hastened his death, and which threw him into a state of despair and dreadful madness. I cannot recollect it without horror; as soon as he saw that all which he had done to increase his strength had produced a contrary effect, death was ever before his eyes. From that moment rage took possession of his soul. Imagine to yourself the madness of Orestes. *Furris agilitus obit.*"

And these are the last hours of a philosopher! The picture exhibited is not that of the mere dotage of extreme old age; but of an old age unsupported by those hopes and consolations which the gospel of Christ alone can afford in a dying hour, and consigned in awful retribution to the direst horrors of remorse. Well might the nurse who attended the death-bed of this wretched man, and who disclosed the horrors which his abashed followers wished to conceal, inquire on another occasion, when asked to wait on a sick Protestant gentleman, whether the patient was "a philosopher," for if he was she would not incur the risk of witnessing such another scene as that of the death-bed of Voltaire.

There is a general corroboration of the fact of the wretchedness of Voltaire's latter days in the "Life of Marmontel," written by himself, and published after his death. Marmontel highly panegyrises both Voltaire and Rousseau, whose infidel opinions he shared; and

therefore he cannot be called a suspected witness when speaking of the miserable condition of his brother philosophers. Of both of them he says: "If I had a passion for celebrity, two great examples would have cured me of it; that of Voltaire and that of Rousseau: examples very different, and in many respects quite opposite, but agreeing in this point, that the same thirst of praise and renown was the torment of their lives." Of Voltaire he adds, "To him the greatest of blessings, repose, was unknown. It is true that envy at last appeared tired of the pursuit, and began to spare him on the brink of the grave. On his return to Paris, after a long exile, he enjoyed his renown, and felt the enthusiasm of a whole people grateful for the pleasures that he had afforded them. The weak and last effort that he made to amuse them; *Irene*, was applauded, as *Zaire* had been; and this representation, at which he was crowned, was for him the most delightful triumph. But at what moment did this tardy consolation, the recompense of so much watching, reach him? The next day I saw him in his bed. 'Well,' said I, 'are you at last satiated with glory?' 'Ah! my good friend,' he replied, 'you talk to me of GLORY, and I am dying in frightful torture.'

This short dialogue speaks volumes. To talk to a dying man of "glory!" And yet in another sense, what theme so appropriate and so consoling? But then what "glory," and for whom. If we turn to that inspired book which Marmontel and his dying friend rejected, we there find this enigma solved. That blessed record tells us of the inanity of what these philosophists accouted "glory;" it inscribes upon the pomps and ambition of this feverish life, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." But does it leave the soul a prey to desolation? does it empty without replenishing? Has it nothing to present calculated to fill that aching void which is felt in an immortal spirit, created for the service and enjoyment of God, when worldly pleasures and honors, "the husks which the swine did eat," are found incapable of satisfying its cravings for "glory and immortality." Is there nothing left to "glory in?" Listen to its reply—to its admonitions on the one hand, and its promises on the other; confining our view to that one particular kind of "glory" which Voltaire chiefly coveted, and of which his friend hoped he had enjoyed sufficient to "sate" him; the incense offered to intellectual power—or as he himself calls it in his confession to Tronchin, "the smoke which had turned his head." He accounted Christians "fools;" he was the wise man; wisdom was his idol; and he believed its chosen shrine to be his own brain, where it was crowned with garlands and worshipped with—"smoke." But the book which he despised has provided against these morbid appetites of our fallen nature; and it predicts the result of such ill-directed and unhallowed ambition. "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom; . . . but let him that glorieth glory in this that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exer-