



THE CHOICE WORKS

of *Tom Hood*

THOMAS HOOD,

(1799—1845)

In Prose and Verse,

INCLUDING THE

CREAM OF THE COMIC ANNUALS.



WITH LIFE OF THE AUTHOR, PORTRAIT, AND OVER
TWO HUNDRED ILLUSTRATIONS.

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MEMOIR OF THOMAS HOOD.

THOMAS HOOD was born on the 23d May 1799, in the Poultry, at the house of his father, a partner in the firm of Vernor & Hood, booksellers and publishers. His mother was a Miss Sands, sister to the engraver of that name, to whom the subject of our memoir was afterwards articulated.

The family consisted of two sons, James and Thomas; and of four daughters, Elizabeth, Anne, Jessie, and Catherine.

Hood's father was a man of cultivated taste and literary inclinations, and was the author of two novels which attained some popularity in their day, although now their very names are forgotten.

Thomas Hood was sent to a school in Tokenhouse Yard in the City, as a day-boarder. The two maiden sisters who kept the school, and with whom Hood took his dinner, bore the odd name of Hogsflesh, and they had a sensitive brother, who was always addressed as Mr H., and who afterwards became the prototype of Charles Lamb's unsuccessful farce.

After the death of his father and his elder brother in 1811, he was apprenticed to his uncle, Mr Robert Sands, the engraver, and plied the burin for some years under his guidance. He thus learnt something of the art which he practised with such pleasant results in after-years in producing grotesque illustrations to his own verses and sketches. This sedentary employment not agreeing with his health, he was sent for change to some relations at Dundee. He remained in Scotland for a considerable time, and made his first appearance in print there in 1814, first in the

Dundee Advertiser, then edited by Mr Rintoul, and subsequently in the *Dundee Magazine*. These early effusions we have not succeeded in procuring, owing to the difficulty of obtaining access to local periodical publications, or we should have gratified the reader's curiosity by reprinting them.

On his return to London, after practising for a short time as an engraver, and doing some fruitless desk-work in a merchant's office, an opening that offered more congenial employment presented itself at last, when he was about twenty-two years of age. In 1821, Mr John Scott, the editor of the *London Magazine*, was killed in a duel. The magazine passed into the hands of Messrs Taylor & Hessey, who were friends of Hood's, and he was offered and accepted the sub-editorship. His first original paper appeared in the number for July 1821, and he continued to contribute till the summer of 1823.

Hood's connexion with the *London Magazine* was the means of bringing him into contact with many of the chief wits and literati of the time, and more especially with Charles Lamb, whose influence over his style and manner of writing is very clearly traceable. All these literary friendships have been delightfully described in his own "Reminiscences."

One of the contributors to the *London Magazine* was John Hamilton Reynolds, author of an exquisite little volume of verse entitled "The Garden of Florence," whose articles appeared under the pseudonym of "Edward Herbert." The acquaintance thus begun had lasting results. On the 5th May 1824, Hood was married to Reynolds's sister, Jane. In the following year (1825) he produced conjointly with his brother-in-law his first publication in a separate form, viz., "Odes and Addresses to Great People." This little volume rapidly passed through three editions, and made almost as great a stir as the "Rejected Addresses" of James and Horace Smith. A copy of the first edition, marked by Hood himself, and now in the possession of the present publishers, thus apportiones the respective authorship of the pieces it contains:—

Ode to Mr Graham	T. H.
Ode to Mr M'Adam	J. H. Reynolds.
Epistle to Mrs Fry	T. H.
Ode to Richard Martin	T. H.
Ode to the Great Unknown	T. H.
To Mr Dymoke	J. H. R.
To Grimaldi	T. H.
To Sylvanus Urban	J. H. R.
To the Steam-Washing Company	T. H.
To Captain Parry	T. H.
To Elliston	J. H. R.
To Maria Darlington	Joint.
To Dr Kitchener	T. H.
To the Dean and Chapter	J. H. R.
To H. Bodkin, Esq.	Joint.

In the present edition we have not thought it necessary or desirable to include those pieces in the above list which are assigned entirely to Reynolds's authorship.

It was in the two series of "Whims and Oddities,"* however, published in 1826 and 1827, and illustrated by his own pencil, that Hood first hit on the peculiar vein of humour by which he afterwards became most famous. These twin volumes obtained an immediate and decisive success, which is more than can be said of the volume of serious poems, "Plea of the Midsummer Fairies," and of the two volumes of "National Tales," which followed them in rapid succession in 1827. And yet there is an indefinable grace and charm about the graver productions of Hood's muse, and a picturesque and sometimes weird atmosphere of romance and imagination about the prose stories, that have won the suffrages of many later readers, and that made it seem proper to reproduce them here as representative of one important side of Hood's genius, though not the comic or more popular side.

His "Dream of Eugene Aram," first printed in an annual entitled "The Gem," which Hood edited in 1829, is representative of another class of serious poems in which he excelled—

* The title of this work was probably suggested by a line in Mr Hookham Frere's poem of "The Monks and the Giants," published some years previously.

"those which consist in the vivid imagination and abrupt lyric representation of ghastly situations in physical nature and in human life."*

In this year Hood left London for Winchmore Hill, where he took a very pretty cottage situated in a pleasant garden. Here the little *jeu d'esprit* of "The Epping Hunt"† was written and published as a small pamphlet in 1829 (passing into a second edition in 1830), with six illustrations by George Cruikshank.

At Winchmore Hill also his son was born in 1830. In this year Hood commenced his Christmas serial entitled "The Comic Annual," which enjoyed a long run of public favour, and continued to be published every winter, without intermission, until 1839, when it was discontinued; but resumed for one year only in 1842, when the eleventh and last volume appeared. In 1830 Hood also published a series of "Comic Melodies," which consisted of songs written for the entertainments of Mathews and Yates. The motto on the cover of each number was

"A doleful song a doleful look retraces,
And merry music maketh merry faces."

Over this was a comic illustration of the lines, consisting of some musical notes, the heads of which were filled in with laughing and grimacing countenances.

About this period Hood was on several occasions induced to attempt dramatic composition for the stage. He wrote the libretto for a little English opera, brought out, it is believed, at the Surrey Theatre. Its name is lost now, although it had a good run at the time. Perhaps it may be recognised by some old playgoer by the fact that its *dramatis personæ* were all bees. He also assisted his brother-in-law (Reynolds) in the dramatising of "Gil

* Professor Masson in *Macmillan's Magazine*, II. 328 (August 1860), art. *Thomas Hood*.

† A companion volume to this, to be entitled "Epsom Races," was announced in characteristic phrase on the back of the cover, but apparently the design was abandoned, as we cannot discover that such a pamphlet ever appeared.

Blas," produced at Drury Lane. For Mr Frederick Yates of the Old Adelphi Theatre he wrote a little entertainment entitled "Harlequin and Mr Jenkins; or, Pantomime in the Parlour," * and for other theatres two farces, entitled "York and Lancaster; or, a School without Scholars," and "Lost and Found." He likewise supplied the text of an entertainment called "The Spring Meeting," for Charles Mathews the elder.

In 1832 Hood left Winchmore Hill, and became the occupier of a house, called Lake House, at Wanstead in Essex. Here he wrote the novel of "Tylney Hall," which was published in the usual three-volume form in 1834.

It should be mentioned that during these years Hood was also a large contributor to the fashionable Annuals of the time, "The Forget Me Not," "The Souvenir," "Friendship's Offering," &c., and to the *Literary Gazette* and the *Athenæum*.

In 1835 the failure of a publishing firm having involved Hood in pecuniary difficulties, he resolved to leave England and live on the Continent. Going over in March of that year, he fixed on Coblenz on the Rhine as the most suitable for his purpose. During about two years that place continued to be the headquarters of the family. In the middle of 1837 he removed to Ostend. From this prolonged exile, which extended on to 1840, arose the volume published in that year and entitled "Up the Rhine," a work written in a series of letters, avowedly after the model of "Humphrey Clinker."

After five years of expatriation, Hood returned to England and took a house at Camberwell. He became a contributor to the *New Monthly Magazine*, then edited by Theodore Hook, upon whose death in the following year (1841), he himself succeeded to the editorship, and continued in that office until 1843, contributing to its pages a number of sketches and verses, which he republished in two volumes in 1844, with illustrations by John Leech, under the title of "Whimsicalities." In 1842 he had

* Printed in Duncombe's edition of "Mathews and Yates at Home."

removed to St John's Wood, where he continued to reside till his death, first in Elm Tree Road, and then in Finchley Road.

In the Christmas number of *Punch* for 1843 appeared the famous "Song of the Shirt," together with a less-known piece, "The Pauper's Christmas Carol." There are several other articles, poems, and cuts in the fourth and fifth volumes of *Punch* presumably by Hood.

On New Year's day 1844 was started *Hood's Monthly Magazine and Comic Miscellany*, with a very promising staff of contributors.

Meanwhile Hood's health had been gradually failing. Even during his sojourn on the Continent alarming symptoms had manifested themselves, and since his return to England, matters had gradually grown worse and worse. After some years of suffering and pain, all hope was at last given up. One night in a delirious wandering he was heard to repeat to his wife Jane the lovely words of the Scottish song—

"I'm fading awa', Jean,
Like snaw-wreaths in thaw, Jean!
I'm fading awa', Jean,
To the land o' the leal!
But weep na, my ain Jean,
The world's care's in vain, Jean,
We'll meet and aye be fain, Jean,
In the land o' the leal!"

An offer of a pension from Government of £100 a year, to be conferred on his wife, as his own life was so precarious, came through Sir Robert Peel in the latter part of 1844, but the grant was to take effect from the previous June. Sir Robert Peel did this welcome and friendly action in the most courteous and generous way, accompanying it with a letter in which he begged for one return—the opportunity of making Hood's personal acquaintance. The meeting, however, never took place, for Hood grew too ill to allow of its possibility, being only kept alive by frequent instalments of mulled port-wine. He wrote to his benefactor to this effect, and Sir Robert Peel replied in a

beautiful and touching letter, earnestly hoping for his recovery. There are few more beautiful traits in the great statesman's character, and few stories more honourable to him, than this of his kindness to poor Hood during the last sad months of supreme suffering. He could die at least with the assurance that those nearest and dearest to him would not be reduced to beggary.

The end grew nearer and nearer. Some weeks ensued of protracted anguish, of almost indescribable suffering, and of convulsive efforts to hold life yet a little longer. At last, on the 3d May 1845, after two days' total unconsciousness, he breathed his last, having scarcely attained the age of forty-six. He was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery, and eighteen months afterwards his faithful and devoted wife was laid by his side.

R. H. S.



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EARLY ESSAYS AND SKETCHES.

ODE TO DR KITCHENER.*

YE Muses nine inspire
And stir up my poetic fire ;
Teach my burning soul to speak
With a bubble and a squeak !
Of Dr Kitchener I fain would sing,
Till pots, and pans, and mighty kettles ring.

O culinary sage !
(I do not mean the herb in use,
That always goes along with goose)
How have I feasted on thy page :
"When like a lobster boil'd the more
From black to red began to turn,"
Till midnight, when I went to bed,
And clapt my tewah-diddle † on my head.

Who is there cannot tell,
Thou lead'st a life of living well ?
"What baron, or squire, or knight of the shire
Lives half so well as a holy Fry—er ?"
In doing well thou must be reckon'd
The first,—and Mrs Fry the second ;
And twice a Job,—for, in thy feverish toils,
Thou wast all over roasts—as well as boils.

Thou wast indeed no dunce,
To treat thy subjects and thyself at once :
Many a hungry poet eats
His brains like thee,
But few there be
Could live so long on their receipts.

* London Magazine, November 1821.

† The Doctor's composition for a nightcap.

TO HOPE.

What living soul or sinner,
Would slight thy invitation to a dinner,
Ought with the Danaïds to dwell,
Draw gravy in a cullender, and hear
For ever in his ear
The pleasant tinkling of thy dinner bell.

Immortal Kitchener ! thy fame
Shall keep itself when Time makes game
Of other men's—yea, it shall keep, all weathers,
And thou shalt be upheld by thy pen feathers.
Yea, by the sauce of Michael Kelly,
Thy name shall perish never,
But be magnified for ever—
—By all whose eyes are bigger than their belly.

Yea, till the world is done—
—To a turn—and Time puts out the sun,
Shall live the endless echo of thy name.
But, as for thy more fleshy frame,
Ah ! Death's carnivorous teeth will tittle
Thee out of breath, and eat it for cold victual ;
But still thy fame shall be among the nations
Preserved to the last course of generations.

Ah me, my soul is touch'd with sorrow
To think how flesh must pass away—
So mutton, that is warm to-day,
Is cold, and turn'd to hashes on the morrow !
Farewell ! I would say more, but I
Have other fish to fry.

TO HOPE.*

OH ! take, young seraph, take thy harp,
And play to me so cheerily ;
For grief is dark, and care is sharp,
And life wears on so wearily.
Oh ! take thy harp !
Oh ! sing as thou wert wont to do,
When, all youth's sunny season long,
I sat and listen'd to thy song,
And yet 'twas ever, ever new,
With magic in its heaven-tuned string—
The future bliss thy constant theme,
Oh ! then each little woe took wing
Away, like phantoms of a dream,
As if each sound
That flutter'd round
Had floated over Lethe's stream !

* London Magazine, July 1821.

By all those bright and happy hours
 We spent in life's sweet eastern bowers,
 Where thou wouldst sit and smile, and show
 Ere buds were come, where flowers would blow,
 And oft anticipate the rise
 Of life's warm sun that scaled the skies ;
 By many a story of love and glory,
 And friendships promised oft to me ;
 By all the faith I lent to thee,—
 Oh ! take, young seraph, take thy harp,
 And play to me so cheerily ;
 For grief is dark, and care is sharp,
 And life wears on so wearily.
 Oh ! take thy harp !

Perchance the strings will sound less clear,
 That long have lain neglected by—
 In sorrow's misty atmosphere ;
 It ne'er may speak as it hath spoken
 Such joyous notes so brisk and high ;
 But are its golden chords all broken ?
 Are there not some, though weak and low,
 To play a lullaby to woe ?

But thou canst sing of love no more,
 For Celia show'd that dream was vain ;
 And many a fancied bliss is o'er,
 That comes not e'en in dreams again.
 Alas ! alas !
 How pleasures pass,
 And leave thee now no subject, save
 The peace and bliss beyond the grave !
 Then be thy flight among the skies :
 Take, then, oh ! take the skylark's wing,
 And leave dull earth, and heavenward rise
 O'er all its tearful clouds, and sing
 On skylark's wing !

Another life-spring there adorns
 Another youth, without the dread
 Of cruel care, whose crown of thorns
 Is here for manhood's aching head.—
 Oh ! there are realms of welcome day,
 A world where tears are wiped away !
 Then be thy flight among the skies :
 Take, then, oh ! take the skylark's wing,
 And leave dull earth, and heavenward rise
 O'er all its tearful clouds, and sing
 On skylark's wing !

THE COOK'S ORACLE.*

The Cook's Oracle; containing Receipts for Plain Cookery, &c.; the whole being the Result of actual Experiments instituted in the Kitchen of a Physician.

DR KITCHENER has greatly recognised the genius of his name by taking boldly the path to which it points; disregarding all the usual seductions of life, he has kept his eye steadily on the larder, the *Mecca* of his appetite; and has unravelled all the mysteries and intricacies of *celery soup*, and *beef haricot*, to the eyes of a reading public. He has taken an extensive *kitchen range* over the whole world of stews, and broils, and roasts, and comes home to the fireside (from which, indeed, his body has never departed), boiling over with knowledge—stored with curiosities of bone and sinew—a made-up human dish of cloves, mace, curry, catsup, cayenne, and the like. He has sailed over all the soups, has touched at all the quarters of the lamb, has been, in short, round the stomach world, and returns a second *Captain Cook*! Dr Kitchener has written a book; and if he, good easy man, should think to surprise any friend or acquaintance by slyly asking, “What book have I written?” he would be sure to be astounded with a successful reply, “A book on Cookery.” His name is above all disguises. In the same way a worthy old gentleman of our acquaintance, who was wont to lead his visitors around his kitchen garden (the Doctor will prick up his ears at this) which he had carefully and cunningly obscured with a laurel hedge, and who always said, with an exulting tone, “Now, you would be puzzled to say where the kitchen garden was situated,” once met with a stony-hearted man who remorselessly answered, “Not I! over that hedge, to be sure.” The Doctor might expect you, in answer to his query, to say—“A book, sir! Why, perhaps you have plunged your whole soul into the ocean of an epic; or rolled your mind, with the success of a Sisyphus, up the hill of metaphysics; or played the sedate game of the mathematics, that Chinese puzzle to English minds! or gone a tour with Dugald Stewart, in search of the picturesque, or leaped double sentences and waded through metaphors, in a grammatical steeplechase with Colonel Thornton; or turned literary cuckoo, and gone sucking the eggs of other people’s books, and making the woods of the world echo with one solitary, complaining, *reviewing* note.” Such might be the Doctor’s notion of a reply, to which we fancy we see him *simmering* with delight, and saying, “No, sir! I have not meddled either with the curry of poetry or the cold meat of prose. I have not wasted over the slow fire of the metaphysics, or cut up the mathematics into thin slices—I have not lost myself amongst the *kick-shaws* of fine scenery, or pampered myself on the mock-turtle of metaphors. Neither have I dined at the table and the expense of other men’s minds! No, sir, I have written on cookery, on the kitchen, on the solids—‘the substantials, Sir Giles, the substantials!’”

* London Magazine, Oct. 1821.