

EXTRACTS FROM AN ANONYMOUS DIARY OF A  
 TOUR OF FRANCE AND SWITZERLAND MADE IN 1802, BY A LADY  
 BELIEVED TO BE HARRIET ECKERSALL

who became the wife of T.R.Malthus on 12th April, 1804.

NOTE

The tour lasted from Sunday 2nd May, when the party crossed from Dover to Calais, until Wednesday 13th October, when they reached London in time for dinner. The journal consists of 54 closely written pages, roughly  $4\frac{1}{2}$ " X  $7\frac{1}{2}$ ", in a note-book which has also been used for sketches (both pencil and pen-and-ink), some accounts, and some "Fragments sur Paris" carefully copied out in French and dated 1797. There is also a scribble which seems to indicate that a very young child got hold of the book at some time.

The sex of the diarist is shown by her shopping-lists - a silk gown, bonnet, chemisette, sewing cotton, and ribbon - as well as by two passages in the journal: the more amusing is when they are crossing the Col de Balme, in an immense cavalcade of mules, and "Myself and another of the Ladies" were obliged to ride astride: "The seat was very comfortable upon an ascent but on any at all steep descent we thought we should fall over the Mules head."

Sunday 2. May - 1802.

Embark'd at Dover Quay at 9 A.M., wind blowing very fresh with a ~~high~~ high swell, had a very short but sickly passage of 2 hours &  $\frac{1}{2}$ ...

The difference of costume may not be so apparent to an Englishman since the Revolution as before, the dress of the Women is the most peculiar, their short Woolen Petticoats so as to exhibit great part of ye leg - linen jackets and immense caps hiding half the sides of the face, or flapping about in the wind, form a great contrast to ye little mobs and long gowns of our ~~cou~~ crossed out] female peasantry - After a dinner of ragouts - next to the Salle de Spectacle, within the enceinte of the Hotel; T the Theatre was

croudé - the scenery very shabby, the acting better than at an English provincial Theatre...

Wednesday 5th - left Montreuil after Breakfast - in which there is nothing remarkable but an old Convent of Religieuses now nearly destroyed, - the Roads exceedingly good to Abbeville a miserable Town -, where we were surrounded by an immense croud of Beggars all complaining bitterly of the want of work & the dearness of bread - the Manufactures of this Town have been lost by the Revolution, they complained in the same manner at the next Poste, but the distress was not so evident - entered Amiens in the Evening a very large but very old Town, found an excellent Inn, and very agreeable Landlady; the Peace lately signed at this Town, seem'd to occasion great satisfaction & Lord Cornwallis spoken of with gt Pleasure...

Friday 7... The narrowness of the streets with the gutters in the middle was the first thing that struck us on entering the grande Ville de Paris...

Sunday 8th [9th May] walk'd up the Mon. Martre, to the Eglise, where they were celebrating mass, we were told there was an exhibition of the true cross but saw nothing more than orisons going forwards. Even<sup>g</sup> Frascati...

Monday 10th - in the Even<sup>g</sup> at the Theatre Francais, a much handsomer building than the Louvois... were greatly interested by the Mithridate of Racine...

Tuesday 11th - went for the 1st time to the Louvre - the magnificent Repository of the rich spoils of Italy... found my expectations fully answered in the Appollo of Belvidere... the Multiplicity of paintings

quite bewilder you on the 1st visit - the beautiful picture of Annibal-Caracchio of Le Christ mort, sur les genoux de la Vierge was the only one that day I carried away in my remembrance - Wednesday 12th - Spent the Morning again at the Louvre (in the grande galerie) in the Even<sup>g</sup> saw l'Abbè de l'Epee at the Théâtre Français; it did not please us so much as the English representation of the same peice - (Thursday 13th) - Were at the Sèance of the Legislative Body...(Friday 14th) In the Morning, heard a lecture on Chemistry at the Jardin des Plantes... were very much gratified by viewing the curious manufacture of the gobelins...

Saturday 15th. After breakfast, went to the Institut des Sourds et Muets [;] heard there a most interesting lecture from the Abbè Secard, in which he developed in an intelligible manner his Method of instructing the Deaf ~~and~~ <sup>&</sup> Dumb...

The party remained in Paris until June 7th: they drove to St. Germain's by way of the waterworks of Marly, and returned by St. Cloud; they went to Chantilly ~~and Versailles~~; they paid three more visits to the Louvre, twice to see the works of David, and once to see the French and Flemish schools of painting, where they "took particular notice of some beautiful landscapes of Vernets." They saw many plays, about which Harriet writes a great deal, and heard one concert, about which she says nothing at all. They admired St. Sulpice, "a very beautiful building in the Modern stile of Architecture," but thought High Mass at Notre Dame "not at all magnificent ~~of~~ striking." They spent a day at Versailles, where they much preferred the Trianon to the large formal gardens, and another watching a "grande Parade," of which the diarist writes, "Morning ~~an~~ & Eveng. equally unfortunate (Saw Buonaparte at a distance)." At the public gardens of ~~the~~ Tivoli she ~~w~~ saw "Walz's" probably for the first time, and wrote, "these last appeared to us ridiculously awkward."

What has been quoted is enough, I think, to show that in his future wife Malthus had found someone whose happy curiosity about life in general very much resembled his own. There is a possible reference to him in the entry for Thursday 27th May : "M. to the rue des petits



Augustins," and she has interpolated in brackets, "Depot des Monuments." For 24th May she has written "Nous n'avon rien fait," and there are merely dashes for the 2nd June; her final entry about this stay in Paris is a note added later: "(Omitted) Bibliothèque Nationale, immense suite of apparts, large globes, antique medals, heard a lecture."

I quote two more entries about Paris as being of general historical interest.

Sun. 30th [May] ... Proceeded to l'Hopital des Invalides to see the Temple de Mars formerly a church, now hung round with innumerable drapeaux taken from the Ennemy, there are only two of the English but not of this last war; those that have been taken are kept at the 1<sup>er</sup> Consul's.

Wednesday 19th [May]. Went by five in the afternoon to a seance of the legislative body - business did not begin till  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 6 [;] several projêts were read by Members of the tribunate which we heard but indistinctly; at 9 o clock the grand projêt pour la formation d'un ligion d'honneur was laid before the legislators by Lucien Buonaparte in a clear & eloquent speech; delivered in so distinct a manner that we did not lose a word - notwithstanding the Echo of y<sup>e</sup> Hall.

The party left ~~Paris~~ for their Swiss tour on June 7th, and returned to Paris on September 25th, when they stayed for ten days at the Hotel Richelieu, where "Mr. Fox had appartments" at the same time. They went to more theatres and to the Louvre ~~again~~, but this was ~~again~~ obviously all written up rather cursorilly after they were home again.

The account of Switzerland consists mainly of descriptions of scenery: those who enjoy Malthus's diaries will be amused to find that his future wife shared his fondness for strawberries; it is also interesting to read how calmly they seem to have left Berne at noon on 17th September, when the gates "were allowed to remain open for an hour," and General D'Erlach's army of peasants captured the town on the following day. There is an echo of Jane Austen as well as of Malthus in the sentence, "At Bienne found a very good Inn and a very ridiculous Landlord": one longs to have travelled with such a party.

Pleasant though the diary is, I think there are only three passages of real interest to Malthusians: the first one which I quote concerns a Rousseau pilgrimage, the second refers to a "Mr. Ricardon," and the third describes the conversation with the coachman which Malthus himself reports in Chapter V of Book II of the Second Essay on Population, page 211 in the first volume of the Everyman edition. (1958)

Vevey is a much more agreeable town than Lausanne but the country about it not so beautiful - went to see the Chateau of Chatilen [?] or Clarens the ~~supposed~~ supposed habitation of Julia - it is an old strong, & gloomy castle, the small windows of which command a delightful prospect - there are some trees near it but the bosquets Rousseau describes our batelier told us were now all destroy'd - "je crois bien (said another) "qu'il n'y ont jamais été" he show'd us a ruin'd cottage on the top of a little hill covered with vineyards & said "c'etoit la ou ils vivoient Julie et Jaques Rousseau quand ils etoient ensemble" we understood it was the castle - no, no, it was in that chaumière, they might perhaps now and then go & visit the Seigneur of the Castle but they never liv'd there -

Sunday 15th [August] cross'd the lake to Meillerie & spent the day in the rich woods that hang over the Lake - we had no better success in finding St Preux station than in finding the bosquets de Clarens [;] we mounted to the top of the Rocks where we could not discover the plateau describ'd [;] a stone they told us with Rousseau's name on it was there but it had now rolled down the hill into the lake probably.

Monday 5th [July] / coming through Signerol this time we had a compleat view of Mont Blanc unobscured by clouds rising considerably above the other mountains notwithstanding its infinitely greater distance, while the horses rested - Mr. M. and I walked down to the bridge over the Orbe to which Mr. Ricardon had conducted us when we passed

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through Signerol 3 weeks ago - we met him on our return, he offered to conduct us by a very curious foot way to Orbe, he ran himself up to the Inn to desire our companions would go on to Orbe without us in the Carriage - while he was gone we examined the remains of an old Castle situated on a small eminence that he has just bought [;] the view from it is very beautiful [;] it commands a view of the fine Rocks that inclose the River Orbe & you look up immediately to the highest hills of the ~~Jura~~ Jura - though one must not in general trust much to the Swiss idea's of Beauty Mr. R. had not deceiv'd us - we found our walk well worth the fatigue.

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[Sunday, 4th July, a "delightful glen" somewhere near the Lac de Joux]. We found in our way quantities of the finest wood strawberries & at the source bought an immense provision of them of some young girls - while we sat on the grass to eat them, were much entertain'd with the Philosepic discourse of the driver of our char on the over-population of his country, he complain'd much of the extreme early marriages, which he said was the 'vice du pays,' & a custom that had originated in a prosperous time & when a good deal of money could be earn'd by polishing stones & that now when the case was altered & the means of subsistence less, they still continued, "de se marier au sortir de l'Ecole: they had large families of children who owing to the extreme healthiness of the air never died but from actual want - he concluded with observing "qu'on ne devoit se marier qu'a quarante ans, et encore alor's qu'a des vieilles filles"- les jeunes filles who were sitting near us were much diverted but did not look as if they would take his advice. The Author of a late Essay on Population with whom he held the conversation was greatly interested to hear many of his own ideas in the mouth of a Swiss peasant - Some of our party wishing for milk to drink after their



strawberries, rather shamefully it must be own'd, seiz'd upon one of y<sup>e</sup> Cows by force & milked her - no bribe being able to corrupt the fidelity of the little Boy who kept them, they did not belong to him he said & he could not sell any of the milk - he endeavour'd to drive his cows away - even after the mischief was done & the cow milk'd, they could hardly make him take any money for it - the milk was not his & it would do him no good - The theives while they robbed him praised his honesty & commended his conduct but his example produced no effect [;] those who had no concern in the seizure of the Cow shared her milk.