

Thomas B. Macaulay (1800-59)

3 *An Election Ballad*

or, *The Country Clergyman's Trip to Cambridge*

As I sate down to breakfast in state,
At my living of Tithing-cum-Boring,
With Betty beside me to wait,
Came a rap that almost beat the door in.
I laid down my basin of tea, 5
And Betty ceased spreading the toast:
"As sure as a gun, sir," said she,
"That must be the knock of the post."

"A letter — and free — bring it here —
I have no correspondent who franks. 10
No! Yes! Can it be? Why, my dear,
'Tis our glorious, our Protestant Bankes."
"Dear Sir, as I know you desire
That the Church should receive due protection,
I humbly presume to require 15
Your aid at the Cambridge election.

"It has lately been brought to my knowledge
That the Ministers fully design
To suppress each cathedral and college,
And eject every learned divine. 20
To assist this detestable scheme
Three nuncios from Rome are come over;
They left Calais no Monday by steam,
And landed to dinner at Dover.

"An army of grim Cordeliers, 25
Well furnished with relics and vermin,
Will follow, Lord Westmoreland fears,
To effect what their chiefs may determine.
Lollards' Tower, good authorities say,
Is again fitting up for a prison; 30
And a wood-merchant told me to-day,
'Tis a wonder how fagots have risen.

The beast in St. John's Revelation.

A layman can scarce form a notion
Of our wonderful talk on the road,
Of the learning, the wit, and devotion, 75
Which almost each syllable showed:
Why divided allegiance agrees
So ill with our free constitution;
How Catholics swear as they please,
In hope of the priest's absolution; 80

How the Bishop of Norwich had bartered
His faith for a legate's commission;
How Lyndhurst, afraid to be martyred,
Had stooped to a base coalition;
How Papists are cased from compassion 85
By bigotry, stronger than steel;
How burning would soon come in fashion,
And how very bad it must feel.

We were all so much touched and excited
By a subject so direly sublime, 90
That the rules of politeness were slighted,
And we all of us talked at a time;
And in tones which each moment grew louder,
Told how we should dress for the show,
And where we should fasten the powder, 95
And if we should bellow or no.

Thus from subject to subject we ran,
And the journey passed pleasantly o'er,
Till at last Dr. Humdrum began —
From that time I remember no more. 100
At Ware he commenced his prelection,
In the dullest of clerical drones;
And when next I regained recollection
We were rumbling o'er Trumpington stones.

1827

(From G. B. Smith, ed. *Illustrated British Ballads, Old and New*. Vol. 1. London, 1881)