

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 finance scheme of Canning contains  
A new Easter-offering tax;  
And he means to devote all the gains 35  
To a bounty on thumb-screws and racks.  
Your living, so neat and compact —  
Pray, don’t let the news give you pain! —  
Is promised, I know for a fact,  
To an olive-faced Padre from Spain.” 40

I read, and I felt my heart bleed,  
Sore wounded with horror and pity:  
So I flew, with all possible speed,  
To our Protestant champion’s committee. 45  
True gentlemen, kind and well-bred!  
No fleering; no distance; no scorn;  
They asked after my wife who is dead,  
And my children who never were born.

They then, like high-principled Tories,  
Called our Sovereign unjust and unsteady, 50  
And assailed him with scandalous stories,  
Till the coach for the voters was ready.  
That coach might be well called a casket  
Of learning and brotherly love;  
There were parsons in boot and in basket; 55  
There were parsons below and above.

There were Sneaker and Griper, a pair  
Who stick to Lord Mulesby like leeches;  
A smug chaplain of plausible air,  
Who writes my Lord Goslingham’s speeches; 60  
Dr. Buzz, who alone is a host,  
Who, with arguments weighty as lead,  
Proves six times a week in the *Post*  
That flesh somehow differs from bread[;]

Dr. Nimrod, whose orthodox toes 65  
Are seldom withdrawn from the stirrup;  
Dr. Humdrum, whose eloquence flows  
Like droppings of sweet poppy syrup;  
Dr. Rosygill, puffing and fanning,  
And wiping away perspiration; 70  
Dr. Humbug, who proved Mr. Canning

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

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