

**DIARY OF
A BLASÉ**

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Diary of a Blasé by Frederick Marryat

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DIARY

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OF A

B L A S É .

By the Author of "Jacob Faithful," "Peter Simple," &c.

Capt. Fred. Bourgeois

PHILADELPHIA:

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1836.

DIARY OF A BLASÉ.

CHAPTER I.

Showing why and wherefore I decided upon a renewal of locomotion.

READER, did you ever feel in that peculiarly distressing state of mind in which one oppressing idea displaces or colours every other, absorbing, mixing up with, empoisoning, and, like the filth of the harpy, turning every thing into disgust—when a certain incubus rides upon the brain, as the Old Man of the Mountain did upon the shoulders of Sinbad, burthening, irritating, and rendering existence a misery—when looking around, you see but one object perched every where and grinning at you—when even what you put into your mouth tastes of but that one something, and the fancied taste is so unpleasant as almost to prevent deglutition—when every sound which vibrates in your ear appears to strike the same discordant note, and all and every thing will remind you of the one only thing which you would fain forget;—have you ever felt any thing like this, reader? If you have not, then thank God by way of grace before you out with your knife and fork and begin to cut up the contents of these pages.

I have and am now suffering under one of these varieties of "Phobias," and my disease is a Politicophobia. I will describe the symptoms.

I am now in the metropolis of England, and when I walk out every common house appears to me to be the House of Commons—every lordly mansion the House of Lords—every man I meet, instead of being a member of society, is transformed by imagination into a member of the senate—every chimney-sweep into a bishop, and a Bavarian girl, with her "Py a proom," into an ex-chancellor. If I return home the ring at the bell reminds me of a Peel—as I mount the stairs I think of the "Lobby"—I throw myself on the sofa, and the cushion is transformed into a woolsack—if a solitary visiter calls in, I imagine a public meeting, and call out chair! chair!—and I as often address my wife as Mr. Speaker, as I do with the usual appellative of "my dear."

This incubus, like the Catholic anathema, pursues me every where—at breakfast, the dry toast reminds me of the toasts at public dinners—tea, of the East India charter—sugar, of the West India question—the loaf, of agricultural distress—and, as every one knows that London eggs are a lottery, according as they prove bad or good, so am I reminded of a Whig or a Tory measure. When the newspaper is brought in, I walk round and round it as a dog will do round the spot he is about to lie down upon. I would fain not touch it; but at last, like a fascinated bird who falls per force into the reptile's mouth, so do I plunge into its columns, read it with desperation, and when the poison has circulated, throw it away in despair. If I am reminded to say grace at dinner, I commence "My Lords and gentlemen;" and when I seek my bed, as I light my taper, I move "that the House

do now adjourn." The tradesmen's bills are swelled by my disease into the budget, and the cheques upon my banker into supplies. Even my children laugh and wonder at the answers which they receive. Yesterday one brought me her book of animals, and pointing to a boa constrictor, asked its name, and I told her it was an *O'Connell*. I am told that I mentioned the names of half the members of the Upper and Lower House, and at the time really believed that I was calling the beasts by their right names. Such are the effects of my unfortunate disease.

Abroad I feel it even worse than at home. Society is unhinged, and every one is afraid to offer an opinion. If I dine out, I find that no one will speak first—he knows not whether he accosts a friend or foe, or whether he may not be pledging his bitter enemy. Every man looks at his neighbour's countenance to discover if he is a Whig or Tory: they appear to be examining one another like the dogs who meet in the street, and it is impossible to conjecture whether the mutual scenting will be followed up by a growl or a wag of the tail; but one remark will soon discover the political sentiments of the whole. Should they all agree, they are so busy in abuse that they rail at their adversaries with their mouths full—should they disagree, they dispute so vehemently that they forget that they were invited to dinner, and the dishes are removed untasted, and the duties of the *Amphytryon* become a sinecure. Go to an evening party or a ball and it is even worse, for young ladies talk politics, prefer discussion to flirtation, and will rather win a partner over to their political opinions than to their personal charms. If you, as a Tory, happen to stand up in a cotillion with a pretty Whig, she taps

you with her fan that she may tap your politics; if you agree, it is "*En avant deux*," if not, a "*chassez croisée*." Every thing goes wrong—she may set to you indeed, but her's is the set of defiance, and she shakes her wig against your Tory. To turn your partner is impossible, and the only part of the figure which is executed *con amore* is *dos à dos*. The dance is over, and the lady's looks at once tell you that you may save your "oaths," while she "takes her seat."

I have tried change of scene—posted to watering places; but the deep, deep sea, will not drown politics. Even the ocean in its roaring and commotion reminded me of a political union.

I have buried myself in the country, but it has been all in vain. I cannot look at the cattle peacefully grazing without thinking of O'Connell's tail, Stanley's tail, and a short-docked pony reminded me of the boasted little tail of Colonel Peel. The farm-yard, with its noisy occupants, what was it but the reality so well imitated by the members of the Lower House, who would drown argument in discord? I thought I was in the lobby at the close of a long debate. Every tenth field, every tenth furrow, (and I could not help counting,) every tenth animal, and every tenth step, reminded me of the Irish tithes; and when I saw a hawk swoop over a chicken, I thought of the Appropriation Bill—so I left the country.

I have tried every thing—I have been every where, but in vain. In the country there was no relaxation—in society no pleasure—at home no relief. England was disjointed, never to be united until it was dismembered—and there was no repose. I had my choice, either to go abroad, or to go mad; and, upon mature deliberation, I decided upon the

former, as the lesser evil of the two. So I gave—I sold—I discharged—I paid—I packed up, and I planned. The last was the only portion of my multifarious duties not satisfactorily arranged. I looked at the maps, plied my compasses that I might compass my wishes, measured distances that I might decide upon my measures—planned, looked over the maps—and planned again.

CHAPTER II.

Showing that, although one may decide upon not staying at home, it is not quite so easy to decide upon to where you are to go.

Well, as I said in my last chapter, I planned—and planned—but I might as well conjugate it, as my better half and many others assisted—it was I planned, thou plannedst, he planned, we planned, ye planned, and they planned—and what annoyed me was, that I could not help considering that “the whole house was in a committee,” and without being able “to report progress.” At first it was *decided upon* that we should proceed up the Rhine, and not leave off paddling until we had arrived at Mannheim, at which town I fancied that I should at least be out of political distance. We read all about Mannheim, found out that it was a regular-built town, with a certain number of inhabitants—with prome-

nades, gardens, and a fine view of the Rhine. "So you're going abroad—where?" Manheim, was the reply, and all the world knew that we were bound to Manheim; and every one had something to say, or something that they had heard said, about Manheim. "Very nice place—Dutchess Dowager Stephanie—very cheap—gay in winter—Sir John Sinclair—Captain Greville—masters excellent"—were the variety of changes rung, and all was settled; but at last one unlucky observation raised a doubt—another increased—a third confirmed it. "A very dull place—German cookery bad for children—steam-boats from Rotterdam very bad, and often obliged to pass two nights on deck." A very influential member of the committee took alarm about the children being two nights on deck, and it was at last decided that to go up to Manheim by steam-boat at 4*l.* 9*s.* a-head, and children at half-price, was not to be thought of.

"I wonder you don't go to Bruges," observed a committee man; "nice quiet place—excellent masters—every thing so cheap—I once bought eighty large peaches there for two francs."

And all the children clapped their little hands, and cried out for Bruges and cheap peaches.

It was further submitted that it was convenient—you might go the whole of the way by water—and Bruges was immediately under consideration.

"If you go to Bruges, you will find it very dull," observed another; "but you'll meet Mrs. Trollope there—now Brussels is very little farther, and is a delightful place;" and Brussels was also referred to the committee.

"You won't like Brussels, but you'll meet Grattan there—there is such a mixture, and house rent is dear. Now I should recommend Spa for the