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In her *Blake and the Nineteenth Century* Deborah Dorfman states that the *Spectator's* review of Gilchrist's *Life of Blake* was the first to appear in print, that it differed from some others in being "more knowledgeable and thoughtful," and that the reviewer was "the first writer to allude to anything that suggests 'fourfold' meaning." Dorfman indicated that she accepted my suggestion that this article--"William Blake," *Spectator*, 21 November 1863, pp. 2771-73--was written by the literary editor of this weekly, Richard Holt Hutton.¹ I had cited as my evidence an unpublished passage in Henry Crabb Robinson's diary. Some years later, I quoted the relevant passage after pointing out that Robinson had drawn a seating plan for his dinner that evening (25 November 1863).² Robinson then wrote,

I talked with my neighbours [Derwent] Coleridge and [Augustus] De Morgan. Hutton, I was informed had whispered about my share of *Blake's Life* civilly in the tone of the *Spectator* . . .

That Robinson in his use of "whispered" was referring to the *Spectator's* review of Gilchrist and not to a conversation at dinner is made clear by the continuation of the last sentence: ". . . and the second article on the book in the *Athenaeum* is still more flattering." The seating plan of the dinner shows that Edwin Field sat next to De Morgan, and that next to Field was R. H. Hutton.

The sceptic can argue, however, that I claimed too much on the basis of this evidence. That is, Robinson's dinner-party informant may have been mistaken, for he may simply have extrapolated from his knowledge that Hutton was literary editor to a

declaration that he was author. What I wish to demonstrate here, then, is that strong internal evidence supports my contention that Hutton was the writer of this important review.

The passage in the review which is perhaps most problematic as evidence states that Blake was a visionary in the eighteenth century, an age when there was "no open vision" (p. 2772). This quotation from I Samuel 3.1 is used by Hutton twice in identified articles: "Mr. Ruskin on Nature and Miracle," *Spectator*, 8 March 1873, p. 301, and "The Various Causes of Scepticism," *Spectator*, 19 October 1878, p. 1299.³ Since it appears neither in *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* nor the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* it may be described as one of the less familiar quotations from Scripture, its presence in a journal to which Hutton contributed therefore having some value for ascertaining authorship.

Somewhat more telling as evidence is this passage on p. 2772:

Imaginative children have been known (secretly) to persuade themselves that nettles were enemies, and thistles powerful enchanters, whose spell was to be broken by the prince of schoolboys.

This seems to be a variation on a theme in an 1852 essay by Hutton's greatest friend, Walter Bagehot. In that essay Bagehot wrote,

All children have a world of their own. . . . But generally about this interior existence, children are dumb. You have warlike ideas, but you cannot say to a sinewy relative,

"My dear aunt, I wonder when the big bush in the garden will begin to walk about; I'm sure it's a crusader, and I was cutting it all the day with my steel sword. . . . You . . . hack at the infelicitous bush till you do not altogether reject the idea that your small garden is Palestine, and yourself the most adventurous of knights."⁴

In his famous obituary article on Bagehot in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1877 Hutton quotes this passage, declaring that in it "Bagehot borrows from his own recollections," there being a tradition in the family that the passage is "but a fragment from Bagehot's own imaginative childhood. . . ."⁵

The "William Blake" reviewer (p. 2773) transcribes from Gilchrist an anecdote supplied by Henry Crabb Robinson, to which the reviewer adds a significant comment:

When Blake, in his usual visionary way, had been telling of a spiritual interview with Voltaire, Mr. Robinson asked suddenly what language Voltaire spoke. "To my sensations," said Blake, "it was English. *It was like the touch of a musical key*; he touched it, probably, French, but to my ear it became English." The visionary, it will be seen, is as acute in dodging a snare as fraud itself.

The fraud referred to here was probably spiritualism. The reviewer's comment, then, parallels Hutton's sceptical attitude towards spiritualism, his earliest view of it appearing in his signed article, "The Unspiritual World of Spirits" in the *Victoria Magazine*, 1 (May 1863), 42-60, just six months before "William Blake." More significant, however, is the fact that Hutton quoted the very same Robinson anecdote in his identified obituary of Nathaniel Hawthorne in the *Spectator*, 18 June 1864, p. 706.

Varying in probative value is the imagery in the *Spectator* review. Admittedly a commonplace in Victorian writing, the image of a safety-valve on p. 2772 is characteristic of Hutton's style as may be seen as early as "'Macbeth' at the Lyceum," *Spectator*, 2 October 1875, p. 1227, and as late as "The Carlyle Centenary," *Spectator*, 7 December 1895, p. 811. Also a commonplace but nevertheless characteristic of Hutton's style is the image of sounding the depths (p. 2772). In the *National Review* alone it occurs in five identified articles published before this review (there are many in the *Spectator* after it), including "Characteristics of Goethe," 2 (April 1856), 249, and "Nathaniel Hawthorne," 11 (October 1860), 477.

More significant, however, than either of these is an image from mathematics. This is a discipline with a special meaning for Hutton. At University College, London, he studied this subject for four years under the famous Augustus De Morgan. Altogether, he was a brilliant student, often standing at the head of his class. In January 1845, in his final year he won the Flaherty Scholarship in Natural Philosophy and Mathematics. In October

he led his class in the examination for honours in the same two subjects.⁶ From 12 October 1854 to 27 December 1856, he served as tutor in Mathematics at University Hall, London, and from 13 January 1858 to 10 May 1865 (during which time the "William Blake" review was published) he was Professor of Mathematics in Bedford College.⁷ Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that again and again during his entire life Hutton is to be found employing figures of speech based on mathematics. Three examples from his earlier writings will suffice. In "Newman's 'Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregations,'" *Inquirer*, 16 February 1850, p. 102, he asserts that "the sphere of direct divine influence must intersect the boundaries of many faiths. . . ." In "Romanism, Protestantism, and Anglicanism," *National Review*, 1 (July 1855), 193, he states that the Puseyite party "are all for what the mathematicians call the principle of the Conservation of Areas." In "Romola," *Spectator*, 18 July 1863, p. 2266, he suggests, "His character is, to use a mathematical term, the osculating curve which touches that of each of the others at the surface, and nowhere else. . . ." In the "William Blake" review, p. 2771, the following image seems, therefore, to have strong probative value:

. . . Blake's singular mind was projected, we may call it, on two quite distinct planes of art,—that of poetry as well as that of painting. . . .

But it is an allusion to a didactic children's book of the later eighteenth century which is the strongest clue of all. To my knowledge no other contributor to the journals that Hutton edited ever refers to it, but Hutton always recalled with amused affection the Reverend C. G. Salzmann's *Elements of Morality* which had been translated into English in 1790.⁸ For instance, in the *Spectator* on 20 November 1875, he wrote (p. 1457) that Mrs. Ewing's *From Six to Sixteen* was deficient in comparison with "the didactic little story-books on which the childhood of the last generation was nourished:"

Books like . . . *Elements of Morality* . . . while they really answered the purpose of teaching children the difference between right and wrong in a very simple way, also answered the purpose of making everything like moral posture-making supremely absurd. . . . Mrs. Ewing will never give the young people of the present day the pleasure of laughing at her at the very time that they are learning from her, as the story-book teachers of our fathers' times used to do.

Many years later, in "What is Priggishness?" *Spectator*, 11 June 1892, p. 807, Hutton pointed out that the period

which gave to the world . . . "Elements of Morality" (by Rev. C. G. Salzmann), the book which Blake illustrated so quaintly and so vividly for the little prigs of the last decade of the last century, was in the highest degree a priggish period. . . .

And on p. 808 Hutton reveals his close familiarity with Salzmann's volume by opening a copy and quoting at length from it.

What these passages demonstrate is that *Elements of Morality* was known to Hutton from his childhood, that he had ready access to it, probably in the form of his own copy, that he associated Blake with the illustrations, and that it was indelibly connected in his mind with didactic priggishness. Since all these features appear in the allusions to the book in the "William Blake" review, I believe that it can be attributed to Hutton on their account alone. The passage concerning the book appears on pp. 2771-72:

Many persons who will not know even his *name* at all may remember the quaint but forcible plates in a didactic little children's novel in three small volumes, called "Elements of Morality," which was translated from the German somewhere about 1790 for the benefit of our fathers' and mothers' childhood, and which has amused the nurseries of the next two generations with the formal stiff-jointed morality which that curious tale (less

adapted for children than for stunted adults in knee-breeches) inculcated on its young readers. Thirty years ago it was a book rare but precious to discerning children who could enjoy the spectacle of a rapidly disappearing world of didactic thought, and one of its greatest attractions was the singular force of those grotesque plates, *not* designed but engraved by William Blake. There was one little engraving of a wicked brother saying, "I hate you!" to the good brother. His hair almost stands on end with fury, and the tremendous impression of fraternal hatred in that stiff old engraving comes back on us now with full force through a vista of thirty years.⁹

"Thirty years" may be a number rounded off for rhetorical purpose, but nevertheless it fits the facts of Hutton's biography; in 1833 he was seven, and therefore could have read the book at that time. Biography thus joins hands with style to reinforce my contention that the *Spectator's* 1863 review of Gilchrist's life of Blake was written by Richard Holt Hutton.

¹ Deborah Dorfman, *Blake in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 84-85, and n. 24.

² Robert H. Tener, "More Articles by R. H. Hutton," *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 66 (January 1962), 60; R. H. Tener, "R. H. Hutton's Editorial Career--III. The 'Economist' and the 'Spectator,'" *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, 8 (March 1975), 10, which quotes from Henry Crabb Robinson's MS diary in the Dr. Williams's Library.

³ Hutton's identified articles are listed in my bibliography in *Victorian Periodical Newsletter*, No. 17 (September 1972) which contains 3600 items.

⁴ Walter Bagehot, "Hartley Coleridge's Lives of the Northern Worthies," *Prospective Review*, 8 (November 1852), 515-16. I quote the revised version found in Bagehot's *Estimates of Some Englishmen and Scotchmen* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1858), p. 332, where the essay is more simply titled, "Hartley Coleridge."

⁵ R. H. Hutton, "Walter Bagehot," *Fortnightly Review*, New Series, 22 (October 1877), 464.

⁶ University College, London, *Register of Students, Sessions 1841-42, 1842-43* (I am indebted to the College authorities and

to the librarian for the opportunity to consult these manuscripts); "University Intelligence," *London University Magazine*, 3 (December 1858), 757; University College, London, *Distribution of the Prizes and Certificates of Honour, Session 1844-45* (London, 1845), p. 16; *London University Calendar, 1846* (London, 1846), pp. 95, 111.

⁷ *Records of the Minutes of University Hall Council*. I am indebted to the Trustees of the Dr. Williams's Library for permission to examine these manuscripts, and to the Registrar of Bedford College for the opportunity to consult the MS, *Bedford College Minutes of Council, 1857-1866*.

⁸ The first edition with plates appeared in 1791. See G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Books* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 607. On p. 608 Bentley informs us that Gilchrist was the first to attribute the engravings to Blake.

⁹ The only other article in any of the journals which Hutton edited making reference to *Elements of Morality* is "The Worship of Children" in the *Spectator*, 6 November 1869, pp. 1298-1300. The writer refers to his father as being a clergyman and reveals that as a child he used to build round-towers with his bricks. Hutton's father, an Irishman, was a Unitarian minister; round-towers are a feature of the historic Irish landscape. Clearly, this article, too, is Hutton's.