ABSTRACT

Soul, Science, and Satire in The Water-Babies

by

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April, 1970.

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

This thesis is an attempt to show that The Water-Babies, by Charles Kingsley, usually dismissed as "an imaginative fairy-tale," has not yet been accorded the place it deserves in English Literature. In my opinion, The Water-Babies represents the culmination of Kingsley's literary work. The Water-Babies incorporates most of the themes Kingsley included in his other books, but without obvious propagandizing. A beguiling and successful fairy-tale on the surface, The Water-Babies, on a deeper level, is also an allegory of spiritual regeneration, and a satire.

The range of subjects included in The Water-Babies is wide. The topics, however, can be grouped under three broad categories: religion, science, and social and sanitary reform. The three chapters of the thesis reflect this division.

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INTRODUCTION

Charles Kingsley was poet, novelist, author of children's books, song-writer, essayist, reviewer, pamphleteer, reformer, parson, Canon, Chaplain to the Queen, naturalist, Professor of History, tutor to the Prince of Wales, traveller, husband, and father. The Water-Babies, written near the end of Kingsley's career, reflects this versatility. In The Water-Babies, Kingsley covered most of the themes contained in his other books, but without obvious propagandizing. In my opinion, The Water-Babies represents the culmination of Kingsley's literary work, but, unfortunately, this book has yet to be accorded the place it deserves in English Literature.

Charles Kingsley did everything intensely. He lived intensely, believed intensely, sympathized intensely, loved intensely, agitated intensely, and wrote intensely. Even fishing, his favourite form of relaxation, received his closest attention. On his success as a fisherman, he commented:

> that's all owing to my blessed habit of intensity, which has been my greatest help in life.

> I go at what I am about, as if there was nothing else in the world for the time being . . . .[1]

This driving force, which gave impetus to all Kingsley's activities, is not only the key to his personality but also his style of writing. His passionate preoccupation with current issues frequently resulted in "soap-box" digressions, and his indulgence in these asides was a fault not overlooked by his critics. Kingsley's desire to reach his readers and arouse them to action enabled him to weave his knowledge of the issues of the day into most of his major novels with such power, however, that the reader is only temporarily distracted by the interruptions.

While the subjects -- history, science, education, theology, politics, economics, sanitation -- included in Kingsley's books cover a wide range, the topics fall into three broad categories: religion, science, and social and sanitary reform.

That Kingsley was a deeply religious man stands out clearly in all his books. He had, however, come to this faith only after a long, inner conflict, during which he had been both attracted to and repelled by Roman Catholicism. Prejudice against "popery," a theme that runs through all his work, inspired his first published book, The Saint's Tragedy. He began The Saint's Tragedy in 1842

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[1]Thomas Hughes, "Prefatory Memoir," Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet. An Autobiography (New York, 1887), p. xxxix.

(two years before his marriage) in prose, but published it finally in dramatic blank verse in 1848. Set in the Middle Ages, The Saint's Tragedy describes the deliberate creation of a saint, and "the dangers of celibacy and ascetism."[2] It reflects young Kingsley's struggle not only to settle his own religious belief, but also to change that of his beloved Fanny. At the time of their meeting, she had made up her mind to live as a nun. The question was whether celibacy was indeed man's highest estate,

> For several years of my life it was the question which I felt I must either conquer utterly or turn papist and monk . . . .[3]

and, in the preface to the unpublished Prose History of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, which he prepared as a bridal gift for Fanny, Kingsley wrote:

> Is human love unholy -- inconsistent with the perfect worship of the creator? Is marriage less honourable than virginity? Is nature a holy type or a foul prison to our spirits? . . . . These were the questions! And in this book [The Saint's Tragedy] I try to solve them. If I succeed, then we are safe! If not, then our honest home is Popery -- Popery and celibacy . . . .[4]

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[2]Robert Bernard Martin, The Dust of Combat (London, 1959), p. 110.

[3]Charles Kingsley, His Letters and Memories of His Life, ed. by his wife, in The Life and Works of Charles Kingsley, I (London, 1901), p. 268.

[4]Charles Kingsley, His Letters and Memories of His Life, ed. by Mrs. Kingsley, I (London, 1885), p. 47.

One can understand, if not condone, his continual sniping at Roman Catholicism in view of the conflict revealed in the passage cited above, particularly when one realizes that to a profoundly religious man (with a strong physical appetite) an affirmative answer to these questions would mean that if he married, he would be living a sinful life. Insofar as marriage was concerned, he settled the question finally, arriving at the belief that marriage constituted a complete union -- physical and spiritual -- sanctioned by God. His happiness in his union with Fanny is testified to in one of his letters to her:

> People talk of love ending at the altar. People are an ass. I am ten times more in love in every sense of the word, animal, intellectual, & spiritual, than when I married -- & I glory in it . . . .[5]

Kingsley's continuing attacks on the Church of Rome through his writing grew from his fear that young people would be attracted to the celibate life and thus miss the supreme happiness they might enjoy in marriage and as parents.

Hypatia, which Kingsley felt to be his best novel, gives a vivid picture of another historical period and describes a different type of religious struggle from that portrayed in The

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[5]Martin, Dust of Combat, p. 110.

Saint's Tragedy. The main theme concerns the fifth-century strife between paganism and Christianity. As the story involves mysterious birth, the supernatural, mesmerism, philosophy, "luscious pagan scenes described with gusto,"[6] and great suspense, it grips the reader's interest. Although Kingsley's religious propaganda against "papists" is very much present in Hypatia, the reader is not conscious of being compelled to "listen" to didactic preaching.

Of Westward Ho!, Robert Martin said:

> It is one of the minor curiosities of literature that Kingsley's most violently propagandist novel has survived the century since its publication primarily as a book for boys . . . adult readers returning to the book for the first time since childhood are startled at how little they remember of the bitter polemical Protestantism of the novel.[7]

While most of Kingsley's books make reference to science in one form or another, it is in his books for children, especially Glaucus; or, The Wonders of the Shore and Madam How and Lady Why or First Lessons in Earth Lore for Children, that Kingsley displays his great knowledge as a naturalist. Using

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[6]Guy Kendall, Charles Kingsley and His Ideas (London, 1946), p. 111.

[7]Martin, Dust of Combat, p. 175.

nature as his setting -- and his classroom -- he not only achieves his purpose of communicating some of his knowledge to his young audience but does so in a refreshing, original manner.

Kingsley, the reformer, used every technique and talent at his command to focus attention on whatever evil he was attempting to expose, but his most potent weapons were vivid description and satire.

In Alton Locke, a savage indictment of the sweaters' shops and lack of sanitary conditions in the poor districts of London, Kingsley's descriptive powers were at their height. Written in the form of an autobiography, Alton Locke narrates many of Kingsley's own experiences. Kingsley had read a newspaper account of a cholera epidemic in an area known as "Jacob's Island." The contributing cause was cited as a surrounding ditch which served the area's inhabitants both as a source for drinking water and as a sewage dump. Kingsley and his friends mounted a two-pronged attack. They not only attempted to influence the landlords to supply proper drainage, but they personally set up water-butts and handed out drinkable water. The foul dual-purpose Jacob's Island ditch turns up in Alton Locke. Despite the digressions by the author, the book

holds the reader's attention because Kingsley's depth of feeling -- his almost evangelical fervour -- and personal involvement in the issue inspired one of the most vivid and memorable scenes he ever wrote.

Referring to Yeast, which Kingsley described as a "sort of fanciful half satiric novel,"[8] his wife said:

> It was written with his heart's blood. No book took so much out of him. After busy days in the parish, he would sit down and write it deep into the night.[9]

As in Alton Locke, Kingsley dealt with contemporary social conditions. He was moved to write one of his best ballads (and most inflammatory insofar as the landowners were concerned) entitled "A Rough Rhyme on a Rough Matter." The speaker is a poacher's widow:

> I am long past wailing and whining
> I have wept too much in my life:
> I have had twenty years of pining
> As an English labourer's wife.
>
> 'A labourer in Christian England,
> Where they cant of a Saviour's name,
> And yet waste men's lives like the vermin's
> For a few more brace of game . . . .[10]

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[8] Margaret Farrand Thorp, Charles Kingsley (Princeton, 1937), p. 501.

[9] Kingsley, Letters and Memories, I, p. 155.

[10] Charles Kingsley, Yeast: A Problem (London, 1890), p. 147.

Kingsley displayed his talent for metaphoric language when he explained that the name Yeast represented "an honest sample of the questions, which good or bad, are fermenting in the minds of the young of this day, and are rapidly leavening the minds of the rising generation."[11]

While a good part of Two Years Ago again deals with a cholera epidemic and/is propaganda for proper drainage systems, the topic of negro slavery is incorporated in the novel as part of a subplot. In addition, Kingsley satirizes the Victorian way of life regarding the rearing of young ladies. In typical style, he interrupts his story to ask:

> Who will help these young girls of the middle class who, like Miss Heale, are often really less educated than the children of their parents' workmen; sedentary, luxurious, full of petty vanity, gossip and intrigue, without work, without purpose . . . .[12]

Among his many interests, Kingsley included an active advocacy of higher education both for the children of workmen and for women.

Kingsley the parson, the scientist, the reformer, and the satirist merged to create The Water-Babies, usually dismissed simply

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[11]Martin, Dust of Combat, p. 93.

[12]Charles Kingsley, Two Years Ago (London, 1890), p. 57.

as a story for children, or an "imaginative fairy-tale." Kingsley wrote The Water-Babies in a relaxed period of his life. He therefore did not seem to feel the compulsion to use his "soap-box." All the familiar issues dear to his heart are interwoven in the story, however, but in a light, charming tone -- very different from anything he had previously written. That Kingsley wrote the story for both children and adults intentionally is borne out by the following statement in a letter to his great and good friend, the Reverend F. D. Maurice:

> When you read the book . . . I hope you will see that I have not been idling my time away. I have tried, in all sorts of queer ways, to make children and grown folks understand that there is a quite miraculous and divine element underlying all physical nature; and that nobody knows anything about anything, in the sense in which they may know God in Christ, and right and wrong. And if I have wrapped up my parable in seeming Tom-fooleries, it is because so only could I get the pill swallowed by a generation who are not believing anything like their whole heart, in the Living God. Meanwhile, remember that the physical science in the book is not nonsense, but accurate earnest, as far as I dare speak yet . . . .[13]

The result is an enchanting fairy-tale on the surface, and, on a deeper level, an allegory of spiritual regeneration and social reform -- the whole "wrapped up" as a delightful, easily swallowed "pill," coated with humour, science, and satire.

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[13]Kingsley, Letters and Memories, Works, III, p. 142.

CHAPTER I

SOUL (Religion)

> Myth and philosophy give allegory its method; epic and drama prefigure its form . . . and religious doctrines ritualize it . . . .
>
> --Edwin Honig

As previously stated, The Water-Babies is not only a fairy-tale. It is an allegory of the spiritual regeneration of man, represented by Tom, the chimney-sweep.

> When the terms of epical heroism are . . . rationalized and systematically redirected (as by Christian analogy, which lays stress on the individual as a type of everyman who may reach godliness), the result is allegory.[14]

Tom's journey in the sea and his experiences there follow a pattern of suffering, redemption, and rebirth. This pattern is the frame-work of many heroic myths.

Kingsley, a classical scholar and the author of The Heroes, was very much aware of the mythological narrative formula of the hero who has to journey through strange territory to reach a goal. The hero, during his journey, meets not only enemies who test him but other individuals who help him, sometimes with the aid of magic. When the end of his quest is

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[14]Edwin Honig, Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory (Evanston, 1959), p. 171.

reached, he has to submit to a last severe ordeal before gaining his reward. With the "powers" now behind him, the hero makes his triumphant return -- symbolizing a resurrection.[15]

Water as a cleansing and purifying symbol is older than Christianity. Ancient hieroglyphics indicate a form of baptism existed among the Egyptians. The hieroglyph used for the rite meant "water of purification."[16] "The water so used in immersion also cleansed the soul, and the person was said to be regenerated."[17] The ancient Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, and Icelanders practiced the baptism of children long before Christianity came into being, because the belief that man is born in sin was prevalent in all ancient nations.[18]

One can trace the worship of water as the source of life as far back as Homer, who spoke of the ocean as "the origin of all things."[19] According to ancient belief, water, before exerting its creative power, dissolved and abolished the form of things, but

> immersion in the Waters signifies not a definitive extinction, but a temporary re-entry into the indistinct, followed

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[15] Ibid., p. 199.

[16] T. W. Doane, Bible Myths and Their Parallels in Other Religions (New York, 1910), p. 320.

[17] Ibid., p. 320.

[18] Ibid., pp. 321-325.

[19] Encyclopaedia of Religion & Ethics, ed. James Hastings (Edinburgh, 1921), XII, p. 712.

by a new creation, a new life or a new man.[20]

We find all the elements mentioned above in The Water-Babies. Tom, very dirty and ill, -- symbolizing man's state of sin and corruption -- is attracted to the cool water of the river which beckons him with one of Kingsley's loveliest songs:

> Clear and cool, clear and cool,
> By laughing shallow, and dreaming pool,
> Cool and clear, cool and clear,
> By shining shingle, and foaming wear;
> Under the crag where the ouzel sings,
> And the ivied wall where the church bell rings,
> Undefiled, for the undefiled;
> Play by me, bathe in me, mother and child.
> . . . . . .
>
> Strong and free, strong and free,
> The floodgates are open, away to the sea.
> Free and strong, free and strong,
> Cleansing my streams as I hurry along,
> To the golden sands, and the leaping bar,
> And the taintless tide that awaits me afar,
> As I lose myself in the infinite main,
> Like a soul that has sinned and is pardoned again.[21]

While Tom is rushing to the water, compulsively saying over and over, "I must be clean, I must be clean," he hears church bells ringing constantly. On the literal plain, the ringing of the church bells is an illusion caused by his fever, and, on the allegorical level, the bell-ringing is a prelude to his baptismal immersion in the water.

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[20] Mircea Eliade, Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism, trans. by Philip Mairet (London, 1952), p. 152.

[21] Charles Kingsley, The Water-Babies: A Fairy Tale for a Land-Baby (London, 1886), pp. 51-52.

Tom's searchers find

> a black thing in the water, and said it was Tom's body and that he had been drowned. They were utterly mistaken. Tom was quite alive . . . . The fairies washed him, you see, in the swift river, so thoroughly that not only his dirt, but his whole husk and shell had been washed quite off him and the pretty little real Tom washed out of the inside of it . . . .[22]

Tom was now about four inches long. Here Kingsley includes one of his frequent touches of exactness which seem to add credence to his story: "or -- that I may be accurate -- 3.87902 inches long, and having round the parotid region of his fauces a set of external gills."[23] Kingsley adds, in quite an offhand manner, "In fact, the fairies had turned him into a water-baby." Then follows a clever argument about whether there are water-babies, ending with the logically sounding illogical statement:

> and no one has a right to say that no water-babies exist, till they have seen no water-babies existing, which is quite a different thing, mind, from not seeing water-babies; . . . .[24]

One of Kingsley's early letters (dated August, 1842), addressed to Fanny, contained the germ of the first part of The Water-Babies. The letter also reveals a Wordsworthian association of nature with childhood innocence:

> And over all, as the cool water trickled on, hovered the delicious sense of childhood, and simplicity, and purity

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[22] Ibid., pp. 88-89.

[23] Ibid., p. 78.

[24] Ibid., p. 79.

> and peace, which every temporary return to a state of nature gives! A woodland bath to me always brings thoughts of Paradise.[25]

At various times throughout Kingsley's life, he indicated that death would be welcome, and the wording of a letter to his wife, written some eighteen years after the letter mentioned above, not only expresses a longing for death but again foreshadows The Water-Babies:

> All that book-writing and struggling is over, and a settled position and work is before me. Would that it were done, the children settled in life, and kindly death near to set one off again with a new start somewhere else.[26]

Thus Tom, in his new form, also appears to symbolize the fulfillment of Kingsley's death-wish.

After Tom's metamorphosis, Kingsley introduces "the one true

> orthodox, inductive,
> rational, deductive,
> philosophical, seductive,
> logical, productive,
> irrefragable, salutary,
> nominalistic, comfortable,
> realistic,
> and on-all-accounts-to-be-received

doctrine of this wonderful fairy tale; which is, that your soul makes your body, just as a snail makes his shell."[27] While Kingsley presents this belief in a very light manner, it was his deeply held conviction. In a sermon, entitled "The Victory of Life,"

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[25]Kingsley, Letters and Memories, Works, I, p. 84.

[26]Ibid., III, p. 110.

[27]Kingsley, The Water-Babies, pp. 98-99.

delivered at the Chapel Royal in 1862, he said:

> What a comfort for us who have seen others die, if death be but a new birth into some higher life; if all that it changes in us is our body -- the mere shell and husk of us -- such a change as comes over the snake when he casts his old skin, and comes out fresh and gay, or even the crawling caterpillar, which breaks its prison, and spreads its wings to the sun as a fair butterfly . . . .[28]

Writing to Professor Rolleston on October 12, 1862, Kingsley stated:

> I am glad to see that you incline to my belief, which I hardly dare state in these days, even to those who call themselves spiritual, viz., that the soul of each living being down to the lowest, secretes the body thereof, as a snail secretes its shell, and that the body is nothing more than the expression in terms of matter, of the stage of development to which the being has arrived.[29]

The "story of the cast skin" is not a new one; it has its root in ancient mythology. Many primitive peoples believed that because certain animals periodically cast off their skins, they renewed their youth, and thus never died. The belief also existed (and still does among some savage tribes) that man once had the ability to cast off his skin and so gain immortality. Through some foolish action, however, he lost this gift. The reason for the loss varies according to the source, but there is one significant similarity -- the change is accomplished in the water. One typical version:

> At first men never died, but when they advanced in life they cast their skins like snakes and crabs and came out with youth renewed. After a time a woman, growing old,

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[28]Kingsley, Letters and Memories, Works, IV, p. 221.

[29]Ibid., III, p. 148.

> went to a stream to change her skin . . . . She threw off her old skin in the water. Then she went home where she had left her child, but the child refused to recognize her . . . . So to pacify the child, she went after her cast integument and put it on. From that time mankind ceased to cast their skins and died.[30]

All the variant forms include the idea that the ability was given to man by a benevolent being.

Kingsley is prepared for the fact that his readers may still be dubious about the change Tom has undergone, and continues the argument which one reader (a child) is presumably having with "Cousin Cramchild":

> And, lastly, if he says (as he most certainly will) that these transformations only take place in the lower animals, and not in the higher, say that . . . . if the changes of the lower animals are so wonderful, and so difficult to discover, why should not there be changes in the higher animals more wonderful . . . ask him respectfully where his microscope has been? Does not each of us, in coming into this world, go through a transformation just as wonderful as that of a sea-egg, or a butterfly? and does not reason and analogy, as well as Scripture, tell us that that transformation is not the last?[31]

He concludes with the enigmatic "that this is a fairy-tale, and all fun and pretence; and that you are not to believe one word of it, even if it is true . . . ."[32]

While Tom was cleaner and happier than he had ever been, he was a little lonely and wanted to meet others of his kind. He had been told that other water-babies existed, but he was unable to see them. He must first undergo a period of trial -- punishment for his sins.

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[30]Sir James George Frazer, Folk-Lore in the Old Testament (London, 1910), I, pp. 68-69.

[31]Kingsley, The Water-Babies, pp. 86-87.

[32]Ibid., p. 88.

He is "tested" on many occasions, and the moment he rescues a lobster from a trap, he is able to see other water-babies.[33]

Tom, still mischievous, and in good spirits because he had "found" the water-babies, continues to prankishly plague little sea-creatures. "Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid," who comes on periodic inspection tours, gives sea-cakes, sea-apples, and such treats to the good water-babies. Tom gets a cold, hard pebble popped into his mouth -- retribution for the pebbles he had put into the mouths of some defenceless sea-anemones.[34]

Tom really gets into trouble when he finds out where Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid keeps her supply of sweet sea-candies. Tom deludes himself into thinking he will eat only one, then two, but he finally eats all the sweets. When "Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby" (a very beautiful fairy, unlike Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid) comes on her weekly visit, and Tom wants to be cuddled like all the other water-babies, she tells him, "I should like to cuddle you; but I cannot, you are so horny and prickly."[35] As a result of his escapade, Tom had grown prickles all over his body. Kingsley thus gives his readers an object lesson in moderation. Tom expects to be questioned by Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid when she arrives on her inspection visit, but she says nothing and gives Tom his share of the sweets -- unlike "anxious parents and teachers . . . , who, instead of giving children a fair trial, such as they would expect and demand for themselves, force

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[33] Ibid., p. 208.

[34] Ibid., pp. 218-220.

[35] Ibid., p. 244.

them by fright to confess their own faults . . . ."[36] The sweets, however, now make Tom ill. His conscience (and his prickly state) finally make him so miserable, he confesses to Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid. She immediately forgives him, but gives him a penance -- the delightful penance of being taught by a little girl whom he likes very much. This little girl goes "home" every Sunday, and Tom, although he wants to, is unable to accompany her. He is told he is not ready yet. In order to redeem himself completely, Tom has "to learn to like going where you don't like, and helping someone y o u don't like."[37] Tom's suspicion that the someone will turn out to be Mr. Grimes, his former sweep-master, proves to be correct. Tom must go to the "Other-end-of-Nowhere" which is farther than the world's end. He has to overcome many obstacles, such as getting to the "Shiny Wall" and through "the white gate that was never opened,"[38] before he can reach his goal. During Tom's epic journey in the sea, he meets many creatures, who, through doing what comes naturally, give him (and the children who read the book) many lessons -- both moral and scientific.

An incident, reminiscent of The Ancient Mariner (similar to the one which enabled Tom to see water-babies), occurs to Grimes. Grimes had been sentenced to remain in Chimney #345. He is very uncomfortably wedged in the chimney, occasionally getting whacked on the head by a policeman-like truncheon. He is unable to light his pipe because his arms are imprisoned. When Tom tries to light the

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[36] Ibid., pp. 242-243.

[37] Ibid., p. 251.

[38] Ibid., p. 271.

pipe with a live coal, the coal is put out by Grimes's cold heart, which "freezes everything that comes near him."[39] Tom, in relating the story of his illness, finally manages to help Grimes. It seems that it was Mr. Grimes's mother who gave Tom shelter when he was sick. When Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid tells Mr. Grimes his mother is dead, Mr. Grimes's frozen heart melts and he cries. His tears accomplish what Tom's sympathetic tears could not -- they wash the soot (symbolic of sin) off Grimes's face and off his clothes; "and then they washed the mortar away from between the bricks; and the chimney crumbled down."[40] After promising to obey Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid, Grimes's sentence is commuted to sweeping out the crater of Etna. This punishment, while still severe, is a step toward acquiring final salvation. Tom also gets his reward, which is to see Ellie, his little tutor, again. He eventually marries Ellie and becomes a "great man of science"[41] -- the reward and the return.

Kingsley personally did a great deal to reconcile religious doctrine and Darwin's Theory of Evolution. In a letter dated September 23, 1860, Thomas Huxley recognized Kingsley's efforts:

> If the Church of England is to be saved from being shivered into fragments by the advancing tide of science, . . . it must be by the efforts of men who, like yourself, see your way to the combination of the practice of the Church with the spirit of science.[42]

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[39] Ibid., pp. 353-355.

[40] Ibid., p. 359.

[41] Ibid., pp. 360-368.

[42] Leonard Huxley, Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley (New York, 1901), I, 238.

As a scientist, Kingsley acknowledged the validity of Darwin's theory. His thinking on the subject finally led to his great "discovery," which he set forth in his paper, "The Natural Theology of the Future." Although it was not until January 10, 1871 that Kingsley read his paper -- to an audience in the Hall of Sion College -- he had begun to formulate his theory many years earlier, as is evident from a letter to the Rev. F.D. Maurice in 1863 (the year The Water-Babies was published):

> I am very busy working out points of Natural Theology, by the strange light of Huxley, Darwin, and Lyell.[43]

The impact of Darwin's Origin of the Species on the religious beliefs of the Victorians has been well-documented. Kingsley's paper did a great deal for those individuals who clung to their religious beliefs, and yet could not reject scientific fact. His carefully thought out answer not only contained solace for those in the nineteenth century but, as the title of his paper suggests, comfort for future generations who would have to contend with more extensive scientific knowledge, and hence a greater challenge to their religious beliefs.

Kingsley expresses his own early experience in his paper:

> When, longing to reconcile my conscience and my reason on a question so awful to a young student of natural science, I went to my Bible, what did I find? No word of all this.[44]

At this point, he asks his audience to bear with him "even though I may seem impertinent." Evidently he persisted in his Bible research

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[43]Kingsley, Letters and Memories, Works, III, p. 175.

[44]Charles Kingsley, "The Natural Theology of the Future," Macmillan's Magazine, March, 1871, p. 371.

because he did find an answer -- in the 139th Psalm, which he stated contained "a marvellous essay on Natural Theology," and tells his audience to:

> judge for yourself whether he who wrote that did not consider the study of Embryology as important, as significant, as worthy of his deepest attention as an Owen, a Huxley, or a Darwin.[45]

Kingsley states that, in the following words, the Psalmist anticipated "that realistic view of embryological questions to which our most modern philosophers are, . . . slowly, half unconsciously, but still inevitably, returning . . . ."[46]

> Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them . . . .[47]

Kingsley discusses those aspects of the Theory of Evolution dealing with heredity and the survival of the fittest:

> Physical science is proving more and more the immense importance of hereditary powers, hereditary organs, hereditary habits, in all organized beings, from the lowest plant to the highest animal . . . . The natural theology of the future must take count of these tremendous . . . facts: . . . . She [physical science] is proving more and more . . .; how the more favoured . . . exterminates the less favoured, or at least expels it, and forces it, under penalty of death, to adapt itself to new circumstances; . . . .[48]

For scientists and other doubters who cry, "But we see no God in Nature. We do not deny the existence of a God; we merely

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[45] Ibid., p. 373.

[46] Ibid., p. 373.

[47] Ibid., p. 373.

[48] Ibid., pp. 373-374.

say that scientific research does not reveal him to us. What used to be considered as marks of design can be better explained by considering them as the results of evolution according to necessary laws; . . ."[49] Kingsley's answer, very cleverly phrased and fittingly logical, is an eminently satisfactory resolution of the problem of reconciling belief in a Supreme Being and acceptance of the Theory of Evolution:

> Analogy from experience, sound induction (as we hold) from the works not only of men but of animals, has made it an all but self-evident truth to us, that wherever there is arrangement, there must be an arranger; wherever there is adaptation of means to an end, there must be an adapter; wherever an organization, there must be an organizer . . . . We might accept all that Mr. Darwin, all that Professor Huxley, has so learnedly and so acutely written on physical science, and yet preserve our natural theology . . . . We all agree, for the fact is patent, that our own bodies, and indeed the body of every living creature, are evolved from a seemingly simple germ by natural laws, without visible action of any designing will or mind, into the full organization of a human or other creature. Yet we do not say . . . , God did not create me: I only grew . . . . <u>If there be evolution, there must be an evolver.</u>[50]

One of Kingsley's concluding statements is an echo from <u>The Water-Babies</u>: "We knew of old that God was so wise that He could make all things but behold, He is so much wiser than even that, that He can make all things make themselves."[51] When Tom arrives at the "Other-end-of-Nowhere" and is told to see Mother Carey (Mother Nature), he finds her sitting on a white marble throne, from the foot of which millions of new-born creatures

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[49] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 375.

[50] <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 375-376.

[51] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 377.

swim away. Tom expects to find her very busy making these creatures, but, instead, finds her quite still. She tells him:

> I am not going to trouble myself to make things, my little dear. I sit here and make them make themselves . . . . Anyone can make things, if they will take time and trouble enough: but it is not everyone who, like me, can make things make themselves.[52]

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[52]Kingsley, The Water-Babies, p. 307.

CHAPTER II

SCIENCE

> Perhaps the most gifted writer among the reconcilers was Charles Kingsley (1819-1875) who, be it remembered, had been a considerable amateur geologist long before 1859 and had been among the first to hail Darwin's magnum opus as a new revelation. His many popular lectures sometimes touched on scientific subjects and not as a spiritual man who fears the destructive influence of a materialistic approach to wisdom, but with all sympathy for science as well as with full reverence for the faith he preached. In his charming fairy-tale, The Water-Babies (1863) there is more than one whimsical exposition of the scientific method and of evolutionary matters.[53]
>
> --J. M. Drachman

Although, as mentioned previously, Kingsley had great respect for Darwin's theory, the suggestion that man had evolved from apes troubled Kingsley. To explain the existence of man-like apes, he devised his own theory, which amounted to a reversion of the Darwinian concept. In The Water-Babies, as a moral lesson about what happens to "people who always do what is pleasant," Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid shows Tom a "waterproof

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[53] J. M. Drachman, Studies in the Literature of Natural Science (New York, 1930), p. 324.

picture book," which relates the History of the great and famous nation of the Doasyoulikes, who came away from the country of Hardwork because they wanted to play . . . all day long."[54] The Doasyoulikes settled in the land of Readymade where there was no need to work for the necessities of life. Kingsley summed up the story in a letter to his wife: "Tom sees how a race of men, in time, become gorillas by being brutish."[55]

The evolution of the Doasyoulikes into gorillas occurs not only because of laziness but also through a Darwinian survival of the fittest. The hairiest and strongest individuals survive because they can withstand the climate and fight off their natural enemies.

Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid, who is Mother Carey (Mother Nature) too, defends Kingsley's hypothesis by stating:

> Folks say now that I can make beasts into men . . . . Well, perhaps they are right; and perhaps, again, they are wrong . . . if I can turn beasts into men, I can, by the same laws of circumstance, and selection, and competition, turn men into beasts.[56]

Kingsley did not limit his theory to The Water-Babies. In a letter to Professor Rolleston in 1861, he said:

> I wish you would envisager that gorilla brain for once in a way, and the baboon brain also

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[54]Kingsley, The Water-Babies, pp. 257-258.

[55]Kingsley, Letters and Memories, Works, II, p. 141.

[56]Kingsley, The Water-Babies, p. 268.

> under the fancy of their being degraded forms. I shall torment you and your compeers with my degradation theory, till you give me a plain Yes or No from facts.[57]

Dean Howson of Chester, on the occasion of Kingsley's departure from that community, remarked that Kingsley's bent was, "in his own opinion, more toward Science than towards Literature. He once said something to this effect, that he would rather be low on the roll of Science than high on that of Literature."[58]

Kingsley's many references to science in The Water-Babies were particularly evident to one eminent reader, Admiral Sir George Back, who, in writing to a friend, said:

> I told you that no one, lady or gentleman, could give me anything like a satisfactory answer to the question of "What is the story of Water-Babies about?" And now that I have read it, the reason is clear enough, for in the playfulness of a . . . fairy tale is included the most amusing allusions to different branches of science. I will honour . . . any Land-baby, age à discretion, who will do full justice to the merits of this extraordinary book . . . .[59]

Tom's days in his new water world are exciting, and he has many adventures. One of the more "amusing allusions" to science, and a good example of how Kingsley was able to teach science to

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[57]Kingsley, Letters and Memories, Works, III, p. 148.

[58]Ibid., IV, p. 154.

[59]Ibid., III, p. 192.

children on their level (while they were blissfully unaware that they were being taught), is the episode of an alder-fly casting its skin. This little fly hopped on Tom's finger and

> sat there as bold as nine tailors; and cried out in the tinest, shrillest, squeakiest little voice you ever heard.
> 'Much obliged to you indeed; but I don't want it yet.'
> 'Want what?' said Tom, quite taken aback by his impudence.
> 'Your leg, which you are kind enough to hold out for me to sit on. I must just go and see after my wife for a few minutes. Dear me! what a troublesome business a family is (though the little rogue did nothing at all, but left his poor wife to lay all the eggs by herself).
> 'When I come back, I shall be glad of it, if you'll be so good as to keep it sticking out just so;' and off he flew.[60]

The fly returned shortly, sat on Tom's knee, and chatted about his plans to get rid of his grey "business suit" of which he had become tired. As he spoke,

> he turned quite pale, and then quite white.
> 'Why, you're ill!' said Tom. But he did not answer.
> 'You're dead,' said Tom, looking at him as he stood on his knee white as a ghost.
> 'No, I ain't!' answered a little squeaking voice over his head. 'This is me up here, in my ball dress: and that's my skin . . . .' the little rogue had jumped clean out of his own skin, and left it standing on Tom's knee, eyes, legs, tail, exactly as if it had been alive.[61]

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[60] Kingsley, The Water-Babies, p. 114.

[61] Ibid., pp. 115-116.

Another incident also adds suspense insofar as the reader is concerned. Tom sees a sight "as strange as the accompanying noise; a great ball rolling over and over down the stream, seeming one moment of soft brown fur, and the next of shining glass: and yet it was not a ball; for sometimes it broke up and streamed away in pieces, and then it joined again; and all the while the noise came out of it louder and louder." Tom asks his friend, the dragon-fly, what it is, "but of course, with his short sight, he could not even see it . . . ." Tom investigates on his own, and finds that the ball of fur is actually four or five otters at play, "who were swimming about, and rolling, and diving, and twisting, and wrestling, and cuddling, and kissing, and biting, and scratching, in the most charming fashion that ever was seen." The mother otter has a conversation with Tom, and he learns how otters live, how they hunt, and how they eat their catch.[62]

The next morning Tom meets a school of salmon which pass him "rushing and plunging up the cataract with strong strokes of their silver tails, now and then leaping clear out of the water and up over a rock, shining gloriously for a moment in the bright sun." Tom is so entranced "he could have watched them all day long." Tom learns something about the salmon's behaviour when he

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[62]Ibid., pp. 118-122

observes a salmon's chivalrous attitude toward its mate. The salmon are "true gentlemen" who, after choosing a wife, "love her, and are true to her, and take care of her, and work for her, and fight for her . . . not like the vulgar chub and roach and pike, who have no high feelings, and take no care of their wives."[63]

Tom gets first-hand experience of natural (and supernatural) phenomena while walking on the ocean floor. He is suddenly "aware of a hissing, and a roaring, and a thumping, and a pumping." When he gets nearer to the noise, the water becomes boiling hot. Tom keeps going until he comes to a place called "Stop." He does, and just in time, "for he was on the edge of a vast hole in the bottom of the sea, up which was rushing and roaring clear steam enough to work all the engines in the world at once . . . ." There is a great deal of mud tossed up by the steam, and Tom is in danger of being buried alive. He is saved from that fate by being blown "a mile up through the sea" by the sea geyser right into the legs of the most "wonderful bogy which he had ever seen." Evidently this creature, which had a claw like a comb at the tip of each of its many legs, had to comb and sort the vapors which arose from the geyser, and "When they steamed up through them against his wings, they were changed into showers and streams of metal." A different metal falls from

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[63] Ibid., pp. 139-140.

each wing -- gold, silver, copper, tin, and lead -- "Whereby it comes to pass that the rocks are full of metal."[64]

The references given above are only a few of Tom's many fascinating water experiences.

The fact that Kingsley was interested in every aspect of science -- including education, research, and practical application -- is implicit in The Water-Babies.

Kingsley's work as a natural scientist was widely recognized. For example, he was asked to become President of the Midland Institute of Birmingham. His inaugural address, "The Science of Health," was covered by reporters from many top London newspapers. Mrs. Kingsley stated that The Times "gave him a leading article," from which she quoted:

> We could fancy that some, even among the most hopeful originators of this movement, would have opened their eyes, on finding, put in first place, nearly to the exclusion of all other subjects, the necessity of studying the laws of health and strength, of physical succession, natural selection, and morbid degeneracy, especially as illustrated in the dwarfed and enervated population of our large towns . . . . We feel really obliged to the Canon for taking the bull by the horns, and telling those townsfolk some very simple truths, with the further remark that they have only to use their eyes, their memories, and their understandings, and then they will learn a great deal more than he can tell them.[65]

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[64] Ibid., pp. 317-321.

[65] Kingsley, Letters and Memories, Works, IV, p. 127.

Kingsley, in his speeches, sermons, and books, especially those directed to children, continually emphasized, directly, or indirectly (as we have seen in The Water-Babies), that the best method of learning was to use one's eyes, common sense, and understanding -- "an honest study of the facts . . . as you can see them round you in daily life . . . ."[66]

Throughout Kingsley's active life, he advocated the teaching of science in all schools. Mother Carey, in an attempt to impress Tom (and the young readers of The Water-Babies) with the importance of science, tells him her version of the story of Epimetheus and Prometheus. She lauds Epimetheus as a man, who, through "working and grubbing on"

> understood so well which side his bread was buttered, and which way the cat jumped, that he began to make things which would work and go on working, too; and ships, and railroads, and steam ploughs, and electric telegraphs, and all the things which you see in the Great Exhibition; and to foretell famine, and bad weather . . . . And his children are the men of science, who get good lasting work done in the world. . . .[67]

Kingsley lived to see the fulfillment of his dreams in connection with scientific education:

> Natural science is now occupying a more and more important place in education. Oxford, Cambridge, the

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[66] Ibid., III, p. 217.

[67] Kingsley, The Water-Babies, pp. 312-313.

> London University, the public schools, one after the other, are taking up the subject in earnest; so are the middle class schools throughout the country; and I hope that my children . . . will see the day when ignorance of the primary laws and facts of science will be looked on as a defect . . . .[68]

Insofar as "chemical science" was concerned, Kingsley was a visionary. The words of our present-day pollution fighters seem to echo a speech he made about "Human Soot" in Liverpool in 1870. We have not yet reached the time he predicted "when, by improved chemical science, every foul vapor which now escapes from the chimney of a manufactory, polluting the air, destroying the vegetation, shall be seized, utilized, converted into some profitable substance, then the Black Country shall be black no longer, and the streams once more run crystal clear . . . ."[69] In The Water-Babies, Kingsley suggested a practical use for the sewage which polluted the streams. Instead of letting sewers run into the water, people should put "the stuff upon the fields like thrifty reasonable souls . . . ."[70]

While one gets the impression from Kingsley's speeches and sermons that he would have liked to spend most of his time in sci-

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[68]Charles Kingsley, "Physical Science," Good Words, ed. Norman Macleod (London, 1871), p. 387.

[69]Kingsley, Letters and Memories, Works, IV, p. 62.

[70]Kingsley, The Water-Babies, p. 211.

entific research, he obviously felt that his first duty was his work as a parson. He corresponded with the scientific greats of his day, and, in a letter to Charles Darwin, expressed his longing to study nature in the light of Darwin's discoveries:

> Your explanation of an old puzzle of mine -- Lathyrus nissolia -- is a masterpiece . . . . Ah, that I could begin to study nature anew, now that you have made it to me a live thing, not a dead collection of names. But my work lies elsewhere now. Your work, nevertheless, helps mine at every turn. It is better that the division of labour should be complete, and that each man should do only one thing, while he looks on, as he finds time, at what others are doing, and so gets laws from other sciences which he can apply, as I do, to my own.[71]

Kingsley constantly applied "laws from other sciences" in all his writings, especially in his attempts to convince the public of the need for sanitary reform. He was very much aware of what he referred to as "universal laws," and criticized people who were always ready, as he says in The Water-Babies, to give "spiritual causes for physical phenomena."[72]

One year, after it had rained almost incessantly for three months in Eversley, the local farmers asked Kingsley to include in his next service the prayer against rain. He refused to do so, and his parishioners were annoyed. He answered their

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[71]Kingsley, Letters and Memories, Works, III, p. 177.

[72]Kingsley, The Water-Babies, p. 255.

criticism with a sermon entitled, "Why Should We Pray for Fair Weather?" Kingsley believed the rains were necessary to cleanse the drains of refuse at a time when cholera was again a threat. He told his flock that everything in nature was in balance. At times, in order to maintain this balance, more than the average amount of rain must fall. His main argument was that "the weather, my friends, depends upon no arbitrary changes in the will of God: but on laws as fixed and certain as those by which the seed becomes a plant, or by which a stone falls to the ground."[73]

Kingsley has Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid make the point that these "so well ordered" natural laws were originally set in motion by God:

> I cannot help punishing people when they do wrong. I like it no more than they do; I am often very, very sorry for them, poor things; but I cannot help it. For I work by machinery, just like an engine, and am full of wheels and springs inside; and am wound up very carefully . . . once and for all, long ago, so that I cannot help going.[74]

After England had suffered through two cholera epidemics, Kingsley preached a series of three sermons under the title "Who Causes Pestilence?" In the first of these sermons, he said:

> We have just been praying to God to remove from us the cholera, which we call a judgement of God . . . .

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[73]Kingsley, Letters and Memories, Works, III, p. 117.

[74]Kingsley, The Water-Babies, pp. 221-222.

> Do not let us believe this time . . . in the pitiable, insincere way in which all England believed when the cholera was here sixteen years ago. When they saw human beings dying by thousands, they all got frightened, and proclaimed repentance . . . . But did they repent of and confess those sins which had caused the cholera?[75]

He spoke of filth, foul water, foul air, foul food, foul bedrooms, laziness, and toleration of these conditions, as sins. In a speech on "The Water Supply of London," he stated that people "are often content to drink, under the name of water, fluids which physicians know well, and indeed often warn them in vain, to be mere diluted poison. . . ."[76]

Kingsley frequently remarked that children were the innocent victims of the lack of proper sanitation. He was therefore particularly impatient with those who, after the death of a child from the cholera, spoke of "God's will." He pointed out that God, "who does not wish the child's soul to die, may possibly have created that child's body for the purpose of its not dying except in a good old age."[77] In The Water-Babies, he deplores the death of "all the little children in

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[75]Charles Kingsley, "First Sermon on the Cholera," Sermons on National Subjects, The Works of Charles Kingsley (London, 1885), XXII, 135.

[76]Charles Kingsley, "The Water Supply of London," New Miscellanies (Boston, 1860), p. 207.

[77]Charles Kingsley, "Speech in Behalf of The Ladies' Sanitary Association," Ibid., p. 224.

alleys and courts, and tumbledown cottages, who die by fever and cholera . . . and nasty complaints which no one has any business to have, and which no one will have some day, when folks have common sense . . . ."[78]

The Public Health Bill, passed in 1872, included many of the reforms for which Kingsley had fought. While one cannot attribute the passing of this Act directly to Kingsley, certainly he did a great deal to awaken public awareness to the need for sanitary reform. Certain passages of the Act, mentioned above, sound like extracts from Kingsley's works:

> Prohibition as to putting . . .sewage matters, &c. into streams . . . .
> Closing of foul pumps or wells . . . . Buildings unfit for human habitation . . . .
> Water supplied for domestic purposes to be analyzed [for impurities] . . . .[79]

Kingsley, four years before his death, was able to say:

> The civilized world is learning . . . to live more and more according to the laws of physical science, which are, as the great Lord Bacon said of old, none other than 'Vox Dei in rebus revelata' -- the voice of God revealed in facts; and it is gaining, by so doing, year by year, more and more of health and wealth. If you want to know what the study of physical science

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[78]Kingsley, The Water-Babies, p. 217.

[79]Great Britain, Parliament, Sessional Papers (House of Commons), 1872, Public Bills, Vol. IV, Bill 48: "Public Health Bill," pp. 252-253.

has done for man, look as a single instance, at the science which does not merely go to cure disease . . . but tries to prevent disease, and, thank God, is succeeding beyond our highest expectations.[80]

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[80]Kingsley, "Physical Science," p. 388.

CHAPTER III

SATIRE

> The Menippean satire deals less with people as such than with mental attitudes. Pedants, bigots, cranks, parvenus, virtuosi, enthusiasts, rapacious and incompetent professional men of all kinds, are handled in terms of their occupational approach to life as distinct from their social behaviour . . . . The Menippean satirist . . . shows his exuberance . . . in overwhelming his pedantic targets with an avalanche of their own jargon.[81]
>
> --Northrop Frye

While some critics recognized satiric elements in The Water-Babies, few realized the scope of Kingsley's satire in this book. One of the evils Kingsley wanted to emphasize was the plight of the child labourer:

> He [Tom] lived in a great town in the North country, where there were plenty of chimneys to sweep, and plenty of money for Tom to earn and his master to spend. He could not read nor write, and did not care to do either; and he never washed himself, for there was no water up the court where he lived. He had never been taught to say his prayers. He never had

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[81]Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (New York, 1967), p. 309.

> heard of God, or of Christ, except in words which you have never heard, and which it would have been well if he had never heard. He cried half his time, and laughed the other half. He cried when he had to climb the dark flues, rubbing his poor knees and elbows raw; and when the soot got into his eyes, which it did every day in the week; and when his master beat him, which he did every day in the week; and when he had not enough to eat, which happened every day in the week likewise.[82]

The main evil Kingsley wanted to satirize, however, was the cruelty -- whether deliberate or well-intentioned -- of adults to children. While successfully accomplishing this aim, Kingsley also attacks many other social ills, inadequacies, manners, and pretensions of his time. His favourite targets were, among others, doctors, educators, and politicians. He was also not above poking fun at his learned and respected scientific contemporaries.

In the latter connection, the Hippocampus minor dispute between Professors Owen and Huxley[83] inspired one of his

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[82]Kingsley, The Water-Babies, pp. 3-4.

[83]In 1861, the British Association met at Cambridge. Kingsley was present when Professors Huxley and Owen were "protagonists in the classic Hippocampus minor controversy . . . . In this debate over the classification of mammals according to their brains, Owen had elevated man above the rest of nature on account of his brain; Huxley insisted that the mind as well as the body was a product of evolution, and pointed to his discoveries, such as that the Hippocampus minor is found in the brains of both man and ape, to substantiate this." Leo Justin Henkin, Darwinism in the English Novel (New York, 1963), p. 83.

most comic satires, "Speech of Lord Dundreary in Section D, on Friday Last on the Great Hippocampus Question," which was circulated among his friends:

> of course we were very much delighted, and, I may say, quite interested, to find that we had all hippopotamuses in our brains . . . . Certainly, I never felt one in mine; but perhaps it's dead. . . . They say hippopotamuses feed on water. No, I don't think that, because teetotallers feed on water, and they are always lean, and the hippo's fat, at least in the Zoo. Live in water, it must be; and there's none in my brain. There was when I was a baby, my aunt says, but they tapped me; so I suppose the hippopotamus died of drought. No -- stop. It wasn't a hippopotamus after all, it was hip -- hip -- not hip, hip, hurrah, you know, that comes after dinner . . . and the section hasn't dined, at least since last night . . . . No. I recollect now. Hippocampus it was. Hippocampus, a sea-horse; I learnt that at Eton; hippos, sea, and campus, a horse -- no -- campus, a sea, and hippos, a horse, that's right. Only campus ain't a sea, it's a field, I know that; Campus Martius -- I was swished for that at Eton . . . .[84]

In the midst of all this nonsense, Kingsley again refers to his "degradation theory:"

> about men being apes, I say, why shouldn't it be the other way, and the apes be men? do you see? . . . . I should be glad indeed if it was so, if it was only for my aunt's sake . . . [otherwise] what is to become of her precious soul?[85]

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[84]Kingsley, Letters and Memories, Works, III, pp. 145-146.

[85]Ibid., p. 146.

It seems that Professor Owen was of the opinion that apes could not be the ancestors of man since there was a "gulf" between man and ape. Professor Huxley stated the gulf was bridged over by a structure -- the "Hippocampus minor."[86] Somehow, delightfully, Kingsley, in his Dundreary speech, and in his further reference to the great controversy in The Water-Babies, turned Professor Huxley's very scientific term for the all-important evolutionary bridge into "hippopotamus major:"

> The professor . . . held very strange theories about a good many things. He had even got up once at the British Association, and declared that apes had hippopotamus majors in their brains just as men have . . . . You may think that there are other more important differences between you and an ape, such as being able to speak, and make machines, and know right from wrong, and say your prayers, and other little matters of that kind; but that is a child's fancy, my dear. Nothing is to be depended on but the great hippopotamus test. If you have a hippopotamus major in your brain, you are no ape, though you had four hands, no feet, and were more apish than the apes of all aperies. But, if a hippopotamus major is discovered in one single ape's brain, nothing will save your great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-greater-greatest-grandmother from having been an ape too. No, my dear little man; always remember that the one, true, certain, final, and all-important difference between you and an ape is, that you have a hippopotamus major in your brain, and it has none . . . as Lord Dundreary and others would put it -- nobody but men have hippopotamuses in their brains; so, if a hippopotamus was discovered in an ape's brain, why it would not be one, you know, but something else.[87]

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[86] Ibid., p. 147.

[87] Kingsley, The Water-Babies, pp. 172-173.

Kingsley again chaffs his friends by "proving" there are no babies on the moon:

> there being no atmosphere, there can be no evaporation; and, therefore, the dew-point can never fall below 71.5° below zero of Fahrenheit: and, therefore, it cannot be cold enough there about four o'clock in the morning to condense the babies' mesenteric apophthegms into their left ventricles; and, therefore, they can never catch the hooping-cough; and if they do not have the hooping-cough, they cannot be babies at all; and, therefore, there are no babies in the moon.--Q.E.D.[88]

Kingsley continues to enjoy himself by playing upon the fact that scientists and medical men have a propensity to use terminology which is incomprehensible to the layman (and, one suspects, to many scientific colleagues). Professor Ptthmllnsprts, "a very great naturalist and chief professor of Necrobioneopalaeonthydrochthonanthropopithekology in the new university which the King of the Cannibal Islands had founded," traps Tom in his net. When the professor's niece (Ellie) says Tom is a water-baby, the professor denies it. The moment he does, he regrets it. Although the professor realizes Tom is a water-baby, the professor (like many adults) is unable to admit to a child that he is in the wrong. Tom, terrified lest he be made into a dirty chimney-sweep again, bites the professor's hand, and escapes. Ellie, in an attempt to recapture

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[88] Ibid., pp. 192-193.

Tom, is fatally injured in a fall. The professor, prostrated by grief and remorse, has a mental breakdown. All the doctors in the country are summoned, and "of course every one of them flatly contradicted the other: else what use is there in being men of science?"[89]

Revealing his low opinion of doctors, Kingsley gives a sample of what he terms "true medical language, one half bad Latin, the other half worse Greek, and the rest what might have been English if they had only learnt to write it" -- the jargon of the baffling (and baffled) physicians:

> The subanhypaposupernal anastomoses of peritomic diacellurite in the encephalo digital region of the distinguished individual of whose symptomatic phaenomena we had the melancholy honour (subsequently to a preliminary diagnostic inspection) of making an inspectorial diagnosis, presenting the interexclusively quadrilateral and antinomian diathesis known as Bumpsterhausen's blue follicles . . . .[90]

Continuing his attack on long words, Kingsley becomes more satirical. The wife of the hapless patient is so frightened at this long-winded diagnosis that she "ran for her life . . . for fear of being squashed by the words and strangled by the sentence." She later petitions the government to put a tax on long words, on

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[89]Ibid., pp. 168-173.

[90]Ibid., p. 183.

an ascending scale, according to their syllabic content. The Chancellor of the Exchequer thinks it is a wonderful idea. When he presents his bill, however, it is strongly opposed by most of the Irish members on the ground that, "in a free country no man was bound either to understand himself or let others understand him."[91] The bill fell through on the first reading. "Now the doctors had it all their own way." The poor patient had to submit to:

Borage.
Cauteries.
. . . . .
Water of Nile.
Capers.
. . . . .
Hops.
Ambergris.
Mandrake pillows.
Dormouse fat.
Hares' ears.
Starvation.
Camphor.
. . . . .
Strait-waistcoats.
Bullyings.
Bumpings.
Blisterings.
Bleedings.
Bucketings with cold water.
. . . . .

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[91] Ibid., pp. 183-185.

and when the above "remedies" did not work:

> Coaxing.
> Kissing.
> . . . .
> Good Advice
> Gardening.
> Croquet.
> Musical soirées.
> Aunt Sally.
> . . . .
> The Saturday Review.
> . . . .
> Madame Rachel's Elixir of Youth.

and many other "cures" including "mesmerism," "pure bosh," as well as Homoeopathy, Hydropathy, Pyropathy, Geopathy, Atmopathy, Sympathy, Hermopathy, Meteoropathy, Antipathy, Apathy, and

> With all other ipathies and opathies which Noodle has invented and Foodle tried . . . .[92]

Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid dispenses just **retribution** upon these gentlemen who were also guilty of giving little children too much "physic." First she "pulled all their teeth out; and then she bled them all round; and then she dosed them with calomel, and jalap; and salts and senna, and brimstone and treacle . . . ." and then she gave them a "great emetic of mustard and water, and no basons, and began all over again . . . ."[93]

Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid has a busy time of it, as she also

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[92] Ibid., pp. 185-191

[93] Ibid., p. 224.

suitably punishes other well-meaning evil-doers, such as careless nursery-maids who bound babies very tightly into perambulators. She bound the maids in a similar manner "till they were quite sick and stupid, and would have had sunstrokes: but, being under the water, they could only have water-strokes . . . ."[94] All this activity tires the lady. She, therefore, "takes a break" for lunch, after which, with renewed vigour, she tackles "the best part of the day" -- the birch-rod wielding schoolmasters. Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid boxed these gentlemen's ears, hit them over the head with rulers, and accused them of telling tales. The schoolmasters protested their innocence. The more they defended their honour, however, the more Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid insisted they were not telling the truth. Finally, she whipped them very "soundly with the great birch-rod, and set them each an imposition of three hundred thousand lines of Hebrew to learn by heart before she came back the next Friday."[95]

> 'Maxima debetur pueris reverentia' -- The greatest reverence is due to children . . . .[96]

That Kingsley believed the above statement has been demonstrated in The Water-Babies. He also "practiced what he preached."

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[94] Ibid., p. 225.

[95] Ibid., pp. 225-227.

[96] Ibid., p. 177.

Mrs. Kingsley said of him:

> Punishment was a word little known in his house. Corporal punishment was never allowed. His own childish experience of the sense of degradation and unhealthy fear it produced, of the antagonism it called out between a child and its parents, a pupil and its teachers, gave him a horror of it. It had other evils, too, he considered, besides degrading both parties concerned. 'More than half the lying of children,' he said, 'is I believe, the result of fear, and the fear of punishment' . . . . Justice and mercy, and that rigid self-control, which kept him from speaking a hasty word or harbouring a mean suspicion, combined with a divine tenderness were his governing principles in all his home relationships.[97]

Mrs. Kingsley adds that Kingsley respected as well as loved his children, "from the early days . . . the young father hung with reverent and yet passionate wonder over the baby in its cradle, to grown-up years when he treated them as friends and equals."[98]

Kingsley's son corroborated Mrs. Kingsley's statements:

> 'Perfect love casteth out all fear,' was the motto on which my father based his theory of bringing up his children; and this theory he put into practice from their babyhood till he left them men and women.[99]

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[97] Kingsley, Letters and Memories, Works, III, pp. 4-6.

[98] Ibid., p. 7.

[99] Ibid., p. 7.

As mentioned previously, Kingsley had very definite ideas about education:

> It is not good for little boys to be told everything, and never to be forced to use their own wits. They would learn, then, no more than they do at Dr. Dulcimer's famous suburban establishment for the idler members of the youthful artistocracy, where the masters learn the lessons, and the boys hear them . . . .[100]

Tom, in his travels, comes to the Isle of Tomtoddies (all heads and no bodies), originally Gulliver's famous Isle of Laputa. As Tom approaches this island, he hears a terrible weeping, wailing, and whining. He is eventually able to make out some words -- "the Tomtoddies' song which they sing morning and evening, and all night to their great idol, Examination -- 'I can't learn my lesson: the examiner is coming!'" On the Isle of Tomtoddies, playthings are forbidden. The inhabitants of the island appear to be assorted vegetables, and about half of them are decayed. Those which are still alive appeal to Tom for help in answering questions such as: "What was the name of Mutius Scaevola's thirteenth cousin's grandmother's maid's cat?" "How long would it take a school-inspector of average activity to tumble head over heels from London to York?" To Tom's query as to what good it would do if he told

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[100]Kingsley, The Water-Babies, p. 209.

them the answers, they reply that they don't know -- all they know is that the examiner is coming.[101] Kingsley was obviously implying that examinations put children under too much stress and that too much useless information was being taught. Today, many educators and educational psychologists believe this is true of our educational system. Insofar as examinations are concerned, the trend is toward class work and research papers as better and fairer measurements of a pupil's progress. Educators also feel -- as Kingsley evidently felt about Dr. Dulcimer's method (rote learning) -- that teachers should put more emphasis on the understanding of fundamental concepts to force children "to use their own wits."

Kingsley was also very much against too much stress on study, which he felt was detrimental to the health. Tom, puzzled and upset by the decaying and neurotic vegetable children he sees everywhere, has a conversation with an old stick, "which belonged to good Roger Ascham." The stick informs Tom that:

> there were as pretty little children as you could wish to see, and might have been so still if they had been only left to grow up like human beings, and then handed over to me; but their foolish fathers and mothers, instead of letting them pick flowers, and make dirt-pies, and get birds' nests, and dance round the gooseberry bush,

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[101] Ibid., pp. 336-338.

> as little children should, kept them always at lessons, working, working, working, learning week-day lessons all week-days, and Sunday lessons all Sunday, and weekly examinations every Saturday, and monthly examinations every month, and yearly examinations every year, everything seven times over, as if once was not enough . . . till their brains grew big, and their bodies grew small, and they were all changed into turnips, with little but water inside . . . .[102]

The poor little turnips, in their haste and fright to prepare for the examiner, "crammed themselves so fast . . . that they burst and popped by dozens all around him, till the place sounded like Aldershot on a field day . . . ."[103]

Before Tom leaves this sad island, he passes the tomb of a poor turnip who had succumbed to educational strain. The deceased's parents had erected a long epitaph over his tomb extolling his "wonderful talents, early development, and unparalleled precocity." Later, however, Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid changed the wording to:

> Instruction sore long time I bore,
> And cramming was in vain;
> Till heaven did please my woes to ease,
> With water on the brain.[104]

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[102] Ibid., p. 340.

[103] Ibid., p. 342.

[104] Ibid., pp. 339-343.

As for the little student, no doubt he became a water-baby, because Kingsley tells his little readers that the water-babies are:

> All the little children whom the good fairies take to, because their cruel mothers and fathers will not; all who are untaught and brought up heathens, and all who come to grief by ill-usage or ignorance or neglect; all the little children who are overlaid, or given gin when they are young, or are let to drink out of hot kettles, or to fall into the fire . . . and all the little children who have been killed by cruel masters, and wicked soldiers . . . .[105]

Prejudice and intolerance do not escape satirical comment in The Water-Babies. When Tom meets the salmon couple (previously referred to), he happens to mention that he had just played with some trout. The lady salmon's reaction is quite snobbish: "Ugh! What low company!" She confides that she had actually heard that a trout had had the temerity to propose to a lady salmon. The gentleman salmon hopes "that there are very few ladies of our race who would degrade themselves by listening to such a creature for an instant." Kingsley comments on the incident:

> For you must know no enemies are so bitter against each other as those who are of the same race; and a salmon looks on a trout, as some great folks look o n some little folks, as something justtoo much like like himself to be tolerated.[106]

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[105] Ibid., p. 217.

[106] Ibid., pp. 141-143.

Kingsley does not forget to satirize slavish fashion followers. Tom, shortly after his metamorphosis, watched, with great enjoyment, the antics of some lady caddises:

> One would begin with some pebbles; then she would stick on a piece of green weed; then she found a shell, and stuck it on too; and the poor shell was alive, and did not like at all being taken to build houses with: but the caddis did not let him have any voice in the matter, being rude and selfish, as vain people are apt to be; then she stuck on a piece of rotten wood, then a very smart pink stone, and so on, till she was patched all over like an Irishman's coat. Then she found a long straw, five times as long as herself, and said, 'Hurrah! my sister has a tail, and I'll have one too;' and she stuck it on her back, and marched about with it quite proud, though it was very inconvenient indeed. And, at that, tails became all the fashion among the caddis-baits in that pool, as they were at the end of the Long Pond last May, and they all toddled about with long straws sticking out behind, getting between each other's legs, and tumbling over each other, and looking so ridiculous that Tom laughed at them till he cried, as we did. But they were quite right, you know; for people must always follow the fashion, even if it be spoon-bonnets.[107]

Kingsley is not so amused when he refers to the silly fashion-minded women who put tight stays and tight shoes on their children. Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid punishes these ladies, but not severely, because they had meant well, and had merely been foolish.[108]

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[107] Ibid., pp. 101-102.

[108] Ibid., pp. 224-225.

When Kingsley describes the home of Sir John, he humorously points up the penchant of male heirs to leave "their mark upon the place" by using famous architectural masterpieces as models. The cumulative effect on Harthover House is an incongruous mixture of "nineteen different styles."

> For the attics were Anglo-Saxon.
> The third-floor Norman.
> The second Cinque-cento.
> The first-floor Elizabethan.
> The right wing Pure Doric.
> The centre Early English, with a huge portico, copied from the Parthenon.
> The left wing Pure Boeotian . . . .
> The grand staircase was copied from the Catacombs at Rome.
> The back staircase from the Tajmahal at Agra. . . .
> The cellars were copied from the caves of Elephanta.
> The offices from the Pavilion at Brighton.
>
> And the rest from nothing in heaven, or earth, or under the earth.[109]

Not all of Kingsley's satire is comic. He is quite biting when he refers to the intolerant behaviour of most people toward those who are "different." He illustrates this peculiarity of the human species allegorically by a Chaucerian parliament of fowls held at "Allfowlsness." On trial is the "prettiest, neatest, young lady-crow," who is being taunted and bullied because she had

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[109] Ibid., pp. 23-24.

not stolen any grouse eggs, and had had the gall to declare that she would not steal any. The lady-crow is pecked to death before Tom can help her. Kingsley reveals his opinion of American democracy when he calls the attacking birds:

> true republicans, these hoodies, who do every one just what he likes, and make other people do so too; so that, for any freedom of speech, thought, or action, which is allowed among them, they might as well be American citizens of the new school.[110]

The little readers of The Water-Babies are consoled by the fact that the fairies turned the lady-crow into a beautiful bird of paradise "with a green velvet suit and a long tail, and sent her to eat fruit in the Spice Islands." Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid is also right on the job insofar as the evil hoodies are concerned. She lures them to a strychnine-filled dead dog, and justice is done.[111]

Kingsley brings wildlife conservation, a universal concern, to the reader's attention as the last of the "Gairfowl" (all alone on the Allalonestone) relates the sad history of her species:

> Once we were a great nation, and spread over all the Northern Isles. But men shot us so, and knocked us on the head, and took our eggs . . . the sailors used

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[110] Ibid., pp. 286-290.

[111] Ibid., pp. 277-281.

> to lay a plank from the rock on board the thing they called their ship, and drive us along the plank by hundreds, till we tumbled down into the ship's waist in heaps; and then, I suppose, they ate us, the nasty fellows![112]

The Water-Babies is not free of evidence of Kingsley's prejudice against the Catholic religion. In a passage reminiscent of Popeian juxtaposition, he describes the ills which fly out of Pandora's box:

> Measles,
> Monks,
> Scarlatina,
> Idols,
> Hooping-Coughs,
> Popes,
> Wars,
> . . . . . .
> Despots,
> Demagogues . . . .[113]

When Tom arrives safely on the shore of the "Other-end-of-Nowhere," Kingsley takes the opportunity to satirize various and sundry evils. He ridicules "all the wise people instructing mankind in the 'science' of spirit-rapping while their house was burning over their heads."[114] He attacks untalented authors whose

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[112] Ibid., pp. 277-281.

[113] Ibid., pp. 310-311.

[114] Ibid., p. 324.

"stupid books" lie everywhere in "Waste-paper-land."[115] Kingsley also focuses on the publishing trade as a target, much more caustically, in Two Years Ago. It seems that the custom, of some publishing houses of "lionizing" young authors, and encouraging them to cater to the less discriminating (and greater number) of the reading public, existed in Kingsley's time too:

> If a young gentleman, invited to enrol himself in the Mutual-puffery Society which meets every Monday and Friday in Hatchgoose the publisher's drawing-room, is willing to pledge himself thereto in the mystic cup of tea, is he not as solemnly bound thenceforth to support those literary Catilines in their efforts for the subversion of common sense, good taste, and established things in general, as if he had pledged them, as he would have done in Rome of old in his own life-blood?[116]

The only noteworthy change, since Kingsley's day, is that the liquid used for the pledge is a "mystic" mixture known as the cocktail. Tom, continuing his journey, passes "the sea of slops, to the mountain of messes, and 'the territory of tuck.'" The latter ground is very sticky going because the road is made of bad candy and bad food. These non-nutritive tidbits are made by "foolish and wicked people . . . who actually go and steal receipts out of Madame Science's big book to invent poisons for little children." On the day of retribution,

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[115] Ibid., p. 322.

[116] Kingsley, Two Years Ago, p. 82.

Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid will have a fitting punishment for these particular people -- a very nasty stomach-ache induced through forced eating of their own products.[117]

Kingsley hits at some of his religious colleagues when he mentions the wise men of Gotham who were bricking up the town gate because "it was so wide that little folks could not get through." When Tom asked why, they told him they were "expanding their liturgy."[118] While only Kingsley knew what he meant by this enigmatic and apparently contradictory statement, the meaning might be contained in correspondence, between Kingsley and Maurice, which refers to interpretations of the Bible and the Prayer-book. In a letter to Maurice, Kingsley states that "I have delayed writing to you about the Essays [Maurice's Theological Essays] till I had read them over many times . . . you must expect good pious people to accuse you of misinterpreting Scripture and preaching a new gospel . . . and of the very faults which you and I should accuse them." The following, a continuation of the above, seems to have a more direct relation to the reference in The Water-Babies: "on the whole, the outlook

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[117]Kingsley, The Water-Babies, pp. 322-323.

[118]Ibid., p. 328.

is perfectly awful, when one sees the mountains of rubbish which have to be cleared before people can be made to understand their Bible and Prayer-book . . . . I think, too, that in this way so much of the real liberality of our Articles and Liturgy might be made evident." He tells Maurice "if you go steadily on the offensive and proclaim yourself champion of the honest and plain meaning of our formularies, and hurl the onus probandi on the popular party, you will frighten them, get a hearing from the unorthodox, and bring over to your side the great mass who fear change, while they love and trust their formularies enough to be glad to have the right interpretation of them."[119] In a letter to Kingsley, on the same subject, Maurice says:

> we should not see so much violent straining and perverting of truth to serve a purpose; we should have much less idolatry of the Bible, and much more reverence for it. And the hard-working clergy of our parishes . . . would find a clearness in their minds . . . instead of being obliged, as is now so much the case, either to shut their eyes against any new light or else to destroy and reconstruct their system each time that any is vouchsafed to them.[120]

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[119]Kingsley, Letters and Memories, Works, II, pp. 117-118.

[120]Frederick Maurice, The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice (New York, 1884), I, pp. 373-374.

The trend toward fragmentation of long-established empires receives sharp criticism from Kingsley. Tom eventually arrives at the land of Hearsay, "in which there are no less than thirty and odd kings, beside half a dozen Republics, and perhaps more by next mail."[121] At this point, Kingsley takes the opportunity to comment on the trivial and obscure reasons why nations and people war against one another: "And there [in the land of Hearsay] he fell in with a deep, dark, deadly, and destructive war, waged by the princes and potentates of those parts, both spiritual and temporal, against what do you think? One thing I am sure of. That unless I told you, you would never know . . . ."[122] The present-day reader of The Water-Babies cannot help but think of the tragic Irish Protestant-Catholic quarrel, and of Biafra.

People in this strange land are all running away, and, at the same time, running after a "poor, lean, seedy, hard-working old giant . . . ." This giant was "made up principally of fish bones and parchment, put together with wire and Canada balsam; and smelt strongly of spirits, though he never drank

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[121]Kingsley, The Water-Babies, p. 329.

[122]Ibid., p. 326.

anything but water . . . ." In addition to a butterfly-net in one hand, and a geological hammer in the other, the giant had numerous pockets "full of collecting boxes, bottles, microscopes, telescopes, barometers, ordnance maps, scalpels, forceps, photographic apparatus, and all other tackle for finding out everything about everything . . . ." Tom suggests that the giant stop running and let the people come to him. The giant points out that if he did, "all the butterflies and cockyolybirds would fly past me, and then I should catch no more new species . . . ." He laments the fact that, during his short conversation with Tom, "at least nine new species have escaped . . . ."[123] Kingsley is obviously commenting on the reluctance of men to accept progress. The world is therefore always a few steps behind the giant (symbol of scientific progress) because he cannot wait for man's slow adjustment to change. The giant must not only keep trying to make new discoveries but try to get his previous innovations accepted. "So the giant ran round after the people, and the people ran round after the giant, and they are running unto this day . . . ."[124]

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[123] Ibid., pp. 330-333.

[124] Ibid., p. 335.

It can be seen from the passages cited above that, while Kingsley's satire was wide-ranging, his very real concern for children influenced the choice of many of his targets. In my opinion, Kingsley was successful in his aim at "what all Mortals may correct."[125]

Is The Water-Babies a successful children's book in view of the satire it contains? As a fairy-tale, The Water-Babies received an enthusiastic welcome from the public in 1863, and the fact that the book continues to sell as a children's book testifies to its success in that category. In 1951, an unsigned article in The Times Literary Supplement included the following statement on the popularity of The Water-Babies:

> Kingsley is at his best in The Water-Babies. He dedicated it to his younger son, Grenville Arthur, who was aged five when it appeared, and to all other good little boys. It was hailed at once, and not only by children, with astonishment and delight. . . . The book ran into many editions, was translated into many languages . . . .[126]

Since the publication of this book, there have been critics who also appreciated its satiric elements. In 1863, the anonymous author of an article in The Anthropological

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[125] Jonathan Swift, "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift, D.S.P.D.," Jonathan Swift: Selected Prose and Poetry, ed. by Edward Rosenheim, Jr. (New York, 1959), p. 326.

[126] "Kingsley as Children's Writer," The Times Literary Supplement (June 15, 1951), p. 2.

Review observed that "the disciples of the false philosophies which it satirizes, will hardly relish the castigation administered . . . . The whole episode relating to Professor Ptthmhlnsprts . . . should be perused by every savant . . . . We must pass it over here, as well as many other brilliant passages."[127] In 1954, Northrop Frye said:

> The Menippean adventure story may . . . be pure fantasy, as it is in the literary fairy tale. The Alice books are perfect Menippean satires, and so is The Water-Babies . . . .[128]

The author of The Times Literary Supplement article also remarked that the fame of The Water-Babies was such that the book "was read to the little son of Queen Emma of the Sandwich Islands by his father, King Kahehamema IV . . . ."[129] The little prince (and other children who hear or read the story of The Water-Babies) could not possibly perceive or understand Kingsley's satire. The child would just enjoy the surface story. The King (and other parents who read The Water-Babies to their children), however, would understand. I believe that Kingsley hoped his satire would thus reach enough adults to have some corrective effect on the evils which he had attacked.

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[127]"Kingsley's Water Babies," The Anthropological Review, I, (1863), pp. 473-476.

[128]Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 310.

[129]Times Literary Supplement, p. 2.

Kingsley's daughter summed up the appeal of The Water-Babies to both children and adults when she said:

> while the book enchants the child, it gives the wise man food for thought.[130]

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[130]Rose G. Kingsley, Introduction to The Water-Babies [and] Glaucus (London, 1908), p. xi.

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