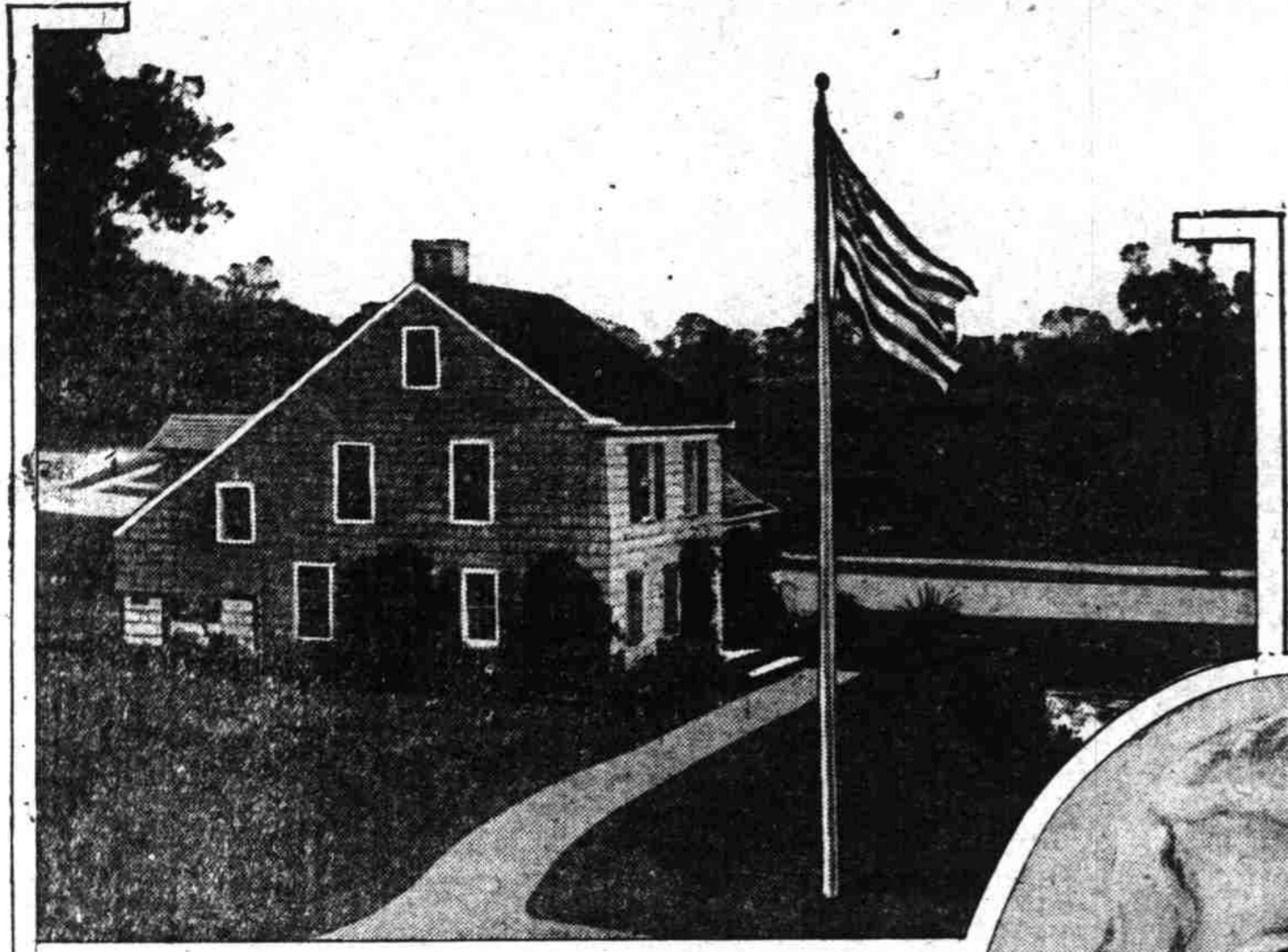


# PAINE'S LONG LOST REMAINS HOME BY PARCEL POST

## After Century of Wandering, What Little Is Left of the Great Patriot Is Recaptured to Rest on the Soil He Helped Make Free— Strange Story of 100 Years of Theft and Desecration, Mystery and Fraud.



Paine Museum, New Rochelle.

By William M. van der Weyde  
President of the Thomas Paine National Historical Association.

PARCEL post brought to New York from overseas a small wooden box such as is commonly used by business houses for the transmission of samples. A label on the cover bore the words "Of no commercial value."

The declaration was indeed true, for the box contained nothing of any intrinsic worth whatever. But so precious are the contents of this little wooden box to every patriotic American that its value is incalculable.

In the tiny case were two small envelopes, each containing hair, and there was also the wax cast of a human face.

Ironical, indeed, calling to mind his own oft quoted phrase that it is but one step from the sublime to the ridiculous—in the return to America, sans ceremony, by parcel post, of the last fragment that is known to be in existence of the stone body of Thomas Paine, patriot, statesman, philosopher; author of those epoch making works, "Common Sense," "The Crisis," "Rights of Man" and "Age of Reason."

Two locks of the great patriot's hair were in the little wooden box. There was also a wax cast made of Paine's face three years after his body was taken to England—thirteen years after death.

The return of the last vestige of the famous reformer's remains to the "United States of America" (a name invented and first used by Thomas Paine to designate the republic that he planned and contributed so largely to, found) terminates not only the remarkable travels of Paine's body—but also brings to a close an astonishing chapter of history covering a period of a century.

### He Died in 1809.

Thomas Paine died in New York June 8, 1809, in a little frame house that stood on the site of the present 59 Grove street—"Greenwich Village"—then described as "Greenwich, two miles from New York." He was buried, as provided in his will, in a plot 12 feet square, on the great farm presented to him in 1784 by the state of New York "in consideration of eminent services rendered to the United States in the progress of the late war, and as a testimony of the sense which the people of this state entertain of his distinguished merit," etc. (Laws of New York, Seventh Session, 1874, chapter 64, section XXXI.)

Ten years after Paine's burial, William Cobbett, the famous English radical, conceived the idea of disinterring the body of the great author, and hoped that by taking it to England he might awaken there an interest in Paine's remains and his writings, and that it would lead to a popular revolution.

In a public letter that Cobbett wrote from America September, 1819, to Lord Folkestone in England, he said:

"While such a fellow as pensioned Johnson, 'that slave of state,' stands in colossal marble in St. Paul's, Paine lies in a little hole under the grass and weeds of an obscure farm in America. There, however, he shall not lie unnoticed much longer.

"He belongs to England. His fame is the property of England; and if no other people will show that they value that fame, the people of England will.

"Yes, my lord, among the pleasures that I promise myself is that of seeing the name of Paine honored in every part of England, where base corruption caused him, while alive, to be burned in effigy. Never will England be what it ought to be until the marble of Pitt's monument is converted into a monument to the memory of Paine.

### Death Mask of Paine

Before the close of that same month (September, 1819) Cobbett had dug up the body and started off to England with it. The next number of Cobbett's Register (XXXV, page 382)



Death mask of Thomas Paine.

contained a report of the exhumation. Cobbett wrote:

"I have just done here a thing which I would do; that is, taken up the remains of Paine in order to convey them to England. . . . I found him lying in a corner of a barren, rugged field. . . . Our expedition set out from New York to the place—twenty-two miles off—at the peep of day, took up the coffin entire; and just as we found it it goes to England. Let it be considered the act of the reformers of England, Scotland and Ireland. In their name we opened the grave. And in their name will the tomb be raised."

The month following the disinterment, Cobbett arrived in England with his strange freight. The Hercules, carrying Cobbett, his personal and household goods and the large wooden box that inclosed the remains of Paine, reached Liverpool Nov. 21. A Liverpool newspaper reported Cobbett's arrival in these words:

"Arrival of Cobbett and Tom Paine's remains. The Hercules arrived on Sunday last, on board of which was the notorious Cobbett. . . . A large number of friends met him on the beach and cheered him to the inn, which is a considerable distance from the docks. On Wednesday he underwent the usual examination at the custom house yard, which occupied a considerable time, as he brought with him a deal of heavy luggage. The bones of Paine were deposited in a large wooden box and lodged in the custom house yard. When the box was opened, Cobbett observed:

"There, gentlemen, are the mortal remains of the immortal Thomas Paine." The skull was shown and the coffin plate accompanied it, but all that could be deciphered was "Paine, 180, aged 74 years." Cobbett was extremely attentive to the box and looked rather serious at the exhibition."

Now commenced the travels of Paine's bones through England; travels that resulted in the eventual disappearance of every part of the body save a tiny fragment of the brain and some locks of the hair.

Cobbett gave orders for the shipment of the body to his house in Bolt Court, Fleet street, London. There the body arrived intact, and it is likely that it was not disturbed until some years later.

In the meantime a report had been circulated to the effect that the body Cobbett took to England was not that of Paine. The Times and the Courier in London published this report, attributing the statement to Earl Grosvenor. A little pamphlet published in 1822 by Henry Stemma, in Leicester Square, and which he called "Cobbett's Gridiron," also inferred that the body was that of a negro.

Cobbett replied to Earl Grosvenor as follows:

Your lordship is represented as insinuating that these bones are not the bones of Paine. . . . I shall by and by cause them to be exhibited in the coffin and with the coffin plate, which came out of the ground with them, and



William Cobbett



Lock of Thomas Paine's hair

then you will see whether they will be displaced! (Register, XXXV, p. 599.)

In order to forever set at rest the stories then in circulation (that the body was not Paine's, but that of a negro) Cobbett had made that same year, 1822, a wax cast of the face. The head was in a remarkably fine state of preservation, when it is considered that it was then thirteen years after Paine's death and burial. The wax cast showed very plainly the

features of Thomas Paine; they were not those of a negro. Cobbett publicly exhibited the wax death-mask, and its exhibition seems to have effectually put an end to the story inspired by Earl Grosvenor.

### To be Put in Museum.

This is the wax mask that has just come over here, together with Paine's hair. The mask and hair will be added to the collection at the Thomas Paine National Museum at New Rochelle. The museum is located in the pretty little house that Thomas Paine erected a few years before his death on the farm given him by the state of

personal friend of Cobbett, abstracted from inside the skull a small part of the brain, and at the same time he took from the outside some of the hair.

Several years ago Moncre D. Conway, the eminent biographer of Paine and his predecessor as president of the Thomas Paine National Historical Association, succeeded in locating in London the fragment of Paine's brain, and he brought the relic back to America with him, presenting it to the association. In October, 1905, the little piece of that great brain that produced "Common Sense," "Rights of Man" and "Age of Reason," was restored with appropriate ceremonies to the locality from which Cobbett in 1819 had taken Paine's body. With the fragment of brain, when it was reinterred under the Paine monument in New Rochelle, was a printed copy of Benjamin Tilly's written account of the removal of brain and hair. It read as follows:

"Tuesday, January 7, 1833, at 1

was at Normandy Farm from the time of its shipment there from Bolt Court, London, to a few months after Cobbett's death. Several friends of Cobbett viewed the remains in that time.

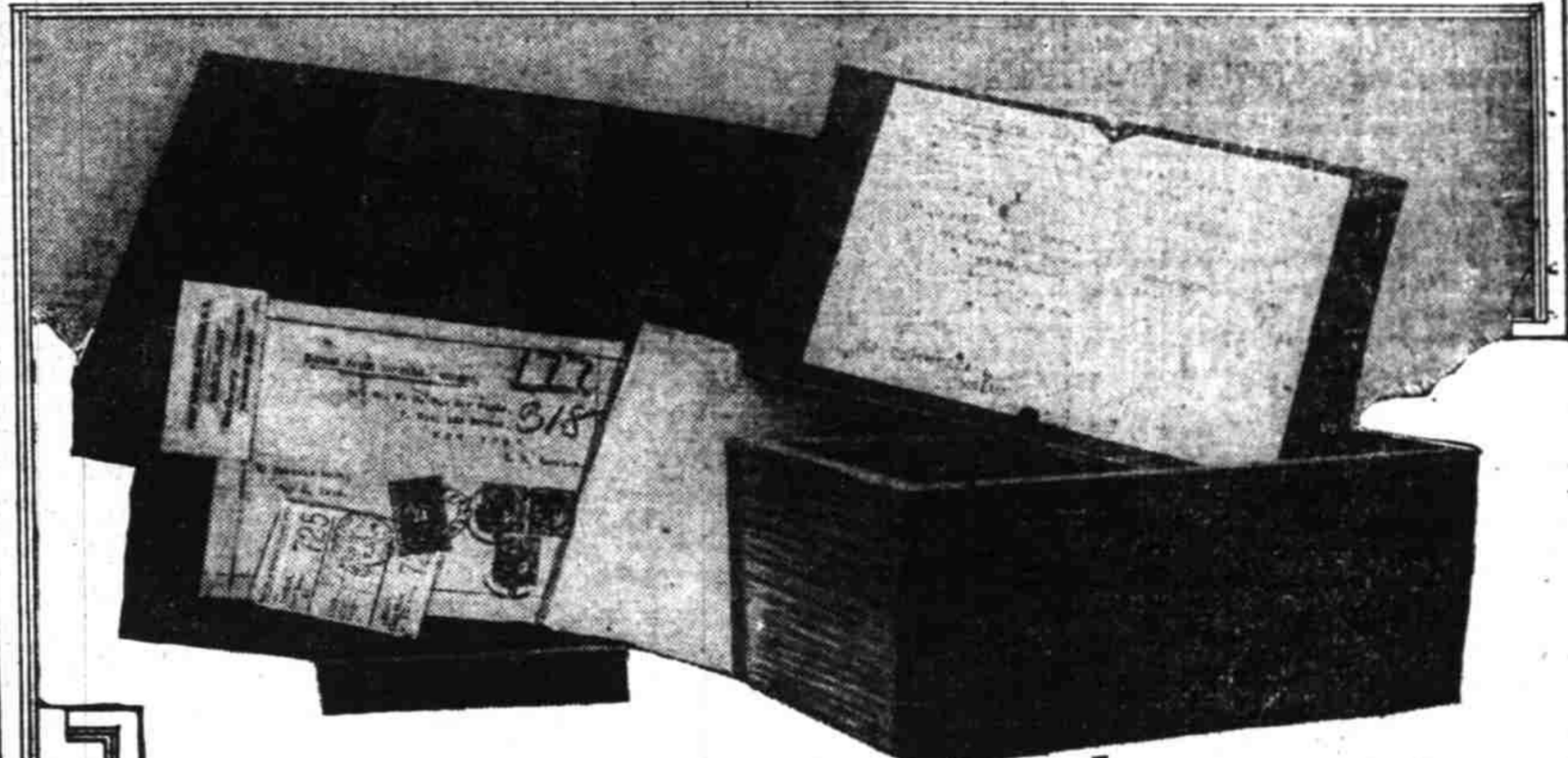
On October 27, 1835, James Paul Cobbett, son of William Cobbett, inscribed his name on the larger bones and in several places on the skull in order to insure their identification in future years.

Dr. Moncreu Conway, up to the time of his death in 1907, firmly believed that some day the skull, at least, would be found. "It is as likely as not," he told me, "that Paine's skull is in the office of some London physician—not as a Paine relic, but because doctors have human skulls for purposes of study. If the skull of Paine, or rather, if one that is alleged to be Paine's, turns up, it can readily be identified by the fact that it bears the name of Cobbett on it, and another word or two which I am keeping secret for the present."

The Rev. Robert Ainslie's connection with the bones resulted, no doubt, from the fact that his brother, who was famous as a veterinary surgeon, had some affiliation with the estate of Lord King at Ockham, not far from Cobbett's home at Normandy farm.

The son of Robert Ainslie, Oliver, a lawyer in London, informed Dr. Conway that his father had purchased the skull and right hand of Paine at Richards' auction rooms, 43 Rathbone Place, near Oxford street, London.

Benjamin Tilly, at about the time Oliver Ainslie referred to, was changing his abode and it is quite possible that he temporarily confided the box with Paine's bones to the auctioneer. It may be that either Richards himself, or one of his employes, abstracted the skull and right hand from the box and sold them to the clergyman. Certain it is that Tilly remained ignorant of the removal of any parts



Parcel Post package containing Thomas Paine's remains

*Tuesday January 7, 1833 at 1 o'clock at noon I went to 11 Bolt Court, Fleet Street, and there, with Mr. Gutzwill & Mr. Dean, I saw at the house of Mr. Cobbett, the remains of Mr. Thomas Paine, (that were brought from America by Mr. C.) when I procured some of his hair, and from his skull, took a portion of his brain, which had become hard, and which is almost perfectly black.*

Benjamin Tilly's certificate



Lock of Thomas Paine's hair

I had intended asking Dr. Conway, when I next saw him, to leave a record in writing, so that the "secret" might not perish with him. But I never again saw Dr. Conway. A few months after our conversation he died, quite suddenly, in Paris.

I have recently, however, by the merest chance, in the course of my investigations tracing the remains of Paine, discovered the "secret" for myself. I have made a record of it, which is filed away in the Paine association's archives.

In January, 1836, Cobbett's effects were sold at auction at Normandy farm. The box containing Paine's body was not put up for sale, although Jesse Oldfield, Cobbett's publisher, requested the auctioneer, Thomas Piggott, to offer it. After the sale, George West, trustee of the Cobbett estate, took possession of the box. He held it for nine years.

At the end of that period, the receiver being ended, he turned the box over to Tilly, who had been Cobbett's amanuensis, and who was an ardent admirer of both Cobbett and Paine. It was in March, 1844, that Cobbett's estate was sold at 13 Bedford Square, East London, Tilly's address at that time.

That next heard of the bones was in 1849, when, as alleged by a writer in Notes and Queries, January 25, 1889, he "saw Paine's bones in a box in the house of John Chennell, a corn merchant in Guildford." The writer, who signed himself "A Native of Guildford," went on to say that Chennell told him they had been bought at the Cobbett estate at Ash by someone who was ignorant of the contents of the box.

Chennell appears again in a letter to the Surrey Times, published January 19, 1889. This correspondent relates that Chennell had Paine's bones in a porcelain jar that was covered with parchment bearing the words, "The Great Paine's Bones." There were "only a very few bones inside the jar," he wrote. The discrepancies in the Chennell story are apparent. The Cobbett sale took place at Normandy farm, not at Ash. One writer tells of the bones in a box, while the other states that they were in a porcelain jar.

The story is not entirely impossible, however, but if Chennell had any of Paine's bones in his possession they were at best only a few of the bones. Cobbett's bones in 1849 were in Tilly's keeping, or the major portion of them.

In 1853 or 1854 the Rev. Robert Ainslie, secretary of the London City Mission, told Edward Truelove, a London publisher of reputation, that he had in his possession the skull and right hand of Thomas Paine. Truelove tried to question him, but his inquiries were evaded.

In later years Robert Ainslie's daughter, Margaretta, first wife of the late Sir Russell Reynolds, told of her remembrance of the bones in her father's house when she was a child. She said: "Thomas Paine's bones were in my possession. I remember them as a child, but I believe they were lost in the various movings which my father had some years ago. I can find no trace of them."

of the body from the big box. Or, as Dr. Conway thought possible, these had been removed by West, the receiver of the Cobbett estate, and sold by him to Chennell.

At this point in the tracing of the remains there is necessarily much conjecture. About 1860 Tilly died at the home of a family named Ginn, at Bethnal Green. Tilly at the time of his death had the skeleton in his possession, minus the skull and the right hand. In a separate parcel Tilly had the fragment of the brain, two locks of Paine's hair, some papers authenticating the bones, and some other unpublished manuscripts by Cobbett, the wax cast of Paine's face made in 1822 and some pamphlets and miscellaneous papers.

The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ginn casually mentioned to the Rev. George Reynolds, minister of the Baptist church which the Ginn's attended, the facts of Tilly's death at their home and the strange articles that were found in the room of their boarder after his demise. Mr. Reynolds was interested, and at once looked up Mrs. Ginn and had a talk with her.

Mrs. Ginn told the clergyman that in cleaning Tilly's room after his death she found a bag containing a lot of bones, and that she had disposed of them to a rag-and-bone collector for some paltry sum. She was apparently unaware of the fact that they were human bones. The other articles found in Tilly's room were preserved and shown to the minister.

Mr. Reynolds at once arranged for their purchase. The fragment of brain he resold to a London bookseller, and from him it was bought by Dr. Conway. The Cobbett papers and manuscripts he sold to the Cobbett family and to the British Museum.

Word reached me recently that Mr. Reynolds still owned the hair and the papers of authentication and the wax cast of the face. I at once communicated with Mr. Reynolds and arranged for the purchase of the relics for the Paine National Museum at New Rochelle.

### Did Not Credit Tale.

Regarding the story of Mrs. Ginn—that she had not known the skeleton in Tilly's room was human, and that she had sold it to a rag-and-bone dealer—Dr. Conway was always skeptical. He believed Mrs. Ginn knew just what bones they were and had disposed of them more profitably.

Certain it is that all of the bones, and the skull as well, have disappeared. The Ginn's are dead, so are the Ainslies, and it is more than likely that if any of the bones, or the skull, are still in existence (which consider unlikely), the persons who own them do not know they are part of Paine's skeleton.

The Rev. Alexander Gordon of Manchester, England, some years ago, claimed to have seen the bones in 1873 and to have again heard of them in 1876, but he affects an air of mystery about the matter, and declines to give any information. In response to my inquiries, Mr. Gordon has written me that "Dr. Conway was pleased to believe that I knew something about the bones of Thomas Paine, but I never confirmed that belief."

At the great Paine celebration, which was held at the Paine monument in New Rochelle, May 26, one of the speakers was a clergyman, who spoke on "Religion's Debt to Thomas Paine."

New York, the great stone mansion that originally stood on the property having been burned to the ground during Paine's absence in Europe as a member of the French National convention. The museum is under the direction of the Thomas Paine National Historical Association.

While the wax mask attracted considerable public attention when shown in London in 1822, Cobbett determined that the time was not propitious for carrying out his ideas of a revolution. Eleven years later (in 1833) Cobbett directed that the great box, with Paine's body in it, be sent from his London home, 11 Bolt Court, Fleet street, to his country place, Normandy Farm, in Sussex.

Just previous to the shipping of the box and its weird contents to Cobbett's Sussex home occurred the first step in the disintegration of the body. Benjamin Tilly, a secretary and close

o'clock at noon, I went to 11 Bolt Court, Fleet street, and there, with Mr. Gutzwill & Mr. Dean, I saw at the house of Mr. Cobbett the remains of Mr. Thomas Paine (that were brought from America by Mr. C.) when I procured some of his hair, and from his skull I took a portion of the brain, which had become hard and which is almost perfectly black.

### Also Contained Hair.

The second of the two envelopes in the parcel post package also contained a lock of Paine's hair, as well as this authentication on a piece of oiled paper which enclosed the hair.

Mr. Paine's hair, brought from Normandy Farm, 21st Jan., 1836, by Mr. Oldfield.

This is also in Tilly's handwriting. Jesse Oldfield was Cobbett's shopman and publisher. The date given is the day following the sale of Cobbett's effects at Normandy Farm. Cobbett having died seven months previous. The box containing Paine's body

## THREE POEMS FROM THE PEN OF T. A. DALY

**McAroni Ballads.**  
**DA BIGGA NOISE.**  
Som' ways I may be dumb, my frand,  
For I ain't long een deen land;  
Yat eet ees long enough to feel,  
Dat I have caught da meenin' clear  
Of all da bigga noise I hear  
Een street an' allee, shop an' meell,  
Eet ees not pretty, no, but strong,  
Dees song da s made da whole day long  
Een evra place dat turns a wheel;  
Eet ees da wan great Bigga Noise,  
Da verra loud an' ogly voice  
Of 'Merica's Dollar Beell.

Now mebbe, too, I a'rose I know  
Not verra mooch of Mexico—  
I think eet ees long enough to feel,  
Jus' close enough so I could hear  
All noises back of evra heell  
Where fighters shout an' bullets seeng,  
I'd mebbe hear da sama theeng!  
Eet might be just a leetle squeal—  
O! not da wan great Bigga Noise—  
But steell da same old ogly voice  
Of 'Merica's Dollar Beell.

**Not Observing.**  
"No," complained the Scotch professor to his students, "ye dinna use your faculties of observation. Ye dinna use them. For instance—"  
Picking up a jar of chemicals of vile odor he stuck one finger into it and then into his mouth.  
"Taste it, gentlemen," he commanded, as he passed the vessel from student to student.  
After each one licked his finger and had felt rebellion through his whole soul, the old professor exclaimed triumphantly:  
"I tol' ye so. Ye dinna use your faculties. For if ye had observed ye would ha' seen that the finger I stuck into the jar was nae the finger I stuck into my mouth."

**The Trees.**  
They are gone! O! implacable city,  
'Twixt a night and a night,  
With no pang of regret or of pity,  
You have slain them outright,  
Though their beauty besought you to spare it,  
To keep it forever and wear it  
For your own and your children's delight,  
You have fattened your greed and  
The squalor your streets shall inherit.

In their innocent glory and grace  
They, the primal lords of the place,  
Ere your earliest highway was trod,  
Had grown old in the service of God;  
And with arms lifted up, as in prayer,  
Gave him thanks for the sunlight and  
air,  
For the nourishing moss at their feet,  
And the thrushes that made their retreat.  
In the heart of this Eden so long,  
For their lodging gave tribute of song,  
E'en the violets, setting the award,  
Breathing perfume of prayer to the  
Lord,  
Paid in full for their leasehold; but  
you—  
In the service of Mammon, you grew  
To a huddle of houses and mills,  
Spreading squalor through hollows and  
hills,  
Till your grimy arms reached through  
your smoke  
To this grove of the poplar and Oak.  
They are gone! O! implacable city,  
'Twixt a night and a night,  
With no pang of regret or of pity,  
You have slain them outright,  
Though their beauty besought you  
to spare it,  
To keep it forever and wear it  
For your own and your children's  
delight,  
You have fattened your greed and you  
merit  
The squalor your streets shall inherit.

**Little Polly's Poem.**  
**TAINTEMEMA.**  
Once my father said to me  
"Here's a curious mystery:  
Every deed which is not right  
In this house that's brought to light  
Is not done it would appear  
By somebody living here  
Anyways it's always blamed  
On a total stranger named  
"Taintemema."  
Fingermarks upon the door  
Muddy trackings on the floor  
Books and papers out of place  
Or a broken cup or vase  
Just exactly what he meant  
Still it caused me to repent  
And the next time I was blamed  
For a fact I was ashamed  
To deny it. So today  
You will never hear me say:  
"Taintemema."  
punctuated by T. A. DALY.  
(Copyright, 1914, by T. A. DALY.)

**Unintentional affront.**  
Mrs. Smith was an ardent worker in the cause of the prevention of cruelty to animals, and when Mrs. Brown came to tea, told her a pathetic tale of a donkey that she had rescued from a cruel master the day before.  
The visitor was very interested, and when she rose to go said:  
"I am glad you have told me all those fascinating things about animals, dear Mrs. Smith. I shall never see a donkey again without thinking of you."