

**Joseph Toynbee, F.R.S., aural surgeon / by Gertrude Toynbee.**

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⑥

By

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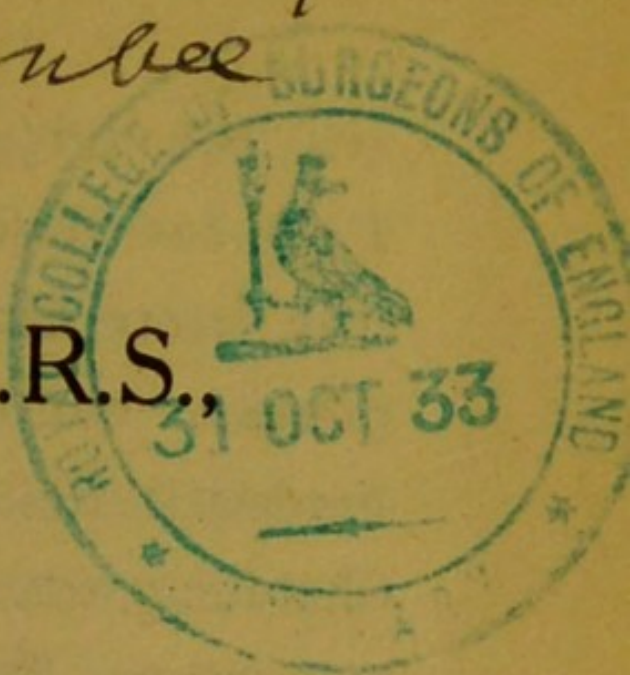


Prof Keith with kind regards  
from Sister Toynbee

Joseph Toynbee, F.R.S.,

Aural Surgeon.

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My father was a many-sided nature. He was keenly interested in his profession but he seldom talked of it. Poetry was one of the subjects which was uppermost in his mind. He repeated a great deal of Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley and Tennyson in his walks. It was his great delight to inspire his children with his own tastes, he shared everything with them. On Sunday evenings he would read aloud *Paradise Lost*, Wordsworth's *Excursion* and *Prelude*, Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, Shelley's *Skylark* and *Sensitive Plant*, Longfellow's *Evangeline*, etc. He had a very reverent, spiritual nature, but disliked theology and preferred reticence on



religious subjects. James Hinton's *Mystery of Pain*, and Seeley's *Ecce Homo* were books he read just before his death and which made a deep impression on him. Dr. Arnold, Dean Stanley, Frederick Robertson of Brighton, William Ellery Channing, were all writers with whom he had much sympathy. Emerson influenced him deeply as a young man. The progress of scientific thought and discovery was watched by him with keen delight and he read with enthusiasm Lyell's *Antiquity of Man*, Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Grove's *Correlation of the Physical Forces*, Buckle's *History of Civilization*. He knew Faraday personally and always spoke of the beautiful simplicity of his character and the peculiar charm of his lectures.

Perhaps my father's most characteristic side was his love of nature. It had possessed him as a very young man, and he looked back to his first sight of the hills as an epoch in his life. It was a love which deepened with years. He always had



flowers about him and liked to place one or two only in a glass so as to enjoy the exquisite beauty of their forms. He delighted in the wide skies over Wimbledon Common and would always leave his dinner if there was a beautiful sunset to be watched there. He enjoyed all kinds of scenery, but the snowy Alps of Switzerland inspired him with such a sense of awe and sublimity that they became a ruling passion in his life. He went nearly every year to Switzerland and felt he had not had a real holiday if he had gone elsewhere.

He was not a politician, but in so far as he was one he was a Liberal and was always keen about any question which touched the interests of the working people. He was strongly in favour of an extension of the Suffrage. He had been a friend of Mazzini's and had helped him in his school for Italian organ boys. Mazzini's principle that the people should claim liberty not as a right, but as a means for doing their duty, was the keynote of my father's



efforts in Social Reform. He deplored the physical degradation of the masses of the people and he always strove to remove it, but to raise them to a consciousness of their dignity as immortal souls was his ultimate aim.

In 1846 he gave evidence before the first Health of Towns Commission because his professional work and his personal sympathy with the poor had brought him face to face with the details of their surroundings. He started a Samaritan Fund for providing nourishment in sickness for the very poor. He helped to start about 1848 the Metropolitan Association for Improving the Dwellings of the Working Classes. He was the Treasurer, Michael Faraday was one of the subscribers. My father and others wrote short leaflets on ventilation, the circulation of the blood, the air we breathe, and kindred subjects connected with health. The Society published and distributed these. They also looked after the preservation of open spaces and footpaths,



reported on insanitary dwellings, etc. Working and professional men formed the Committee of Management.

When my father came in 1854 to reside in Wimbledon he immediately took an interest in forwarding schemes for the education of the working people and he gave a lecture to them on "Dirt and Disease," enforcing what he was constantly preaching through the whole of his life, that for a great part of our ill-health we have ourselves to blame, and that it is morally wrong to disobey the laws God has made for our body. He took an active part in getting a Village Club and Lecture Hall built and he then started Penny Readings, only one other place in England, Ipswich, having started them before. These were followed by homely Conversaziones which he called "Chat Meetings" and at which he showed specimens through his microscope.

Lecturets and lectures followed, my father undertaking the organization for some time and giving



readings and lectures on various topics—his experiences in foreign travel, which were full of humorous anecdotes; “The Great Toe, its Rights and Wrongs,” à propos of broad-soled boots, which he maintained showed breadth of understanding; “The Wonders of Nature,” etc.

Just before his death he was starting a local museum at Wimbledon with the double object of awakening people’s interest in the world of nature, close around them, and of creating a common bond of fellowship between rich and poor, educated and uneducated. He published a little book called *Hints on the Formation of Local Museums*, and brought out one number of what was intended to be a continuous series of “Museum Notes.”

My father was one of the first members of the Commons Preservation Society, and he printed and circulated a speech he made at the Mansion House on the subject just before his death. He laid great stress on the fact that the commons and open spaces



are the lungs of London, and he also dwelt on the pleasure the beauty and freedom of these great expanses can give to dwellers in crowded cities.

My father was a great lover of art and made a collection of water colours which was a great delight to him. He was acquainted with some of the artists, Boyce, Burne-Jones, Rossetti, Alfred Hunt, old James Holland, Samuel Palmer, etc. Some of them stayed with him at Wimbledon. He delighted in Ruskin's writings and had an interesting correspondence with him.

In summing up my father's character I should say it was his personal magnetism that was specially remarkable. He drew all kinds of people to him by his sympathy and charm and sincerity, and he had the art of making every one feel at their best with him. His patients, his working-men neighbours, his friends, and his family loved and revered him with enthusiasm. Wordsworth's *Happy Warrior* might be taken as a portrait of him :—



*Whose powers shed round him in the common strife,  
Or mild concerns of ordinary life,  
A constant influence, a peculiar grace ;  
But who, if he be called upon to face  
Some awful moment to which Heaven has joined  
Great issues, good or bad for human kind,  
Is happy as a Lover ; and attired  
With sudden brightness, like a Man inspired.*