

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott  
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel  
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen  
Weber Freiligrath Frey  
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel  
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas  
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach  
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil  
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London  
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer  
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup  
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff  
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt  
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier  
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder  
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer Bebel Proust  
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke George  
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot  
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy  
Storm Casanova Lessing Langbein Gilm Gryphius  
Chamberlain Schiller Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates  
Brentano Strachwitz Claudius Schilling Kralik Schiller Iffland Sokrates  
Katharina II. von Rußland Bellamy Gerstäcker Raabe Gibbon Tschechow  
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius  
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Goedicke  
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist Mörike Musil  
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus  
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus  
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke  
Nestroy Marie de France  
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht Ringelnatz  
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz  
von Ossietzky May vom Stein Lawrence Irving  
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# **Fletcher of Madeley**

Brigadier Margaret Allen

# Imprint

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## INTRODUCTION.

BY COMMISSIONER RAILTON.

There is a great difference between a red-hot man and a Red-hot Library book We have no desire at all to pander to the common idea of our day that "it does not matter what you belong to," by any of these books Very little reflection will show anyone the immeasurable distance between the sort of clergyman this book describes and the mere leader of formalities holding a similar position in these days of ease and self-satisfaction.

John Fletcher was a marvel, if viewed only on his bodily side At a time when clergymen had far more opportunity than they have even to-day to retire into their own houses and do nothing for the world, he pressed forward, in spite of an almost dying body, to work for God daily, in the most devoted manner That he was able to continue his labours so long was simply by God's wonder-working mercy. We cannot judge him because he remained in the strange position (for anyone who cares about God or souls) in which he was found No other sphere was perhaps possible for him at that time It must not, however, for that reason be imagined that the Salvationist can conceive of a red-hot life mixed with the reading of prayers out of a book, or the teaching of any poor soul to turn to such heathenish folly.

We can gladly take whatever is red-hot out of such a life without allowing ourselves to be poisoned in any respect whilst so doing But it seems necessary, at the very outset, to call attention to this, lest at any time it should be argued that, after all, the Salvationist life is no better, in our opinion, than the stiffest and most formal specimen of Christianity.

About this fervent soul, whose wife was one of the few preaching women of her century, there could have been little voluntary formality, and if he was able to exist amidst the framing that others had set up for him, it may be an encouragement to anyone who is shut out for a time from the free, happy worship that God desires, and left with no alternative but to be content with "Divine services"

where God's wishes are too often made of no effect by the arrangement of man.

But what will be the Salvationist's condemnation if, with all the opportunities he has to cultivate the utmost freedom in prayer and service, he never attains to that intimacy with God, that delight in communion with Him, that power to force others into God's presence, which John Fletcher's life discloses to us?

The mere thought of Fletcher, if you read these pages carefully, will ever bring back to you an impression of nearness to God and companionship with Him which is scarcely conceived of in our day amongst the majority of those who ought to lead men to the Father. Do not let us excuse ourselves for any lack of that communion which must be His continual delight. If we pride ourselves upon our repudiation of forms of worship that men have invented, and glory in the manifestations of Christ at the street corner and in the public-house, to which we have become accustomed, let us take care that we do not grieve Him by contentment with the general action of The Army or of the Corps, or of the Brigade, in the absence of any close contact between our own souls and God or the lost.

This book will be useless unless it brings us continually right up to the personal questions which it is so eminently calculated to raise: Am I on such terms with God as this man was? Can He equally reckon upon my continual obedience and faithfulness? Is He sure to hear and answer me also? Do I share with Him that agony for souls, that inexhaustible pity and love which will never let one perish, for whom, by any extremity of sacrifice, I can do anything? Do I breathe out the breath of God upon those with whom I come in contact, making the world feel that I have no harmony with any of its aims or inclinations, but that I really belong to Heaven?

By inference, rather than directly, this life is a tremendous confirmation of the old faith John Fletcher gained all he had because he believed the Bible just as it stands. He knew from his own experience and from daily intercourse with Him that the promises it contains come direct from the mouth of God, and not from the "sublime imagination" of some Jew poet, as the contemptible deceivers of our day would have us believe. If there were any delusion about

that old Book, then John Fletcher was one of the most pitiful specimens of a degraded superstition this world ever contained. But where, amongst all the applauded doubt-preachers of our day, is there to be found a man of love and prayer and power approaching to this one?

Do not let us be discouraged as to the possibility of a life as holy as this amidst the circumstances of our rushing warfare John Fletcher was, after all, only a thorough disciple of Him who had not where to lay His head None of us are called to live amidst denser crowds, more hurry, worry, or contention of any sort than was the daily lot of our Heavenly Master This book would draw us farther from Him, not nearer, if it only made us thirst for retirement and stillness, for hours of meditation or privacy It is, not the imitation of Fletcher, but the imitation of Christ to which these pages are meant to call us Most of us may never possess many of the charming traits of this most refined gentleman. We may perhaps suit God's purposes amidst the rough crowd all the better for that But, depend upon it, close intercourse with the Nazarene is as possible amidst the throngs of London, or Glasgow, or New York, or Madras, as it was in the alleys of Jerusalem or Capernaum, and intimacy with Jesus is, after all, the one thing needful for every disciple.

But whoever is red-hot will ceaselessly be thinking and planning for the worst; that is to say, not only for those commonly called the worst, whose wild career of sin strikes all decent people with horror, but for the far more seriously in danger, who turn their very religion into a form or an amusement, and care nothing for any real intercourse with God. These are the people perhaps most difficult of all to get at, the people whom we shall never be likely to make any impression upon unless we combine with the greatest possible activity an intensity of spiritual heat and power of which we suppose Fletcher was one of the grandest specimens the world ever had. Do not let us resent or run away from any reproach as to our own comparative coldness and inefficiency which this story may bring to us How much better to writhe and be aroused under any such reproofs now than only to awake to them when life is slipping away! Alas! for the readers who shall close this book without resolving to be as holy and useful as God commands us all to be!

*London, April, 1905.*

## The Life of John Fletcher.

### CHAPTER I.

#### At the Castle

In the nursery of a fine old Swiss castle, on the shores of Lake Lemman, stood a small boy of seven, confronted by his white-capped nurse.

"You are a naughty boy!" she exclaimed "Do you not know that the devil is to take away all naughty children?"

The little fellow opened wide his clear, truthful eyes, into which there crept a deepening look of trouble—trouble rather than fear; big tears rolled down his pinafore, and when tucked away for the night, Jean Guillaume De La Fléchère crept out of his cosy cot, sank upon his knees, and began the first real prayer of his life: "O God, forgive me!" Nor would he be interrupted until the inward sense of pardon comforted his sorrowing little heart Many years later he described this time as the shedding abroad of the love of God within him.

Colonel De La Fléchère's family mansion commanded as fine a view of Swiss scenery as could be found in the neighbourhood "Hill and dale, vineyards and pastures, stretched right away to the distant Jura mountains At a few paces from the château was a terrace overlooking Lake Lemman, with its clear blue waters and its gracefully curved and richly-wooded bays On the right hand, at a distance of fifteen miles, was Geneva, the cradle of the Reformation in Switzerland; on the left, Lausanne and the celebrated Castle of Chillon High up in the heavens were Alpine peaks, embosoming scenes the most beautiful; and not far away was Mont Blanc, 'robed in perpetual and unsullied snow.'" (Tyerman.)

In this earthly paradise the little Jean received his first unconscious training, breathing not only the clear mountain air into his lungs, but a no less important atmosphere of refinement, of culture, and of nobility into his mental and moral being.

He was devoted to his mother, who could never say he wilfully disobeyed her. One day, however, she deemed him lacking in reverence for her, because, when rebuking a member of the family over-sharply, John turned upon her a long look of evident reproof. She promptly boxed his ears, but was more than mollified when the boy lifted his clear eyes to hers, brimful of tenderness, and said simply, "Mother, when I am smitten on one cheek, and especially by a hand I love so well, I am taught to turn the other also."

It was not priggishness, but submissive affection, and she read it aright.

## CHAPTER II.

### In the Manor House

In the château at Nyon Jean De La Fléchère was keeping his tenth birthday (September 12th, 1739) Away in old England the Lord of the Manor of Leytonstone, Essex, was giving his first caresses to a tiny baby girl, later to be known as little Mary Bosanquet, and forty years later still as the wife of the saintly John Fletcher, Vicar of Madeley.

Mary was but a four-year-old baby when she received her first definite conviction that God hears and answers prayer She was a timid little maiden, and the greatest comfort she had in the world was the fact that she possessed a real Father in Heaven, strong, mighty, and willing to protect and help her Sunday evenings in Forest House—as the Bosanquet mansion was called—were devoted to the children On those occasions Mary's father taught her sister and herself the Church catechism. At five years old his youngest daughter asked questions concerning true Christians according to the Word of God, which might well have encouraged evasion on the part of her parent She reasoned out everything told her; but her eager and earnest questions being so constantly put carelessly by, gave her childish mind the impression that the Bible did not mean all it said, therefore a sensible person would make due allowance for its threatenings.

As this thought began to take well hold of Mary, a Methodist girl entered the household as nurse, whose conversations with the children were a great enlightenment to them both.

In a year or two the nurse left them, but not before she had implanted in little Mary's mind the truth that it was not being united to any church or people which would save her, but that she must be converted through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that the fruits of believing in Him as a personal Saviour would be power to love and serve God with a holy heart That was excellent, but it had not been so explained to the child that she could understand the process either of "faith" or of "conversion." The result was perplexity.

Not a few children in bygone days have had to suffer long Sunday afternoon agonies over the harrowing pictures of Foxe's "Book of Martyrs," this being then considered a profitable and bracing Sabbath "exercise" for hundreds of sensitive little ones whose dreams were haunted, and whose waking hours in the dark were rendered terrific by vivid imaginings of racked, tortured, and burning saints. Mary was one of these. Yet so troubled was her little heart over the ungrasped subject of faith that one day, while gazing upon these fearful pictures, she exclaimed to herself, "Oh! oh! I do think it would be easier to *burn* than to *believe!*"

Mary seems to have been busy with these thoughts for nearly two years. She had not passed her eighth birthday when we find her sitting by herself for "a good think," and wondering "What can it mean to have faith in Jesus?"

Vexed with the mystery of the subject, her childish soul rose in rebellion against God for having chosen so hard a way into salvation, and she exclaimed aloud —

"Oh, if I had to die a martyr, I could do it; or give away all I have, I could do that; or when I grow up to have to be a servant, that would be easy; but I shall never, never, *never* know how to believe!"

Two lines of an old hymn drifted instantly through her mind —

Who on Jesus relies, without money or price,  
The pearl of forgiveness and holiness buys.

It was the light she needed. The Spirit of Love had taken pity upon the little girl. From that moment the plan of salvation was clear to her, and she cried out —

"I do, I do rely on Jesus; yes, I *do* rely on Jesus; and God counts me righteous for all He has done and suffered, and hath forgiven all my sins!"

She felt that a great weight had been lifted from her heart. Before this it seemed that everything in the world was easier than to believe, now it appeared the simplest plan God could have devised. Had there been but a kindly and understanding person near to whom Mary could talk freely, she might have been a happy, trusting little Soldier of Jesus from that hour, but there was no one to

help her into the sunshine of a child's daily faith and love and service, and religion became to her rather a subject for morbid thought. Terribly afraid of sin, not understanding temptation, wholly uninstructed how to get victory over her temper and other failings, she grew discouraged, and feared she had sadly grieved God. With all this shut up in her soul, perhaps it was no wonder that her mother should sometimes exclaim: "That girl is the most perverse creature that ever lived; I cannot think what has come to her."



## CHAPTER III.

### Early Adventures

From the bathing-place of Nyon château a slim, tall lad shot out into the blue water, as much at home there, evidently, as he had been while racing on the terrace His long hair was bound by a strong ribbon, which the active movements of the swimmer at length loosened In some unexplainable manner the ribbon caught and wound itself about the boy's feet, tying his head to his heels, and rendering a full stroke impossible With all his might he struggled and tore, but the bond only grew tighter He was in deep water, no help within call, and the awful thought came that there, in the budding of his bright young life, he must be cut off and die a helpless prisoner He stayed his struggles, almost paralysed at the thought, and that instant the ribbon gave way and he recovered himself.

Nor was that his only narrow escape from death in the same lake Five miles from the shore a rocky island reared its head.

"It would be a fine feat to swim there from land," said young Fletcher to four of his companions They agreed, and the five set forth Fletcher and one other lad succeeded in reaching the island, but found its smooth cliffs sank so steeply into the water that there was no possibility of climbing them Despairingly they swam around the islet again and again, finding at last a bare foothold to which they clung until a boat fetched them off The other three could swim but half the distance to the island, and would have sunk exhausted had not a passing boat picked them up.

A third time young Fletcher narrowly escaped drowning; on this occasion it was in the Rhine, where the river is wide and very rapid. The current swept him far from home, nor could he land for the sharp rocks on either hand At length he was flung violently against one of the piles of a powder mill, lost consciousness, and disappeared, rising again on the other side of the mill (according to an onlooker, who took out his watch) *twenty minutes after* his head had vanished beneath the water Surely a guardian angel accompanied Jean De La Fléchère in all his earthly wanderings!

Although a good rider and practised swimmer, the life of this young fellow was not by any means wasted in athletics and sport; he studied hard to prepare himself for the University of Geneva, succeeding most brilliantly. His extraordinary diligence, no less than his striking ability, distinguished him among the other students, and he bore off first prizes with ease, studying early and late that he might acquire the knowledge he loved. After leaving the University he gave himself to the acquirement of the German language, and studied Hebrew and higher mathematics.

All this he did with the idea of becoming a minister of the Gospel, but the more he thought about the burden which he would assume by so doing, the less he felt able for his suggested task.

"Go into the army, Fletcher," pleaded some of his friends, and it was not long before he turned the power of his clear brain to work upon military engineering. He became very keen on his chosen profession, and at the time when Portugal was despatching troops to Brazil, Fletcher hied himself to Lisbon, gathered together a company of young Englishmen, accepted a Captain's commission, and agreed to sail upon a certain day in the Portuguese Service.

His father, Colonel De La Fléchère, refused to sanction the step, or to supply him with the money he requested for the enterprise.

"I will go without it," he resolved, and counted the hours to the sailing of the man-o'-war.

A day or two before the appointed date a maid, who was serving him with breakfast, clumsily dropped the tea-kettle upon his leg, scalding him so severely that he had to take to his bed. While there the ship sailed, and in view of Fletcher's later life, it is a striking fact that she was never heard of again.

Though desperately disappointed, Fletcher was as keen as ever on becoming a soldier. He returned to Nyon, and, to his unbounded delight, learned that his uncle had procured him a commission in the Dutch Service, of which he was a Colonel.

Eagerly he made his way to Flanders, grudging the days of travel which kept him out of his ambition. Bent though he was in rough-hewing his way according to his desire, Providence was surely shaping for him an end other than he planned. On his arrival

Fletcher found that peace was concluded; his soldiering capabilities were no longer required. Almost immediately his uncle died, and the door into the military profession seemed closed to him for ever.

