

puts it elsewhere: ‘The prophet dies, and the man of torpid heart and sluggish brain lives on.’³⁶

IAN STELLER AND NATHAN FLUM
Providence, Rhode Island, USA

<https://doi.org/10.1093/notesj/gjae090>

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Advance Access publication 1 August, 2024

³⁶ Hawthorne, ‘The Artist of the Beautiful’, in *Mosses from an Old Manse*, 467.

E. A. FREEMAN’S PREVIOUSLY UNIDENTIFIED LETTERS TO THE EDITORS OF THE *SPECTATOR* AND THE *GUARDIAN* DURING THE CRIMEAN WAR

The historical, political, religious, cultural, racial, and ‘comparative’ ideas of E. A. Freeman (1832–92), Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford between 1884 and 1892, which informed his censorious attitude towards the Ottoman Turks and his critical views on the Eastern Question, have been the subject of commentary and scholarly examination ever since his death. In the *English Historical Review* of July 1892, Freeman’s obituarist, James Bryce, registered him in the historical record as an individual of a virulently anti-Turkish disposition. ‘By far the strongest political interest—indeed it rose to a passion—of his later years was his hatred of the Turk.’ ‘Ever since the days of the Crimean war’, Bryce continued, ‘[Freeman] had been opposed to the traditional English policy of supporting the Sultan’.¹ Most scholars, who have mainly focused on Freeman’s responses to the Eastern crisis of the 1870s, followed suit. The underlying historiographical assumption has been that because Freeman criticized the Ottoman Empire during this period, he was *ipso facto* an opponent of the Crimean War which Britain fought between 1854 and 1856 in alliance with that empire.² The evidence from Freeman’s writings and

lectures later in his life, which commented on the Crimean War, seems to corroborate this claim.³ This also appears to be case with some of Freeman’s periodical articles and reviews published between 1855 and 1856, as well as with his contributions to the anti-war *Tracts for the Present Crisis*, published in 1856 by Sir Arthur Hallam Elton, 7th Baronet.⁴ Yet as early as 1895, Freeman’s first major biographer, W. R. W. Stephens, recognized that his response to the war was not monolithic, but dynamic.⁵ Following Stephens lead, I argue that Freeman’s overlooked letters to the editor of the liberal *Spectator*, a journal which had achieved a ‘leading position amongst the weekly press of the metropolis’,⁶ as well as to the editor of the high-church weekly *Guardian*, necessitate a reassessment of Freeman’s response to the Crimean War: beginning with his cautious support of the conflict in its early stages, before his *volte-face* in the spring of 1855, after which he became one of its severest critics.

Though Freeman published many historical books during his lifetime, his position as one of the most outspoken ‘public intellectuals’ of mid- to late-Victorian Britain was consolidated primarily due to his authoritative and moralistic punditry in contemporary ‘higher journalism’.⁷ Victorianists

Eastern Question’, in G.A. Bremner and J. Conlin (eds), *Making History: Edward Augustus Freeman and Victorian Cultural Politics* (Oxford, 2015), 120.; P. Stephenson, ‘E. A. Freeman (1823–1892), a Neglected Commentator on Byzantium and Modern Greece’, *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique*, 4 (2008), 128–9; C.J.W. Parker, ‘The Failure of Liberal Racialism: The Racial Ideas of E. A. Freeman’, *Historical Journal*, 24/4 (1981), 832; M. Lake, ‘“Essentially Teutonic”: E. A. Freeman, Liberal Race Historian. A Transnational Perspective’, in C. Hall and K. McClelland (eds), *Race, Nation and Empire: Making Histories, 1750 to the Present* (Manchester, 2010), 58.

³ E.g., E.A. Freeman, *Four Oxford Lectures 1887: Fifty Years of European History. Teutonic Conquest in Gaul and Britain* (London and New York, NY, 1888), 26–7; idem, ‘The True Eastern Question’, *Fortnightly Review*, 18/108 (Dec. 1875), 747–8.

⁴ [E.A. Freeman], ‘Mahometanism in East and West’, *North British Review*, 23/46 (Aug. 1855), 449–80; [E. A. Freeman], ‘Creasy’s History of the Ottoman Turks. Second Notice’, *Saturday Review*, 2/30 (24 May 1856), 88–9; A.H. Elton, *Tracts for the Present Crisis*, 2nd series (Bristol, [1856]), [57]–64; [81]–4; [97]–104; [121]–8; [145]–8; [149]–56.

⁵ W.R.W. Stephens, *The Life and Letters of Edward A. Freeman* (2 vols, London and New York, NY, 1895), I, 148–53. See also, V. Randall, *History, Empire, and Islam: E. A. Freeman and Victorian Public Morality* (Manchester, 2020), 123.

⁶ C. Mitchell, *The Newspaper Press Directory* (London, 1856), 30.

⁷ On Freeman as an intellectual, see H.S. Jones, ‘Historical Mindedness and the World at Large: E. A. Freeman as Public Intellectual’, in Bremner and Conlin (eds), *Making History*, 293–

Funding support for this article was provided by the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AH/L503885/1), Royal Historical Society Centenary Fellowship, Institute of Historical Research, Sir John Keegan Scholarship, Balliol College, Oxford.

¹ J. Bryce, ‘Edward Augustus Freeman’, *English Historical Review*, 7/27 (July 1892), 502.

² See, for example, W. Kelley, ‘Intellectuals and the Eastern Question: “Historical-Mindedness” and “Kin Beyond Sea”’, c. 1875–1880’ (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 2017), 39–40; idem, ‘Past History and Present Politics: E. A. Freeman and the

and other scholars have done much over the past decades to lift the veil of anonymity and pseudonymity shrouding articles carried in contemporary periodicals, with E. A. Freeman's corpus expanding considerably as a result. *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824–1900*, for instance, identifies a number of his contributions to various publications, such as the Free-Church aligned *North British Review* and the Congregationalist *British Quarterly Review*, amongst many other.⁸ *The Curran Index to Nineteenth-Century Periodicals*, moreover, lists an astounding seven hundred and thirty-six items under the name 'Freeman, Edward Augustus', published in the learned *Saturday Review* between 1855 and 1878.⁹ Yet more work remains to be done in uncovering the full scale of Freeman's journalistic output, and especially his letters to editors of various contemporary newspapers and periodicals. As another of Freeman's obituarists noted, his journalistic writings were perhaps 'of greater influence than his more elaborate historical works'.¹⁰ The same holds true for his interventions in correspondence columns. Letters to the editor, according to Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor, reveal 'that nineteenth-century readers were not passive consumers of print but active respondents who wanted to be in dialogue with the publications they read and with other readers.'¹¹ Freeman's letters to editors are full of historical significance, since they offer more profound insights into his mind directly

responding to events as they arose and to various points of contention in Victorian culture—especially in regard to its political and intellectual contours. In particular, Freeman's previously unidentified and hitherto neglected letters to the editors of the *Spectator* and the *Guardian* serve to challenge the commonplace historiographical assumption that Freeman occupied a place in the camp of the Crimean War's critics from the outset.

Though Stephens acknowledged that '[b]etween the years 1853 and 1855, [Freeman] wrote several letters to the *Spectator* on the subject of the Crimean War', he only dated three of these letters—29 October 1853, 16 April 1855 [published on 21 April], and [25] August 1855—albeit without giving full citations that might aid in their identification.¹² James Kirby has rightly recognized that Freeman's letters to the editor of the *Spectator* can partly be identified by the signed acronym 'E.A.F'.¹³ As Freeman himself admitted to the Greek statesman Spyridon Trikoupes in 1855, his war-related letters were signed in this way.¹⁴ Citing Kirby, H. S. Jones has noted that Freeman authored eleven letters in the years 1849–58—though the total number for the whole period is certainly higher.¹⁵ Eleven was actually the number of Freeman's war-related letters published in the *Spectator* between 1853 and shortly after the signing of the Treaty of Paris on 30 March 1856.¹⁶ The *Spectator* carried five more of

310; Randall, *History, Empire, and Islam*; and Kelley, 'Intellectuals and the Eastern Question'.

⁸ W.E. Houghton et al., *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824–1900* (5 vols, Toronto and London, 1966–89). Also, online at *ProQuest C19: The Nineteenth Century Index*. For a more comprehensive list of the periodicals Freeman wrote for, see Jones, 'Historical Mindedness', 297–8. Further information can be found in the Papers of Edward Augustus Freeman in the John Rylands Research Institute and Library, Manchester (GB 133 EAF2/1-268, 1849–92): <https://www.librarysearch.manchester.ac.uk/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma992986452667601631&context=L&vid=44MAN_INST:MU_NUI&lang=en&search_scope=Special_Collection&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Special_Collection&query=any,contains,Freeman%20Guardian&offset=0&pcAvailability=false> (last accessed, 30 Apr. 2024).

⁹ *The Curran Index to Nineteenth-Century Periodicals*, <<https://www.curranindex.org/?selectedItem%5Bindex%5D=contributor&selectedItem%5Bid%5D=2328&showMo=true>> (last accessed, 30 Apr. 2024).

¹⁰ Quoted in Jones, 'Historical Mindedness', p. 299.

¹¹ L. Brake and M. Demoor (eds), *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland* (Gent and London, 2009), 360.

¹² Stephens, *Life and Letters*, I, 148, 150, 152.

¹³ J. Kirby, 'From Tractarian to Democrat: The Intellectual Formation of E.A. Freeman', in Bremner and Conlin (eds), *Making History*, 46, n. 3.

¹⁴ Stephens, *Life and Letters*, I, 186.

¹⁵ Jones, 'Historical Mindedness', 298.

¹⁶ E[dward] A[ugustus] F[reeman], 'Russians, Turks, Greeks, Slaves, and Danes', *The Spectator*, 26/1322 (29 Oct. 1853), 1037–8; E[dward] A[ugustus] F[reeman], 'The Revolt in Epirus', *The Spectator*, 27/1343 (25 Mar. 1854), 337–8; E[dward] A[ugustus] F[reeman], 'What are the Greeks?', *The Spectator*, 27/1379 (2 Dec. 1854), 1259–60; E[dward] A[ugustus] F[reeman], 'What are the Greeks?' No. II', *The Spectator*, 27/1381 (16 Dec. 1854), 1333–4; E[dward] A[ugustus] F[reeman], 'Peace or War', *The Spectator*, 28/1399 (21 Apr. 1855), 407–8; E[dward] A[ugustus] F[reeman], 'Peace or War', *The Spectator*, 28/1403 (19 May 1855), 513–14; E[dward] A[ugustus] F[reeman], 'States and Nations', *The Spectator*, 28/1417 (25 Aug. 1855), 883–4; E[dward] A[ugustus] F[reeman], 'E.A.F., G.H., Mr. Bridges Adams, and the Spectator', *The Spectator*, 28/1420 (15 Sept. 1855), 954–5; E[dward] A[ugustus] F[reeman], 'The Scandinavian Alliance', *The Spectator*, 29/1438 (19 Jan. 1856), 74; E[dward] A[ugustus] F[reeman], 'Parties or Statesmen', *The Spectator*, 29/1440 (2 Feb. 1856), 129; E[dward] A[ugustus] F[reeman], 'The Terms of Peace', *The Spectator*, 29/1455 (17 May 1856), 529.

Freeman's letters which dealt with other topics (15 January, 29 January, and 21 May 1853), or touched upon the war only tangentially given that they appeared a few months after its conclusion (12 July and 13 December 1856).¹⁷

Contrary to what most scholars have assumed, Freeman's overlooked letters reveal that he initially supported the war, albeit reluctantly. Though he did not share the public's 'pro-Turkish enthusiasm', he concluded in his first letter 'that in the present struggle the [Ottoman] Porte ought to be supported against Russia'. He deemed despotic Russia 'to be really a worse enemy' than the Ottoman Empire, and resolved that Britons 'must keep faith with [the Turk], barbarian and infidel though he be'.¹⁸ Freeman continued to voice similar arguments in his subsequent letters, but the first shades of doubt began to appear in December 1854 following the devastating revelations of newspaper correspondents and 'special artists' about the abhorrent state of the British army due to disease and privation. Although Freeman remained convinced that '[o]n the principles on which European nations have acted for some centuries, the war is undoubtedly just', he confessed that '[he was] really beginning to doubt whether such scenes of horror abroad and of bereavement at home ought to be inflicted for any purely political or commercial considerations; whether we have a right to shed either native or foreign blood in any cause but that of our national existence.'¹⁹ By April 1855, Freeman had entirely changed his mind. In his letter published on 21 April, he recanted the grounds on which he initially based his support for the war, whilst emphasizing the impact the reported horrors of the battlefield had on him.²⁰

The *Spectator* was not the only publication in which Freeman ventilated his views on the war. The *Guardian* was another of his outlets. As a liberal high-churchman, Freeman was 'naturally drawn' to a group of intellectuals such as R. W.

Church who were part of the *Guardian*'s constellation of 'leading lights', and from 1848 until his death he regularly wrote reviews for it.²¹ In May 1855, following his *volte-face*, Freeman wrote two previously unidentified letters to the editor of the *Guardian*—also signed 'E.A.F.'²² In his first letter of 16 May, Freeman expressed strong disagreement with the Sunday use in Anglican places of worship of the 'Prayer in Time of War and Tumults' from the Book of Common Prayer. The prayer, Freeman averred, was 'utterly unsuited to the circumstances of the struggle', given that it suggested the justice and defensiveness of war: 'It supposes some invader, like the Norman of the eleventh, or the Spaniard of the sixteenth century, to have landed, or to be about to land, upon our coasts.' Freeman's newly developed anti-war stance led him to posit Britons as the 'aggressors' because of their invasion of a country—Russia—which had never threatened them, adding in a highly critical tone that 'the last cause in which Christian blood ought to be spilt is in the futile if not impious attempt to patch up the loathsome tyranny of infidel barbarians [i.e., the Ottoman Turks]'.²³ The letter sparked a debate in the *Guardian*'s correspondence columns, with one reader taking issue with Freeman's argument, whilst another seeking 'to enlarge upon his admirable letter'.²⁴ In his second letter of 30 May 1855, Freeman responded to his critic, and pointed out that one of the grounds on which he initially based his support proved to be erroneous. The critic, Freeman wrote, 'supposes that England was bound by some treaty to support the Sultan. I did so myself for a long time, and, on that ground, for a long time, held *the first* war to be just, or, at least, not unjustifiable.'²⁵ Freeman thus signalled his *volte-face* to the *Guardian*'s readers. Through these

²¹ Kirby, 'From Tractarian to Democrat', 42–4. On the *Guardian*, see J.L. Altholz, *The Religious Press in Britain, 1760–1900* (New York, NY, and London, 1989), 27–8.

²² E[dward] A[ugustus] F[reeman], 'The War and the Prayer in Time of War', *The Guardian*, 493 (16 May 1855), 375; E[dward] A[ugustus] F[reeman], 'Peace or War', *The Guardian*, 495 (30 May 1855), 419.

During the war, Freeman also wrote a few *eponymous* letters on different topics: Edward A. Freeman, 'Mr. Freeman on the Professorial System', *The Guardian*, 446 (21 June 1854), 482; Edward A. Freeman, 'St. Wollos' Church, Newport', *The Guardian*, 518 (7 Nov. 1855), 824.

²³ F[reeman], 'The War and the Prayer in Time of War', 375.

²⁴ Nemo, 'The War and the Prayer in Time of War', *The Guardian*, 494 (23 May 1855), 400; T., 'To the Editor of the *Guardian*', *The Guardian*, 494 (23 May 1855), 400.

²⁵ F[reeman], 'Peace or War', 419 (original emphasis).

¹⁷ E[dward] A[ugustus] F[reeman], 'The Oxford University Election', *The Spectator*, 26/1281 (15 Jan. 1853), 54; E[dward] A[ugustus] F[reeman], 'Oxford and its Representatives', *The Spectator*, 26/1283 (29 Jan. 1853), 103–4; E[dward] A[ugustus] F[reeman], 'The Chancellor and his Doctors', *The Spectator*, 26/1299 (21 May 1853), 485; E[dward] A[ugustus] F[reeman], 'Parties or Statesmen', *The Spectator*, 29/1463 (12 July 1856), 747; E[dward] A[ugustus] F[reeman], 'The Greek Apology', *The Spectator*, 29/1485 (13 Dec. 1856), 1319–20.

¹⁸ F[reeman], 'Russians, Turks, Greeks, Slaves, and Danes', *Spectator*, 1037–8.

¹⁹ F[reeman], 'What are the Greeks?', 1259.

²⁰ F[reeman], 'Peace or War', 407–8.

letters, we can therefore gain fresh perspectives into the nuances and dynamic nature of Freeman's response to the Crimean War, allowing us to place it on a more complex trajectory of definition and redefinition.

PETROS SPANOU

University of Oxford, Oxford, United Kingdom

<https://doi.org/10.1093/notesj/gjae066>

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Advance Access publication 7 June, 2024

THE SECOND WIFE: ELIZABETH GASKELL'S WIVES AND DAUGHTERS (1864–66) AND KATHARINE THOMSON'S WIDOWS AND WIDOWERS: A ROMANCE OF REAL LIFE (1842)

In a letter to Mary Russell Mitford written in 1850, Elizabeth Barrett Browning reports hearing 'from a friend of Mrs Thomson's' that Elizabeth Gaskell's first novel "'Mary Barton"' was shown in MS. to Mrs Thomson & failed to please her; and in deference to her judgement certain alterations were made'.¹ Gaskell was related to the novelist and historical writer Katharine Thomson by marriage, since Thomson was the second wife of Dr Anthony Todd Thomson, whose sister had become the second wife of Gaskell's father in 1814. The families were undoubtedly well-known to each other over a long period of time: Dr Thomson had been the physician who superintended Gaskell's birth, and Thomson's brother William John Thomson was a miniaturist who painted Gaskell's portrait in 1832. However, new light may be placed on the relationship between the works of the two writers through an assessment of the similarities between the character of Mrs Hyacinth Kirkpatrick/Gibson in Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters* (1864–6) and that of Miss Louisa Williams/Mrs Meadows/Jones in Thomson's *Widows and Widowers: A Romance of Real Life* (1842). In Gaskell's novel, Mrs Kirkpatrick is a woman in her late thirties who is 'pretty and graceful' with 'soft auburn hair'.² As the unmarried Miss Clare she had been governess

in the aristocratic Cumnor family but she left to marry a curate and, following his death, she became a 'poor unsuccessful schoolmistress' (*WD*, 78). Perpetually struggling for money, she apparently 'made desperate love' to Mr Preston, a younger man who is much more interested in her teenage daughter and who boasted to his family of his conquest of the 'very pretty widow' and 'often laughed with them at all her little advances' (*WD*, 383–4). Indeed, her interest in male attention generally prioritizes the practical over the romantic: when the more suitably middle-aged doctor Mr Gibson proposes marriage, her predominant reaction is that 'it was such a wonderful relief to feel that she need not struggle any more for a livelihood' (*WD*, 86).

Similarly, Katharine Thomson's Miss Williams is in her thirties and has 'massive auburn curls'.³ She 'had been a teacher in a school near Northington' as well as 'a governess [...] "a lady capable of the higher branches of education"' (*WW*, I, 31, 32–3). At the beginning of the novel she is visiting the Meadows family, but it is not merely her friendship with the daughter Adeline that prompts her enthusiasm for the trip: she is also interested in Adeline's widowed father and unmarried brother Loftus and is 'indifferent whether she captivated Mr Meadows or Loftus' since either could provide her with a stable establishment. Although her friendship with Adeline is genuine and Thomson assures the reader that 'she was really good-natured' (*WW*, I, 34) she is, like Mrs Kirkpatrick, quite willing to exaggerate emotional displays to achieve an effect. She is similarly happy to receive the attentions of any marriageable male suitor who might be able to offer a comfortable domestic establishment. When both her marriages end in widowhood, her ultimate fate also recalls Mrs Kirkpatrick's attempted flirtation with Mr Preston: the last that is heard of her is that she is 'going about everywhere with a lieutenant [in] the Marines, a very young man' (*WW*, III, 324) whom she calls 'jokingly, her younger brother' (*WW*, III, 325).

In both novels, the heroine's father proposes marriage whilst the heroine herself is absent from the

² Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Works of Elizabeth Gaskell, Volume 10: Wives and Daughters* (1866), ed. Josie Billington (London and New York: 2006), 13, 15, 77. All further references will be to this edition of the text, hereafter abbreviated to *WD*.

³ Katharine Thomson, *Widows and Widowers. A Romance of Real Life*, 3 vols (London: 1842), I, 31. All further references will be to this edition of the text, hereafter abbreviated to *WW*.

¹ Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Mary Russell Mitford, 13 December 1850, in *The Brownings' Correspondence*, ed. Philip Kelley et al., 30 vols to date (Winfield, Kansas: 1984–date), XVI, 245.