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Inconsistent hyphenation and unusual spelling in the original document have been preserved.

A Table of Contents has been added for the readers convenience.

A number of obvious typographical errors have been corrected in this text. For a complete list, please see the [end of this document](#).

THE CONFESSIONS OF AN ETONIAN.

By I. E. M.

**LONDON
SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.
1846.**

"To preserve the past is half of immortality."
D'ISRAELI THE ELDER.

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PREFACE.

ToC

The author is anxious to request any person who may meet with this trifling volume to bear in mind that it contains the memoir of an unworthy member of the place to which it alludes—that many years have now elapsed since he quitted the spot where its regulations with regard to education have been as much altered as improved. For Eton! "my heart is thine though my shadow falls on a distant land." But should these pages influence the judgment of any mistaken but well-meaning parent, as to his son's future destination, the writer will hope that he has not exposed himself in vain.

THE CONFESSIONS OF AN ETONIAN.

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

ToC

"Here's Harry crying!" And on the instant, my brother awoke the elder ones to witness and enjoy the astounding truth.

"What makes you think that?" I replied, in as resolute a tone as a throat choking with anguish would admit of.

"Why, you're crying now," added another brother; "I see the tears shining in the moonlight."

"Only a little," I at length admitted; and, satisfied with the concession, my numerous brethren composed themselves once more to sleep in the corners of the carriage, on their way to Eton, leaving my eldest brother's pointer and myself at the bottom, to our own reflections. As for old Carlo, his still and regular breathing evinced that his mind was as easy and comfortable as his body, sagaciously satisfying himself with the evil of the day as it passed over him. Here Carlo had the advantage of me,—I anticipated the morrow. Strange and boisterous school-boys, tight-pantalooned ushers, with menacing canes, were, to my yet unsophisticated mind, anything but agreeable subjects for a reverie, and I felt proportionately doleful; I turned my thoughts on the past, and I was very miserable.

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I now learnt that I had been happy, and, for the first time, appreciated that happiness. The hours of this long, weary day had appeared to be as many months; and when I ruminated on former scenes, and their dear little events, I sighed in bitterness, "What a time ago all this seems!" And as I peered up at the moon from my abyss through the window, my eyes unconsciously swam with tears, when I reflected that, if at home, I should at this moment be taking tea with my dear nurse, Lucy, and my sister's governess, just before I went to bed.

I had now bid an eternal farewell to, doubtless, by far the dearest,—happiest period of our existence, the dawn of life's day—that enviable time when "we have no lessons;" when the colt presses, with his unshod foot, the fresh and verdant meadow, while he wonders at the team toiling under a noontide sun, over the parched and arid fallow in the distance.

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This, then, was my first lesson of experience; and on reflection, perhaps many of us will agree that, after all the vaunted troubles and anxieties incident to manhood, few surpass in intensity and hopelessness the sad separation from home for a detested school; it is real and wringing anguish, though, fortunately, like flayed eels, we eventually become inured to it.

I now went through, for three years at a private school, the usual routine of punishment and bullying preparatory for Eton; and as these were of the ordinary kind, I will at once omit this epoch of my life, and commence with my *debût* at that great capital of England's schools.

It may not be out of place to give here a slight and rapid sketch of the scene to which these immediate pages are confined, as well as of other matters connected with it.

Every one knows where Windsor is, and that Eton was separated from it by the Thames, until united by Windsor Bridge. But, with regard to the latter town, there may be some confusion, for it is divided into Eton, and Eton proper. This last will hereafter be distinguished as "College," and is

situated about half a mile from the bridge, to which it is connected by the town.

"College," I think, may be said to comprehend "the school-yard," the suburbs, and "the playing fields."

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"The school-yard" is a spacious and respectable quadrangle; the upper school, the church, the cloisters, and long chamber, each respectively forming a side of it. In the centre is placed the statue of the founder, Henry VI.

"The upper school" is placed over an arched cloister, and an ominous-looking region, in which, I suspect, is the magazine of birch. The school is nothing more than an extensive room, with its floor lined with fixed forms, and the wainscot with sculptured names innumerable. One is guilty of a sad omission should he quit Eton without giving a crown to Cartland to perpetuate his name on the immortal oak. Perhaps the loss of few olden records would be more deplored than its destruction, for here are registered many of Eton's worthiest sons; C.I. FOX, as in after life, is here pre-eminent. Adjoining the upper end is another room, called "the library," in which there is not a book, but there is "the block," which speaks volumes; and as a library may, by a little forcing, be defined to be a chamber set apart for the acquirement of learning, this room is not, perhaps, misnamed.

This block is a very simple machine—merely a couple of steps. The victim places his knees on the lower, and his elbows on the upper step; but if the reader will thus place himself in his imagination, he will enter more immediately into the spirit of the thing.

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In front of him he sees a couple of little collegers, to hold aside the skirts of his coat. On his left is Keate, like Jupiter about to hurl his thunderbolt; on his right "the birch cupboard;" and though he can see nothing, he has little doubt of what is in his rear, the instant he is operated on. "Neither intemperance nor old age hae, in gout or rheumatic, an agony to compare wi' a weel-laid-on whack of the tawse, on a part that for manners shall be nameless."

The church, though not very remarkable for its dimensions, may be styled a handsome and venerable Gothic edifice; simple and regular, with its sides supported by deep and lofty buttresses, the recesses of which form the boys' "fives-walls."

The cloisters form another small quadrangle. Over them are built the comfortable dwellings of the "College fellows," and "the College library," which is somewhat more appropriately furnished than that just described.

The Fellows have each been boys on the foundation, having been elected, according to seniority, to King's College, Cambridge, from whence they have been re-elected Fellows of Eton.

"Long chamber" is long enough to contain nearly the whole of the collegers, or boys on the foundation, whose complement I conjecture to be about seventy. This is a region of which I can give but an uncertain description, for few "Oppidans" cared to venture in. When I did, it was to be tossed in a blanket, so that, though elevated, my survey was hasty and superficial; but I suspect that the entire furniture to which a colleger lays claim, is his bed and bureau, tables and chairs being here as much out of keeping (if they could be kept at all) as at Stonehenge. *En passant*—this tossing was a pastime replete with the sublime and awful. That their efforts might be simultaneous, those who held the blanket, and they were legion, made use of the following neat hexameter:

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"Ibis ab excusso, missus ab astra, sago."

And you go with a vengeance. "You shall fly from the quivering blanket, despatched to the stars." The suspense was fearful while awaiting the utterance of the ultimate syllable—how perfectly and permanently have I acquired this pithy verse!

The floor is polished once a year on Election Friday, by "rug-riding." This is accomplished by rolling a fellow up in a counterpane, here properly called a rug. To either end of him is attached a rope, to which five or six boys are harnessed. The floor is now well smeared with tallow-grease, over which the warm mummy, rendered still hotter by friction, is now drawn with delightful velocity. The polish thus obtained is admirable, and but the slightest flavour of grease lingers until the ensuing election.

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The suburbs form a small town, composed of a few large and indispensable shops, together with the houses of the masters and dames, at whose houses the boys, not on the foundation, and who are denominated "oppidans," board and lodge.

"The playing-fields" are very extensive, and subdivided into the playing-fields, "upper-shooting-fields," and "lower-shooting-fields." The two latter are separated from the former by "poet's-walk," a lovely little peninsula, with an avenue of lime-trees running through its entire length.

The shooting-fields are appropriated solely to cricket, and in winter are "out of bounds." The playing-fields are open for foot-ball in the winter, and for fighting all the year round. The whole is most beautifully situated on the banks of the Thames, with the Little Park and Windsor Castle on the opposite side. In addition, it is lined and studded with the stateliest and most gigantic elms in England.

These three divisions, the school-yard, suburbs, and playing-fields, form in theory "the bounds," which in practice are boundless, an Etonian's movements being curbed by time, rather than by space.

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Eton, at its foundation, was a charity-school for seventy boys. In time, it received other pupils. The original ones are collegers, who are distinguished by a coarse black gown; the latter are

oppidans, literally meaning "town-boys." The former may not wear white trowsers, and all are debarred boots, and black or coloured neckcloths.

Collegers are dieted solely on mutton; hence they are familiarly and vulgarly termed "mutton-tugs," abbreviated to "tugs," which homely monosyllable they themselves derive from *togati*, on account of their wearing the *toga*—had they not better trace their origin at once from that mysterious and secret society of the Thugs of India? But their internal economy should be treated with diffidence, for between them and the oppidans there was ever an undefined, though "great gulf fixed." Owing to this, there is a difficulty in deciding how much, if any, of the following incident may be authentic. As asserted above, they were confined to mutton, the whole mutton, and nothing but the mutton, until the humane, but late Mr. Godolphin bequeathed a sum of money, to be appropriated in supplying them with potatoes, which henceforth accompanied the mutton, though in a state of nature; and as this was not contrary to the statute, and as in all charities as little is done for the money as is possible, the poor boys and their potatoes were without remedy, until one of the College Fellows kindly bequeathed an annuity towards extricating them from their dilemma. He has ever since been appropriately immortalized as "Pealipo Roberts."

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Each boy has a tutor, who is one of the masters, of whom there are about thirteen. Their chief occupation is in correcting, and explaining the errors of their pupils' exercises. At the period now spoken of, the school consisted of six hundred and twenty boys, probably the greatest number it had hitherto attained. Each master's house is generally filled with boarders.

The "dames" are boarding-houses, mostly kept by clergymen's widows, or widows of some sort; there are also about thirteen of these.

Assistant masters are professors of French, mathematics, writing, and dancing; but they are altogether independent of the college, and are taken or not at the will of the parents.

There is another class of assistant masters, and these are the Cads. They are the professors of shooting, rowing, and cricket, and have many pupils. The most leading characters among them were Jack Hall, Lary Miller, Pickey Powell, and Jemmy Flowers; but with regard to the latter there existed a slight odium, owing to his religious tenets—he was suspected of Mahometanism. Lary Miller ever asserted his conviction, that "Jemmy was a Maho-maiden, having surprised him one evening in the Brocas, lying on his stomach, worshipping a very large mushroom." Making due allowance for Lary's notorious veracity, and for Jemmy Flowers' religious inebriety, still the circumstance of a mushroom, and that a large one, flourishing on the Brocas, must ever throw a strong air of improbability over this assertion.

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There is a holiday on every red-lettered saint's-day in the calendar; when this, or no other excuse occurs, it is termed "a regular week," when Tuesday is a whole holiday, Thursday half an one, and Saturday three-quarters.

The longest period of time a boy uninterruptedly enjoys to himself may be said to comprise two hours, commencing each time at twelve, four, and six o'clock, on whole and half holidays; and these periods are designated by the never-to-be-forgotten sounds of "after twelve," "after four," and "after six."

"Whole school days" affect this arrangement but little, the difference being, that on holidays, they are separated from each other, by attendance on absence, and church; and on whole school-days, by school-times, of which there are four, commencing each at eight, eleven, three, and five o'clock.

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The boys learn all their lessons, and do their exercises, in their own rooms, going into school to say or construe them. One school-time occupies about three-quarters of an hour.

The whole school is divided into six forms, of which the sixth ranks the highest. This, and the fifth form, comprise about half the number of boys, for whom the lower half fag. An upper boy may fag a lower one to Windsor, or anywhere else.

Though the river be out of bounds, half of the boys dedicate themselves to boating during the summer. The extent and main object of their expedition is "Surly Hall," a notorious public-house, three miles up the river from Windsor Bridge. Surly Hall may be said to be appropriated to the Etonians, and here they rest themselves. I never recollect one boy guilty of intoxication at this place.

There are two grand aquatic processions every year up to this Surly Hall—on the 4th of June, George the Third's birth-day; and on Election Saturday, towards the end of July. They are beautiful gala-days, when eight or ten long-boats are rowed by their crews in costume, accompanied by a couple of military bands; swarms of nobility and gentry come from London to enjoy them, some person of peculiar rank being "the sitter" in the leading boat; but boating is not allowed.

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"Montem," so called, perhaps, from the ceremony of a boy flourishing a flag on a small mount, occurs every third year, when the upper boys are dressed as officers, and the fags, resembling sailors, in white trowsers and blue jackets. Thus they are obliged to expose themselves to a multitude, while they walk to Salt Hill, where they dine. As an Eton boy, I have witnessed four Montems, and could never think of each but as a ridiculous, tedious, and detestable performance; the only good resulting is, that the captain of the collegers receives several hundreds of pounds, which are collected from the crowd by other collegers in fancy dresses, and denominated "salt-bearers," and "runners," who dun high and low for "salt."

CHAPTER II.

"How old are you, Graham?" asked my future tutor.

"Nine, if you please, sir."

"Can you do sense-verses?"

"No, sir, only nonsense ones."

"Well, you are placed in the upper Greek; be in eight-o'clock-school to-morrow. Graham," calling me back, "take this order to the book-seller, and he will give you the requisite school-books. It is Greek grammar in the morning; get a boy to show you where the lesson is. You may go."

So soon as I had procured the books, I peeped into the Greek grammar, which struck me as being an interesting-looking book, for hitherto, I had never even seen a Greek letter. I went to my Dames, where I found Tyrrel *ma*, and Kennedy, who shared my room, playing at battledore.

"You don't care for the row, Graham, do you?" asked Tyrrel, after they had played half an hour, and observing that I looked a little puzzled.

"Oh, that makes no difference," I sighed, "but this Greek is such odd stuff, and I don't know a letter in the alphabet except the four first ones. Can you give us a help?"

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After a lengthened debate among us, the only apparent chance for me was, that the lesson should be written out in English letters, so that when I repeated it, I should appear to know my lesson. This, Tyrrel good-naturedly effected for me.

At eight o'clock, then, the next morning, in due routine, I approached the master in his desk, under the same superstitious awe as poor Friday, when he cowered before the august Crusoe. I would not have failed in my performance for worlds, and now entered the desk resolved on acquitting myself to perfection.

My ardour was not slightly damped when, on uttering a few words, the master, with a frown, demanded why I had not commenced where the previous boy had left off.

"I thought, sir, that I was to begin at the beginning."

"What business have you to think?"

Commencing, then, as he directed me, I had no sooner recited four lines, than he ordered me to "go."

"That's not all, if you please, sir."

"It's quite enough for me; go."

So I went, under the painful suspicion that I had failed, and was to be punished accordingly. I was not yet aware that the succeeding boy went on with the lesson where his predecessor had left off; and when he had said his three or four lines, he likewise was dismissed, and so on—it being taken for granted, that the boy knew the remainder of the task; but this extreme innocence of mine, when I informed the master that I had not accomplished the whole lesson, is not a little amusing, when compared to my future career, was it not for the remorse a man of crime might feel when he reverts his thoughts to a time ere he had transgressed. At that time I should have acted similarly under every circumstance; I intended well.

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"Now let us go to breakfast," said Kennedy, as I returned to the room.

"Will you fellows get it ready, and make the tea," asked Tyrrel, "while I go and lay breakfast for my master?" Kennedy and myself were as yet exempt from that duty for a fortnight, which is the privilege granted to each new comer.

"What a lucky fellow I am," said Tyrrel, on his return, "to have you two in my mess, with your new set of tea-things, and a double set, too! If we manage well, they'll last us easily to the holidays. Till you came, I was obliged to slip into other fellows' rooms, and sharp a cup of tea. Now, let us regularly lock up everything in my cupboard, for it's quite empty; how comfortable we shall be; and your pictures, Kennedy, make the room look so nice!"

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"And what beautiful frames they have!" I observed.

"The frames and glasses," replied Kennedy, "were a present for those views about home, which a sister sketched for me."

"What shall we do after twelve?" asked Tyrrel.

"Can't we go out in a boat?"

It was soon arranged that Kennedy and Tyrrel should play at cricket, and that I should stay in

to work at my Greek, of which another lesson occurred at five-o'clock-school. At two o'clock, the trio met at dinner; after which we proceeded to our room, where, soon as we entered, Kennedy beheld each of his drawings rifled of their glasses, which lay shivered to pieces beneath them on the floor.

Gregory *mi* had, in an unlucky moment, lounged into the room with a little cross-bow, and had practised his skill on each in succession.

"Never mind, Kennedy," said Tyrrel, "they must have been broken one time or another."

I now proceeded unwarily enough to the cloisters, where I thought I might puzzle out my hieroglyphical task more in quiet.

"I say, my little man, you must come and bowl to me."

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"I've got my lesson to learn," I replied.

"When do you say it?" inquired the fifth-form boy; and finding that it was not required till five o'clock, and discrediting my singular difficulty, which I stated to him, he at once took me away, notwithstanding that, as a saving clause, I asserted the privilege due to a boy's first fortnight, but which, I was now told, should not avail me for having told such a falsehood about the lesson. In the following schooltime I was, of course, "put in the bill," but was not flogged, in consequence of pleading my "first fault," another and too fleeting privilege of a new boy.

On returning to my room in the evening, I found my two friends looking unutterable things, while around them lay, "like leaves in wint'ry weather," the fragments of our prided crockery ware!

In our absence, a boy, well knowing what he was about, had come to the cupboard to sharp some tea-things, but finding, to his disappointment, that it was locked, he was yet determined that we should not escape him. The whole was unfortunately suspended, by a bit of rope, to a large nail in the wall; this, then, he had maliciously cut, and the result had proved fatal to the whole "double set of tea-things," with the exception of a pewter salt-cellar. "Well, they must have been broken, one time or another," archly remarked Kennedy.

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A very few days had elapsed before I had become a genuine Etonian, which a boy is never accounted until he has been once flogged. Notwithstanding my respect of that honourable title, I was still very unwilling to purchase it so dearly. I had an inclination for forming my own opinion upon matters, somewhat independently of others; and though, in the lower part of the school, to be put in the bill, and suffer accordingly, carried with it anything but a reflection towards the subject of it, still, for reasons of my own, I concluded that it would be far more respectable to act otherwise. This, then, with me, was not merely an opinion—it became a principle, and one which, unfortunately, I was most anxious to preserve inviolate—unfortunately, because it must inevitably be outraged. Even under the most favourable circumstances, owing to my ignorance of its rudiments, I was sensible that I must frequently fail in my Greek tasks; what chance, then, had I, constantly thwarted in my endeavours to avoid this, by hourly and capricious flogging?

This, then, weighed upon my mind in no slight degree, for though exposed, from an early period, "to rough it" more than was common, the sensitiveness of a boy's disposition will be anything but deadened in consequence, so long as he thinks for himself, and forms his own line of right and wrong, though perhaps it schools him precociously to conceal what his associates may deem to be his weaknesses, though probably his better traits of character, should he be blessed with such. This tendency was not likely to be diminished by the following incident:—

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From the moment I first left my home, which was at an early period, the little religious instruction I might have received from my nurse was abandoned, and never even reflected on for a moment, till within a short time of my departure for Eton, when, by some chance train of thought, I became sensible that I knew not a single prayer—at least perfectly. I was well aware that other boys did, though many neglected them. To supply this my deficiency, I henceforth never failed to offer up, each morning and evening, extemporary ones, and which, though puerilely adapted to little impressions or wants, yet flowed the more truly from the heart, and cherished an affectionate, and therefore, truly religious feeling, towards my Almighty Father.

One morning I was awakened by the clock striking the hour in which I should have been in school, when, instantly dressing myself, I harried away, and on returning to my room, was kneeling at a chair, when I was interrupted by the dreaded vociferation of "lower boy!"

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Though knowing the consequences, should I be discovered, I never for a moment wavered as to the course I should adopt, but continued deliberately at my accustomed devotions. As I was thus occupied, the fifth-form boy entered my room to learn my reason for neglecting his summons, and was for a moment startled when he discovered in what manner I was employed; but, without further hesitation or compunction, taking me by the collar, he inflicted a blow as a punishment for my presumption. This was a little too much, so instantly springing at him, and taking him unawares, for a moment I actually beat my tyrant off, when Kennedy accidentally presenting himself at the door, at once ranged himself by my side. This made the pitiful fellow pause, and finding that, though so immeasurably his juniors, we were resolute, he prudently informed us, that so soon as we had procured the captain's permission to fight with him, he would comply; this formality existing on a feud arising between an upper and lower boy. On inquiring into the case, the captain refused his consent, but added a severe threat towards my aggressor.

Insignificant as they appear, these incidents had lasting effects on me. With regard to the first, I at once resigned myself in despair to the bitterness of a disappointed, and almost a broken spirit; and, so far as all scholastic duties were concerned, I henceforth adopted a reckless,

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heedless course, except that I pursued it doggedly and systematically.

As to my religious duties, I was considerably embarrassed, and that, because I bestowed some attention upon them; had I not, I should have been as easy in this respect as most other boys. However, after no little examination into the subject, and, by-the-by, confusion, I came to the resolution of guiding myself as well as I could by what little knowledge I might possess; and unspiritual as this reliance on my own efforts evidently was, I, in unison with it, farther resolved, that should I omit what I knew to be right, I would refrain, at all events, from that which I judged to be wrong—and I do not see what I could have done more.

To assist, or prevent me in my resolution, things were nearly balanced. No boy had been more completely exposed to the chance of circumstance, and, in consequence, to the unbiassed sway of my natural disposition, which was restless in the extreme. For this there is no alternative—for good or bad, work it will, and in such a case idleness is indeed the root of all evil.

To save me from, or rather to diminish this danger, I was *at that time* imbued, in no trifling degree, with benevolence and candour; and I was free, also, of two qualities which I have since acquired, for they are appendages as common to our natures as are our limbs to our bodies. I was devoid of selfishness and prejudice; and as society is constituted, one commences life with a bad start, destitute of such accomplishments.

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CHAPTER III

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ToC

Of the seven days in the week, probably more flogging occurs on Friday than during all the others put together. On the unfortunate, the shuffling, and the dense, the effect of this day's ordeal has ever proved to be most searching. On Thursday, then, towards the conclusion of eleven o'clock school, the boys were not a little delighted, when Keate, closing the book, informed them that an hour since he had been honoured with a request from his Majesty that the morrow might be converted into a whole holiday, and that they should be indulged accordingly. It need hardly be stated with what yells of ecstasy this announcement was received, as we rushed from our seats, lightened of the sombre dread of "Friday's business."

In the evening, I was summoned to the tea-table of Gregory, my puissant master, to account, if I could, for my presumptuous absence at a time when every fag's presence was so imperatively required. On my appearance, my fellow-fag was astonished at the air of confidence with which I advanced towards the table, guilty of such a heinous omission. My master, for some seconds, regarded me with a stern and savage aspect.

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"You little rascal," at length he exclaimed, his voice deepening under the effects of rage soon to be amply gratified, "you've been toasting these muffins with the snuffers!" At the same time he confidently pointed out to me, with savage delight, the single and blackened mark occasioned by such an unorthodox implement. This was not what I was prepared for, and the circumstance was, alas, but too evident, and the palms of my hands were immediately tingling under the strokes of my master's hair-brush.

"And now," said he, pausing for a moment, "I am going to give you another licking for not being here in time."

"No," I exclaimed, "you have excused me a fortnight's fagging; at least, you said yesterday that you would, should I ask the King for a holiday to-morrow."

This was the truth, and so, in an unguarded moment, he had expressed himself; but being, at the least, as anxious for a holiday as he was, and sighing for a fortnight's emancipation from slavery, I had determined to take him at his word, and obey him to the letter. In a spirit, then, of excessive innocence, or impudence—I think the former, though I may have since exchanged it for the latter—I had started off for the cottage in Windsor Park, where the King was then residing, and had actually gained admittance without interruption from any one, though I was now accosted by a gentleman who demanded the purport of my visit. I replied that I had come up to ask the King to get us a holiday for Friday. Upon this, he informed me that it was not usual for strangers to see his Majesty while resident at the cottage, and that I had better wait until his Majesty returned to the Castle; and then he kindly walked back with me towards the garden, through which I had previously passed, and there left me. Here I met Jerningham walking with his mother, whom I acquainted with the object of my interview with the Duke of Dorset, as he proved to be. This happened to be a very fortunate rencontre for me, as Lady Jerningham eventually turned out to be my "friend at court," and had seconded my petition with success.

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As the next day was a holiday entirely originating with myself, I concluded that I had a right to make the most of it, and enjoy it in my own way. Under this impression, Kennedy and I started at seven that morning, towards Perch-hole, where Lary Miller was to meet us with a punt and casting-net, and we were to fish our way down the river, towards Datchet. While awaiting him at

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the water's edge, among other inventions to amuse ourselves, Kennedy thoughtlessly snatching off my hat, set it floating on the water; so taking him by the collar, ere I had time to reflect, I swung him well into Perch-hole. The moment he scrambled out, there seemed to be no doubt on either side as to what was to be done. Indeed, it would be impossible to say which of us struck the first blow, though the question with us now was, who was to give the last. Perhaps any other boys, as soon as the first burst of passion had exploded, would have deferred the contest to another opportunity, when each might be attended by his second; but Kennedy breathed nothing but immediate retaliation, and probably he might wish to exercise himself after his immersion. I also preferred the present time, as, on giving the subject a momentary consideration, during the early period of the fight, it struck me as being most repugnant and ungrateful to my feelings, to meet my greatest friend in cool blood, to see which could batter the other the most, and that, too, only to glut the sight of hundreds.

In general, each battle at Eton is conducted with all the etiquette incidental to the prize-ring, under the latest regulations of the Birmingham Youth, or White-headed Bob. Indeed, one would here conclude that it was impossible to contend without a ring, seconds, and time-keeper. Notwithstanding the deficiency of these desiderata, we weaved merrily away for nearly an hour, during which period, perhaps from being the lightest, I was prostrated three times, which therefore divided the contest into but three stages or rounds, during which time each rested on the grass, and conscientiously recommenced our operations, the instant we imagined that the half-minute had expired. [27]

The clock now struck a quarter-past nine, when we were reminded, that should we fight on, each would be well flogged for disregard of absence; and as our occupation was barely worth the penalty, we at once put on our jackets, and departed in silence, to answer to our names, while, as a matter of course, we were to finish the battle after twelve, for my holiday afforded us ample time.

This morning, therefore, for the first time, we breakfasted in different rooms. Each now commenced this repast with feelings far from cheerful. The anger of the moment having passed away, there remained no sense of enmity between us; and yet, in an hour or two, we were to meet again, like a couple of dogs, and mangle each other as we best might.

Kennedy could not but feel that he was not only the strongest, but had actually been more prevalent in the contest than myself; nor did he, on this account, congratulate himself, when he reflected that the appointed hour was fast approaching when he must do his best to thrash me still more. The sole thought that weighed on my mind, was that of having quarrelled with a fellow whom I liked far beyond myself. At this moment the door opened, and Kennedy, placing his rolls and butter on the table, stretched his hand across it towards me, and the next, we were sipping our tea together out of the pewter salt-cellar, with no farther traces of enmity, save the three unequivocal black eyes we retained between us. [28]

This subject reminds me of a very melancholy one which I witnessed several years afterwards; and as I have heard it discussed so frequently, and so erroneously, I cannot help wishing, if possible, to give a concise and true statement of the case. In the instance alluded to, the contest might be said to have terminated with no unusual consequences, for the clock had struck the hour in which it was imperative for every one of us to be in his dames for the night, and the combatants were in the act of putting on their coats, and all would have been well, had not a voice, which I distinctly recollect, exclaimed, "One more round!" Whichever had now declined would have been considered as vanquished: they closed, struggled for the fall, and the fall was fatal. The sole cause of this miserable catastrophe was that voice of a mere bystander, and of this he must be as sensible as I am. I know not who he may be, nor do I envy him his secret. [29]

It was now getting towards the latter end of July, and I had been an Etonian nearly three months. During this time I had experienced a fair average of fighting, bullying, fagging, and flogging, and had also acquired some useful accomplishments. I could paddle my skiff up to Surly Hall and back, swim across the river at Upper Hope, and had even begun to get in debt, having some weeks ago "gone tick" with Joe Hyde for a couple of bottles of ginger-beer, with the proviso of returning them when empty, but which, it must be confessed, were still lying at the bottom of Deadman's Hole, for the farther improvement of my diving.

Having just been disappointed in my endeavours to procure a boat at Hester's, I was returning towards my dames about the middle of after-six, totally at a loss for amusement. Every other boy was now eagerly employed on the river, or at cricket, and the whole college was silent and deserted. As I strolled listlessly along, I observed a funeral slowly issuing from the church-door on its way to the burial-ground. Singular to say, this was the first instance of death's doing on a fellow-being I had yet witnessed. On its approach, I seated myself on the Long-walk wall, and watched the coffin and its noiseless followers, as they glided slowly before me. So soon as all had passed, I quietly slid down from my seat, and accompanied the procession at a little distance. [30]

While we are young, we are not only moved more easily, but doubt not that every person else feels as sincerely. Under this impression, I accompanied the corpse towards its grave, touched with a sort of pity for the mourners, and sobered by a deep and respectful sympathy.

As I stood by the brink of the grave, I could not but feel a soothing comfort and hope under our affliction, so beautifully held out to us by the spirit of "the service of the dead;" and I even entertained an affection for the clergyman who officiated. But when I witnessed the lowering of the coffin to its future resting-place—heard the soft crumbling of the churchyard soil, as it dropped from the grasp of the sexton on the below-sounding coffin, down below—the anguished but stifled moan of the childless father, who had apparently expended his hard-got earnings for

the interment of his child—I not only repassed the gates considerably affected, but overpowered with an indescribable dread of impending death. I was now possessed with a servile love of God, arising from fear; an anxiety to please and obey him, to an infinite degree. Alas! even at this early age, how worldly-minded, how pitiful, can be our motives!

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I now determined within myself, as resolutely as presumptuously, to "go and sin no more;" and to that effect, that very evening, dived to the bottom of Deadman's Hole, and returned to Joe Hyde his horribly portentous bottles.

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CHAPTER IV.

ToC

A few weeks previous to the holidays, "the old Queen" gave a magnificent *fête* at Frogmore, when, to form a prominent feature in the day's amusements, her favourites, the Etonians, were invited to play a cricket-match, for which a beautiful space of lawn had already been most good-naturedly prepared.

I think the first approach to royalty must ever be most interesting to boys, at least it was deeply so to me on this day; for when I observed the wide-swelling lawns, the broad groves, and glassy lakes of this little paradise; the Queen, with the princesses and royal suite, as they glided over the turf in a train of pony-carriages, lined and shining with the richest satins; the splendid and gaudy clusters of marquees, glittering in all the pride of Tippoo's eastern magnificence, from whom they had been rifled, with their bright crescents blazing in the sunbeams—I found all the lovely and dearly remembered fancies, conjured before my infant imagination by the nursery tale, at once placed in delightful reality before me.

Towards the evening, I had rambled, considerably fatigued with the restless pleasures of the day, into the most secluded parts of the shrubberies, and was resting on a seat, listening to the notes of a bugle band in the distance, when they were interrupted by the steps of some one passing quickly along the gravel walk towards me, and the next moment I saw a girl approaching the gate in front of me. I instantly rose and opened it for her; but as she passed, the little girl, after a slight hesitation, inquired with an expression of some anxiety if I had seen her father, Sir George Curzon.

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"I do not know your father by sight," I answered, "and fear you will hardly meet with him here; for I have been more than half an hour on this seat, and have seen no one at all."

"I declare," she sighed, "I do not know how I shall find him, and I am quite tired, too! But will you, if you please, tell me the way towards the palace—I should be much obliged to you?"

"As well as I can," I answered; "but would it not be better that I ran and inquired for your father, and brought him here, for then, in the meanwhile, as you are tired, you can rest yourself on this bench?"

"You are very good-natured," replied Miss Curzon, as she sat down; "but if you will only wait until I have rested for a minute, perhaps you will go with me towards the palace, for I don't like being here quite alone."

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I now perceived that the poor little girl had been crying.

"But why are you here by yourself?" she added, the next moment; "have you lost your way too? But sit down, there is room for both." And she looked up so kindly, while her beautiful little hand, contrasting with the rough bench, pressed it to enforce her request.

How happy was I to obey her, and yet how painfully confused! In a word, I was out of my element, this being my very first rencontre with one of the softer sex; for which reason, though so many years have since passed away, I cannot help reciting and recollecting it as an occurrence of yesterday.

"Are you not an Eton boy?" demanded Miss Curzon.

"Yes; but I have been one only for a few months."

"Papa says that Frederic shall be sent to Eton, by and bye," she replied, rather abstractedly.

"Perhaps, then," I answered, "I shall know him—at least, I hope I may."

"Oh, it will be a long while before he joins you, for he is quite little yet; and then, you know, he must be your fag, instead of your friend."

"I shall never fag a brother of yours," I answered.

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"May I ask you some questions about this horrid fagging?" demanded Miss Curzon, and turning towards me.

"Of course," said I; "as many as you please."

"Have you got what they call a master?"

"Certainly; every lower boy must have one."

"What do you do for him?"

"Lay his breakfast and tea-things every day, and make his toast."

"Anything else?"

"Whatever he chooses."

"And if you did not choose to do it?"

"I should get a good thrashing; or, in other words, Miss Curzon, get a good licking."

After a brief silence, she resumed her questions.

"As you have been so short a time at Eton, I suppose you have not yet been punished?"

"O yes, many times. I got a capital flogging yesterday."

"Will you tell me what you were flogged for?"

"For eating in church."

"And what could make you do that?"

"I had been fagging all the morning, Miss Curzon; and having no time for breakfast, I went into church with my rolls in my pocket, and one of the masters saw me eating them." [36]

"You have quite frightened me for poor little Frederic!"

"Perhaps he will be more fortunate," I replied; "so I must even wish, as you said just now, that he may indeed be my fag, for then he can breakfast with me every morning."

"I declare I will ask papa to place him under your care if you will let me?"

"You cannot know, Miss Curzon, how obliged I feel to you for thinking that I would take care of your brother; and depend upon it, I will."

"Yes," said the little lady, looking stedfastly in my face, "I feel quite certain you would. But," she added, as her own brightened with a smile, "you must now fulfil your first promise to me, and find my father, for I am so tired, I must rest here a little longer."

"Very well," I replied; "but how I should like to talk with you here all night! Do not go away until I return."

I now hurried away in search of her father, who, after many inquiries, was pointed out to me by Chrichton, though in a very inaccessible position; for he was standing with other important personages, among whom I could discern the Duke, by the side of her Majesty's poney-phaeton.

"Do, Chrichton," I begged—"do go up to Sir George Curzon for me; you are more used to that sort of thing than I." [37]

All my eloquence being thrown away upon him, and on that instant thinking of my little lady in the grove, I walked towards the group with my hat in my hand, without further hesitation.

"If you please, Sir George Curzon, there is a young lady in the shrubberies who wants you."

"I think, young sir," replied Sir George, "you must make a mistake."

"No, sir. She has lost you, she says; it is Miss Curzon."

"Dear me! I thought she had been all this while with her aunt. Where is she?"

"A little beyond that temple on the hill, there," I replied, pointing with my hat.

"You need hardly go all that way yourself," said the Duke, observing Sir George about to follow me; "the boy can show her here very well."

"Yes, Sir George," added her Majesty; "let the little boy run and bring her."

"Well, then, my little gentleman," asked Sir George, "may I ask you to do so?"

"Oh, yes, Sir," I replied, and I was off on my way towards her in a moment.

"I have found your father. Miss Curzon," said I on my return, "and he has asked me to lead you to him. I hope I have not been long." [38]

"I am sorry you should have had so much trouble," she answered, as she took my arm; "but we must now make haste, for it is getting quite late, and I know papa wishes to go part of the way home to-night."

"Do you live far from here, then?" I rather pointedly inquired.

"Oh, yes—I don't know how many miles—all the way down in Cheshire; we took this place in our road from town."

"Well, then, Miss Curzon," I said, as we approached her father, "I wonder if ever we shall meet again! You cannot think how I hope we may; but now good bye, and——"

"You need not leave me quite yet," she replied, interrupting me; "come a little further with me—what were you going to say?"

"Though I may never see you more, nobody will ever be so glad to hear that you are happy as I; for I would sooner see you so than any person I know."

"Thank you, thank you," she replied, rather earnestly, "and I hope we shall be able—indeed, I am certain I shall see you again somewhere—I will not," she added, as we approached the circle, "I will not, if you please, keep your arm before them. Good bye, then; I shall hear of you, at all events, from my brother."

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She then left me, while I reluctantly directed my steps towards the college, which now appeared unwelcome and obtrusive. She was so different to everything I had hitherto experienced!—so gentle and kind—so unassuming, and yet so lovely—and now to be torn away and severed from such a person! That night I attempted to console myself in the following effusion; and as they are the first and last lines of which I was ever guilty, shall be here inserted; for though the versification is by no means faultless, they were true to my feelings at the time:—

When 'midst the deepest gloom of night,
While all is still and lone,
A heavenly meteor flashes bright,
But floats away as soon;

Does not the bosom of the moor
Seem doubly dark and drear,
Frowning still sterner than before
Did that false light appear!

So, lady, have you crossed my way,
Brighter than cloudless morn—
So o'er this heart thy piercing ray.
Gleamed—and thou art gone!

CHAPTER V.

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ToC

My first half-year as an Etonian had now expired. Brief as it was, it has been to me the most portentous period of my existence. I sometimes feel that my fate, here and hereafter, has hinged upon it—this world is globular for the same reason that a woman's tear is. Are we the creatures of the merest chance, or of eternal predestination through all time, if there be such a thing as time at all? The question is idle; for as we have never yet solved it, I begin to think we never shall. The Almighty has willed this obscurity, and therefore it is for the best.

I sensitively felt that I was launched amid the crowd of a bustling world, to steer and shift for myself as I best might. Like other boys, I had a tutor; but, though a thoroughly conscientious man, he was worse than useless; for he was to be practised on with such facility, that I, with his other pupils, imposed upon him as we chose.

When I returned for the holidays to the paternal roof, it was only to be fagged by my elder brethren; for here the fagging system, I regret to say, was not only tolerated, but carried out to its most deplorable extreme.

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Ever distant then in our days of boyhood, and that, too, while under the same roof, now that the casualties of after-life have dispersed us, we are become, to all intents and purposes, entire strangers one towards the other.

As to my father, he was, of course, wholly engaged in the cares of providing for so large and expensive a family; and though a man, I am persuaded, of strong and ardent affection for his children, I can barely say that I was acquainted with him.

Accustomed to this sort of distant intercourse from my infancy, I was desirous of no other, until the following occasion, which happened a year or two subsequent to the present time.

I had been engaged in rather an arduous expedition, and, in consequence, was laid up a day or two afterwards with a fever, and in considerable danger of my life. As soon as I could be removed, I was sent to my father's house. In the evening, as we ranged ourselves round the fire, the rest of the family, from prudential motives, removed themselves to a distance. My father drew my chair towards his own, asserting that in illness one should not desert the other.

By the time that I returned home, I had moreover become a confirmed "shuffler."

This word bears, indeed, an ominous insinuation; but at Eton it is not so disreputable as it sounds. The shuffler ever employs what ingenuity he may be gifted with, in contriving how he may do as little in school, and as much out of it, with the least possible flogging; and it is astonishing to what a nicety this calculation can be reduced, and to what a degree of perfection a boy's powers for it may be brought, by constant and careful cultivation.

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Yet I was, I think, far from being an idle boy. I neglected my studies, not to become listless and unemployed, but that I might earn more time for other, and, as most persons would think, less edifying pursuits, and was therefore invariably devoted to cricket, rowing, and foot-ball matches.

This, then, was the good or ill effect which resulted from the chance of circumstance. My father had at once concluded, that send a boy to Eton, pay the yearly bills, and his education was infallibly insured.

From the moment that I entered the college, I had been carelessly placed far above my acquirements; and constant flogging was inevitable, for a year or two at least, until, perhaps, by close application, I had made myself equal to my daily tasks. But this was a prospect by far too distant to be entertained by a boy of nine years old; for it is the ambition of a boy not to be flogged at all—not as little as possible. [43]

An objection to sending a boy early to Eton is, that should he have the hardihood to brave frequent punishment, he may be very nearly as idle as he pleases; and at this early age, too, he has not the sense to apply himself to study of his own will, and that, too, while surrounded by so many temptations to the contrary.

One flogging, without the slightest stigma attaching to it, or reprimand, is the certain penalty of failure in his task. With hardihood or without it, I then had no chance, though, at all events, I acquired it, and that too, to such a degree, and I deemed the penalty so trivial, that I henceforth enjoyed a delightful sense of freedom and independence in its way.

If I bestowed a thought on the subject at all, it was to be flogged not more than once in a day, if I could conveniently do otherwise.

Yet, in an irrational mood, I would read—I would frequently steal off to some quiet spot in the neighbourhood, and employ myself in various histories, of which reading I was always very fond. My favourite retreat was up in an old pollarded willow-tree, secure from fagging, and therefore enjoying the distant voices in the playing-fields, delightfully contrasting with the quiet splash of the trout leaping in the river beneath me.

Thus I obtained a respectably accurate knowledge of the Roman, Grecian, and English histories, and a somewhat precocious insight too of the characters of their various and prominent actors. [44]

As for the heroes of the fabulous ages, I was completely conversant with each of their circumstances, and for this reason. I must acknowledge, that, as the hour approached for punishment, I was apt to be troubled in mind, similarly to a patient about to undergo a disagreeable operation; but no sooner had I opened Lempriere's classical dictionary, than every unpleasing anticipation was dissolved, and I became totally unconscious of vulgar realities, and absorbed in its poetical but unequivocal immorality.

CHAPTER VI.

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In spite of the ingenuity I expended, in order to imbibe as small a quantity of Latin and Greek as was possible, and of the number of persons, whom I have so frequently heard declaiming against the exclusive attention paid to their attainment, and with whom, during my pupillage, I entirely coincided, I cannot help smiling at the extent to which I have since *ratted* in this respect. Now that I am no longer forced to profit by such studies, I have arrived at the conviction of their necessity. If a knowledge of our own language be desirable, they afford the only means of understanding the true import of the words which constitute it; and when, at times, I have sufficient diffidence to suspect my own capabilities of forming a correct opinion in the matter, and examine into that of others, I have to acknowledge, not only that the advocates of the dead languages are the most competent judges, but that the persons who oppose them the most strenuously, are invariably those who are the least conversant with them; while the former, again, are rarely heard to regret the time expended in their acquirements; while what superior though uneducated man, but has deplored his ignorance of them, and his want of opportunity to acquire them? [46]

But I have, of late, arrived at such an extreme as to advocate the study to the exclusion of all others, with the exception of modern languages. My paradox is this, that which is downright indispensable for everyday life, do not teach us; for then, in spite of ourselves, we must, in these subjects, become our own instructors. If, in a few years after we have left the school, we possess not a respectable knowledge of such common, and easily acquired subjects, as arithmetic, history, and geography, we alone are culpable; and the more the world makes us sensible of our deficiency, the more we deserve it, and the sooner we shall set about to apply the remedy. Teach us, then, in boyhood, that which we will not, or in this case, perhaps, cannot teach ourselves—a knowledge of the classics.

I sometimes suspect that many persons doubt of their importance, from the fact of their being distinguished as the dead languages, while, perhaps, they are exactly the only immortal ones—unchangeable throughout all ages in their primitive purity. In an unwary, or perhaps charitable moment, I am seized with enthusiastic admiration of our forefathers' good taste in so justly appreciating the beauties of ancient literature, though I now and then have a misgiving that it is a relic of the cloister, which had no productions of its own to compete with them, and its traditional authority has not yet become extinct; not that the moderns have produced such works of genius as to supersede them, for those of the imagination are not to be accumulated to greater perfection, from age to age, like those of science. Indeed the works of the ancients, relative to the latter, are now only useful as instances of the progress of the human mind; nor could they be otherwise, as science is more or less perfect in proportion to the ages that have preceded; as it is the last man's knowledge, added to that of all his predecessors, or, as Sir John Herschel far better expresses it, it "is the knowledge of many, orderly and methodically digested and arranged, so as to become attainable by one;" and thus a respectable philosopher of the present day may possess more knowledge than even such powerful and original minds as those of Confucius or Zoroaster, Aristotle or Pythagoras: he is not like the goose I now see wading through the mud, and that can't build its nest a jot better than the sacred ones of the Capitol could.

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With regard to works purely imaginative, perhaps the very converse of this will be found to be the case. The bard of Chios is not superseded by those of the Lakes, who, as far as all beauty imparted by the force of originality is concerned, even labour under a disadvantage, for every author is conscious that a strong memory is a dangerous thing, and will interfere with his originality in spite of himself.

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If then the sublimest soarings of the human imagination conveyed to our minds, and clothed in all the beauties of language, are desirable, we shall seldom regret the hours we have expended over Homer or Virgil, Demosthenes or Cicero.

But although this comparatively exclusive attachment to the classics may be Eton's most prominent characteristic, I suspect it to be by no means the most important or beneficial one.

The contrast and contact, resulting from the sheer multitude of varying dispositions, refined by the gentlemanly tone of character indigenous to the college, afford advantages superior to all the rest put together.

There are three other prominent features in the economy of Eton, which I have touched on in former pages, namely, those of fagging, flogging, and attendance in church during the week days.

As regards the two former intellectual characteristics, I must admit that I am unusually obtuse; for although boasting a long and intimate acquaintance with both, I have never arrived at any certain conclusion as to their good or ill effects, though I have little doubt but that they contain a mixture of each, only I am uncertain which may preponderate.

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The former might be profitable, both to the fagger and the fagged, did it not commence and finish at the wrong end; for could a boy be well fagged from the age of fourteen to eighteen, he would probably be all the better for it, but during this period he is unfortunately the despot. Many persons conclude that the system acts beneficially on the youthful members of the aristocracy; but I think the same end might be attained, and more respectably, by the mere jostling amid the crowd, without proceeding to the extremity of subjecting a boy of gentlemanly feeling, to the coarse caprices of a tradesman's son. I have myself *requested* the present Marquis of D—e to walk into the playing-fields each evening, with a slop-basin in his hand, and milk an unusually quiet cow that used to be there; but this office fell to his lot, merely from his being the only boy in my dames who knew how to milk a cow—in fact, it was his boast that he could milk a cow better than any man in England. Lord C—stl—h too, must well remember when a great wild, raw-boned Irish fellow, with a rope round his waist, would throw himself from Lion's Leap into the river, by way of learning to swim, while his lordship was appointed to pull him out again; but the particular time that I now mean was, when he was all but drowned, and vociferating with Hibernian vehemence, "pull, you blackguard!" every time his head emerged for a moment from the bottom of the river. But whatever effects this levelling process may have in youthful days, I suspect that they are by no means permanent, and are completely obliterated on leaving the school.

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With regard to the punishment of flogging, many persons condemn it, as degrading to a boy's character. These same persons would, probably, deem it out of place to raise their hats on entering a man's shop, and perhaps every one would feel it to be so in England; but in other countries, were they not to do so, the shopkeeper, from experience, would merely attribute the omission to what he deems an instance of ill-breeding, habitual to John Bull; or, when he is not aware of this, he will frequently decline to accommodate his customer. I mention this instance to show, that what may meet with disapprobation in one place, will not do so in another; and thus what to us at a distance, and in after years, may appear to be repulsive, may by no means be so considered during boyhood. Again, others will say, that it ought to be felt as a disgrace. To this, I can only answer that it never will be; for where there are so many boys as at Eton, this mode of punishment must frequently be adopted; and as often as it is, so certain, from its repetition, will it cease to be considered in that light—it is altogether a necessary evil, which flesh is heir to. Should the boy have committed anything unbecoming a gentleman, he is invariably and appropriately punished by the manner adopted towards him by his own associates, and the feeling of the school in general. Let flogging, then, still be tolerated as a mere physical and

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convenient inconvenience—its effect, too, is but ephemeral, and soon becomes lost among the things that were.

Not so will be the effects of frequent attendance in church. Concerning these three subjects, perhaps no two persons could be found who might entertain similar opinions; therefore, it behoves one to advance any decision as regards them with caution and diffidence; but if one of them admits of greater certainty of opinion than the others, is it not that relative to the frequent occurrence of the church service? However the other two subjects may be opposed, some advantages may be still held out in extenuation of their practice, but I cannot help feeling that this cloying attendance on chapel must be altogether pernicious.

His religion is not to be flogged or forced into a boy, like so much Latin and Greek, or even to be instilled into him by a comparative stranger. Until he comes to be able to inquire or think about it for himself, the duty of instructing him is exclusively incumbent on his parents, or on those who are in more immediate contact with him than the tutors of a college can be. The superior and sufficient influence of the former, in this respect, may be evidenced by the fact of a little Catholic boy whom I knew, duly attending church with the rest of us, and afterwards leaving the school, and remaining to this day as staunch a Papist as ever entered the confessional. [52]

Out of the six or seven hundred boys present during divine service, should only fifty of them have their minds properly disposed, there would be something to advance in support of the practice; but that even this cannot be urged, I would appeal not only to every old Etonian, but to every boy of the present day. With the exception of Sunday, to which, of course, I am not now alluding, a boy, in my time, would almost as soon think of bringing a cricket-bat into church with him as a prayer-book; and if the prayers attracted our attention at all, it was but momentarily, and that merely to ascertain whether the tedious chaplain had nearly arrived at the conclusion of the service.

I assume the nature of boys of the present day to be similar to that of boys twenty years ago; and if so, I suspect that all these services have added about as much to the growth and strength of their religious principles, as the hundred-and-one paternosters and ave-marias muttered by a monk of Camaldoli for the last half century. [53]

But was the evil merely negative, one would hesitate to object to anything that has been adopted for ages by a foundation so admirably conducted as that of Eton, and which has ever worked so well; but an additional effect of this compulsory attendance is to induce, by the force of early habit, an indifference and callousness of feeling during divine service, which but few in after life have the grace to overcome. But are the tutors of the College sensible of similar effects within themselves? Probably not; for there is little reason that they should, inasmuch as they have been preferred to their present situations, and carefully selected from a multitude, in consequence of their very singularity in this respect.

The promoters of this system seem to be guided, not by how it affects the boys, but by how they wish it would. While attending these services with appropriate feeling themselves, I suspect that they are apt to forget how different was their own conduct on the same occasions in their youth; or if not, they must imagine that the rising generation has become far more immaculate than their predecessors; "but boys will be boys" to the end of the chapter—and here it is. [54]

CHAPTER VII.

Six years have now glided away, and my station as an Etonian has experienced a still greater revolution. In place of being a fag, I was now the puissant "captain of my dames," and had six lower boys of my own; but my greatest privilege consisted in being the possessor of rather more than three thousand "old copies." [55]

These are the original copies of verses on various subjects which have borne the correction of their authors' tutors, and which have been reserved and put by, after a fair copy of them has been shown up in school.

The collection now in my possession had been, for years, entailed by its founder upon the captain of my dames, whoever he might be, for the time being. These, then, I enjoyed for four years, and a subject could not well be given us, but I possessed it already composed on. True, I was once at a loss, when we had to produce verses on the death of George III.; but several copies, simply on death, with a dash here and there of my own put in to suit the present occasion, sufficiently answered the purpose, at the cost of but very little literary labour. One boy, I remember, actually had two old copies on the death of George II., of such respectable antiquity was his collection of MSS. [56]

In addition to this inestimable treasure, I had become, by this time, flogged into the school routine of business, and could now, with ease, perform the requisite and daily tasks, no longer

laying in any claim to the designation of a shuffler, at least to the eyes of the vulgar. My four remaining years then, at Eton, formed, indeed, a dream of happiness.

When not otherwise particularly engaged, it was my delight, on the instant of coming out of school, or church, to fix my eyes on some distant object, and to start off for it, merely, I suppose, because it was out of bounds. Being constantly in the habit of this, I became acquainted with the localities of the neighbourhood, perhaps more accurately than any other boy at Eton. The two most distant points I ever reached, were Staines and the race-course at Ascot Heath. These excursions I ever undertook in solitude.

It was singular, that one of the most prominent features in the surrounding country should have been nearly the last I attained. This was the spot which must have attracted, one time or another, the attention of every boy: it is that beautiful hill of St. Leonards.

Perhaps the reason that I attained it so late, was, that in these rambles, I preferred crossing the country as the crow flew, and in the present instance, therefore, I must have crossed through the Thames, and it was a long while ere I could prevail upon myself to pass by such a circuitous route as Windsor and the Life Guards' barracks, for an object otherwise comparatively close to me.

About this time, then, I started for and reached it. From that day, I have always thought, that were it in my power to choose a region wherein to spend my days, this should be it. It is the only spot I have yet chanced upon, which, when viewed from the distance, with its details filled up in the imagination, delightfully fulfils and gratifies it to the utmost. What view can be more heavenly, than when we look through and over the tops of the stag-headed oaks, along the valley spread out beneath us, with the Thames winding and glistening in the sun, and the noble castle of Windsor in the horizon, proudly rearing itself into the sky?

Notwithstanding this scene, I had been rather earnestly observing a distant but very lady-like figure walking across the grass, by the side of some rails, and I felt somewhat disappointed, and dissatisfied, when, at length, it vanished among the trees. I was now resting myself at the foot of one, and deeply engrossed in the desultory wanderings of a beetle on the ground, between my feet. I am not conscious how long a time I might have been thus amusing myself, when I was roused by an indistinct rustle close to me, and, on looking up, I saw before me the lady-like figure. In the surprise of the moment, I was possessed with a vague consciousness of some former acquaintance, and in the first impulse, my hand nearly reached my hat, but, in doubt, I withheld it.

She, too, seemed to be in the like predicament, bending slightly with the neck, and I even fancied that her lips moved. The next moment, she had passed on, and I became sensible of the presence of "my little Frogmore girl!"

Could I have the presumption to renew, at this moment, such a brief and casual interview, and so long ago, too? What was I to do! Had she given me a slight token of recognition, or had she not?

At this moment, I am astonished at my determination. In a desperate state of agitation, yet without a chance of wavering, I now rose, and walked along the avenue to overtake her, as she was turning down another to the right. On gaining the corner, I found her a few yards in advance, seated on a bench with several other persons. I at once kept directly down the first avenue without passing her.

Here, at last, then, had I once more met with Miss Curzon! Yet how was she altered! She was now about sixteen, and considerably above the common height of women, and her figure possessed an air of far greater slenderness than when I first met her. Then, too, her hair, which was mostly concealed, was light—now she wore a profusion of it, of a dark and glossy brown. She was in deep mourning.

Every day did I direct my steps to this hallowed spot, but in vain. She had been on a visit, I suppose, and had now left the neighbourhood. But, to my imagination, she was ever present, the last vision at night, and the first in the morning, but I never could dream about her.

CHAPTER VIII.

Though ever leading a life very much at variance with the established discipline of the college, it was seldom that I was detected; but about this time, though really living in far greater conformity to its rules than usual, it was very hard upon me that I should now meet with a surprising run of ill-luck.

At one time I had become ambitious of exercising the rites of hospitality, which was the more patriotic on my part, as every article of the repast had to be stolen. I had been led on to this

expense by a friend presenting me with three bottles of port, which, of course, would need a few biscuits to accompany them; and then I thought of a dessert, and at length ascended to the determination of giving a downright supper.

The brace of partridges, then, and the moor-hen, I shot on the other side of Dorney Common; the milk for the bread-sauce, came as usual from the old black and white cow. The ale, bread, knives and forks, I easily procured from my dame's own supper-table, just before she and the rest of the boys entered the room. [61]

An hour or two after all in the house had gone to bed, my two friends and I had roasted our birds, and enjoyed probably such a meal as we shall never again so much appreciate. Had each of us preferred the partridges, the affair had not gone off so well; but, fortunately, Tyrrel very aptly began to speculate on the virtues of the moor-hen, informing us that it was undoubtedly the highly prized **ορτυξ** of the early Greeks, but kindly relinquishing his share of it, Kennedy enjoyed the whole of it to himself; for, though I doubted not but that the subject had been classically handled, I obstinately returned to my old opinion relative to the difference between a partridge and a tough old moor-hen. These, then, had been duly respected, and we were sitting round the fire, with the second bottle of port looking rather foolish in front of us, and were wondering at the cannons which were then being fired on Windsor hill, when we were alarmed on hearing somebody coming quickly up the stairs. Having blown out the candles, and put the bottles into my drawer, we each jumped into our beds, but were by no means pleased when the man-servant entered merely to awaken and inform us, that Tim Cannon had won his fight of Josh Hudson, for which great event the guns were then firing, and that, in the joy of his heart, he had got up to claim an even bet of sixpence, which he had made with Kennedy relative to the result. [62]

Such an interruption, under such comfortable circumstances, was enough to ruffle any one's temper; but I was still more distressed on opening the drawer to take out the wine and renew our orgies to discover, that either the cork had not been firmly fixed, or omitted altogether, for there were my shirts and neckcloths almost floating in good old port. At this instant, to add to my dissatisfaction, in walked my dame! The cannons having disturbed her, she had heard the never-to-be-sufficiently-confounded footman run up the stairs, and arisen to ascertain the cause; when, guided by our voices, she now joined our party, an uninvited and unwelcome guest. Indeed, we were hopelessly committed, for getting up and lighting our candles and fires in the middle of the night was a capital offence.

On my dame withdrawing herself, in a lamentable state of distress and disapprobation of our misconduct, we instantly consulted as to what was to be done to deter her from complaining of us to Keate. To assist our councils, we summoned to our aid, "Fitty Willy," properly and feelingly so called from his weakness for epilepsy; nevertheless, he had ever shown great genius for getting into scrapes, and even still greater for extricating himself from their baneful effects. He at once decided, with all the assurance of an old stager, that our only hope was to proceed next morning, in a body, to my dame, and state the dreadful result, should she complain of us, and that we must express the deepest contrition of our delinquency. This, then, the next day, we had actually effected to all intents and purposes; and Kennedy was winding up the business with all the fervour of Irish eloquence, when I unfortunately burst into yells of laughter! This rendered his declamation null and void, and he even gave up the point at once; when my dame, writing a note, immediately dispatched it to head-quarters. To this day do I feel remorse for my martyred fellow-sufferers; for, on the morrow, never were they so punished, if I judge rightly from my own feelings; we were compelled, moreover, to write out fifty lines of Homer every day, for a month to come, and for these I had no "old copies;" but I soon managed to get into another dilemma. [63]

In a weak moment, I had agreed with Kennedy to sham ill and "stay out," the equivalent for which is, as we are too unwell to go into school, we are so, to be out of our houses, and when detected are invariably flogged with extra severity. On these occasions, too, my dame sends a certificate to the master, stating our respective maladies. This time, having merely acquainted her that I felt indisposed, it became incumbent on her to particularise the case, I being totally ignorant of the complaint she was pleased to ascribe to me. Kennedy's complaint was, that he had got a stomach-ach. [64]

We had now before us a long day and a beautiful one besides, and we decided that each should jump into a skiff, and scull to Cliveden, many miles up the river. This we performed in a very satisfactory manner, except that, on our return, just when we were opposite the beautiful little village of Bray, resting on our oars, and responding to each other the alternate verses of that aquatic air, now, I fear, become obsolete, though so full of pathos:

"Oliver and his dear,
His dear and Oliver—
John Mogs and all his hogs,
His hogs and sweet John Mogs—
Agnes and her geese,
Her geese and sweet Agnes, &c."

I heard a voice close to me on the bank, which, by no means, chimed with the chorus, and the well-known tones of which thrilled to my very soul. There was my tutor, and I was recognised—Kennedy threw himself on his face at the bottom of his boat, and floated away undetected.

This catastrophe, however, prevented us not from landing afterwards at Surly Hall for our cigars and brandy-and-water, where it now became Kennedy's turn to get into a scrape. Owing to the numerous and vociferous applications of the claimants for refreshment, "Mother Hall" is [65]

always prudently ensconced in her tap-room, to which the means of communication was through a square hole in the door. On the present occasion, Kennedy, in his impatience, had gone round to a window in her rear. On this quarter she was entirely unguarded; and he had got his head through, and was in the act of securing some biscuits. At the moment, our landlady was absorbed in concocting a bowl of punch; nevertheless, catching a glimpse of the outstretched hand, she flew to the point of attack. Kennedy would have now retreated, had not his ears wedged lightly between the bars, and his head become immoveably fixed, and the next moment the choleric Mother Hall was thumping him on the head with the lemon squeezer. His eloquence, so effective on most occasions, now availed him nothing, and he was seriously tortured. I think he was a little spirit-broken besides, for it was ever after a tender subject with him.

Not having heard from my tutor that evening, I began fondly to hope that, taking into consideration the extent of punishment consequent on such a breach of discipline, he had kindly omitted to take any further notice of the affair. [66]

Neither of us having recovered from our indisposition, we were, of course, "staying out" on the following day, which we had taken very good care should be Friday. Instead, then, of being instructively employed with the tasks of that dreadful day, I was comfortably seated in my room, reading "Quentin Durward," when, alas! its beautiful illusions were dissipated, and I awoke to the painful reality of vulgar life, by being summoned to Keate, now occupied in the middle of eleven o'clock school. Changing, then, my book, and putting my Horace under my arm, I enjoyed the distinction of walking "alone in my glory," up the middle of the school, to Keate's desk.

"Well, Graham, what do you want here?" demanded Keate, in his hurried manner.

This forgetfulness, or perhaps ignorance, on his part, completely disconcerted me; and not wishing to inform against myself, I held my tongue, hoping that some unforeseen chance might yet favour my escape. But the next moment, observing his cholera to be rapidly on the increase, I was conscious that this plan would be worse than useless.

"I am staying out, Sir," I at length hinted.

"Staying out, are you! Then you are unwell—yes, you look very ill indeed; pray, what is the matter with you? Tyrrel!" he vociferated, the next moment, "you had better bestow your attention on the place before you in the book, and I will presently examine your knowledge upon the subject—you seem to be very interested in the present one; you're watching, I suppose, to see how your friend Graham can exert his ingenuity in getting off.—Well, Graham?" [67]

"I have taken physic, Sir?"

"Taken physic, have you! Pray, what was it?"

"A pill, Sir," I replied, not very confidently.

"Yes; and I suppose, no doubt, that you judged a quiet row up the river would do you a little good—stay, afterwards—a flogging, perhaps, will have a still better effect."

As luck would have it, I was never, on any occasion, so slightly punished. Keate, though I never knew him to be guilty of an absent fit before, entirely forgot for what he was flogging me, and gave me but the average number. The laugh was certainly on my side, when, just as I had completed my disarranged toilet, he discovered his error. Neither of us could forbear smiling, and he congratulated me on my good fortune.

The detection of my next peccadillo was not followed by such baneful effects. They were now making at Windsor Theatre great preparations for a night, which was to be graced with the presence of his Majesty, who had also kindly condescended to order the tragedy of "Warwick" on the occasion. I had amused myself by going up in the day-time to witness the rehearsals, and otherwise examine into the economy of the stage in general. I also made myself, without any evil intent at the time, entirely conversant with the localities of the place. To draw a full house, Mr. Betty, once the Young Roscius, had been engaged to personate the Earl of Warwick, and admirably he sustained it, too. During the performance, I had crept from the gallery—here always appropriated to the Etonians—through a door which had been purposely made not to appear such, into a place immediately over the stage. Across this space stretch the enormous rollers on which the scenes are wound, but in the recess where I now stood was stored a confused heap of theatrical lumber, such as an enormous gilt lion, a dragon, a collection of clouds, and other curiosities. At first I conjectured that the effect below might be heightened by the dismissal of a few of the clouds, but I feared lest they might dislocate a neck or two. A similar result might have occurred had I cut the ropes of the front scene. At length, I determined merely to launch an enormous dusty carpet on Mr. Betty's devoted head below. Finding this to be far beyond my single strength, I procured three assistants, and, at a given signal, we simultaneously launched it forth. [68]

At that moment the Young Roscius and another star were fascinating the house, when our gigantic bundle, lodging for a moment between the rollers, gradually squeezed through them, and the next, enveloping our victims, [69]

"Turned to groans their roundelay."

This occasioned an uproar throughout the house, and on regaining our seats, "the King-maker" had crept from beneath the mass, leaving Edward IV. still struggling under it: the former, with his moustache, ermine cloak, and other appendages, in pitiable disorder, was now haranguing the audience in the tone of a deeply-injured man. By what means I never could divine, or even

suspect, but Mr. Betty arrived at the originator of the deed, and, to avoid more disastrous consequences, I was obliged to call upon him the next day, and promise never to do it again.

[70]

CHAPTER IX.

ToC

Though by no means superstitious, there was one circumstance, and only one, with regard to which I sometimes doubted whether it was not influenced by some fatality, and the present case was connected with it.

With another boy, I was passing out of the archway leading upon Windsor Terrace, in order to hear the Life Guards' band, which here played every Sunday evening, when once more I met with Miss Curzon. She was coming away, and at that instant was walking between two other ladies. This time, then, there was no doubt: as I passed, she made a very slight, but slow bend of her neck; at the same time there was in her face a fixed and serious expression. Slight as was the recognition, it was undoubted.

"Why, Graham," presently exclaimed the friend I was walking with, "that lady bowed to you!"

"And why should she not?"

"And why should you blush about it so?"

Never mind that—this was, and ever has been, if not the happiest, the loveliest moment of my life.

[71]

On turning back, that I might, should fortune favour me, obtain some farther traces of her, I just glimpsed her as she entered a carriage, which drove away in the direction of Datchet.

Once again, then, was I at fault, still possessing not the faintest suspicion of her retreat, for resident in the neighbourhood I was now confident she must be.

It was six years and more since I had heard her voice. From that moment I had dwelt upon it and her, with all my mind, with all my heart, and with all my soul. But then, this might have been an ideal passion, as has happened to many of us, and we have never been less enamoured than when in the immediate presence of its object: but in this instance it was very different, creating a kind of fretful happiness quite intolerable. Byron says, in his ever-glowing way, that—

"Sweeter far than this, than these, than all,
Is first and passionate love!"

But, he should have added, what probably he meant, early love. Love at twenty is as nothing, unless one's a fool. Downright love exists only with boyish and the wildest romance, infinitely removed from every grain of common sense. I will give an instance of this boyish weakness, though a ridiculous one.

[72]

There was a maid-servant in Eton, who was a modest, respectable, and certainly very pretty girl. Notwithstanding the stoutness of her ankle, she had made a deep impression on many of the bigger boys, though probably not one of them had exchanged a syllable with her. This girl now became betrothed to a Windsor tradesman. No sooner was this ascertained, than her admirers let him plainly know, that should he presume to prosecute his design, it should cost him dearly. Several of them now never met the poor fellow without insulting him; and I remember one boy, more ardent than the rest, went into his shop and fought him chivalrously, like a good knight and true. So high did the feud now run, that the shop-keepers sided with their townsman, and for months half the school was each evening engaged in a spirited skirmish with the Windsor mobility for this Fair Maid of Perth; and I believe that, in consequence of the excitement they evinced on the occasion, the match was postponed for nearly two years. The boy who particularised himself for his pugnacious prowess has since become a preacher in the open fields, and a zealous supporter of the miraculously unknown tongues.

"But these are foolish things to all the wise," and particularly so to me, though my head was altogether turned, and my heart too. My days were more than ever dedicated to roaming over the country; and in the evening I used to love to scull my skiff far up the stream, and then float quietly down while I watched the sun setting, and the luxurious yet modest forget-me-not, on the banks; then leave my boat to sit motionless on a retired stile, and listen to "the still small voice" of the mysterious bat, or the drowsy soothing hum of the beetle. One of these evenings, by the bye, was productive of a little adventure.

[73]

I had just accomplished "the shallows," and was now rowing hard against the stream opposite Boveney Church, when I was startled for the moment by the sounds of a number of female voices, some of which even amounted to screams. On looking over my shoulder, I now observed an enormous pleasure-charge, with its deck and cabin crowded with a numerous party of ladies and

gentlemen. It was drawn up the stream by three or four horses. At this spot the stream ran with such rapidity, that a boat which was fastened to the stern, had broken away, and the ladies became, in a degree, panic-struck, when they saw their only means of communication with the shore quickly floating away from them.

It was now for me to do my best to capture it, though when I had fastened it to my skiff, it was with great difficulty that I could stem the stream with it, and reach them. Having at length succeeded in this, the instant I arrived, in addition to innumerable thanks, many fair and braceleted wrists were now proffering full and fizzing bumpers of champagne, while others showered various fruits into my skiff.

Without any hesitation, I emptied a respectable number of glasses of their contents; and having declined the rest, they were reluctantly withdrawn, with the exception of one. I thought I might as well take that; I looked at its fair and kind donor, and—there was Miss Curzon! As I raised the glass to my lips, I glanced across its brim, and again the same depression of the slender figure—the same expression and mixture of fixed seriousness!

Now, then, I at last had a certainty of gleaning some tidings of her. I saw Maberly standing by her side, and, the next morning, I questioned him closely, but warily, upon the subject.

"I was rather lucky, last night, Maberly," I observed.

"Yes," he replied; "it was no common person who gave you that glass of wine. Do you not think she was very lovely?"

"There were several lovely persons," I answered.

"You know whom I mean."

"O yes," I prudently answered; "she was sitting on a sofa, close to the steerage, and gave me—bless her!—the first glass of wine."

"Thank you," said Maberly; "that was my sister."

"Then she was a very nice-looking person," I replied.

"Don't you recollect, now, the girl who held out the last glass to you?"

"Perfectly; but is she the person you admire so?"

"Oh! you know, you're near-sighted, or you would have thought so."

"And who is she, after all?"

"I am not quite certain that I know her name," said Maberly; "but I suppose it is the same as her uncle's, Mr. St. Quentin, with whom she lives there, at the Grange, by Old Windsor."

I said but little more, and withdrew, by no means dissatisfied with the information I had gained.

CHAPTER X.

When I look back at this period of my life, though it must be with a feeling of disapprobation—and when I coldly say disapprobation, I insinuate remorse—let me confess that I still do so with an undeniable leaven of envy; envy at the lawless liberty I enjoyed, not only with regard to my actions, but to my conscience; revelling in a deficiency of forethought and blindness of consequences, as truly delightful for the present, as overwhelming and deplorable for the future.

I was not aware that "coming events cast their shadows before;" and, alas! that past ones, leave them.

But there was one thing of which I was aware, and of which persons rarely are, at the time,—I knew that I was happy; yet I deemed that this ought not to be, so long as I remained subject to any trace of palpable, or, as I then thought, irrational restraint.

In truth, like a good many other foolish fellows of that age, I began to entertain no small opinion of myself. I now felt that it was degrading to be shut in each night, like sheep within a fold, or to peep through the grated windows like a felon, and that I would not rest until I had freed myself from such restraints.

The impediments and risks opposed to my design were great, but my fortune, or misfortune, carried me through them all.

On examining the different windows of the house with this intention, I at last found one which I judged to offer greater facilities than any other; but as it was in the room of two other boys, it became necessary that I should intrust them with the matter. As, of course, they were also to be participators in the benefits arising from the success of our attempt, they were happy to join me.

It occupied but little time to make our preparations for the sortie. The bars of this window were placed so widely apart, that by taking off our coats and waistcoats, we could each squeeze through. We had, then, only to subscribe the ropes of our trunks, and saw off the legs of our chairs, and in a few minutes we possessed a lengthy rope-ladder. We now went to bed, appointing three-o'clock in the morning for the hour of our first sally. Notwithstanding the height from the ground, and our suspicions of the weakness of our ropes, so eager was each to be the first to descend, that we drew lots for the precedence. This fell to Bush, who instantly commenced his descent, and the next moment, the silence of night was dispersed by the awful crashing and jingling of apparently a hundred panes of glass! Both legs and half of his body had passed directly through the window below. We had conjectured that there had been no window, but here was that of the unlucky laundry. The instant he had reascended, I coiled up the ladder, and retreating with it to my room, threw it under my bureau and jumped into bed, instantly expecting the whole house to be in an uproar, though, as it turned out, no one was awake by the clatter. The following morning, the effects were merely attributed to the attempts of some villains to break into the house, instead of out of it.

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I had now to set about and devise some other mode of egress. The place I next fixed on for this purpose was my own window. Should I succeed, detection would be almost impossible, every suspicion being lulled, in consequence of the apparent difficulties for such an attempt. In addition to the bars, there was a wire grating in front of the window, which, moreover, was at the top of the house; but, then, the two windows beneath it had been economically bricked up, in order to avoid an accumulation of the window-tax. By knotching a breakfast-knife very finely, I managed to pass it beneath the fat piece of iron in which the bar terminated, and then to saw in two one of the nails which fixed it. I then took out the head of the nail, and the bar turning round the remaining nail, as on a pivot, left a sufficient space for my body to pass between it and the window-frame. I had but to twist the bar back again, stick in the head of the nail, and everything was, apparently, in its former state. By wrenching, in a slight degree, the tenter-hooks, I could now disengage the lower part of the grating in a moment, sufficiently to pass beneath, and having constructed a sliding board in the floor, under which I deposited my rope-ladder, I felt entirely secure from detection, and I was not mistaken.

[79]

It was indeed a joyous moment when I made my first experiment, and felt my foot on the dewy grass, for I deemed that

"Then the world it was mine oyster,
Which I with knife might open."

Among these nightly rambles, there is one that will ever be, I should think, deeply impressed upon me.

Everybody in the house had been in bed for hours. As I was far too restless to doze on the occasion, I had been stationary at the open window, counting the hours as they slowly passed, and it was now getting towards two o'clock, when I was to descend the ladder, already placed and hanging from the window.

In those days I was rarely troubled by low spirits, but at the present moment, I must own, that they partook considerably of the gloominess of the hour, and the scenery around. The night was very dark, but I could just see the ghost-like masses of the gigantic elms, as they stood motionless against the gloomy sky, and could even hear the quiet rippling sound of the river as it glided along in the distance, the night was so very still. But all this now horribly contrasted with a scene I had witnessed but a few hours ago on the banks of that river now so deserted.

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A school-fellow and friend had there been drowned, and I had heard his piercing shriek as he fell from his boat. His body had not yet been recovered. This morning we had been playing at fives together. How were he and I occupied now! I dared hardly think, and then I pictured to myself his listless and lifeless body rolling under the stream into some dark depth:—

"And there I sat all heavily
As I heard the night-wind sigh—
Was it the wind that through some hollow stone
Sent that soft and tender moan!"

Just then the deep tone of the Castle death-bell came swelling across the river from the other side. In an instant I knew it was the harbinger of death—of the Princess Charlotte? I was right—she was just then dead!

[81]

This now struck me as a frightful moment. It was not from the fear of death, nor, alas! from the fear of God. What could it be? I am convinced that no one has literally trembled from fear, but now my heart felt as though it shivered. I stood motionless till the last and least sound had reverberated through the now silent court, and there was nothing to be heard but the beating of my own heart. There I stood fixed like a statue, afraid to stir, even to heave my chest to sigh—this, then, was superstition.

I gradually arose from my trance to be conscious of the truth; and now even concluding it to be my duty to combat against the weakness, though in a joyless mood, I descended the ladder.

"Time and tide tarry for no man," and I think even less for me. The day had now come that I was to take leave of Keate and of Eton, and return to my father's house—and for what! I had not a suspicion, or whether I was destined for the army, church, law, or for anything else. The prospect, however, appeared cloudy and comfortless, and I was now to reside for an indefinite

period at the only place, much as I did love the spot, where I ever felt myself to be in the midst of strangers. Here, apparently, I was another being than when at Eton—reserved, gloomy and distrustful—cold and unfeeling—wandering about the place like a solitaire, as I was. I had not, nor have I ever had, an acquaintance in the county—I had never been into another house. Should any friends of the family be staying with them, I would take my breakfast of bread and milk before the usual hour, in order to avoid meeting them, and then absented myself for the rest of the day, until dinner-time. This last was indeed a painful ordeal, especially should there be any ladies present.

[82]

The truth is, circumstances, and by no means my own inclinations, forced me to be mute, and that, too, at times, when I would have almost given my life to have been otherwise, and then I looked ashamed of myself, as I really was, for my apparent deficiency of good breeding.

But now it was that I was bidding farewell to Eton—an eternal farewell! now it was that I felt

"How dear the schoolboy spot,
We ne'er forget, though there we are forgot."

I had been an Etonian for ten lovely years, and—what had I acquired?

I had, in due routine, become captain of the Oppidans—could, on an emergency, translate the dead languages—had worked myself into the eleven of cricket and of foot-ball, and now came forth from Keate's chamber, destined to learn that "the recollections of past happiness are the wrinkles of the soul."

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[85]

BOOK THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

ToC

The youngest of a numerous family,—now that every profession is overstocked,—has no right to entertain considerable expectations. Therefore, when my father endured the expenses of my education till my twenty-third year, he did far more than was incumbent on himself, and far more than I, in any way, deserved. It was, indeed, an expensive education, and the object to be gained by it, the Church. Unfortunately, my inclination for this had never been ascertained, and still more unfortunately, from my youth, I had ever opinions and difficulties on religious points, thoroughly inconsistent with the established one. These I had ever kept within myself, and it has been my ruin. Had I earlier exposed them to my father, perhaps I might have prosperously pursued some other profession, and been, at this moment, something like an useful member of society.

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Finally, in opposition to my own judgment and conviction, I bowed to that of others, and was ordained Deacon, in St. George's Chapel, Hanover Square. I now retreated to a parish in a remote county, which henceforth might be considered in the light of an honourable exile.

One Sunday, then, in the depth of a rainy winter, I set off on my horse, with my canonicals strapped before me in a valise, to commence my clerical duties. On entering my parish, for want of a more respectable asylum, I put up at a public-house, where I changed my dress, and came forth, for the first time, in the character of a Divine, walking towards my church, where I met with an unusually large congregation assembled to hear "the new parson."

Notwithstanding my lamentable deficiency of self-possession, I got through the service without any distressing error—I ought not to have read the Absolution, that being restricted to priests, nor should I have upset the cushion on which I was kneeling, for, not having sufficient confidence to replace it, I was forced to hang on by my elbows to the reading-desk for the remainder of the Litany. As for my sermon, I knew it by heart, and it went off very well. I think, at all times, if my sermon was a good one, I used to get along well enough, for, as I proceeded, I became interested in it. On the other hand, when it was considerably below the average, I became even more so, labouring to gain the conclusion, like a wounded partridge to reach the adjoining enclosure.

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Having accomplished the service, I fondly concluded that my little devoir was finished for the day, and that I might now retire to collect my agitated nerves in quiet, but at the porch I was requested to visit an old woman who was lying in the poor-house, in the last stage of a dropsy. The only entrance to her chamber, or rather, her loft, was by an upright ladder fixed against the wall, the two upper steps of which were broken away. After a little manœuvring in consequence of this difficulty, I entered the place in the attitude of Nebuchadnezzar in the act of grazing, "meekly kneeling on my knees."

Like all other invalids in humble life, she was anxious that I should become impressed with the full extent of her suffering, and to this intent was irresistibly importunate in her entreaties that I

would grasp her arm, and, to my horror, the next moment I saw the impression of my fingers deeply, and, to all appearance, permanently stamped upon her flesh! With this ordeal she appeared satisfied, and having read the prayers for the sick, I really suspect a little impressively, owing to my feelings as a novice, and left upon her pillow a few shillings, I do think and hope that her spirits were a little brighter than before—and there was need, for there were faint hopes of her descending that ladder more, save for her "long home."

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I once more directed my steps to the public-house for my horse, whose head I now turned towards a farm-house where I had written to procure apartments. I had proceeded but a short distance, when he sunk up to the girths in a small bog, but contrived to scramble out so soon as I had dismounted. I knew beforehand, that my future residence was inaccessible for any description of carriage, but as I was little likely to be encumbered in this way, it was a matter of no consideration, but it certainly annoyed me to find that every now and then I was liable to get my sermon moistened in a quagmire.

In the midst, then, of these bogs was my solitary abode, which enjoyed the somewhat singular appellation of Pinslow. This, I fancy, from its situation among the surrounding morasses, to have been a corruption of "Peninsula," as it had but one line of access.

I was destined to be the first of my profession that ever resided in the parish. The salary being very minute, with no parsonage-house, hitherto each clergyman, save the one of the neighbouring parish, had conscientiously declined the appointment.

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On reaching my house, I found it to be rurally situated in the centre of its straw-yard, but altogether well suited to my wants. There was a very good one-stalled stable, or loose box, and as, on rainy days, I would throw off my reading-coat, and rub down my horse for an hour, this was an object of some importance. I was equally fortunate with regard to my sitting-room, for, without rising, I could reach anything I wished for, from one end of it to the other. A second room was sufficiently spacious to hold the bed.

Towards the close of the evening, laying aside etiquette, as Crusoe would in his solitary isle, I went out in order to visit a curate who had lately taken the parish bordering on my own, and who, like myself, had just entered on his noviciate. Here I found Seymour, a fellow Etonian and contemporary.

Though we had never before been intimate, how happy was I to meet with him. For years had I been in the habit of seeing him every day, when all was happiness, and now to be with him again, though my prospects were as gloomy as the barren moors around us! I felt how different was my regard for him to that for friends of later date. The truth is, we knew each other!

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This, together with youthful and happy associations, is the secret of all those lasting friendships commenced in boyhood. We feel, however we may try to conceal it, that our acquaintances in later life may be playing a part, or at all events, may be guided more or less by interested motives; while, on the other hand, should sad experience not have taught us the same policy, it will inevitably happen, that sooner or later we shall have to deplore our imprudence. It is not so much that we are betrayed as misconstrued; our opinions are misinterpreted from ignorance of our real dispositions. This, then, is why it has become so imperative on us to shroud ourselves in reserve; and, alas! the more so as our dispositions may be sanguine and ardent. Hence, too, the Lord Chesterfield's scouted maxim, "Do not be, but seem," though his lordship is not to be reprobated so much as the world, that compelled him thus to advise his own son. But I fear I shall be found fault with by both parties, as I have learnt to be, but not to seem.

No wonder, then, that we hasten to renew our early friendships, and throw aside all this deplorable restraint.

"Your father is a horrid radical," I once heard a boy say to the Lord Chancellor's son.

"And your mother is his Majesty's mistress," was the retort, in even plainer language.

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This is adopting the other extreme, but will here serve as a sample of that youthful openness, however ridiculous and disagreeable, which teaches us at once how to choose our friends and confidants, with little fear of being mistaken; and when we have arrived at manhood, whatever number of years may have separated us, we are still conscious of each other's nature, because we have learnt, in the meantime, that it never changes, in whatever degree it may have done so in appearance. Let any one, for a moment, bestow his attention upon some prominent person of the present day, whose character may contrast with what it was in boyhood, and has he confidence in him? in other words, is he imposed upon with the rest? He may cling to him for auld lang syne, but he will be far from being deceived, while the other is as conscious that he is not so.

For this reason, I have always thought well of those who have carried on their early intimacy to after-life. One of them must be creditable to our race, for I have noticed friendship between two indifferent characters ever to be brief.

Seymour, poor fellow, was just now under rather adverse circumstances, for he had arrived here but five days, and had been confined to his bed during the four last of them, having caught cold from wet feet, which I regretted the more, as he had but little chance, in such a country, of ever again enjoying the comfort of dry ones. When I arrived at his hovel he had just come down to his sitting-room, and I think I seldom recollect a more comfortless, or ludicrous scene either. Till this moment, I suppose, he who had roughed it as little as any one, was now looking pale, wretched, and emaciated, with his slender, gentlemanly figure crouched close upon the comfortless fire-place. Should he have the energy to stir for anything, his nicely arranged hair was instantly dimmed with the cobwebs and dust which it gathered as it swept across the low

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ceiling. On the dark and damp floor was scattered a number of splendidly bound books, with a Wilkinson's saddle. Along the wall was tidily arranged an extensive collection of Hoby's boots, and a hat-box, imprinted with "Lock, Saint James' Street," but which article was now converted into a temporary corn-bin, and was nearly full of black oats.

CHAPTER II.

It is but yesterday, when I felt that to be "a pot-hunter"^[1] was the lowest step of degradation; and I was quite right, for then I lived at home; my father had an admirable kennel of pointers and spaniels, a couple of well-stocked manors, and a zealous keeper. But, since then, "a change came o'er the spirit of my dream," and my finances not so flourishing that I could keep up a shooting establishment on the footing which I have hitherto enjoyed. At present I am provided with sustenance at the cost of one shilling a meal; but should I procure a dinner elsewhere, which seldom happened, or my fishing-rod prove effective, which it never did, a proportionate deduction ensues in the cost of my repast.

Once or twice, as September approached, it crossed my mind that this kind of economy was not entirely to be overlooked. But, no, no! True, I had got under a cloud, and "my house-hold gods lie shivered around me;" but, to become a pot-hunter! I had not fallen, nor would I fall, so low as that. September has arrived, and I have!

To entertain a proper feeling on the subject, I am fully sensible that a gentleman should only destroy game, which, when killed, is thoroughly useless to him; and being thus principled, I am at a loss to account for the unwonted delight I experienced whenever my gun did its work on the victim, which in a few hours was to smoke on my solitary board.

Some one affirms it to be as probable for an empty sack to stand upright, as for a needy man to be honest. The simile is ingenious and plausible, but as uncharitable. The weakness I have just acknowledged is undoubtedly attributable to my circumstances, though I trust I am still beyond the reach of the graver imputation. But I should be ambitious of proving more than this—the utter extravagance of such a theory; for it is a cruel one, and has caused both mischief and misery. How many otherwise inoffensive persons have I known implicitly to adopt an opinion to the prejudice of their less fortunate acquaintance, merely from their deficiency of the world's wealth! But, not content with this, these persons, who are the very people to esteem poverty as the worst of ills, not satiated with his destitution, must do their utmost to sink him still lower by their treatment of him; little suspecting, too, I should hope, that the most probable means of enticing a man to become a villain, is to convince him that the world deems him to be such. I have known more than one victim to this treatment, for all are not gifted with independency of mind sufficient to defy it.

Owing to an insurmountable detestation of my profession, I spent but a few days of the week in my parish. It was not that I was careless, and indifferent for the welfare of my parishioners; for, in spite of myself, I could not but like them.

Beyond doubt, it is imperative on a clergyman ever to be in the heart of his parish, employed in bestowing, spiritually and corporally, such assistance as it may fall to his share to be able to bestow. As to relieving their distresses arising from poverty, my finances were much too limited to be of any avail. With regard to those who were suffering on a sick bed, with but slender hopes of recovery, my powers of consolation were even more meagre.

I have said that my opinions widely differed from those supposed to be entertained by a Protestant clergyman, and particularly so on the efficacy of a death-bed repentance. Could it then be expected that I was thus to smear myself over with hypocrisy, and to a poor broken-spirited fellow-creature, looking imploringly for religious aid and comfort, utter to his confiding ears such doctrines as, at that time, I unhappily and foolishly thought to be no more "than sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal?"

This, then, was not to be thought of or endured; and, therefore, sooner than remain inactive among my people, I was ever, as much as possible, studiously at a distance. Still it could not but annoy me, should my presence have been required on any emergency, while absent; and this, thanks to my fortune, never occurred, though I had many narrow escapes of it.

At one time, having postponed the preparation of my sermon during the earlier part of the week, I arrived, in consequence, at my lodgings on Saturday evening, in order to get it ready for the morrow. I had scarcely begun, when Maria, dispensing with her lowly knock for admission at the door, rushed in, and announced an event which had just occurred within a mile of the house.

A girl of eighteen, and her sister of eight years old, had been spending her birth-day at their grandfather's, and, after dark, had set out on their return to their father's house, mounted on an old horse, with the younger girl behind. In the bottom of a valley which divided the two houses,

ran a little stream, but which now, from heavy rain, had increased to a rapid and deep, though still a narrow rivulet. In passing through the ford, the younger girl, while raising her feet to avoid the water, fell from the saddle, pulling her elder sister with her. The youngest, much frightened, rushed through the water and gained the bank. The foot of the elder one became entangled in the stirrup, which unfortunately caused her head and shoulders to remain beneath the water. The horse was so quiet as to stand still in the stream, grazing on the bank, and was thus stationary long enough for the girl to become insensible, when he walked out, and her foot, on his moving, becoming once more free, her helpless little sister, by the light of the moon which was then shining, could just see the stream roll away the body of her sister towards a deep hole a little lower down, when she lost sight of her. This, then, was the cause of the present interruption.

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On arriving at the spot, it was distressing to observe the insignificance of the place, with regard to such a melancholy event. The water where she had fallen, was not more than two feet in depth, and while searching for her body during the night, at any place I was able to jump across the stream. Yet, singular to state, we never found the body till the commencement of the fourth night from the accident.

The corpse of this poor girl was the first I had ever seen. Her eldest brother had discovered and placed it on the grass, and as he and her father gazed upon it, while the moon shone down upon the group standing motionless and silent in the gloomy ravine, never was I so conscious of the intensity of the misery which *can* befall us—that indeed "the trail of the serpent was over us all."

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The funeral of this girl was the first at which I had to officiate. It is singular that a funeral consequent on an unusual death should be attended by greater numbers than an ordinary one. On this occasion, I may safely say, that my little retired burial-ground, and its immediate vicinity, were occupied by thousands.

Though always in the habit of taking great exercise, I never experienced severer work than on the day which brought rest to others, not but that I might have avoided it. For five weeks successively I have served three churches each Sunday. On these days I had to walk forty miles, and ride another forty miles, and once or twice experienced heavy falls with my horse. This, then, I suppose, was steeple-hunting, properly so called—all this too was for love, at all events, not for money.

The latter, indeed, was very scarce in this part of England. My predecessor had served the parish fourteen years, for twelve pounds per annum. The present rector was in the annual receipt of forty-three pounds, out of which he had to pay me, but with the aid of a little simony, this was easily avoided, and as I took no fees, I can hardly call it a lucrative appointment, and certainly not a sinecure.

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I am fully aware of the fallacy of judging on any subject, without examining both sides of the question, but the following case really seems to have only one:—

By great ingenuity, I should think, the sum of eight hundred and forty-five pounds is distilled from out the peaty soil of my humble parish, under the denomination of great and small tithe.

From the sound, one might be led to suppose that this sum was, in some slight way, connected with ecclesiastical purposes; and, by-the-bye, so it is exactly, for forty-three pounds go to the rector, and the remainder is distributed among three wealthy and noble families.

At first, too, one might expect that this sum would, at all events, afford to pay for a permanent and resident clergyman, with a roof over his head, "be it ever so humble;" but no, the parish is but the receptacle for the luckless, roaming deacon, and its poor parishioners are ever doomed to be as sheep without a shepherd, and to be fleeced accordingly.

Among these sabbatical circuits of mine, there was one which, though I shall be, more than usual, guilty of egotism, I do not wish to forget, it was so in keeping with the nature of the country—primitive and stern. It was the only time I was sensible of fatigue, though in the present instance I had not more than two churches to serve, nor was I under the necessity of walking more than half of the usual distance; but I was so ill with the influenza that I was doubtful of succeeding. Attempt it I would, for hitherto, though invariably hurried, I had never kept a congregation waiting for one moment. Having got upon my horse, I rode him forty miles across the moors, to my own church first: so far from fatiguing me, I found that the freshness of the air had considerably added to my strength: still, the exertion of reading would have proved too much, had not the singers, perceiving my weakness, good-naturedly chaunted the prayers which occur between the lessons, just giving me breathing time, and sufficient strength to finish the service. The instant this was over, I walked away for the other church, determined, at all events, to persevere, for in a whimsical mood I had ever resolved to perform the Sunday's duty punctually, in spite of time, tide, or anything else. As I crossed each field, I was obliged to get on the top of every gate in order to rest myself, notwithstanding the exertion of it. On coming to the fatal little stream in the valley which divided the parishes, I became sensible that I had no strength to clear it, and that, should I attempt it, a total submersion must inevitably be the result. I had no time to hesitate, so at once walked through the ford, though at the time I was in a profuse and faint-like perspiration.

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On reaching the church, I found myself to be in good time, but had not proceeded far in the service, when I discovered the clerk to be in such a state of drunkenness, as would have appeared to the least fastidious, blasphemous and repulsive. In this dilemma, I knew it would be useless to tell a noisy boisterous fellow to hold his tongue, so at once, quietly but quickly, reaching his book, I placed it in my reading-desk, and the fellow, without a murmur, resigned himself to his fate and went fast asleep. In spite of the check which my wet clothes might have

occasioned, I was rapidly gaining strength, and, to my surprise, got easily through the duty.

At the conclusion of the service, a labourer's wife came up to me with the usual fee between her finger and thumb, the price of being grateful to her God for safe deliverance in child-birth. She apparently deemed me out of my senses, and I had to tell her twice to keep back the shilling gained by the sweat of her husband's brow.

I had next to visit a dying man, and I had a dread of it. The poor fellow had been for many years an open and avowed infidel, and entertained an invincible hatred towards clergymen. He had, at last, consented to send for me, in compliance with the entreaties of his wife. Being an industrious man, he had realized sufficient to enable him to rent a very comfortable cottage, a cyder orchard, to keep a couple of cows, besides having by him a sum of ready money. A few years back, in assisting at the harvest, he had strained himself internally, and induced an atrophy. On asking the wife whether they were badly off, her sole reply was to take a cup from the chimney-piece, and show me, in heart-breaking silence, a sixpence and three half-pennies! Cows, money, and orchard—all had disappeared during a lingering illness,—and the poor old woman's inevitable fate was now to await the fast approaching death of a good husband, and then retire, for her few remaining and widowed years, to the workhouse of a distant parish!

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On speaking to him, I could not but admire his really gentlemanly self-possession, accompanied by a tone of respect and kindness. After I had finished the prayers for the visitation of the sick, I read a few others which I had copied out from some authors, selected by Paley, and beautiful compositions they are; the poor fellow sunk into an agony of grief, and I wish I had not read them. Was I wrong or not? I fear that I was, and am sorry for it; but we shall both know by and bye.

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On returning in the evening through my own church-yard, never was I so struck with its air of wretchedness. It was placed in the bottom of a swampy moor, confined on one side by the little decrepit old church, with its boarded steeple looking like a dog-hutch, and just small enough to hold three parts of a cracked bell, if I might judge from the tinkling of it. On another side, it was protected from the bitter blast by the poor-house, thus judiciously placed for the benefit of the invalided paupers. It was a dreary evening in February, and everything was looking chilly and black, except, by the bye, an early primrose peering out from the side of a crumbling tomb in the very darkest corner of the whole—that looked fresh and bright enough.

I suspect the sort of humour I was now in, to have been occasioned either by my illness, the death-bed I had just witnessed, or the separation for a whole week to come from a person for whom I had lately found that I felt "a deep and tender friendship."

About thirty miles from my parish, lived my nearest neighbours, and with whom I had become rather intimate. So much was this the case, that this place gradually assumed the character of what I recollect "home" once used to have for me, many years ago. To this house I used frequently to canter over on a Sunday's evening with all the delight of a school-boy returning from a detested school.

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Until now I had thought that my benevolent host had here been my greatest friend; but there was another for whom, to my infinite surprise, I found that I felt far more intensely. Yet it was odd that, in her presence, I was apparently cold and inattentive, and thus, perhaps, it might have ever been, had she not unguardedly attracted my attention by what she meant for a severe rebuke. I happened to be walking with her and a gentleman whose wife had lately experienced, on some occasion, a narrow escape of her life; "and so Miss Bassett I had nearly become a gentleman free of incumbrance, and then I should have come and proposed to you."

"But then I should have tried to thwart you, for the mere sake of opposition," was my rather too free and easy reply.

"Oh, Mr. Graham," she answered, "you might have set your mind quite at rest on the subject, for I should have preferred Mr. Goodriche a thousand times before you."

"For what possible reason, Miss Bassett?" I asked, in sober earnest.

"Because I could have led a quiet, happy life with him—now perhaps I might have liked you, and then you would have immediately behaved like a wretch, and broken my heart."

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FOOTNOTES:

- [1] One who kills game exclusively to lessen his butcher's bill.

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It was on my way to London, in company with her father, that, as the sun rose, I caught a glimpse in the horizon of the hill, on the other side of which the abode of my family was situated—I may not call it home, for it is too true, that "without hearts there is no home." Still, how I must have loved the spot! its woods, its lawns, and its valleys! No sooner had the steamer touched at a port, than I left my luggage to go on with it as it might, and jumped out, in order to take one more peep at a place which set at defiance every recollection that I could force to rise up in judgment against it.

Having walked twenty miles, I stopped at a public-house within a mile and a half of the place, for some refreshment, as well as to await the darkness of night. At ten o'clock I sallied forth, and the first of the paternal estate on which I trespassed was a large wood, every tree of which, I might say, was an old acquaintance.

Here, then, what a contrast was I conscious of! Some years back, I used to range this very wood, the sworn friend of the keeper, in order to detect the poacher; and now I was listening to every rustle, and peering along the gloomy paths, lest I myself should be detected by my former ally. So much did my fears on this point increase on me, that I took to the open fields, and gained the park. [107]

Here at once, in spite of everything, I felt myself to be on my own property,—roaming about in ecstasy—visiting every tree that I had planted and fenced round years ago. Each of these I pruned, and even had the temerity to steal into the green-house, which was close to the library, and procure the gardener's saw, with which I climbed up into an old Scotch fir, and dismembered a large limb which over-hung and injured a lime-tree I had planted in the dell below. Having sawed the limb into portable pieces, I concealed the whole in an adjoining plantation.

Notwithstanding the lights in the windows evinced that the inmates had not yet retired to rest, I sauntered over every part of the lawn, and at last walked directly up to the drawing-room window. The blind was down, but the shutters unclosed. By stooping close to the ground, and peeping beneath the blind, I could survey the whole room.

Here were two daughters and their father. The eldest was fast asleep in an arm-chair; the younger one working, and their father, as usual reading a volume of Sir Walter Scott, the well known binding of which I at once recognised. I could not get a sight of his face, for the book he held before him; but I saw his forehead and thin silvery hair. [108]

What was now my surprise, to hear a carriage, at this time of the night, driving towards the house! I instantly placed myself behind a tree, close to the road-side. Curious to state, at that very spot the carriage suddenly stopped, and I might have touched it with my hand. The horses had gibbed, owing to the steepness of the ascent; and on her inquiring into the cause, I immediately recognised the voice of another daughter, who, with her husband, was coming on a visit to her father from a distant county.

I now returned to my public-house, and was off at dawn in a coach for town. Byron felt from experience, when he sighed, "and oh, the utter solitude of passing your own door without a welcome, finding your hearth turned into a tombstone, and around it the ashes of your early hopes, lying cold and deserted."

In all and each of my various excursions, in foul weather or in fair, I had ever one invariable companion. This was my horse, and his name was Clodhopper. He was a light bay, with a pale face. Our intimacy commenced under the following circumstances: [109]

One Saturday afternoon I was staying on a visit with a family, many miles from my church, and being therefore in great need of a horse, I at once went to look through the stables of an extensive horse-dealer in a neighbouring town. Having ascertained the price of several likely-looking horses, I ordered a large powerful one, for better examination, to be led into the yard. It was not unnecessary in this case; for the animal had one totally-extinguished and dreadfully-disfigured eye, a broken knee, both fore-legs fired, and a conspicuous spavin.

"He's a little blemished, Mr. Turner," I observed.

"Why, how, Sir, can you, or any other gentleman, expect to see a great, fine, upstanding horse like that ere, but what has a some'ut?"

But as I did, I requested to see another. For this one he asked but eighteen pounds. With my own eyes I could see that he stood above fifteen hands, was only just coming six, and was a strong, hardy animal, with a written warranty for soundness. All this being quite clear, I could not possibly account for the lowness of the price, otherwise than by feeling quite confident that there must be "a some'ut."

While thus deliberating, "Mr. Graham," said the dealer, "will you mind what I says? You'll never be married—you never can make up your mind to nothun, I see." [110]

On my getting into the saddle, to try him along a few streets, Mr. Turner added this very disinterested advice—

"Now, don't you go and hammer a good horse like that ere over the hard stones. A parcel of little ragged, dirty-nosed boys, run athwart, and upsots a respectable individual."

I did hammer him, wasn't "upsot," and bought Clodhopper.

There were two accomplishments in which I think he was unrivalled—falling down without breaking his knees, and in running backwards. In performing the first feat, which, on an average, occurred twice in three weeks, he fell, without a moment's hesitation, directly on his head, and instantly took a somersault on his back; so that literally he never had time to break his knees, though he broke the saddle now and then. The second, he could perform at a frightful pace; and the more one whipped and spurred, the faster he would go, and never stop till he came in contact with something. One of these I suspect to have been the "some'ut"—unless, by-the-bye, it had been the whooping-cough, or something very like it.

But Clodhopper's chief recommendation was, that whether in winter or in summer, with oats or without them, he was ever the same—stoical and indefatigable, so long as he was on the top of his legs. When eventually I had no further use for his services, I sold him for a leader to a coach proprietor, for seventeen pounds and a dozen of bad champagne; but I fear that the unfortunate wheeler in his rear must, by this time, have tumbled over him a lamentable number of times. [111]

There was another rather prominent character in my establishment. This was "Old Bob."

The master whom he served was a neighbouring farmer, but I frequently obtained his services. His appearance was that of a veteran bull-dog, seamed with the traces of youthful strife, but in reality he was a pointer. Unfortunately, too, in his younger days, the stable-door had jambed his tail off within two inches of its origin, but still Bob flattered himself that it was a tail, for he affected to brush the flies away with it.

I think he had a high opinion of my shooting, for, whenever I was so inclined, he despised the society of any one else. As he was a selfish fellow, I suspect that I was indebted for his services to interested motives. He was a pot-hunter, like myself, and would instantly swallow anything I shot, could he but reach it first. He could certainly trot very fast, but that was the best pace he could accomplish, and had we anything like a fair start, I could distance him; and so convinced did he become of this, that the moment he found me abreast of him, he would give up the race in despair. [112]

Considering this and other infirmities, for he was stone deaf and very near-sighted, he was highly creditable to his profession.

Though he frequently found game under his very nose, he was perfectly aware, though his mouth watered to taste it, that he had not a chance until I came up and shot it. He was, in consequence, the staunchest dog in the country. Only once, in this respect, did I know him guilty of a breach of decorum, and that too, I must say, under very aggravating circumstances.

One sultry day, at the expense of a great deal of time, and still more trouble, he had carefully footed an old cock pheasant round three sides of a very extensive field, and at last brought him to a stand-still in a bunch of nettles, and was now patiently waiting for me to come up and help him. In the meantime, an unfortunate terrier had chanced upon the trail of the pheasant, and now came yapping along the ditch as hard as he could scamper. Of course, Bob being as deaf as a post, was quite unaware of this circumstance, and as the terrier brushed rudely by him, poor Bob looked so mortified! He wasn't going to find game for him, so "the devil take the hindmost," became the order of the day, and had I not shot the pheasant, which they put up between them, Bob was so angry that he would have wrung the very soul out of little Whisky. [113]

After the fatigues of a long day, Bob was dozing in the farm-yard, when the team arrived in the evening from market. Nobody saw Bob, and Bob couldn't hear the wagon, which the next moment passed over his neck, and broke it.

CHAPTER IV.

The sole thing connected with my days on this spot, attended by a satisfactory feeling, is the remembrance of my long and quiet evenings, when I did happen to spend the week in the parish. It was the only period of my life that I read to any effect, and I must own, that even then it was no fault of mine, for it was impossible to do otherwise.

I used to rise at one o'clock in the afternoon, and go to bed at five the next morning. As to late hours, as it is termed, I have no sort of compunction, so long as I do not spend more than the necessary quantum of the twenty-four in bed.

I was agreeably surprised with the number of works I crept through; among which, my favourites were Byron's works throughout, with his life by Moore; Butler's Analogy, White's Farriery, and Dwight's Theology, which last is as full of poetry as Childe Harold.

The last half hour of each night or morning, I invariably enjoyed with my feet on the fender, in dreamy contemplation of the past, wreathed in the fumes of a cigar, and soothed by the lowly and desultory murmurs of the geese in the straw-yard beneath my window. [115]

At the distance of about two miles from me, was Winthra, a seat of his Grace the Duke of Northumberland. Though the smallest of his several domains, it was the most beautiful; nor was it diminutive, being six miles in circumference. This paradise was placed in the centre of a country which was hideous in the extreme. Here then, was "the diamond of the desert."

We may remember that, in olden times, the amorous Edgar, on the fame of Ordulph's lovely daughter, despatched a confidant to her distant home in order to ascertain whether her beauty was of such transcendancy as report declared it.

In this spot, then, the ancient seat of the Earls of Devon, the future queen, Elfrida, lived. A park it has ever been, from that day to this; and as one winds his silent steps between the stems of the giant and ruined oaks, the impression is, that here the spirits of Druids linger and roam as the last refuge left them untouched by the hand of man.

It contained the two sides of an extensive valley, sweeping gradually down to the Winthra, a beautiful trout-stream murmuring along the ravine. The only inhabitant of the enormous mansion was a worn out and pensioned butler; so that my sole companions of the solitude were the deer, and these being never or seldom meddled with, had increased to multitudes; and when one observed the huge and lofty walls with which the whole was shut in, he felt indeed in Rasselas's happy valley. [116]

Here, then, have I passed days and days, without seeing one soul, reading, sketching, fishing, and bathing. Only once was I sensible of an intruder.

One bright moonlight night, I was passing along by the banks of the stream, when I observed on the other side something which I was confident, from familiar acquaintance with the spot, was not wont to be there. As it was lying on the pebbly beach, partly in the chequered shade of a beech-tree, and partly in the water, I was totally at a loss to imagine what it might be, but had a strong foreboding that it was a human body. A little lower down there was a shallow, through which I passed; and on reaching the spot, I must acknowledge that I was equally horrified to find that the object of my anxiety was a freshly-killed deer. The poor thing had evidently come here to drink, when it had been seized upon by some dog; and I cannot express my mixture of rage and remorse as I watched the damp, warm vapour slowly rising from the lacerated and bloody flank, and contemplated the beautiful but dimmed eye, glazed by the pale moonlight. Our peaceful sanctuary was violated! [117]

I borrowed the very old gun of the very old butler, and watched for the moment of my revenge till daybreak, but it was never satiated.

A few months after this, having received an invitation to a delightful residence near the sea, and at the same time to meet some families of the county, among whom was to be "my own dear somebody," Seymour and I had set off in high glee with such a break in the monotony of our monastic habits.

That afternoon, then, I was riding by the side of this "somebody." A sort of confidence had arisen between us, very delightful and unaccountable; except simply that, on one side of me, as I rode along the edge of the cliffs, there was the Atlantic looking lowering and stormy, mingled in the horizon with the still drearier sky, broken or relieved by the contrast of a very lovely girl.

At this moment it was blowing and raining heavily, and, as she cantered along, my admiration of her was anything but diminished, when I witnessed the cheerful and good-natured indifference with which she treated a boisterous day of "bleak and chill December."

Being an ardent sort of little personage, she had been descanting with considerable animation and enthusiasm on a subject which affected her deeply. Her hair, completely dripping, was hanging down her cheek, now freshened by the coldness of the pelting rain. I cannot conceive how anything could look more beautiful than this girl did at that moment. At the same time though she appeared serious and melancholy, and, I think, a little out of humour too, while her hat, which was too large for her, had, from the wet, become quite shapeless, and appeared pressed down over her face, so that I could not forbear laughing, in spite of everything, though at the moment I felt wofully wretched! [118]

Interrupting herself, and looking up towards the clouds, she pointed out to me, with her whip, a portion of blue sky, perhaps intimating a cessation of the storm. Regardless of either, I coolly as thoughtlessly put my hand out to take hers! but owing to the action of our horses, missed it. She never saw the attempt, and I narrowly escaped making a great fool of myself.

The most egregious act of folly, I think, a man can be guilty of, is to allow himself to meet with "a refusal."

We may easily have tact enough to know, beforehand, the real state and probable result of the case.

In the present one, this girl and her family would have seen me at the bottom of the Red Sea, ere my hopes and wishes on the subject had met with, "a consummation so devoutly to be wished." [119]

Two days afterwards, I was standing once more on the deck of a steamer, with my carpet-bag at my feet, bound for a foreign port.

The Church I have resigned for ever—my parish, Winthra Park, both deserted—and my humble abode! "its hearth is desolate."

BOOK THE THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

We are aware that, when we "train up a child in the way he should go, he will not depart from it;" but fortunately, when it is that in which he ought not to go, he certainly will depart from it when he can.

Thus having consumed nearly half my life—at all events, the *better* half—at a public school and the University, preparatory to a profession, my antipathy for which was exactly proportioned by my inaptitude for it, the sole result is, that I can now answer to the definition of a real gentleman, "one who has no visible means of a maintenance."

I begin to suspect, then, that it may be, now and then, just worth while to condescend and observe how a child's disposition may incline him to go; and though, as an humble disciple of John Locke, I am quite sensible of the absurdity of "innate ideas," yet it is very evident that, at an early period of our lives, we evince traits which are infallibly indicative of the bent of our dispositions, which are just as our natures may have been constituted, and this bent is better known by the name of genius.

Now it has been beneficently, and I will say beautifully ordained, that an individual, by gratifying this instinctive impulse of his genius, not only augments his own happiness, but that of his species also, and, I sometimes fondly hope, even that of the Creator himself.

Over an extent of country is distributed a variety of soils, one adapted for one kind of produce, another for another, and the aggregate may amount to so much. Counteract this arrangement, and surely the result will be far inferior. Indeed, where is the agriculturist who is not strictly attentive as well as acquiescent to this tendency?

How exactly, then, do I imagine this to apply to the variety of dispositions among ourselves; and if we follow, with regard to their natures, the same economy, then shall we see how simply true it is, that when we train up a child in the way he *should* go, he will not depart from it.

The conviction of this truth makes me curious to ascertain the way I ought to have gone; not that I am unaware of my present tastes, but which, probably, are the mere effects of education, and consequent and acquired habits, while my early ones have long since been lost or "warped by the kind severity of the pedagogue."

Possessing a tolerable memory with regard to events, I will, then, just rummage about its lumber-room, and see if I cannot tumble out some long-forgotten recollection on the subject, if I may so express myself; but I sincerely trust that it may not turn out to be a tendency for the poet, or some such inclination incompatible with the fortunes of the youngest of younger brothers.

After some pains to effect this object, I fear I must conclude that I have never evinced any marked genius, one way or another, unless it be for that of the vagrant! What a shock to my theory!

Though an idle boy, I was ever a restless one. Whenever I had an opportunity, I was certain to give my nursery-maid the slip, and ramble through the fields and coppices, though at the cost of a whipping, or, at all events, the deprivation of my supper. I could never see a distant hill, but I longed to reach its summit to see what was on the other side; and had I been more conversant with holy writ, I should have been ever sighing, "O, that I had wings like the dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest." In short, every spot in the distance seemed to be more sunny and delightful than that which I at the moment occupied. For hours would I lean my forehead against the cold glass of the nursery window, and contemplate the noble hill that swelled in the horizon. There, I had no doubt, was the end of the world. Then would I conjecture whether it were possible to get there and back again, and whether life was long enough for such a voyage. I then fixed my eye on a large beech-tree—which, blessings on it, is still standing—that I conjectured to be placed about midway. I next counted the number of fields between us, in which I included the lawn. I knew that it was not a very great voyage to traverse this last to the Ha-ha and back. Following up these data, I arrived at the astounding conclusion that the whole original expedition might be accomplished in one day!

This, then, I had resolved to do; but which, after many failures, I never accomplished until several years subsequently, when I determined not only to effect this distance, four whole miles, but to push on to the sea-side, seventeen miles beyond. Now, this was a voyage, and I designed to perform it unknown to any one. As I was ignorant of the probable duration of such an undertaking, I was anxious to take a sufficient wardrobe, and therefore required a valise; but not being able to procure one, I purloined a long leather-legging of my father's, buttoned it up, and stuffed it with my clothes, and which now, when turned in at the ends, and strapped to the saddle

with the buttons downward, would have imposed itself as a respectable valise on the most experienced "travelling gentleman." The next morning, I rose before the sun, and squeezing through the bars of the stable window, threw out the saddle and bridle, went into the park up to my knees in dew, caught poor little Forester, and was away, while all at home were still fast asleep.

"Men are but children of a larger growth;" and in lieu of Horsa's-hill in front of my home, I have now extended my ambition to a region, which, let me confess, without any particular reason, I have pictured to myself as the nucleus of glaciers and avalanches—of mountains and mighty rivers. At all events, thither will I now hasten, if it was only to support my theory—at any rate, that I may enjoy the credit of being throughout a consistent character—though, by-the-bye, I might just as well have been the dreaded poet!

On examining my map, I found that the shortest way to the spot I had in view was to go across the paddock and the Downs for the sea-side, where I went on board for St. Malo, and from this corner of France I must find my way across to Geneva, at the other corner.

The passage across the Channel was, as I expected, far from agreeable; for when a man wishes his "native land good night" in single blessedness, with but a slender purse in his pocket—and as his country's shores diminish, while sea-sickness increases—he cannot but cast a lingering look towards the scene of his youth far behind him, which he is leaving, perhaps for ever, to wander he knows not whither. [126]

Thus have I paid for that liberty, which has enabled me to explore my solitary way through the most interesting countries of Europe. During my pilgrimage, as I have traversed the monotonous plains of La Vendée, the awful grandeur of the Alps, and the lovely yet sublime scenery of Italy, under every aspect—in summer and in winter, in sunshine and in storm—so have I, at times, been elated by the buoyant hopes of the present, as well as bowed down to the dust when I looked forward to the future. I have risen with the sun, my spirits vying with the freshness of the dawn; but how often "has my sun of hope set without a ray, while the dark night of dim despair shadowed only phantoms!" Alone, and on foot, I have accomplished thousands of miles over France, Piedmont, Savoy, Switzerland, Tyrol, Lombardy, and Italy—I have toiled along the dusty road, beneath the noontide heat of an Italian sun, or wandered over trackless Alpine heights through the midnight storm—have rested on princely couches, or on the wheaten straw of the peasant—I have joined the mazourka in palaces, or the tarantala in the wilds of Calabria—I have revelled in the scenery of Claude, or brooded over the lofty solitudes of Salvator Rosa and the brigand—I have experienced the frivolity of France, the dissipation of Florence, the profligacy of the Venetian, the degeneracy of the Roman, and vindictiveness of the Neapolitan, the insincerity of the impoverished noble, and the truth of honest poverty—I have wondered in the gaudy sanctuary of the Papist, teeming with devotees, or pondered amid the nobler simplicity of the Heathen's Temple in the deserts of malaria. [127]

Like the Bohemian, I had, indeed, dearly purchased this liberty! at the cost of every tie, even of religion itself, though perhaps unconscious of it at the time. I then enjoyed robust health, the main-spring of scepticism. Deprived, then, of the source of true happiness, and without any defined object in view, the career before me was a dreary one—though for the present my spirits were buoyed up by the excitement attendant upon novelty.

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CHAPTER II.

ToC

My main guide through France was the Loire, which led me by a meandering route of nearly five hundred miles to the neighbourhood of Lyons.

Knowing, at that time, so little of the language of those who surrounded me, as actually to envy the fluency of a parrot which I heard chattering with, I suspect, the true Parisian accent, I can scarcely account for the feeling of thorough nonchalance with which I commenced my pilgrimage, and which ever accompanied me to its conclusion. It was seldom even that I was sensible of loneliness, though I must bear witness to the almost inspired truth of the poet, when he says:—

"But midst the crowd, the hum, the shock of men,
To hear, to see, to feel, and to possess,
And roam along, the world's tired denizen,
With none who bless us, none whom we can bless,
This is to be alone—this, this is solitude!"

And no one but the solitary pedestrian, entering a crowded city in a foreign land, can know this intense loneliness; but—

"To climb the trackless mountain all unseen,
With the wild flock that never needs a fold;
Alone o'er steep and foaming falls to lean,
This is not solitude;"

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and I could scarcely feel that I had even left my home, when, towards the termination of my first day's walk, I came suddenly upon our old friend Blue Beard's Castle! Le Chateau de Barbe Bleu, as it was here designated. Not only was I for the instant transported back to my own country, but to the very nursery; for here, "once upon a time," lived the original and redoubted Blue Beard, the dreaded hero of our nursery romance; and, doubtless, I enjoyed the same lovely and peaceful prospect, though with somewhat different feelings, as "Sister Anne" some centuries foregone.

Never, by any event, were my early days brought so vividly fresh before my mind's eye, as at this moment. In those times, to my recollection, the sun seemed to have been ever shining, the birds ever singing, the trees ever in leaf, and everyone equally kind, and it turns out to be but a silvery regretted dream, never to be re-dreamed. But I comforted myself with the reflection of a better man—"after all, the same blue sky bends o'er all of us, though the point above me might as well beam a little brighter blue." But I have found even an Italian sky to pall at last, to let us have as pleasing a variety of cloud and sunshine, as the better taste of Providence will afford us during our little day, and let us be content.

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But the impartiality of Providence towards us in this respect, is very conspicuous, or a little examination into the subject will clear away what few doubts we may entertain concerning it; otherwise, we might feel a difficulty in reconciling the various degrees of happiness which we are apt to suppose prevailed throughout the world, or to exist at present between different persons, with our notions of justice, when we revert from the present refined and peaceful period, to those of barbarism and bloodshed, or think of the pampered alderman and the overworked and starving pauper.

Has, then, the general happiness of mankind actually varied with different epochs? Were the lauded golden ages so much brighter than these of the baser metal? No more so, perhaps, than, in spite of Homer's assertion, were the heroes who contended on the plains of Troy superior in stature or force to those on the plains of Waterloo. As the human constitution accommodates itself to all climes, so our sense of felicity fits itself to external circumstances; and thus the quantity of happiness, or rather, sense of enjoyment, existing at various ages of the world, may not have differed more than that which we suppose to exist between contemporaneous individuals; and this cannot be very great when we doubt whether the peasant would barter his poverty for the wealth of the prince, on the condition, also, of adding to his own years the fifteen or twenty additional winters that have silvered the hair of his superior. Thus, at all events, a few fleeting years annihilates the extremes of their lot.

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The truth is, the cup of happiness is very limited, and that of most men as replete as their sense of enjoyment can admit of; more than this is superfluous, wasted, and unappreciated, or even, as it were, condensed by the feeling of satiety which ensues; while, on the other hand, the rarer sources of happiness to another man will expand and fill the cup, blessed as he is with an "elasticity of spirits." Happiness, too, being for the most part placed in perspective, becomes equally distant or inaccessible to all, and seems to have been purposely placed beyond our reach for the same reason that the old man feigned to have concealed the treasure beneath the soil in order that his sons might become rich by the culture of it, which they necessarily, though unwittingly, effected in their search for the gold; and thus our only happiness consists in our efforts to attain the same, though the instant we become sensible of this, we find that we have then indeed exhausted the cup, and like the rest that have done so before us, take a long breath, and sigh, "all is vanity!" and begin to think more intently and exclusively about the attainment of our wishes in another world; for—

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"Quand on a tout perdu, quand on n'a plus d'espoir,
La vie est un opprobre, et la mort un devoir."

VOLTAIRE.

I think that our Creator never meant us to be contented, and that we should always have something to look forward to and fret about—"It is thy vocation, Hal,"—or we sink into apathy, and become averse to the prospect of the last great change. "Well, Mr. Graham," said a once contented, but now expiring Nimrod to me, "after all you have said, give me a thousand a-year, and the old bald-faced mare again, and I don't care if I never see the kingdom of Heaven." Or, as Johnson parodied the enjoyment of the savage—"With this cow by my side, and this grass at my feet, what can a bull wish for more?" Contentment! Nothing with vitality must, or ever will be contented, save a vegetable, or a toad in the centre of a rock, and he probably is sighing, with Sterne's starling, "I can't get out!"

Occupation seems to be the original, or true source of all enjoyment; though for this word I would substitute that of progress, and implying successful occupation. My friend and I each possess an estate of six thousand pounds, but the former lately possessed twenty thousand, and I nothing. Which of us is now the more happily situated?

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Hence arises the happiness of the saint-like and self-denying hermit; his complaint, "I can't get out!" lasts as long as he does, while he progresses with every flying moment; and conversely, the most unhappy man is the idle and irreligious one. Happiness was mingled with sorrow when Gibbon penned this most interesting but melancholy passage on the termination of twenty years' incessant labour, and which should give us a deep insight into the philosophy of life.

"It was," says he, "on the day, or rather night, of the 27th of June, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page, in a summer-house in my garden. After laying down my pen, I took several turns in a *berceau*, or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene; the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and perhaps the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind, by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion; and that whatsoever might be the future fate of my history, the life of the historian might be short and precarious."

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Othello's *occupation* was gone. I made a pilgrimage to this spot on the banks of the Lake of Geneva, and reached it towards the close of a summer's evening, and saw all as the historian had described it; on returning the next morning, the arbour and its creepers were lying prostrate on the ground!

But the general and more prosperous lot—for a beneficent Creator has willed a preponderance of happiness—is pictured by, probably, the most pertinent and poetical simile ever devised. Keeping in view the career of man on earth, "the river," says Pliny, "springs from the earth, but its origin is in heaven. Its beginnings are insignificant, and its infancy frivolous; it plays among the flowers of a meadow; it waters a garden, or turns a little mill. Gathering strength in its youth, it sometimes becomes wild and impetuous. Impatient of the restraints it meets with in the hollows among the mountains, it is, perhaps, restless and turbulent, quick in its turnings, and unsteady in its course. In its more advanced age, it comes abroad into the world, journeying with more prudence and discretion, through cultivated fields; and no longer headstrong in its course, but yielding to circumstances, it winds round what would trouble it to overcome and remove. It passes through populous cities, and all the busy haunts of man, tendering its services on every side, and becoming the support and ornament of the country. Now increased by numerous alliances, and advanced in its course, it loves peace and quiet, and in majestic silence rolls on its mighty waters, until it is laid to rest in the vast abyss."

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CHAPTER III.

[136]

ToC

So long as I followed the course of the Loire, I was each day surrounded, though not by magnificent, yet by a beautiful and happy kind of scenery; but as often as I quitted its banks for a few days, in order that I might pursue a more direct line towards the mountains of Savoy, which now began dimly to appear in the horizon, so often was I compelled to pass over a level and treeless soil, and with the captive of twenty years imprisonment, when led into the street only to be executed at the other end, I began to sigh, "O, that I might but look on a green tree once more!" And I shall long remember the cheerful and delightful sensation, as I again drew near the verdant tracts, and then listened to the distant sound of the rapid Loire.

During one of these detours, but through a well-wooded plain, on my way towards the old city of Bourges, I had long been pacing through a deep and dusty lane formed purposely to exclude every breath of air, while the sun appeared to be heaping coals of fire on my devoted head. I was at length compelled to sit down considerably affected by the intense heat and leg-weariness. The day was now somewhat advanced, while, to all appearance, there was no termination to the silent woods, or, perhaps, forests on every side.

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"A night in the greenwood spent,
Is but to-morrow's merriment;"

but I was now so annoyed by thirst that I was again compelled to rise and persevere in toiling on my way, until I was so fortunate as to meet with a man, whose rough and wild exterior portended anything or everything sooner than such satisfactory tidings as I was sufficiently ingenious to extract from him. Conducting me a little in advance, he pointed towards a distant but gigantic cross, rearing itself up into the blue sky, and then left me, apparently confident that I should find everything needful at the foot of that cross.

Having reached this in about half an hour, I observed a monastery situated in a valley beneath me. This, then, I conjectured was to be my *auberge*; for, on looking around, nothing was to be seen save the aforesaid interminable glades, and, what was still somewhat perplexing, the monastery itself was apparently tenantless. Having seated myself in the shade, in order to contemplate some contrivance by which, in a respectful manner, I might gain admittance and reveal my necessities, during perhaps an hour's suspense, I recognised not a token of habitation, until at length a bell lazily tolled, and echoed among the solitary woods.

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Descending into the valley, I now approached the portal, within which I found a person with a

brown freckled face, enveloped in a cowl of the same colour, seated motionless on a cold stone bench behind the gate. For the instant, I was the rude Gaul, surveying the mysterious senator of the forum; but without insulting his beard, or wasting words on the subject, I followed my silent conductor through several extensive corridors, into a spacious and very habitable salon, where a remarkable and interesting person shortly made his appearance, approaching with his hand proffered in token of welcome, while his face beamed with everything one could imagine to be associated with benevolence and charity. He seemed to divine by instinct that I was an Englishman, as promptly as he did by my embarrassment that I was no Frenchman, addressing me in my own language with great fluency, though, as was to be expected, with a considerable accent. Informing me that I was welcome to his monastery, he withdrew to order some refreshment. Returning shortly with a monk, he announced my supper; and I shall not forget the sense of humiliation I experienced, when compelled to sit at table and be attended on by two persons, each of whom was half a century my senior, and one of them that might grace the proudest aristocracy of Europe, of which, indeed, this abbot, Pere Antoine, was once a member in his youthful days, at the court of Louis XV. [139]

The monk who had now joined us proved to be my countryman, which circumstance had induced his Superior to grant him the indulgence of entertaining the stranger. I may be permitted to say indulgence, for, with a face glowing with delight, he let me know that he had not listened to his native tongue for fifteen years.

My supper consisted of broth, potatoes, and artichokes, which also comprised my breakfast, as well as dinner, during my sojourn of three days in this monastery, where they esteem even fish and eggs to be too carnal. Such is the austerity of their lives, that this monk, who was their physician, informed me that it required three entire years to become inured to it, but that those who stood the ordeal mostly attained a very great age. Their clothing, food, and medicines are each confined to such as they themselves can manufacture from the produce of the surrounding acres, of which they are the cultivators. As the sun went down, the Abbot and his companion, wishing me good-night, retired to rest. On approaching the window, I observed another monk sauntering from the burial-ground, where, with his hands, in conformity to their daily custom, he had been scooping out his final resting-place. [140]

Never have I been so conscious of intense loneliness and solitude! It was now about midnight, and the moon was shining brightly on the Abbey lake. Not a leaf was stirring, and all things as still as death, while the clear evening star shone cold and motionless over the dark edge of the forest, towering black and gloomy in the silent distance. I was as "the last man." Not a soul was breathing nearer to me than the poor old monks, who, hours ago, had crept to their dormitory in the farthest cloister of the Abbey.

The order among whom I was, was that of La Trappe, which is by far the most austere sect in Christendom. They allow themselves but five hours' sleep, and that on a bare board, without putting off their clothes. They perform masses each morning, from half-past two until six o'clock; they deny themselves any meat whatever, their meal invariably consisting of some oaten bread, with a little poor wine of their own growing, disguised in water; and—they never speak!

When we reflect that what is not only the great characteristic between man and the brute, but perhaps the most wonderful and beneficent gift of God to man should be thus rejected, we cannot but be possessed with a very sorry opinion of such an unjustifiable institution. [141]

I have now spent a few days with two of them, both of whom were as agreeable, truly well-bred men, as I ever met with; but what is the more remarkable is that these two old men, who have lived, or rather but just existed under such privations, were as good-tempered, kind-hearted old persons, as it is capable for human frailty to attain; and when we consider that each day is a day of penance, and that, too, a monotonous penance, with not a prospect beyond their walls, and none within, save their burial-ground, perhaps there is nothing in the character of man so unaccountable as such overwhelming immolation, unless it be that they esteem this life as so insignificant, such a nothingness in comparison to eternity, and that endless glories are to be earned by, comparatively speaking, momentary deprivation, that they endure it as martyrs. And when, as I was, in the stillness of the crumbling Abbey, while its bell tolled the hour and reverberated through the courts and deserted cloisters, I remembered that these poor old men, so kind, so hospitable to the stranger, so denying, so unsparing to themselves, had here buried their youth under such belief, I could not but from my heart wish them compensation as extreme as their delusion.

CHAPTER IV.

On reaching Bourges, my attention was attracted by an object widely differing from the venerable Abbot. Judging from my own experience, I may confidently affirm that not an

Englishman quits his country, but he instantly becomes sensible of the comparative plainness of the fairer sex. I need hardly say that I allude to that of the lower orders; for as I was circumstanced, I was but little qualified to estimate the attributes of the more exclusive circles, only one of whom I chanced to meet, or rather to approach, during my ramble through France. Whether it was from unexpectedly meeting with a moderately humanised countenance suddenly appearing among those I observed daily around me, or that I had met with a face exquisitely lovely, I will not determine. I had been awaiting the arrival of the Mal Poste for Marseilles, the passengers of which were expected to join the table d'hôte. For the last ten minutes I had been contemplating a dark, muddy court-yard beneath the window. The travellers having arrived and taken their seats at the table, I sat down, and was instantly startled by the face that I observed opposite to me, contrasted, as it chanced to be, with a dark unshaven one on either side of it. The salon was nearly as sombre as midnight, and there was a delicate and oval face, brightened by a pair of large soft eyes, "with fire rolling at the bottom of them!" Long, long did I deplore my deficiency of the organ of language; for with such a person for my *vis-a-vis*, I could open my mouth but to eat!

[143]

We are little aware how exclusively we derive our opinion of others from their appearance and manner, and so independently of the sentiments they utter. Until we live among those with whom we cannot converse, it is impossible to be sensible of this truth; but I am confident, from long experience, that it is the fact. I have formed as correct an opinion of a German's character, not a word of whose language was intelligible to me, as of the Englishman's beside him, and perhaps more so, as not being misled by what he might choose to advance. And in support of this assertion, I will just mention, that I have subsequently met with foreigners, whom it has given me great pleasure to meet with, again and again, and that a mutual regard has existed between us, though neither has, for a moment, been verbally intelligible to the other.

As, then, it is so possible thus to estimate a person, I will just select the one opposite to me as an interesting example, for I well remember her. She appeared to be about seventeen, and radiant with youth and freshness, but accompanied with a delicacy and slenderness, as excessive as could be consistent with health. Her manner was completely fascinating, and her voice particularly so, when you observed the lips and teeth from whence it floated. She was a sort of fond person, and yet with a great share of humour—very talented, but all in delightful subjection to a refined and delicate feeling. Alas! the morrow's sun saw us, by roads as opposite as our future paths through life, departing from Bourges for ever.

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Bidding farewell, even to a disagreeable person, when you know it to be *for ever*, causes a blank, unpleasant sensation, and therefore I was now weighed down with a feeling of desolation quite oppressive. The sole thing that seemed to cling to me was my knapsack. No sooner have I ever formed any sort of regard for any sort of person, than Geoffrey Crayon's words, "Tom, you're wanted," dole upon my ear, and I must away. This is the curse of the traveller. And now what has since been the fate of this person? Confusion overwhelm the clogs and procrastination of civilised society! As Geoffrey Crayon once more bluntly states it, "Done," said the devil—"Done," said Tom Walker—so they shook hands, and struck a bargain; and why could not she and I have done the same! But she has gone, and that her days of life might be brightened with cloudless serenity, no one so ardently prayed, as a homeless and hopeless unknown; for I found that—

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"The heart like the tendril accustomed to cling,
Let it grow where it will cannot flourish alone,
But must lean to the nearest, loveliest thing
It can twine itself round, and make closely its own."

And, to make the matter worse, I had also at this time finally to separate from my oldest companions, a pair of shoes. They formed the last relic of my English wardrobe, and had borne me over a long distance. Having really an attachment for them, I placed them high up in the fork of a Spanish chestnut tree, whither I could not help again climbing up, that I might take a last look at them as they rested pale with the dust of leagues, uncomplaining though deserted.

In a few days more I had reached the heart of Switzerland; but what a contrast had I experienced in passing from one country to the other! The whole of France, with the exception of my ever happy Loire, must surely be the most monotonous and unpicturesque tract of the whole continent; while Switzerland presents, at every turn, a combination of the paradisaical and of terrific sterility. Smiling patriarchal pastures, walled in by granite mountains, frowning in eternal silence and solitude, save when thundering with the awful avalanche. I said that their piles of granite were barren; but what a moment is it to explore your way companionless, and find them to be the source and spring of richness and fertility to Europe, as the sun is of warmth and light to the world—to pick your doubtfully hazardous way across the glacier, and there read great Nature's receipt for making rivers. You find that the nearer you climb towards the heavens, the more palpable are the works of their Creator:—

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"My altars are the mountains, and the ocean—
Earth, air, stars—all that proceed from the great Whole,
Who has made and will receive the soul."

As to how mine was likely to be disposed of, the moment had now arrived when I was to consider; for not only had severe sickness overtaken me, but I suspected that my death-blow had been received. Severe sickness will bring the stoutest of us, and the most unthinking, to reflect soberly on the past, the present, and the future; at all events, it had this effect on me one night, among many other restless and sleepless ones, as in solitude I watched the flickering flame of the

candle by my bedside. As for the present, until the moment of leaving my country, I had bestowed but little attention on it. It is the man of the world, who is wisely engrossed with that period; and, unfortunately, I had never been gifted with, or rather had never acquired, a sufficient stock of common sense to enable me to approximate that character.

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We all love to contemplate and dwell on the brightest side of things, simply because that is the most pleasing to us; and having but little self-denial, I ever enveloped myself in the past, the sunniest side of my existence.

As for the future, with regard to a life to come, for that was what I was now to think about, my opinion, if it could be called such, laboured under confusion and inconsistency. Could anything have made me more miserable than another, it would have been the doubt of it; but from this I have ever been exempt, feeling assured, that were there none, our minds would no more have been created capable of entertaining an idea of it, than that our bodies would have been hampered with legs for which there was to be no need—and as these imply the function of walking, so our idea of futurity affords us the proof of it. Yet happy as I was in its belief, I always regretted that I had been born, notwithstanding that I was aware that an endless sleep and non-existence must be one and the same thing. My love of existence then, of some sort, must have been an acquired taste, like that of the opium-eater—I would that it had never commenced, but had not sufficient fortitude to relinquish it. But most probably this regret arose as I looked back through the bright and peaceful vista of my earliest days, and then fondly trusting that it could but lead to some lovely period, ere I existed here; but alas! I could recal no recollection of it, nor could any one else that I knew of, with the exception of Pythagoras, and, perhaps, my Lord Herbert of Cherbery.

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But I must cut short all this absurdity, to call it by the mildest term, especially as my pilgrimage is drawing "towards an end, like a tale that is told."

I arose from my bed apparently with similar prejudices ere I was confined to it, but, with my constitution, they have happily received a fatal blow. Had I been with others, I should probably have lingered in Venice until my hour had come, but, as it was, what had I to stop for?

"Whether it was despair that urged me on,
God only knows—but to the very last,
I had the lightest foot in Ennerdale."

Many a weary mile have I since accomplished in a state of health almost incredible, though I am now convinced that I have performed my last; but it was a beautiful one!

On the eastern shores of the Bay of Naples rises the mountain of St. Angelo. For days had I gazed upon it with a wistful eye, and with all the eagerness of my childhood, when I never saw a distant hill but I was restless until I had reached it. Notwithstanding that my strength now daily diminished, my desire so increased upon me, that but a brief time had elapsed ere I had gratified it. This mountain protrudes abruptly into the Mediterranean, dividing the bay of Salerno from that of Naples.

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I have enjoyed the grandest scenery of Europe, but never, never such as this, or at such a moment. The death stillness of the day was appalling—the air was motionless, the heavens cloudless, and the deep blue sea, far, far beneath me, without a ripple; and not a sound reached my ear but that of my own watch. There I rested on the summit, basking in the sun, and enjoying a view, if such might be so called, worthy an angel's while to fly down and witness, and which, I dare say, one does now and then among these aerial solitudes.

And now my feverish curiosity with regard to distant countries is satisfied to the full. It once was such as extended to other worlds, when I would welcome death in order to indulge it. The time is now approaching, then, when I must set out for "that bourne from which no traveller returns." My love of roaming has happily waned with the power of gratifying it, and I am now on my return, by easy stages, for the monastery of La Trappe, and I trust that a few days more will place me in its peaceful retirement, for I am weary.

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T.C. Savill, Printer, 4, Chandos Street, Covent Garden.

Typographical errors corrected in text:

Page 48: Etona's replaced with Eton's

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK CONFESSIONS OF AN ETONIAN ***

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