

ADOLESCENCE

Too ill with albuminuria brought on by the savage treatment of Champney to do any regular work, I was sent away with various tutors, mostly young men from Cambridge, members of the unspeakable C. I. C. C. U.

I remember in my first term at Cambridge how I was in the rooms of a leading light of the C. I. C. C. U., the Revd. Something Doddridge, my Uncle Tom's trusted henchman.

I remember how eloquently he held forth on the courage to stop any "impure conversation." I remember how impressed we were; how a gentleman with an "honourable" in front of his name, destined to be celebrated in the world of motors and balloons, walked into the room and told us rather a lively story. The Reverend something Doddridge thought of the "honourable" and laughed pleasantly.

I remember how, boys as we were, we filed austerely from the rooms without farewell. Oh, you must know the C. I. C. C. U.!

I remember too how this Doddridge, while in charge of my morals, aided and abetted me in extinguishing street lamps; and how when a policeman pounced upon me, he forsook me and fled! A true disciple of Jesus!

I had no playmates; my morals might be corrupted! Only the "children of brethren" were eligible, and these were as a rule socially impossible.

I was always being watched for signs of masturbation, and always being warned and worried about it. It says something for human innocence

that after four years of this insane treatment I was still absolutely ignorant, though on fire in every nerve to learn the practice that people made so much fuss about.

But really—my tutors! Of all the surpassing prigs! I was so mentally shattered by the disease and torture—for both continued—that I remember practically nothing of the next two years.

But at least I shall take care that this book comes into the hands of the Very Reverend Armitage Robinson Esq., M. A., D. D., Dean of Westminster; for though I suppose he knows how his missionary brother Jack seduced to sodomy his missionary brother Fred, he may still be ignorant of how that brother Fred (one of my tutors) attempted to seduce me in his own mother's house at Maze Hill. This came a little later; and I knew exactly what he was doing, as it happened. I let him go as far as he did, with the deliberate intention of making sure on that point.

I think my readers will agree—enough of my tutors!

I ought to make an honourable exception of one Archibald Douglas, an Oxford man and a traveller. He taught me sense and manhood, and I shall not easily forget my debt to him. I hear he is dead—may earth lie light upon him!

Of course my Mother and her brother my uncle Tom couldn't stand him. (I must excuse my mother and my Uncle. The former was the best of all possible mothers, only marred beyond belief by the religious monomania which perhaps started in what one may call "Hysteria of Widowhood"; the latter a typical sexual degenerate.) They stole his letters and faked up some excuse for getting rid of him. And if "an orphan's curse can drag to hell a spirit from on high" what of the curse of a child on those who betrayed him in their bigotry and meanness to such torture as I have described?

My whole soul cramped; society denied me; books debarred me, with the rare exceptions of Scott, Ballantyne, and some Dickens, with a few even worse!

To illustrate the domestic principles of literary criticism:

I was forbidden David Copperfield because of "little Em'ly"—Emily being my Mother's name, I might cease to respect her. For the same reason she proscribed the Bab Ballads, recommended by a rash tutor, because "Emily Jane was a nursery maid"! Coleridge's Ancient Mariner was condemned because of the water-snakes whom he "blessed unaware"; snakes being cursed in Genesis!

As it happened, however, I had a backbone in me some where. I had always refused to join the sneaking hypocrite gang at Champney's; now I accepted the war, and began to fight for my freedom. I went long walks in the mountains, where my tutors could not follow me, and where delightful peasant girls could and did follow me—God bless them!

One day I had a difference of opinion with a tutor, in the course of which he fell from a rock into a loch (whose name I forget) near Forsinard. Memory fails to recall the actual cause of dispute; but I think I had thrown his fishing-rod into the loch, and thought that it was expedient for him to try and retrieve it.

The same night he found me in the heather with Belle Mc. Kay the local beauty (God bless her!), and gave me up as a bad job.

So I fought the swine! They sent me to Malvern, where my weakness made me the prey of every bully, and saved me from the attention of every budding Eulenburg. Sodomy was the rule at Malvern; my study-companion used even to take money for it. I cunningly used my knowledge of the fact to get taken away from the school.

It must not be supposed that we had no other amusements. There was "pill-ragging"; a form of fight whose object was to seize and hurt the opponent's testicles; and "greasing"; i.e., spitting either in each other's faces or secretly so the victim should not detect the act. In my time this had died out of the other houses; but still flourished in my house "Huntingdon's" No.4. There was bullying, too; and now and then cricket and football.

They sent me to Tonbridge; my health broke down; partly, one may say, through what would have been my own fault or misfortune if I had been properly educated; but, as it was, was the direct result of the vile system that, not content with torturing me itself, handed me over bound and blindfold to the outraged majesty of Nature.

I escaped then from Tonbridge. They sent me to Eastbourne to a P. B. family where I had more liberty, and could have been happy; but the revolting cruelties which they inflicted on the only pretty and decent member of the family, my dear "sister" Isabelle, caused me one day to knock their heads together and walk out of the house.

They sent me to Cambridge. I found myself my own master, and settled down to lead a righteous, sober and godly life; and to make up for lost time in the matter of education.

Outside purely scholastic subjects, they had taught me to fight, to love the truth, to hate oppression,—and by God! I think they taught me well.

On my soul, I should thank them!