MY WORLD STORY BOOK

When They Were Children: Part 1

A Compilation of Historical
Biographies for the Young Reader

Compiled by Marlene Peterson

Libraries of Hope

My World Story Book
Book Eleven: When They Were Children Part 1

Cover Image: Cimabue Meeting Giotto, by Paul-Narcisse Salieres (1876). In public domain, source Wikimedia Commons.

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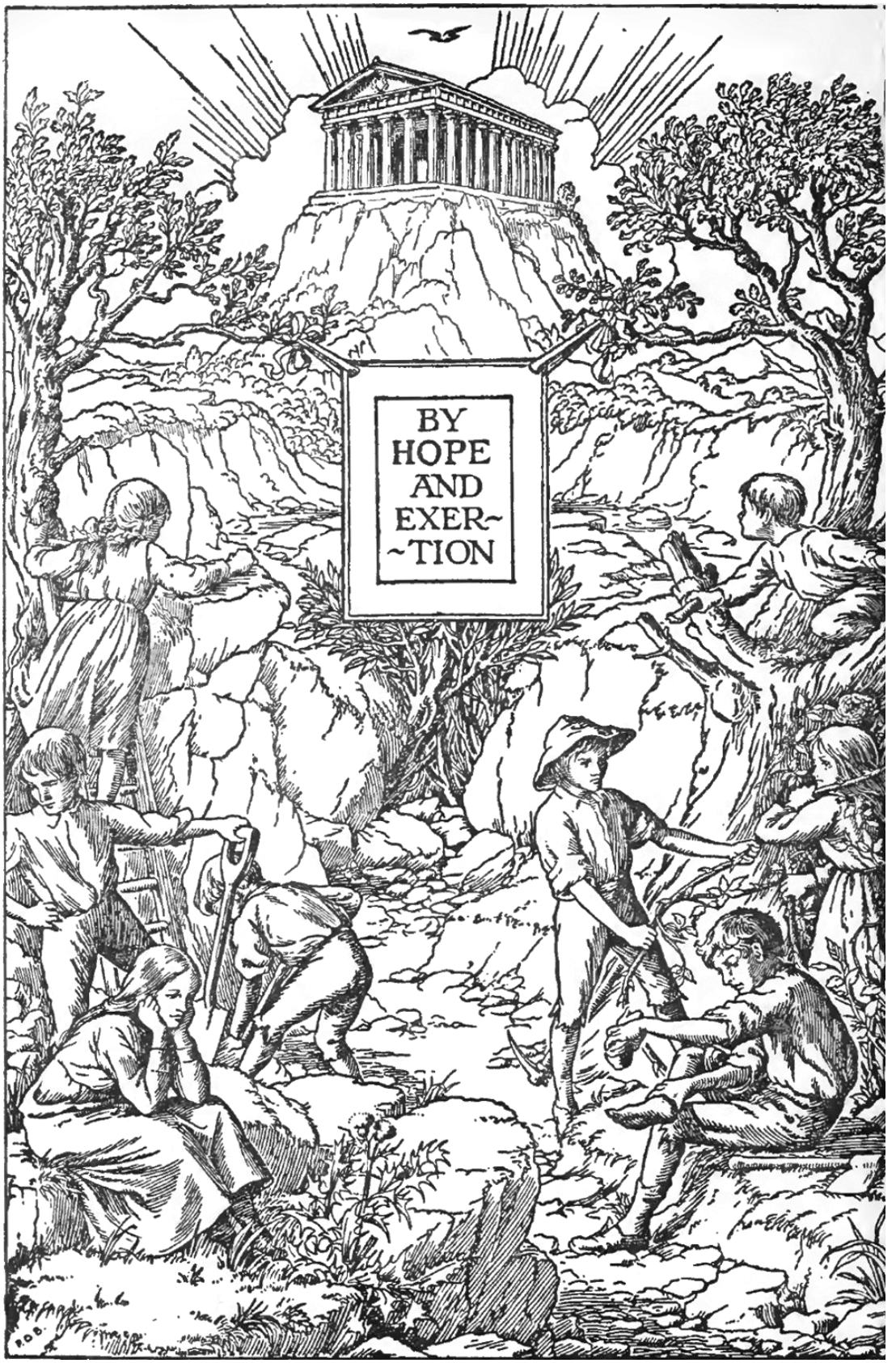
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Introduction

The world has many stately palaces and great cathedrals that tower in their loveliness high above the humble dwellings around them, and their beauty and wonder are the delight of our eyes. We look up at their high walls, their gilded roofs, their slender spires pointing to the sky; we admire the great strength and delicate tracery of their stonework, and whether in sunshine or under the stars, they stand out as splendid monuments of what the mind of man has power to plan and his hands have skill to fashion.

But the foundations on which these buildings rest are hidden from our eyes, buried deep down in the darkness. Yet though unseen and seldom thought of, in every case there has been the patient laying of stone upon stone, without which the stately building could never have been reared.

It is much the same with the great lives which tower above the ordinary ones around us. Here and there we note them; we mark the noble deed, the courage, the heroism, the flash of genius, the habit of self-sacrifice, but we are apt to forget that all this did not come into being suddenly, that in each case there was a long time of preparation, a patient laying of foundations in the years of childhood, act by act, as stone is laid upon stone, before it was known what manner of life would be built up.

So whenever it is possible it is well to consider the time of preparation as well as to admire the finished work, and we shall learn to know these great men and women all the better for hearing something of what they thought and did when they were children.

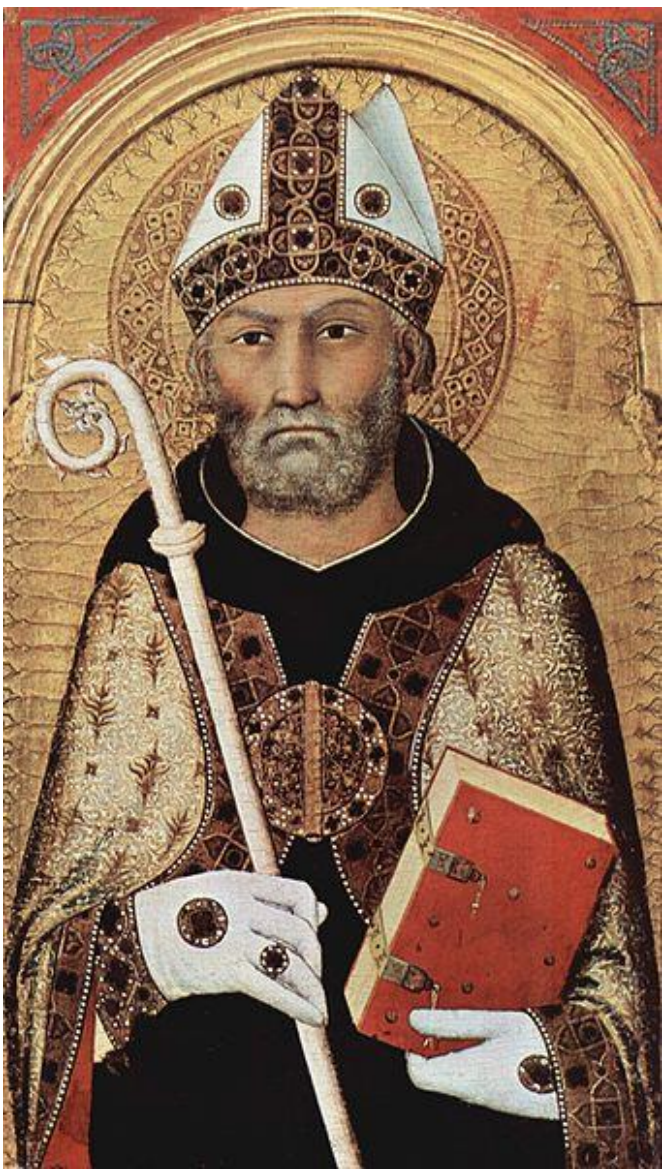
"Souls are built as temples are
Sunken deep, unseen, unknown,
Lies the sure foundation stone;
Then the courses framed to bear
Lift the cloisters, pillared fair;
Last of all the airy spire,
Soaring Heavenward, higher and higher,
Nearest sun and nearest star."

AMY STEEDMAN.

Chapter 1

Saint Augustine

354–430 A.D., North Africa



S. Augustinus, Simone Martini

The story of S. Augustine's childhood is different from almost all other saint stories, because it is told to us in his own words. There are many beautiful lives of the saints written by people who tried to write them as truthfully as possible, but who could not be quite certain of every fact. That is why S. Augustine's own account is so real and so interesting.

He begins his story from the very beginning of his life, when he was a tiny baby. Not that he could remember as far back as that, but he watched other babies, and knew that he must have behaved exactly as they did.

It was in the little town of Tagaste, on the northern shore of Africa, that Augustine was born in the year of Our Lord 354. That little strip of coast with the sea on one side and the desert on the other had seen the martyrdom of Peptua and Cyprian when they laid down their lives for the faith, and Augustine might well be proud of his birthplace. His mother, Monica, was a noble lady, loved and honoured by all who knew her, whose heart was bound up in that one precious son of hers. Many were the dreams she dreamed of his future as she rocked him in her arms, but it was not of fame or honours that she thought; the prayer that came from the depth of her heart was that her little son should live to be a faithful soldier and servant of the Master whom she served.

S. Monica and S. Augustinus, Giuseppe Riva

Like all other babies, Augustine began life by sleeping a good deal, crying a good deal, and then, after a while, breaking out into a smile occasionally. Next came a desire to make his wishes known, and as he could not yet talk, he babbled and waved his arms and kicked vigorously. Then if he did not get his own way, like all other babies, he lifted up his voice and wept.

Little by little he learned to walk and to talk, and after that came school.

"Next I was put to school to get learning," he writes, "in which I, poor wretch, knew not what use there was, and yet if idle I was beaten."

It was all very bewildering to a little boy. Why should he be forced to learn things which he did not understand and had not the least desire to know? Those whippings hurt sorely, but they did not explain matters at all.

Saints Augustine and Monica, Ary Scheffer

It was the thought of the whippings that made Augustine say his first real prayer to God. "So I began as a boy to pray to Thee, though but a small boy, yet with no small earnestness, that I might not be beaten at school."

He was a thorough boy, eager for games and all sorts of mischief, hating to be forced to stay indoors and learn dull, wearisome lessons, and becoming idle and listless when he ought to have been attending to his work. So of course a whipping followed, and with a little sore body he crept away and sobbed out the prayer from his little sore soul.

He did not understand how it could all be meant for his good. We never quite understand that until school-days are left far behind.

As the boy grew older, although he still hated to be made to learn his lessons, he began to be more interested in them, and even to love the ones that had stories in them.

"Latin I loved, not indeed reading, writing, and arithmetic, but the story of Virgil…. Why, then, did I hate the Greek Classics? For Homer cunningly wove the like fictions, and is most sweetly vain,

St Augustine Reading the Epistle of St Paul, Benozzo Gozzoli

yet was he little to my boyish taste. And so, I suppose, would Virgil be to Grecian children. The difficulty of a foreign tongue dashed all the sweetness of Grecian fable. Latin I learned without fear and suffering, amidst the caresses of my nursery and jests of friends, smiling and sportively encouraging me."

It does not need much patience and perseverance to learn our native tongue, and Augustine possessed very little patience and scarcely any perseverance at all.

Which of us if we sat down to write out a list of our faults would feel inclined to mention the little mean sins which no one but ourselves knows anything about? It is so much easier to talk about the big faults that sound rather grand, but no one cares to own up to little mean underhand ways. Yet it is those little mean sins which the great Saint acknowledges when he writes down in his Confessions the story of his childhood.

He was not always quite straight and fair in games, he says. Sometimes in his eagerness to be first, and when no one noticed, he cheated just a very little, but enough to win the game. That was bad enough, but if he found anyone else doing something which he considered not strictly fair he was furiously angry, and talked fiercely about the meanness of cheating. He was fond of showing off, too, and would pretend to be much worse than he really was, just to win the foolish admiration of his companions. There is no doubt that Augustine was a very human little boy.

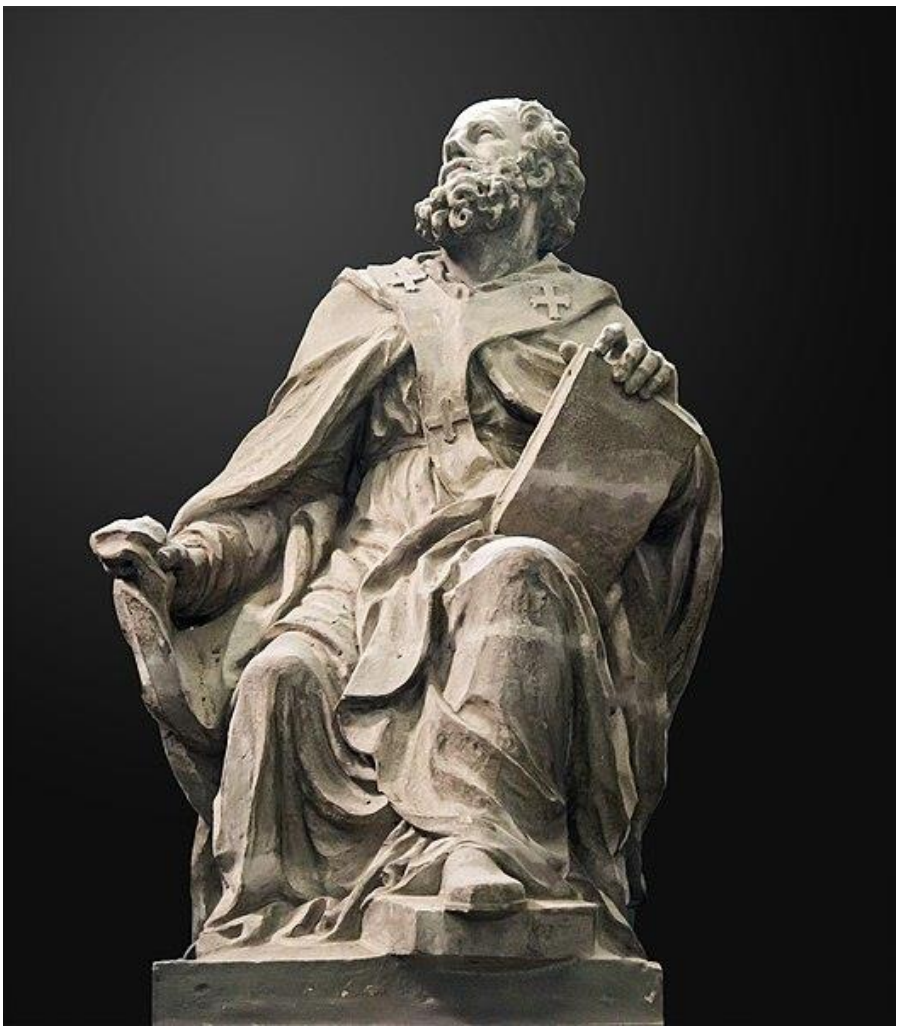
He tells us that in a garden near his house there was a pear-tree covered with pears which were neither sweet nor large. But just because they belonged to someone else he thought it fun to steal them, and he and his companions went out one dark night and robbed the tree of all its fruit. They did not care to eat the pears, and, after tasting one or two, threw the rest away to the pigs. There was no particular pleasure, he allows, in doing this, and he would never have done it alone, but he wanted the other boys to think how bold and bad he was, and that he was afraid of nothing.

All this scarcely seems as if it could be the account of the

S. Augustine, unknown artist

childhood of a Saint, and yet there was always something saintlike surrounding him, something of which he took no heed, but which never failed him his mother's love and her earnest prayers.

She used to weep, he says, but he took no notice of her tears, counting them womanish and having no desire to mend his ways. But God counted those tears, every one, and He listened to those prayers. Augustine wandered away, like the prodigal in the parable, into the far country of folly and sin, but his mother's prayers were like a golden thread following him wherever he strayed, leading him at last back to God. In God's good time those prayers were answered, and the wild boy, so full of faults and sins, became one of the purest and noblest of His Saints.



Statue of St. Augustine of Hippo at the Montauban Cathedral
in Occitanie, France

Chapter 2

Giotto

1270–1337 A.D., Italy

Fourteen miles from the city of Florence, up among the olive-yards and vineyards of Tuscany, the little hamlet of Vespignano nestled in the hollow of the hills, looking down through the blue mists to the domes and towers of the fair City of Flowers. It was a simple little village, and the people who lived there were simple, honest, hard-working country folk, who spent their days in tending their olive-trees and vines and keeping watch over their sheep, like the shepherds of old.

Giotto guarding the goats, Léon Bonnat

Giotto's Childhood, Oscar Pereira da Silva

From time to time echoes of the city life reached the distant village, and to the people of Vespignano, Florence seemed the centre of the world where the most wonderful things were always happening.

In one of the small sun-baked houses of the village there lived a husbandman called Bondone, and it was here in 1270 that his little son was born, to whom he gave the name of Giotto.

Life was hard and rough in that country home, but the peasant baby grew into a strong hardy boy, learning early what cold and hunger meant. His father was sure that even in the wonderful city there could not be found a cleverer, brighter boy than his. The neighbours, too, were all fond of the brown-eyed, bright-faced boy, and were proud of his quickness and clever ways.

All through the long summer days Giotto played about in the sunshine, as wild and free as the little green lizards that darted about on the sunny walls; and when the bitter winds blew, and winter drove him indoors, he was happy enough nestling in the corner close to the big wood fire, roasting chestnuts, or playing with the treasures which filled his pockets, gathered on the hillside in the sunny summer days.

There were no picture books in these days; indeed there were few books of any sort, and Giotto had never seen a picture in all his life. He had heard of one, though, and it may be that he often dreamed of it as he sat looking into the red heart of the fire.

News had come one day from Florence that a most important event had happened there. The great artist called Cimabue had been painting a picture in his studio outside the Porto S. Piero, and everyone had been on tiptoe of curiosity to know what it was like. No one, however, had even caught a glimpse of it, until the day when Charles of Anjou, King of Naples, happened to be passing through Florence, and, hearing of the picture, desired to see it.

All the townsfolk crowded after him as he made his way to the studio, and as many as could edged their way in with him to gaze on the wonderful painting.

It was a marvel of beauty, so they said, and nothing else was talked of; while those who had not

seen it could only wait patiently until it should be finished. When at last it was taken from the studio and carried in triumph through the streets to the Church of Santa Maria Novella, the whole city went wild with delight. Never before had they seen such a Madonna and Child, never before had anyone painted such angels of light.

The first feeling as they gazed was one of awe and reverence, but then a great shout of joy went up and swept like a wave through the streets as the picture was carried along. Ever after that part of the city was called by a new name, the Borgo Allegri, or the Glad Quarter.

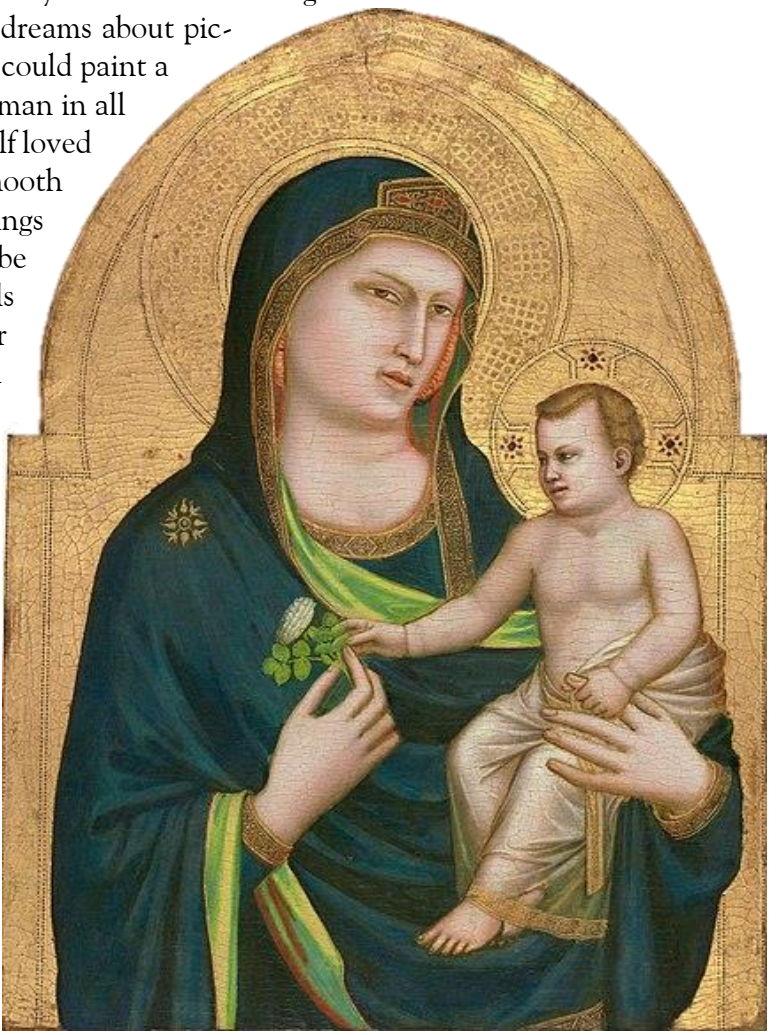
> "A noble picture! worthy of the shout,
> Wherewith along the streets the people bore
> Its cherub-faces, which the sun threw out,
> Until they stooped, and entered the church door."

There can be no doubt that the boy Giotto heard about that wonderful picture, and perhaps listened more eagerly to the news than anyone else in the village.

For Giotto dreamed a great many dreams about pictures, and he thought that a man that could paint a picture like that must be the happiest man in all the world. There was nothing he himself loved so well as to scratch lines upon a smooth rock, trying to draw the shape of the things he saw around him. They could not be called pictures, for he had no pencils and no paper, but it did not matter much to him; he was quite happy with a piece of sharpened flint and any smooth surface to draw upon.

There was plenty of time, too, for drawing out on the hillside, for since he was now ten years old he was put in charge of his father's sheep, and spent the long summer days watching lest they should stray too far afield.

Out there under the blue sky his eyes made pictures for him out of the fleecy white clouds as they slowly changed from one form to another. He learned to know exactly the shape of each flower, and how it grew. He noticed how the olive-trees laid their silver leaves against the blue background of the sky, and how his sheep looked when they stooped



Madonna and Child, Giotto

to eat or lay in the shadow of a rock.

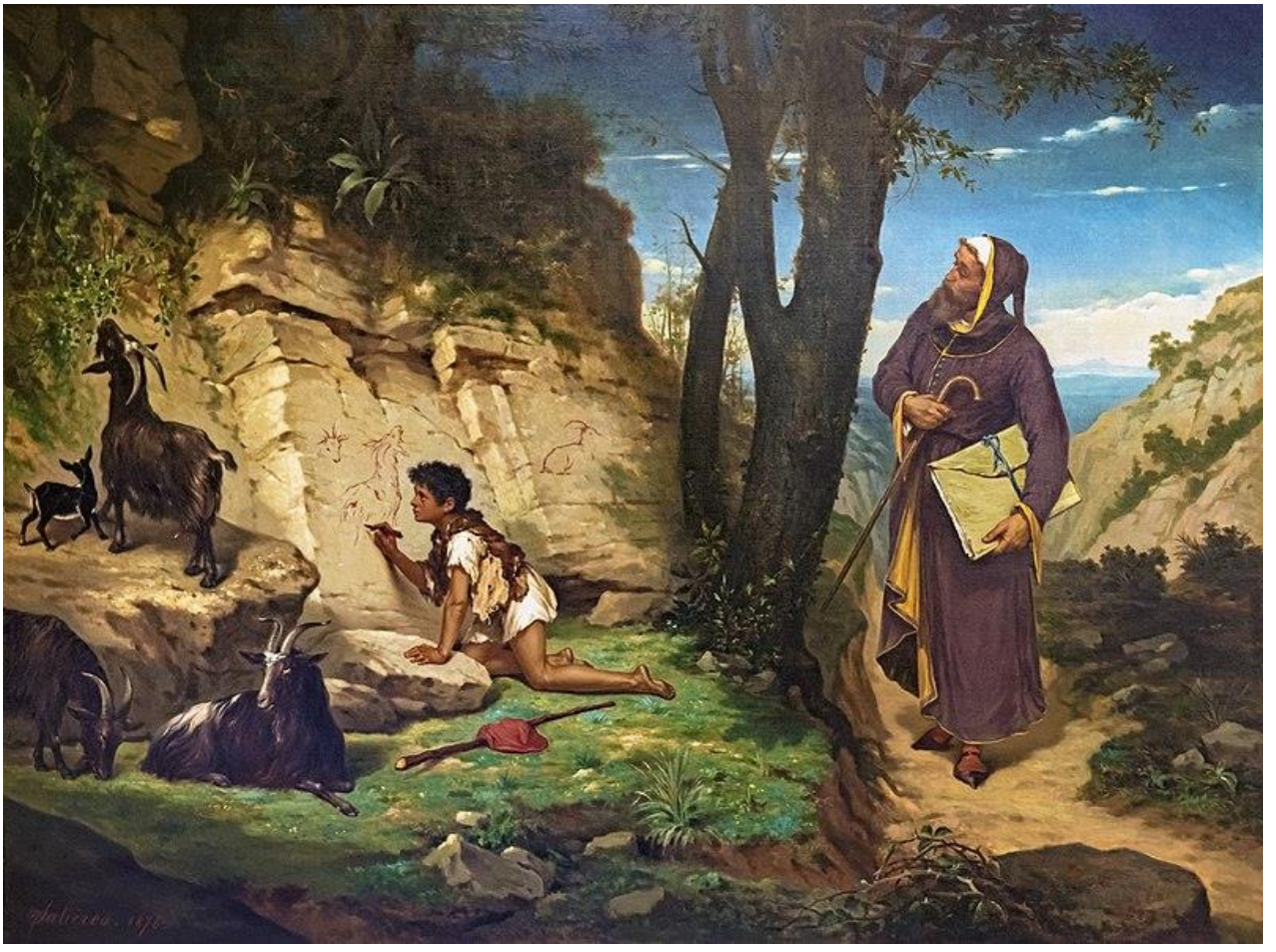
Nothing escaped his keen, watchful eyes, and then with eager hands he would sharpen a piece of flint, choose out the smoothest rock, and try to draw the wonderful shapes which had filled his eyes with their beauty. Sometimes, too, he would try and draw a village mother with her baby, or the little dog that sat and watched him, head on one side, alert and eager.

We know that he must have watched and pondered over these things, for we see them looking out at us from his pictures, painted long years after the village life was left far behind. He always loved to paint and to carve the things that had been around him in his simple, happy childhood.

Now it happened one day when Giotto was out on the hillside as usual with his sheep that a stranger came riding along the lonely road that led to the village. The boy kneeling by the rock, eagerly trying to trace the outline of one of his sheep feeding close at hand, did not hear the sound of the horse's hoofs, and never paused to look up until a voice from the road called to him. Then he started to his feet in surprise, and greeted the stranger with a shy, "Good day, Master."

This was certainly no villager, but a stately knight from the city, such as Giotto had never seen before. The boy gazed up at him with wondering eyes.

Meanwhile the rider had dismounted, and stood looking at the drawing rudely scratched upon



Cimabue meeting Giotto, Paul-Narcisse Salières

Giotto and Cimabue, Raffaello Sorbi

the smooth surface of the rock.

"Who did that?" he asked abruptly.

"I was trying to make a picture of one of my sheep," answered the boy shamefacedly.

The man stood still, gazing intently at the drawing, and then from it looked at the little bare-footed shepherd boy. Giotto was watching him shyly, he was not accustomed to city ways, and the manner in which the stranger looked at him made him feel shy.

"Who taught you to do this?" asked the stranger after a pause.

"Nobody taught me," said Giotto, a smile of amusement breaking over his face; "I only try to draw the things that my eyes see."

The stranger smiled too.

"How would you like to come with me to Florence and learn to be a painter?" he asked.

Giotto's cheeks flushed and his eyes shone. "Indeed, Master, I would come most willingly," he cried, "if only my father will allow it."

"I will come with you, and we will ask him," said the stranger.

The sheep could safely be left for a while, and Giotto trotted along by the stranger's side until they reached the village, and there they found Bondone working under the olive-trees.

"Perhaps my name is known to you?" said the stranger. "I am Cimabue, an artist of Florence, and I will take your boy into my studio and teach him, that he may one day become an artist too."

So this was the great man who had painted that wonderful picture! It seemed too strange to be true. It was a splendid chance for the boy, and Bondone thankfully accepted the offer, although it meant taking away from him the light of his eyes. Who would have thought that the master would

Giotto Painting the Portrait of Dante, Dante Gabriel Rossetti

have deigned to notice those rough drawings on the hillside rocks!

But Cimabue knew better than anyone else how true and good those drawings were, and he recognised at once the power that dwelt in those little rough brown hands, and saw too in the boy's eager eyes how his heart was in his work.

So together the master and pupil set out on the long winding road that led to Florence, and before nightfall the City of Flowers opened her gates to the great artist and his humble apprentice.

It was only a simple shepherd lad that entered the master's studio then. He knew nothing but what he had learned from nature, under the blue sky, out on the hillside, using only nature's materials, the rocks and stones that lay around him, but the soul of the artist was in the boy, and he helped to fill the world with beauty and to sow the seed of the great tree of Art which was to blossom so gloriously in later years.

Chapter 3

Mary Queen of Scots (Part 1)

1542–1587 A.D., Scotland

It was in the month of December 1542, when grim winter held all the land of Scotland in its iron grip, and a storm of troubles swept the country, more fierce even than the wintry blasts, that a royal baby first saw the light in the old castle of Linlithgow.

"Is it a lad?" asked the people anxiously of one another. So much depended on that baby. He was to be their future king, and deliver their land from the English oppressor. The hopes of all the country were centred on the child.

But alas! it was no future king that was feebly wailing in the nursery of the old palace.

"It's a puir wee lassie," was the news that passed from mouth to mouth, and there were looks of bitter disappointment and sad foreboding.

With all haste the news was carried to the dying King James V, at Falkland, and when he heard of the birth of his little daughter he too had no welcome to give her. He had hoped with all his heart that he might have a son to carry on the Stuart line and rule the kingdom he was leaving.

Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, Nicholas Hilliard

"It came with a lass," he said slowly and sorrowfully, "and it will pass with a lass."

He was thinking how it was through Marjorie Bruce that the Stuarts just came to the throne, and it seemed but an ill omen that the crown should now pass to another "lass."

Perhaps the bitter disappointment hastened the King's end, for it was but an hour or two later that he died, and the little fatherless baby at Linlithgow became Queen of Scotland.

Then arose a storm of tongues, and a host of plots and plans raged round the cradle of the tiny

Infant Mary, Queen of Scots. The Honors,
the Scottish Crown Jewels, Edinburgh Castle, Scotland

Queen. Some wanted one thing and some another. Henry VIII of England, her father's uncle, wanted her kingdom as well as herself, and began at once to plot how he might secure both. The Earl of Arran, the next heir to the throne, wanted to have the child completely under his care.

So they all plotted and quarrelled, and meanwhile the Queen-mother, Mary of Lorraine, held the baby safely in her arms and refused to be parted from her. Enemies might gather round, but they had little chance of harming the child when her mother's watchful care surrounded her.

It was rumoured then that the baby was sickly and likely to die, but well might the nurse, Janet Sinclair, deny with scorn such idle tales. The child was as healthy as a child could be. She was as fair and sweet as a flower, and the pride of Janet's heart.

In the sunniest, warmest rooms of the old palace, facing the lake, the royal baby grew and thrived, caring not a jot for the storms that raged around her. When the nobles of her realm came to render to her their homage and to hail her as their Sovereign lady, Mary Queen of Scotland and the Isles, their presence did not greatly disturb her Majesty as she lay warm and contented on her nurse's knee. The next great state ceremonial, however, was not at all to her taste.

It had been considered safer to take the child to Stirling Castle, where she could be securely guarded from foes at home and abroad, and here, nine months later, her coronation was celebrated.

Little Mary was dressed in queenly robes, which doubtless harassed her greatly, and carried in state by her lord-keepers and other nobles across the green to the stately church. There she was solemnly crowned and presented to the people as their Sovereign lady.

It was such a big crown for such a tiny head, and the baby's hand could not grasp the heavy sceptre, while the sword of state was bigger than the little Sovereign lady herself. The throne on which she was held was cold and comfortless, and it is little wonder that she cried and protested loudly. She wanted her mother and Janet her nurse. These great rough men could not know how to hold a baby properly. She did not like the crowd of faces, and the noise frightened her. Then no one seemed to mind whether she cried or not, and she had to sit on that uncomfortable throne while every prelate and peer of the realm knelt before her and, placing a hand upon her head, swore to serve her truly and loyally. She was even kissed by her two kinsmen Arran and Lennox, and that perhaps was worst of all.

"It is an evil sign," said the people, shaking their heads solemnly, as their queen wept and wailed bitterly all through her coronation. Poor little queen! There were always people ready to blame her, even when she did what every other child in her realm would have done under the same circumstances.

So the baby's head was crowned in state and her portrait was struck off on a little copper coin, which was called a "bawbee" perhaps because of the baby face upon it.

Now the King of England did not at all approve of this coronation, and he was furiously angry because all his plots had come to naught. He had planned that the little Queen of Scotland should marry his son Edward, and be brought up in England, but the Queen-mother had different plans, and it was no easy matter to storm the good old castle of Stirling and carry away the baby by force. Cunning too was of little avail, for the Queen was loyally guarded by her lord-keepers, who had wise heads as well as faithful hearts.

"We demand to see the Queen," said the Earl of Angus, riding up to the castle with a strong company of his followers behind. "It is rumoured that she hath been removed and another child substituted and we must see with our own eyes if this be so."

The lord-keepers watched the armed men pressing forward, but they answered calmly and courteously that the request should be granted. Only the rule of the castle was that but one man at a time should enter the castle gate, be presented to the Queen, and that in the presence of her lord-keepers and guards. The plan had been to seize the child as soon as Angus and his followers were admitted into the castle, and their looks of rage and disappointment when their plan came to naught must have warned the lord-keepers to be more than ever on their guard.

The outside storms swept on and Mary's kingdom was laid waste by the invading English, while men quarrelled continually as to who should be the future husband of the little Queen. And all the time the little maiden herself grew like a rose in a sheltered garden, gradually unfolding its petals and growing more lovely day by day. There were other flowers too in that sheltered garden, four other little Maries, her playmates and maids-of-honour. Together they learned their lessons and stitched their pieces of embroidery, and together they gaily played their games, as if the world was full of sunshine, and no dark clouds of war and misery hung over the land.

But the storm of war drew closer, and it was thought safer for a while the little Queen should leave the stronghold of Stirling Castle and take refuge in the priory of Inchmahome, a little island in the Lake of Menteith. From there she could easily escape to the Highlands if the English army advanced on Stirling.

Mary was five years old at that time and was a very charming child. She seemed to have the gift

of making everyone love her, and even the rough fishermen of the lake, who saw her playing on the shore with her four Maries, watched her with love and loyalty in their eyes, and she ruled as a veritable queen over their hearts.

Dressed in black silk with a gay tartan scarf, and her shining golden hair bound with a rose-coloured satin snood, she made a pretty picture for her loyal subjects to gaze upon, as she and her maids-of-honour held a mimic court on the little island.

Chapter 4

Mary Queen of Scots (Part 2)

1542-1587 A.D., Scotland

The Education of Mary Stuart at the Court of Francis II,
Gillot Saint-Evre

Five years was no great age, but yet Mary was already learning history, geography, and Latin, and could speak French as well as English. She was learning too how to sew tapestry and to embroider as well.

But while the little Queen was safely learning her lessons and playing her games at Inchmahome, the Queen-mother was anxiously arranging fresh plans for her little daughter. She was a Frenchwoman, and through all those years of trouble and anxious fears her heart had always turned to her own dear land of France, and now she decided that little Mary should be sent there, and that when she was old enough she should marry the young Dauphin Francis. It was very hard to part with the child, but it seemed to be the best and only way.

Everything was made ready as secretly as possible, for although Henry VIII was now dead, the English were still anxious to carry off the little Queen, and it was impossible to set sail from Leith, for the English fleet was guarding the Forth. So Mary and her maids-of-honour and all her court and guardians were taken to Dumbarton, and waited there until the French galleys arrived to carry her

over to France.

It was a very sad little child with tear-stained face that set sail that day. She was leaving her mother and going off to an unknown land, and everything felt sad and strange to her. But although only six years old she showed that she was a Stuart and a queen, and she bore herself with gallant self-control. Only the tears in her eyes spoke of a very sore little heart as she bade her mother good-bye.

Mary Queen of Scots' farewell to France, Robert Herdman

It might have been hoped that gentle winds and kindly weather would make the voyage as pleasant as possible for the little desolate Queen, but instead of that a most terrific storm arose, and Lady Fleming, the Queen's governess, began to wonder if they would ever see land again. But at last, after days of tossing, a haven was reached, and the little Scotch Queen and all her court were landed on the coast of Brittany. As soon as they were able they went at once to Morlaix, to return thanks in the cathedral there for their escape from the perils of the sea and from the hands of the English.

It happened that as they were returning from the city, the drawbridge over which the little Queen had just passed gave way, and there was a scene of great terror and confusion as it crashed down into the river beneath. It was enough to frighten any child, but Mary was perfectly calm and showed no sign whatever of fear.

It was this fearless spirit of hers which so charmed her uncle Francis, Duke of Guise. "My niece," he said to her, "there is one trait in which, above all others, I recognise my own blood in you: you are as brave as my bravest men-at-arms. If women went into battle now, as they did in ancient times, I think you would know how to die well."

Journeying on to the Castle of S. Germain, Mary was welcomed there by the little French princes and princesses, and saw for the first time the Dauphin who was to be her future husband. The two

children soon became good friends, and as they were about the same age they learned their lessons together, and were taught their dancing steps by the same master.

Dancing came very easily to the graceful little Queen, and it was not long before she and her small partner were called upon to dance before the King and Queen and the whole court. It was perhaps impossible to avoid bringing the child forward, for she had exactly the gifts which best fitted her to shine in a gay court, and she attracted notice wherever she went. But the great sheltered life in the old grey castle of Scotland must have been a healthier and better training for the little maid. The brilliant court of France was scarcely the best place in which to bring up a child. Janet, the Scotch nurse, did not greatly love the change, and must have often shaken her wise head over these foreigners and their ways. They tried at first to part her from her charge, but that was no easy matter, and she soon showed that she was not a person to be lightly set aside.

So two years passed by, and then came the joyful news from Scotland that the Queen-mother was about to return to France for a short time, to visit her little daughter. Mary's delight knew no bounds, and she wrote at once to her grandmother, the Duchess of Guise, to tell the good news.

"My Lady," she wrote, "I am very glad to be able to offer you these present lines for the purpose of telling you the joyful tidings which I have received from the Queen, my mother, who has promised me, by her letters dated xxii. of April, to come over very soon to see you and me, and for us to see her, which will be to me the greatest happiness that I could desire in this world; and this rejoices

The Return of Mary Queen of Scots to Edinburgh, James Drummond

me to such a degree as to make me think I ought to do my duty to the utmost, in the meantime, and study to become very wise, in order to satisfy the good desire she has to see me all you and she wish me to be."

The coming, so much looked forward to, was delayed for some months, and gave the little Queen time to try and grow wise as she had planned, but at last the happy day arrived.

How the child must have longed to run and meet her mother, to throw her arms round her neck and feel the kisses she had missed so sadly! But the meeting was a state affair and Mary had to remember she was a queen first and a daughter afterwards. She read the address of welcome that had been prepared for her, and inquired solemnly into the affairs of her kingdom with a graciousness and dignity that sat quaintly on a child of eight years old, and it was small wonder that everyone was delighted with her. The only wonder was that her little head was not turned by all the praise and admiration showered upon her.

Childhood's days of happy unconsciousness were but short ones for this little Queen of Scotland. Far too early she knew the cares and troubles that gather round the head that wears a crown. She still had many hours of childish joy, gay days in the forest hunting and hawking, fetes at court and many a merry-making, but the weight of the crown was always there, and each year brought fresh responsibilities. After that one happy visit she never saw her mother again, and that must alone have been a sore grief to her faithful little heart. She was not a child to forget easily, and those she loved had their place very deep in her heart. She was carefully thoughtful for all those who served her, and never failed to help them when it was in her power. Many a letter she wrote to the Queen-mother reminding her how faithful the good Janet had been, and begging for some favour to be bestowed upon her.

The childish face of the little Queen, so full of charm and beauty, began very soon to wear a grave and thoughtful expression. Her eyes that gazed so earnestly out to the future had often a wistful look in them, for her life even at twelve years of age was not a very easy one. What did the future hold for her? Brilliant days of happiness perhaps, many triumphs, and surely many cares. But who can look into the future? It is hidden from all mortal eyes, and was hidden then, thank God, from the wistful innocent eyes of Scotland's child queen.

Chapter 5

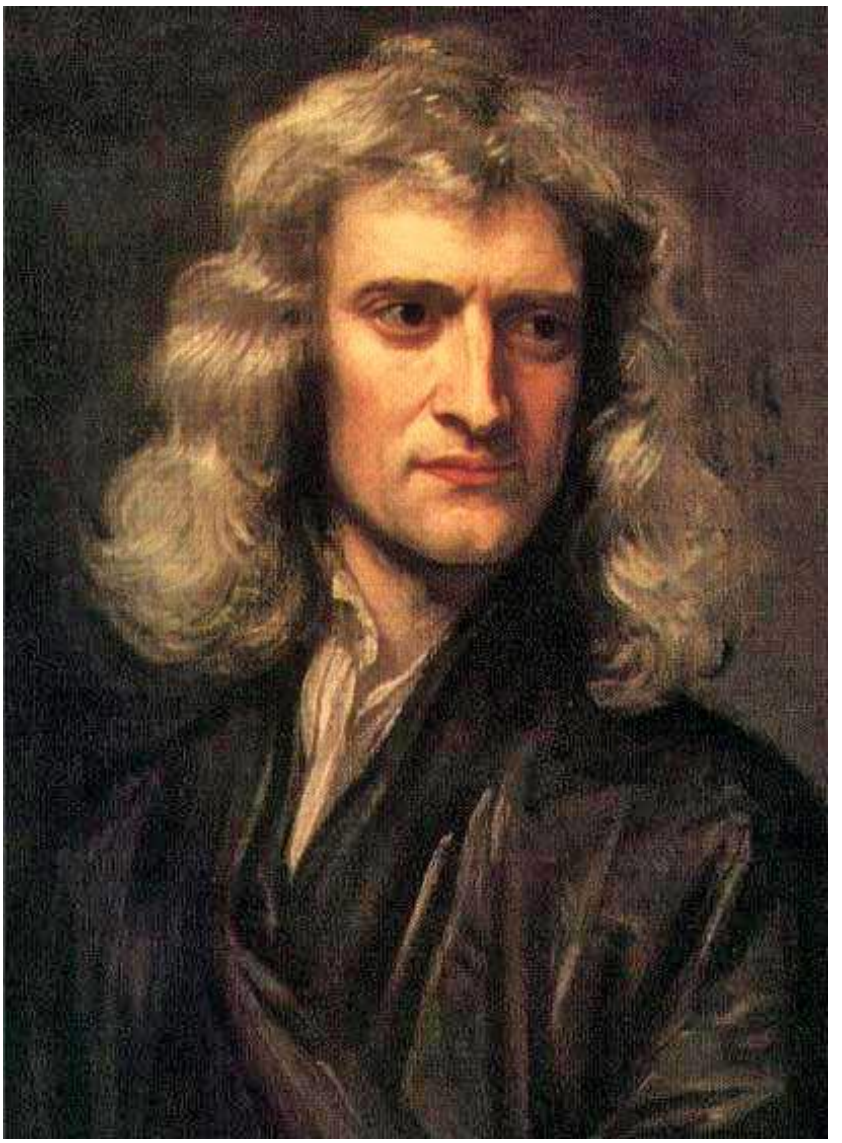
Sir Isaac Newton

1642–1727 A.D., United Kingdom

Long ago, in the year 1642, there was born on Christmas Day one of the tiniest babies, with one of the most wonderful brains that the world has ever known. He was so small that his mother used afterwards to say that he might have been easily put into a quart mug, and yet inside the head of that little Hop-o'-my-thumb there was something which was to make him one of the great men of the earth.

Small as the baby was, he was a very precious gift to his young mother, who had lost her husband soon after her wedding day, and the little fatherless baby was doubly welcome when he came into the world with the sound of the Christmas bells.

It was in the manor house of Woolsthorpe in Lincolnshire that this baby was born, and on New Years Day he was carried to the parish church at Colsterworth and given the name of his father, Isaac Newton. It could have been no easy matter to dress the baby in any christening robe except such as a fairy or



Portrait of Isaac Newton, Barrington Bramley
(Copy of a painting by Sir Godfrey Kneller)

Isaac Newton, Workshop of Enoch Seeman

pixie might wear, but the boy soon began to grow apace and erelong showed plainly that he was no changeling, but a healthy, vigorous young Briton.

As soon as Isaac was old enough he went to a day school, first at Skillington and then at Stoke, but it was not until he was twelve years old that he was entered at the public school of Grantham, and was sent to board at the house of Mr. Clark, an apothecary of that town.

Now Isaac was rather careless and inattentive about his lessons and was usually at the very bottom of his class, until it happened one day that he had a fight with a boy near the top. This boy was a bully and did not play fair, but gave Isaac a very nasty kick which hurt badly.

From that day young Isaac made up his mind to get above his enemy in class, and at once gave his whole mind to learning his lessons. Each day he won a higher and higher place, and, even after passing the enemy, kept steadily on until he became head boy of the school.

Schoolboy games had little interest for Isaac, for he had quite a different way of amusing himself

and needed every precious spare moment for carrying out his plans. His head was full of ideas about making mechanical models which would work by themselves, and he collected by degrees all sorts of little saws, hatchets, hammers, and other tools which he used with deft clever fingers.

A windmill was being built just then on the road not very far from Grantham, and Isaac watched the building whenever he could with the most intense interest. He made friends with the workmen, and was allowed to look on while they put together all the different parts of the machinery, so that by the time it was finished he knew almost as much about it as the workmen themselves. After that it was no very difficult matter for him to make a small model of the windmill with sails and machinery complete, to the great wonder and admiration of all who saw it.

The wonderful little model windmill was set at first on the roof of the house, that the wind might turn the sails and set the machinery working, but as winds are apt to be uncertain, Isaac thought of a new plan and began to work his model by animal power. A kind of treadmill was connected with the machinery, and a mouse was set to run round and round, or rather to try and run round, which set the wheel in motion.

It is to be hoped that the inventor was kind to "the little miller," as he called the mouse, for it must have been hard and monotonous work for the small animal who cared nothing for mechanical experiments, and was only anxious to climb up to the corn placed so temptingly beyond his reach above the wheel.

Isaac's next idea was to make a clock worked by water, and he begged the apothecary for a good-sized wooden box and fitted it up with a dial and hands, and arranged the works which were set a-going by the slow dropping of a certain quantity of water which he regulated daily. It really turned out to be quite a useful clock, and was used by the whole family for many years.

After that came the idea of a little carriage on four wheels, which could be worked by the person who sat inside, but although this was made it was not a great success, as it was impossible to work it uphill, and it was only useful on very smooth level roads.

The boys at school soon discovered that although Isaac Newton was no good at games he could

Isaac Newton performing his crucial prism experiment in his Woolsthorpe Manor bedroom, Sascha Grusche

Newton's Discovery of the Refraction of Light, Pelagio Palagi

make the most splendid things to play with, and his kites were the envy of everyone. He made paper lanterns too, which were extremely useful on winter mornings when the boys had to find their way to school in the dark. These lanterns served another purpose as well and a more entertaining one, for it was great sport on dark nights to light one and tie it on to the tail of a kite, so that the folk round about talked in awestruck tones of the comet that had been seen in the sky.

Those school companions were nevertheless of no great interest to Isaac, and his real friend was a little girl, two or three years younger than himself, who was living in the same house in which he lodged. He must have been a very delightful friend for any little girl to have, for he made her the most beautiful chairs and tables for her dolls, and all kinds of little cupboards and boxes in which to keep her treasures. She was a clever child, and Isaac, who was a "sober, silent, thinking lad," was much happier in her company than in the playground with those shouting boys. His friendship with little Miss Story lasted all his life.

All this time, besides making toys and working models, Isaac had taught himself to draw, and it was one of his great pleasures. His room was hung with pictures drawn and framed by himself, some of them original drawings and some copies. It is said that his walls were "covered with charcoal

drawings of birds, beasts, men, ships, and mathematical figures, all of which were very well designed."

But although he was so fond of drawing it was certainly his making models which took up most of his attention. The water-clock was not very satisfactory after all, and he now turned his attention to making sun-dials. The country people round about thought very highly of "Isaac's dial," and often came to tell the time of day by it.

When Isaac was still a little boy, his mother had married again and made her home at the rectory of North Witham, but by the time he was fourteen his step-father died and the family went back to live at the old manor house of Woolsthorpe.

It was necessary then that some one should help to work the farm, and as there was but little money to spare for school fees, Isaac was brought home, that he might set to work at once and learn to be a farmer.

There was not much of a farmer about Isaac, and there seemed a poor chance of turning him into one. When he was sent to the Grantham market to sell grain and buy what the household required, he left all the bargaining to the servant who went with him, and wandered away to his old lodgings where he knew he would find books to read. Sometimes he even carried a book from home with him, and stretched himself out behind some hedge to read while the old servant went on to the market, and lay absorbed until the servant returned and it was time to go home.

It was just as bad if he went to do work in the fields. His whole mind was bent on inventing water-wheels or some other contrivance, or else he was so deeply interested in watching the sun-shadows that he allowed the sheep to wander away at their own sweet will, and never noticed when the cows broke into the cornfields, eating and trampling down the corn.

Evidently it was no use to try and make a farmer of Isaac, for both the boy and the farm suffered, and so his mother with a sigh made up her mind to let him go back to school to prepare for the university. Perhaps, after all, thought she, there might be something in his queer ideas and his curious love for strange calculations.

So the path was made smooth for Isaac Newton to follow until it led to those wonderful discoveries that were to bring a flood of light into the world, and set his name foremost in the list of great men of genius.

Well might they long afterwards write in the room where that small baby was born one Christmas Day:

> "Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night,
> God said 'Let Newton be,' and all was Light."

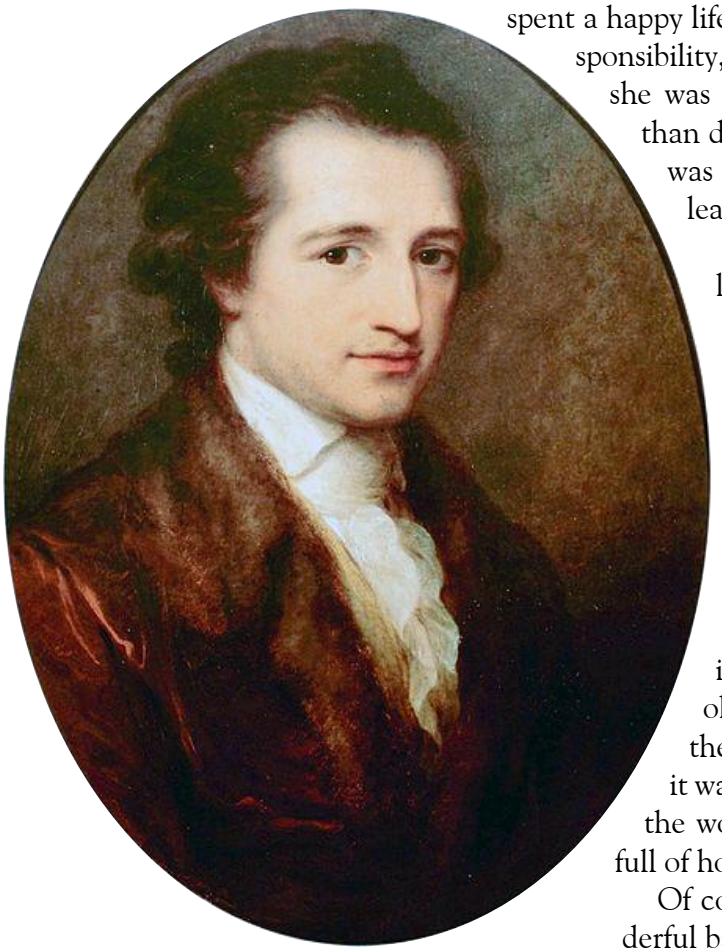
Chapter 6

Johann Wolfgang Goethe (Part 1)

1749-1832 A.D., Germany

Johann Caspar Goethe, imperial councillor of Frankfort, was a stern, stately man, no longer in his first youth, when he brought home to the old house in the Grosse Hirschgraben his bride of seventeen summers, Katharina Elizabeth, the daughter of the chief magistrate Johann Wolfgang Textor.

It was a great change for the young bride, who was still scarcely more than a child. She had spent a happy life in her father's house, with little or no responsibility, and now that was all left behind her and she was the wife of this stern, stately man, more than double her age, who made her feel as if she was still at school when he set her lessons to learn and tried to improve her mind.

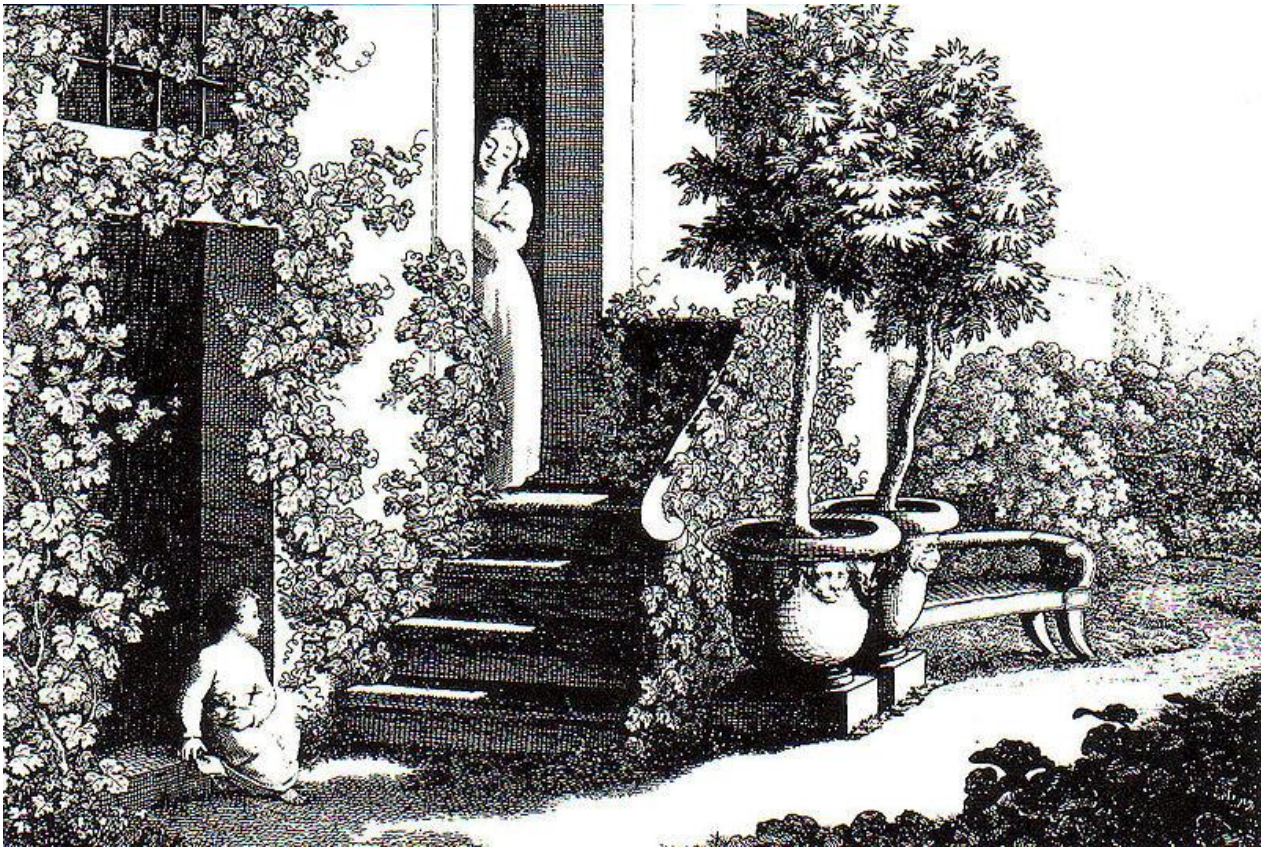


Portrait of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Angelica Kauffmann

Little wonder, then, that when a year later her baby was born she welcomed him with delight, and felt as if she and her little son were much nearer in age than the solemn husband who was so full of wisdom and knowledge.

It was in summer-time, on 28th of August 1749, that little Johann Wolfgang Goethe was born, exactly as the clocks were striking midday. The people of Frankfort-on-the-Main were not at all interested in the arrival of the baby in the old house in the Grosse Hirschgraben, but the stars, it is said, were wiser and knew that it was no ordinary child that had just come into the world, and foretold for him a golden future full of honour and renown.

Of course to his mother he was the most wonderful baby that had ever been born, and certainly he was so quick and clever, even when a little child, that there was some excuse for her pride in



Christiane und August in Goethes Hausgarten, Karl Wilhelm Lieber

him. And surely no child ever had a more charming and delightful mother as playfellow. She had such a sunny, unselfish nature, that she was always happy herself, and always tried to make others happy. Her eyes only looked for all that was best in other people, and fault-finding was unknown to her. Black thoughts had no place in her gay, loving heart, and she had a marvellous way of smoothing out difficulties and making the rough places plain. All beautiful things were a joy to her, and she shared all her pleasures with her little son, and could tell him such wonderful fairy tales that while he listened he seemed to be living in an enchanted land.

So little Wolfgang began very early to take delight in what was fair and lovely, and to dislike all ugly things. This was all very well, as far as it went, but it was not convenient when he refused to play with children unless they were pretty. He was but three years old when he was once taken to visit a neighbour where there happened to be a dark and extremely plain child waiting to play with him. Wolfgang burst into tears and pointed a shaking finger at him.

"That black child must go away," he sobbed, "I cannot bear him."

Needless to say it was Wolfgang who was taken away, and not the black child, and he had to learn the most necessary lesson of self-control.

A little sister, Cornelia, came soon to share his pleasures and be his playmate, and he loved the baby so devotedly that he brought all his toys for her to play with, and sat like a little watch-dog by her cradle. Some other little brothers followed, but none of them lived very long, and it was only

Wolfgang and Cornelia who lived to grow up the greatest of friends.

It was a curious old house where the brother and sister played their games and learned their lessons together. It had so many gloomy passages and dark corners that it was by no means a cheerful place, even in the daytime, when the sun shone through the round glass windows, and the cheerful voices of the servants could be heard. But at night it was so gloomy and so terrifying that the children lay in their little lonely beds and shivered with fear. It was no use asking that someone might stay near them. Their father declared that children must be taught to fear nothing and to grow accustomed to darkness and mystery.

Goethe's Mother, Rudolf Bosselt

Sometimes the terror was more than Wolfgang could bear, and then he would step out of bed and creep along to try and find some maid or servant to keep him company. But his father never failed to hear the patter of those small bare feet, and his way of trying to make his little son more courageous was not a happy one.

Wolfgang, creeping cautiously along, was suddenly met by a dreadful unknown figure so much more terrifying than even his lonely bed, that he turned to fly and dared not venture forth again. How could he recognise in the dim light that the dreadful figure was merely his father, who had turned his dressing-gown inside out to furnish a disguise?

The gay, tender-hearted young mother found a much better way of helping the children to overcome their fears and to be brave during the dark hours of the night. She could not go against their father's wishes, but as it was the time for peaches, and peaches were a great treat, she thought of a splendid plan. Every night when they went to bed, she told them to try and be brave and good, and if they did their very best there would be a dish of velvet-cheeked peaches ready for them in the morning. The very thought of those peaches was like a magic spell to keep away the powers of darkness.

The room which the children loved best in all the house was the large room on the ground floor where their grandmother lived. There was always a welcome awaiting them there, and if their father

was strict, his mother did her very best to spoil them. In her room they could play at any games they liked and it did not matter how noisy they were, and then she was like a fairy godmother with her surprising gifts, and the sugar-plums and dainty morsels which always appeared like magic to fill their hungry little mouths.

Many were the pleasures she prepared for them, but the greatest joy of all was the puppet show she gave them one Christmas Eve. There was a tiny stage and little figures all complete and a play to be acted. Wolfgang was wild with delight. It was like a fairy gift to him, and it opened the gates of another enchanted land.

But life was by no means made up of fairy tales and puppet shows for the little boy. There were many serious duties to be performed and many lessons to be mastered. The learned councillor had very decided ideas about the education of children, and he began early to teach them himself. As soon as they were old enough to learn anything, Wolfgang and Cornelia had their days filled with studies of different kinds. There was very little time for play, and even playtime was often taken up with instructive pleasure, such as feeding and tending silk-worms, or helping to bleach valuable old etchings. The evenings were even worse sometimes, for then they had to read aloud from some book, so dull and instructive that even their father occasionally dropped asleep as he listened.

Portrait of Katharina Elisabeth Goethe (Goethe's Mother), unknown artist

Then, oh! joy and rapture, there was a chance of escape from the dull prison-house into fairy-land. They knew their mother would have a story ready for them, in fact, there was almost always one in the making, and they were wild with interest to hear the next part. Wolfgang, especially, lived in her stories.

"He fairly devoured me with his big black eyes," said his mother, "and when the fate of some favourite character was not just to his liking, I saw the veins of his forehead swelling with anger, while he tried to keep back his tears."

It was all so real to him that sometimes he could not help interrupting, especially if he was afraid things were not going to turn out as he wished.

"Mother," he urged, "the princess will not marry that horrid tailor, will she? Not even if he does kill the giant?"

"Wait and see" was all that his mother would say, and then Wolfgang would go and whisper to his grandmother the ending that he hoped would follow. She always listened patiently, and when the

children were in bed repeated the child's ideas to the chief story-teller to weave into her tale.

Great was Wolfgang's delight when next time the story went on exactly as he wanted it to do.

"I guessed it," he cried, his cheeks burning with excitement, and his little heart thumping with delight.

Chapter 7

Johann Wolfgang Goethe (Part 2)

1749–1832 A.D., Germany

But although Wolfgang loved his mother's stories so well, he did not specially dislike his lessons, and he was a pupil after his father's own heart. Learning of every kind came easy to him, and the wonder was that the child could do work of all kinds so well. Latin he learned easily because his first Latin book rhymed, and he could hum and sing it to himself like a song. There was very little difficulty in teaching him any language. Greek, Hebrew, French, his ear caught them all quickly and easily. English he learned in four weeks from a travelling English tutor, and Italian seemed to him such a "funny language" that he learned it by merely listening to the lessons given to his sister. He had his own work to do in the same room, and as Cornelia was taught Italian he listened too, and learned it quite as quickly as she did.

There were not many books for children to read in those days, but among the ones he had, Wolfgang was never tired of *Robinson Crusoe* and the Bible. Certainly the Bible was his chief

The Goethe Family in Schäfertracht, Johann Conrad Seekatz

Goethe's Library at the Frauenplan in Weimar,
today the German Goethe National Museum

favourite, especially the stories in the Old Testament of the simple shepherd folk, and he loved, too, the rhythm of the grand old Psalms. It was the book his mother loved best of all, and she used to tell him that all the wisdom of the world was to be found there.

On the second floor of the old house, there was a room called "the garden room," because a few plants had been set to grow there, and this was Wolfgang's favourite retreat. It was a quiet place in which to learn his lessons, and read his books and dream his dreams. Kneeling on the window-seat, he could look out of the window over the gardens and the city wall, across to the beautiful valley of the Main and the mountains beyond. It was possible to watch from afar the great storms gathering and sweeping up the valley, like a host advancing in battle array, and at eventide there was the glory of the sunset to watch and wonder at. All these things were silently woven into the web of the child's life and never forgotten.

Very soon after that Christmas Eve which had brought the delight of the puppet show, the kind old grandmother died, and then the councillor decided to rebuild the old house, which he had not cared to do while his mother was alive. It was not pulled to pieces at once, but rebuilt story by story, so that the family were able to stay there most of the time and watch the rebuilding.

To the children all this was a delightful pleasure. Wolfgang, dressed as a little bricklayer, helped to lay the foundation-stone, and was never tired of watching the men at their work and learning how a house should be built. There was the joy, too, of playing at see-saw on the planks with his sister and swinging on the beams until he was giddy.

But at last, when it was time for the roof to be taken off, it was quite impossible to stay in the house any longer, and so until it should be finished the children were sent away to school for the first and last time in their lives. Wolfgang did not like school at all. It was so ugly and disagreeable, the boys were so rough and rude, and they bullied him unmercifully.

Perhaps it was but natural that the new boy should receive little mercy at the hands of his companions. His superior manners and the way that he walked with his head in the air were most

irritating, especially in so small a boy.

Wolfgang certainly carried himself with rather a grand air. Once when his mother had watched him cross the road with some other boys, she laughed to see his grave and stately manner of walking, and asked him if he meant in that way to distinguish himself from his companions.

"I begin with this," he answered gravely. "Later on in life, I shall distinguish myself in other ways."

It was enough to make anyone smile to see the little five-year-old boy draw himself up and answer with such dignity. He had been always rather impressed with the tale of what the stars had foretold at his birth, and he asked his mother gravely if she thought they would help him towards that golden future.

"Why must you have the assistance of the stars?" she said; "other people get on very well without."

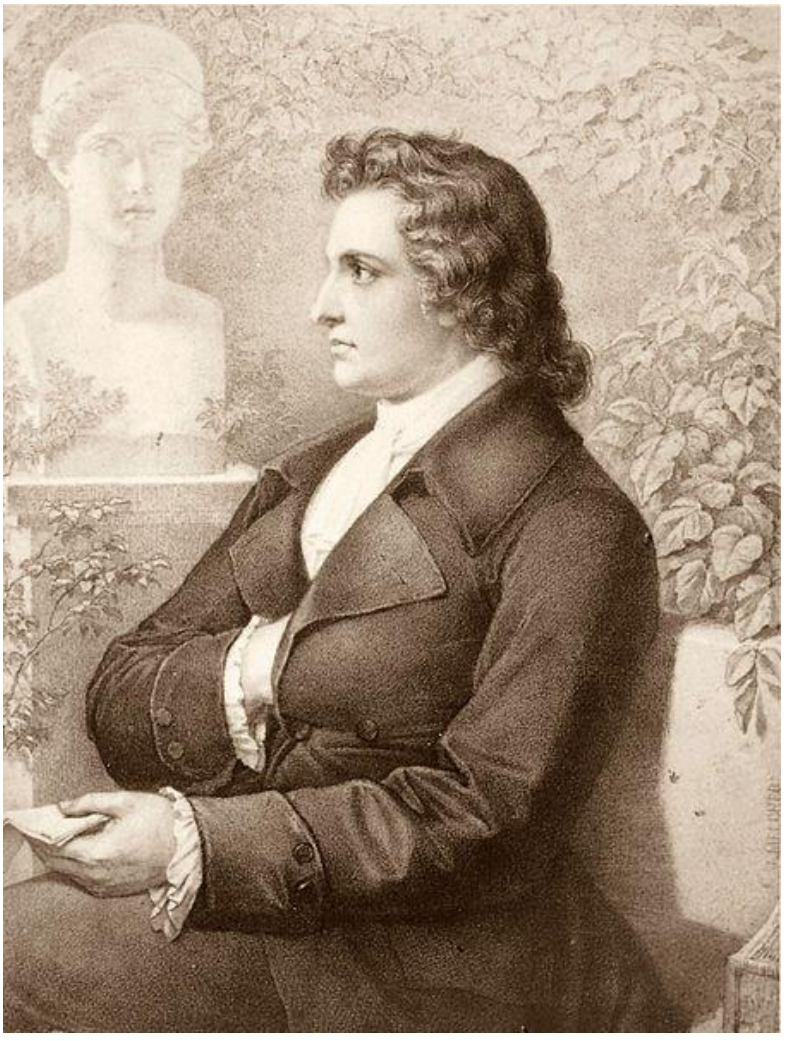
"I am not to be satisfied with what does for other people," was Wolfgang's answer.

Such a boy naturally suffered a great deal at the hands of the school bullies, but they did not quite realise what kind of a child it was that they were persecuting, or his wonderful power of self-

Goethe in the Roman Campagna, Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein

command.

Fighting during lesson hours was strictly forbidden at school, and it happened one day that the teacher was absent and the boys were playing instead of working, when they found the new boy learning his lessons by himself, and they determined to make him break the rule. A broom was found and three of the boys made switches and began cutting and lashing at Wolfgang's legs until the pain was almost more than he could bear. Quite unmoved he sat on, keeping one eye on the clock, while his anger grew hotter and hotter with each smarting blow; then at last the hour struck, and he was free to fight. In an instant he was on his feet, and so powerful was his rage that before the bullies knew what was happening, two of them were hurled backwards on to the floor and the third was nearly throttled. Wolfgang needed no stars to help him in that fight.



Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, after a painting by Jakob Melcher

The only thing that made his schooldays pleasant to him, was that he was now free to wander about the town by himself, and could learn a great deal about the townsfolk and their work, and the history of the old buildings. Every kind of knowledge that came his way was welcome to the boy, everything was of interest. He tells us, in his account of his childhood, how he loved to wander out on to the great bridge over the Main and watch the shining river below.

"I always had a pleasant feeling," he says, "when the gilt weathercock on the bridge cross glittered in the sunshine."

Then across the river there was the wine-market, where he could watch the cranes loading and unloading the casks, and see the market-boats coming in with their curious wares.

In the old town there was always a great crowd on market days, and it was most exciting to push a way through the people, and reach at last the bookstalls where children could spend their pennies on books of folk-songs, or coloured paper stamped with golden animals. The meat-stalls were a great draw back to Wolfgang's pleasure, and he always flew past them and tried not to see them. The pleasant feeling which the shining weathercock had given him was quite gone now.

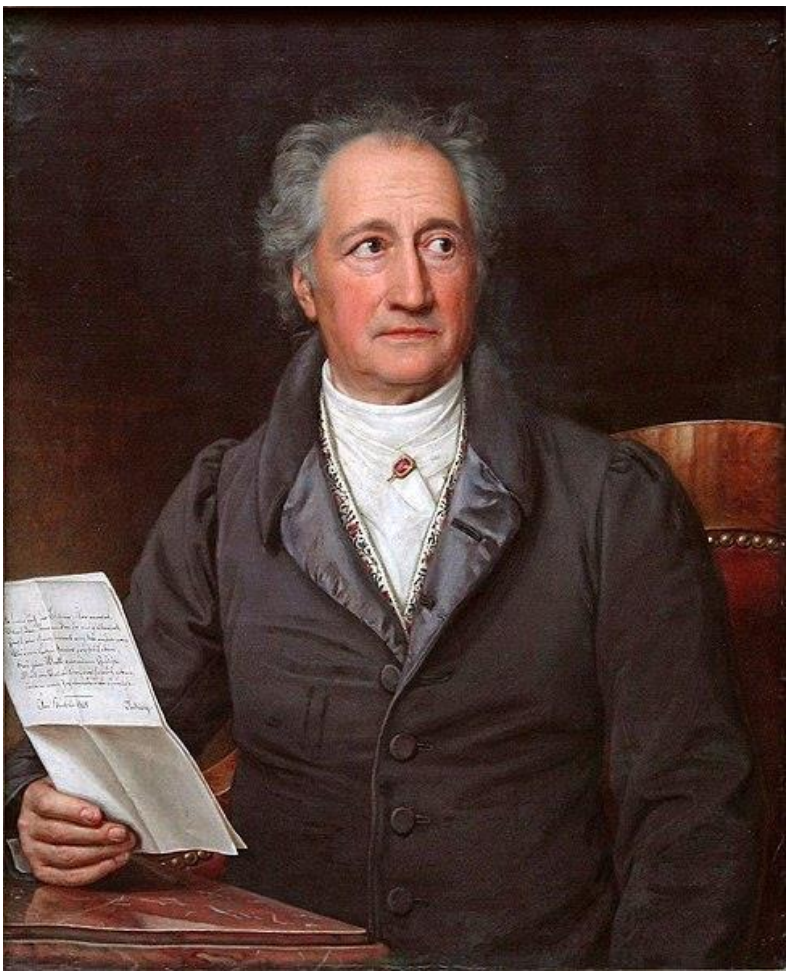
Frankfort was a curious old town, with its walls and bridges, its ramparts and moats, a fortress enclosing other fortresses, little towns crowded together within the big one. It was all full of interest to Wolfgang, but the Rathhaus especially was a storehouse of delight whenever he could find someone to tell him tales of all that had happened there. It was a never-ending joy to dream of the Kings and Emperors, and picture the coronations which those old walls had seen. The child had always a love for old things, old chronicles and pictures, and the beautiful old curiosities in his father's museum. Venetian glass, carved ivories, bronzes and ancient weapons, they all had taught him to love and reverence the beautiful things of the past, in which his father delighted.

Yet in some ways the present was quite as fascinating to Wolfgang as the past. The everyday work of the craftsman, who made pottery as wonderful as Venetian glass, was as deeply interesting to him as the doings of Kings and Emperors.

Chapter 8

Johann Wolfgang Goethe (Part 3)

1749–1832 A.D., Germany



Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Karl Joseph Stieler

The most exciting time of all the year in Frankfort was when the two great fairs were held at Easter and at Michaelmas, and Wolfgang loved to watch the people come flocking in from the outside world, their manners, dress, and ways so different to anything he saw in the old town. It was almost like a huge puppet show, especially the "pipers' court," which he thought was the best show of all.

It was a relic of olden times, when there were so many tolls to pay that the people used to bring gifts to the chief magistrate to persuade him to abate the tax. The custom was still continued, and at the Michaelmas fair-time the magistrates assembled in the Imperial Hall, with the chief magistrate in their midst, one step higher than the rest, ready to receive the burghers' gifts. First came the pipers, dressed in blue mantles trimmed with gold braid, and their queer old instruments; then followed the deputies and attendants.

One by one each deputy stepped forward and presented his offering. There was pepper in a wooden goblet, a pair of gloves curiously slashed and stitched, and tasselled with silk, a white rod, and some small pieces of silver money. There was also an old felt hat brought by the deputy of the city of Worms, but that was always given back again, that it might serve another year.

What made this show so specially interesting to the Goethe children was that their grandfather

was the chief magistrate, who sat on the highest seat and received all the curious gifts, and when the show was over it was always possible to make a modest call on him, and perhaps be presented with the wooden goblet, when their grandmother had emptied out the pepper, or the white rod, or one of the silver pieces. The gloves they knew were always kept for their grandfather to wear when he was working in his beloved garden, and pruning his rose bushes.

The chief magistrate's little grandson was a great favourite with all his grandfather's special friends, and it was little wonder that he grew to be rather stately in his manners, and a little inclined to feel superior. It was not only because the boy was so quick and so clever, that all those learned old men were so fond of him; it was his "goodness and purity" as well, which made him "as refreshing as the morning dew," and tempted them all to do their best to spoil him.

The joyful day arrived at last, when the new house was finished and the children could go home again, much to their satisfaction. It was a much more cheerful house than the old one had been, for now there were scarcely any dark passages and ugly corners, but all was made as light and as beautiful as possible. There was no room for nightly terrors, no lurking-places for cowardly fears now.

But, sad to say, a terror much worse than the old imaginary ones was waiting to seize on Wolfgang very soon after they returned to the new house. It was the year of the terrible earthquake

Weimar's Courtyard of the Muses (depicting German poets Schiller, Wieland, Herder and Goethe), Theobald von Oer

of Lisbon, and all Europe was ringing with the dreadful news, and Wolfgang listened in silent horror to the tale of misery and woe. He had always felt so sure that the good God took care of everybody, and now it seemed as if He could no longer be kind or loving if He allowed such a terrible thing to happen.

Just then, too, a fearful storm swept over the city, and the hailstones broke the new windows and the rain flooded the beautiful new house, while terrified servants made the children almost as frightened as they were themselves.

Wolfgang was only six years old then, and he tried to think things out very seriously, with the result that, like the people in the Old Testament, he built a little altar to God, just as Noah and Abraham had done after flood and fire.

A year later, when the Seven Years' War broke out, the boy had something else to think about besides earthquakes and floods. To Wolfgang, Frederick was the greatest hero that ever lived, and he listened with shining eyes to all that his father told him about the great King, but it was extremely puzzling to find that his grandfather took the side of Austria and had nothing but blame and scornful disdain for Wolfgang's hero.

Here was another puzzle. The Lisbon earthquake had made him doubt the goodness of God, and now he began to doubt the justice of the world.

"He is a strange child," said his mother, at the time when one of his little brothers died, and Wolfgang never shed a tear.

"Did you not love your little brother, then, that you do not grieve for his loss?" she asked.

There was no answer, only Wolfgang turned and slowly went into his own room, and from under his bed brought out a heap of papers, written all over with stories and little lessons in childish hand-writing.

"I had written all these that I might teach him," he said.

Ever since the early days when he had invented the endings to his mother's tales, Wolfgang had gone on making up stories and filling his mind with all kinds of poetry, besides the lessons he learned with his father, and these little tales must have been a real labour of love to the boy, who was only now nine years old.

Those strict lesson hours were very much interrupted just then, when the French troops marched into the town, and one of the King's lieutenants was quartered in the councillor's house, to the wrath and dismay of that same councillor. A great deal of life and gaiety came with the French soldiers, and it was impossible to keep the children steadily at work. There was even a theatre opened, and there Wolfgang spent golden hours of pure enjoyment, of which the puppet show had been but a dim foreshadowing.

Of course the first thing to be done now was to write a play, and the play was written, but a friend among the actors thought it very poor stuff, and Wolfgang was discouraged.

He had noticed, when he and his companions made verses together, that however bad the verses were, the boy who had written them thought them splendid and could see no fault in them. He wondered if it could be the same with him. He was so sure the things he did were good, but then he always found there was something better still to be done. Would he ever reach up to the highest?

So he pondered and asked himself many questions, but as yet there was no answer. The flower was very fair, but who could tell them that the fruit was to be so golden and so rare that the whole world was to rejoice in the glorious harvest.

Chapter 9

Sir Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington

1769–1852 A.D., Ireland

In long ago days, when the stars were thought to hold the secret of the fortune of every child born into the world, wise men gazed up into the wonderful dome of heaven, set with its millions of diamond lamps, and tried to read in that shining page of night the secret which only the coming years could unfold.

Surely if the stars, which look down so calmly arid so coldly upon the little lives just beginning in this world of ours, were really fortune-tellers, they would have set a special sign in the heavens to mark the year of Grace 1769, the year which saw the birth of Arthur, Duke of Wellington, and Napoleon Bonaparte.

But the stars shone on as usual and the world went its way, and there was nothing to mark the birth of our great general, there was nothing to give even a hint of what the years held in store for him. Indeed it seemed of so little importance that we do not know the exact day of his birth, nor the exact place where he was born.

Sir Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, Thomas Lawrence

People say that every mother

Dangan Castle, Childhood home of Arthur Wellesley, County Meath, Ireland

sees a halo round her child which enables her to foresee the honours that will crown the little downy head lying so helpless in its cradle, but dreams like these were never dreamed over the head of this particular baby. His mother never thought much about him at all. Only as he grew older she was vexed with his slow way of speaking and his dull manner. He really did seem a very stupid boy.

"I vow," she would say, "I don't know what I shall do with my awkward son Arthur."

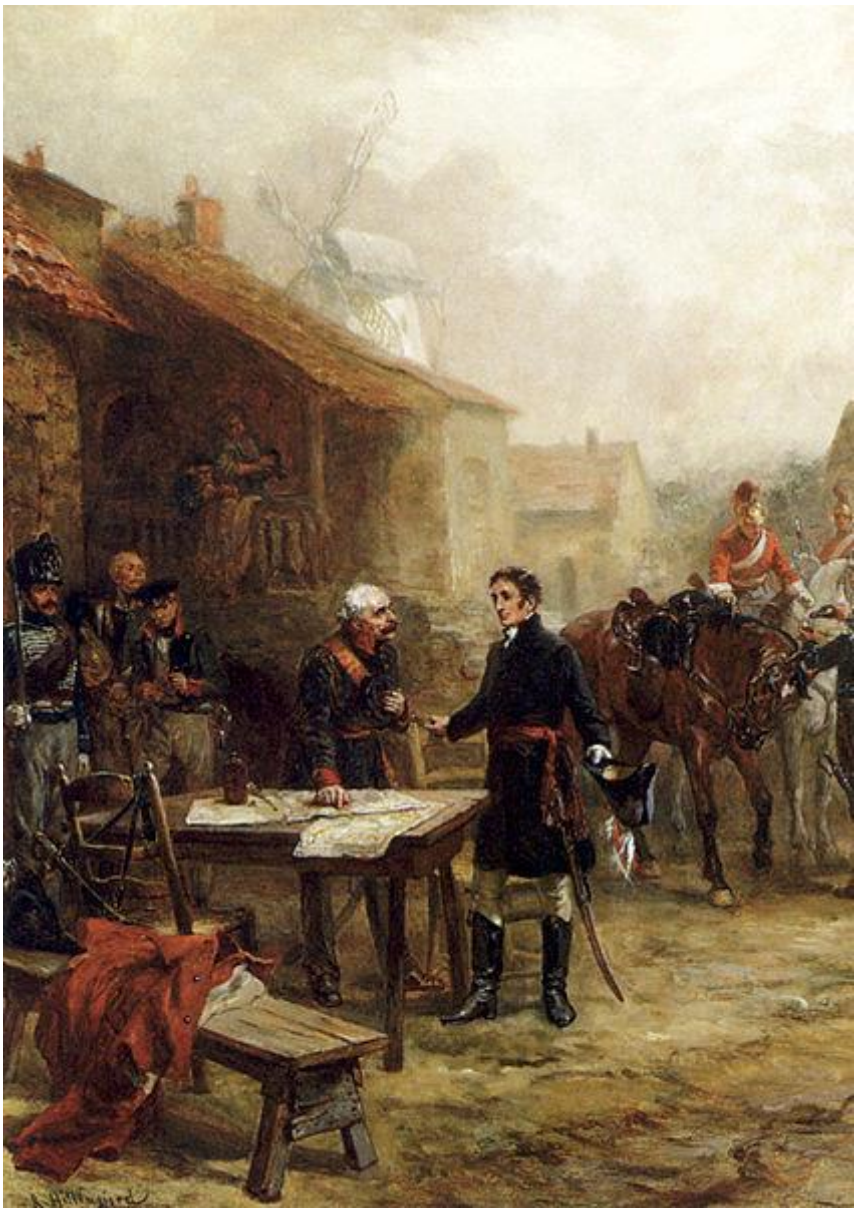
When his lady mother said that, all the household of course followed suit, and Arthur was considered an awkward dunce, and no one troubled themselves much about him. And if the stars took no notice of his birthday, neither did the sun shine very brightly on his childhood, for he was a lonely, rather unhappy little boy.

School was considered the best place for a tiresome child, and as soon as he was old enough Arthur was sent away to a little school where he was not much happier than he had been at home. He does not seem to have had any hampers of good things, or much pocket-money either. One of his schoolfellows remembered long years afterwards how "Lord Wellesley called on Arthur one day and gave him a shilling." Not a very big tip from an elder brother!

After the preparatory school Arthur was sent to Eton, and there he was still considered a dull,

stupid boy. His head was so often in the clouds, and he looked as if he was always dreaming, besides being very shy. He was not a favourite amongst the boys for he did not care much about games and never played in the school cricket-matches or rowed in the boat-races. Almost always by himself he wandered about apparently doing nothing, but all the time he was looking and learning, and storing up a golden store in his mind. There was nothing too small for him to notice. What seemed like unimportant details to others, were the things he tried first of all to learn before going on to bigger things.

There was no thought in the boy's mind at that time that he would become a soldier. He had no wish to go into the army, although he was certainly by no means afraid of fighting and could hold his own fairly well with other boys.



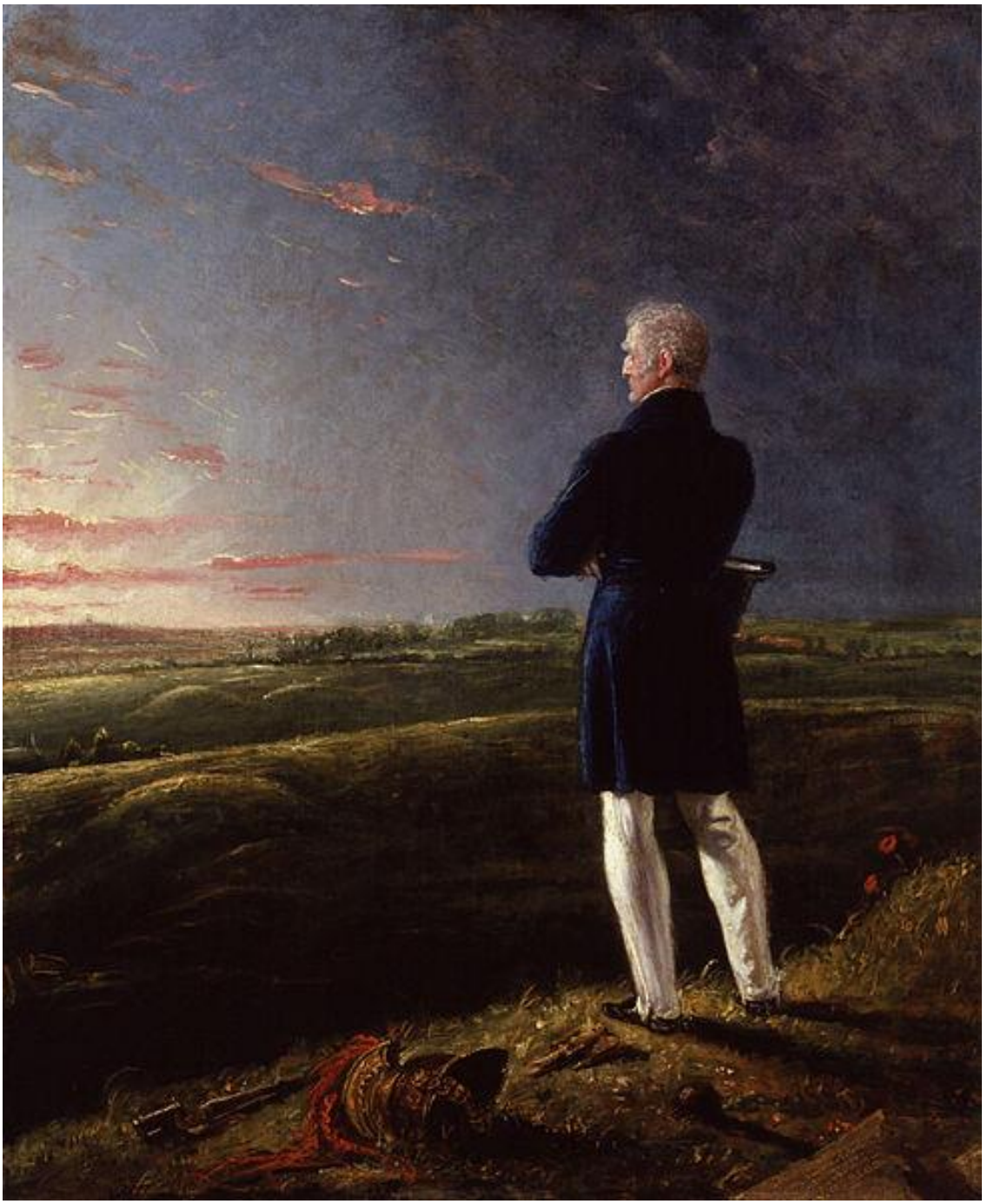
Wellington and Blucher Meeting Before the Battle of Waterloo,
Robert Alexander Hillingford

Walking one day by the side of the river, he saw one of his schoolfellows bathing and was prompted to throw a small stone at him. The stone hit the swimmer, who was naturally most indignant, and who shouted out:

"Do that again and I'll come ashore and thrash you."

Of course, after a threat like that, there was nothing left for Arthur Wellesley to do but to throw another stone, and the furious bather scrambled up the bank and proceeded to carry out his threat. Wellesley gave back blow for blow, and ended by completely routing the enemy, although he certainly was in the wrong that time, and did not deserve the victory he won.

But there were other times when he did not come off with such flying colours. On his grandfather's estate in North Wales there lived a young



Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, Benjamin Robert Haydon

The First of May 1851 (The Duke of Wellington offering a gift to Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and Prince Arthur), Franz Xaver Winterhalter

blacksmith with whom Arthur was very friendly, until one day when some difference of opinion arose between them, and they settled to fight it out. The battle was a fierce one, but in the end the blacksmith was victorious, and gave Arthur a sound thrashing. Long years afterwards, that blacksmith used to proudly boast that he had beaten the man who had conquered Napoleon and all his generals, and he always added, "And Master Wesley bore not a pin's worth of ill-will for the beating, but made me his companion in many a wild ramble after the fight, just as he had done before."

The school-days at Eton were cut short for Arthur, when his father, Lord Mornington, died and his mother went to live in Brussels and took him with her. There he studied under a tutor, Monsieur Louis Goubert, whom Arthur always kindly remembered, for in after years he tells how "as I rode into Brussels the day after the battle of Waterloo, I passed the old house and recognised it, and pulling up ascertained that the old man was still alive. I sent for him and recalled myself to his recollection, shook hands with him and assured him that for old acquaintance' sake he should be

protected from all molestation."

After a year at Brussels Arthur was sent to a school at Angers, where he learned French, and according to a friend's account, "he played well on the fiddle, but never gave indication of any other species of talent."

By this time his mother was quite hopeless about her awkward son Arthur, and she decided that he should enter the army. "He is good for powder and nothing more," she declared.

So his elder brother wrote to the Viceroy of Ireland saying, "Let me remind you of a younger brother of mine whom you were so kind as to take into your consideration for a commission in the army. He is here at this moment and perfectly idle. It is a matter of indifference to me what commission he gets, provided he gets it soon."

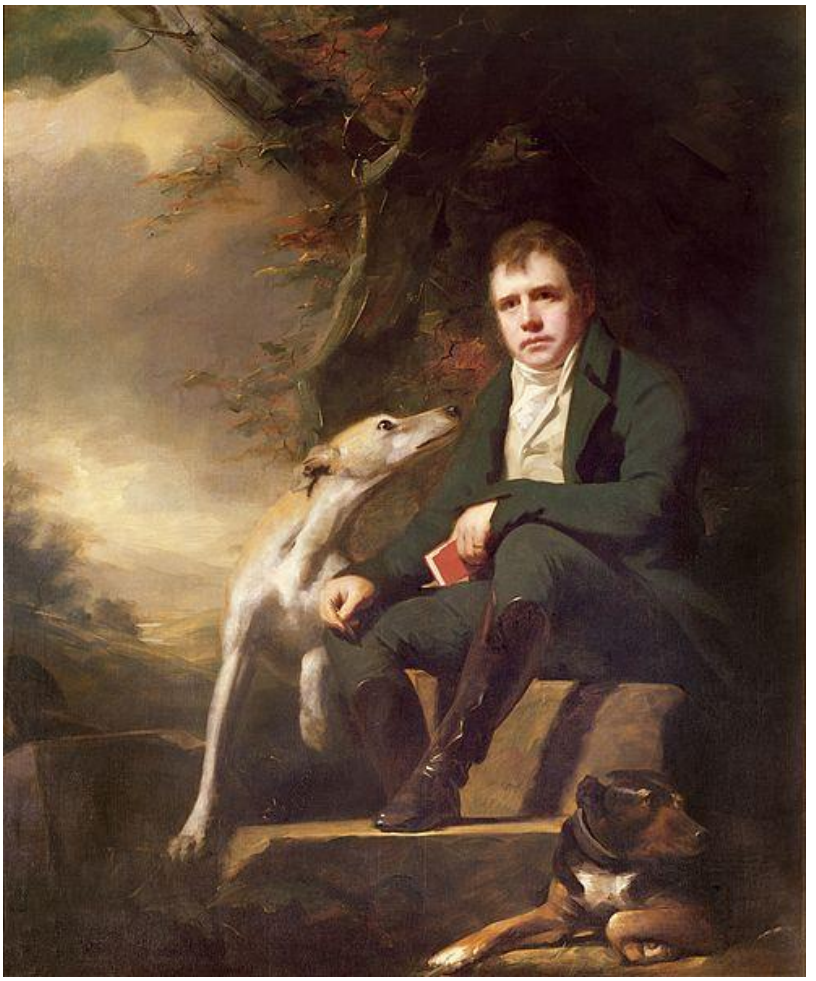
The stars must surely then have looked down with quickened interest, watching for the fate of nations to be decided, watching for the coming of the hero, whose very name is now the glory of England, the quiet dull boy who had "shown no signs of greatness," but who stood out to win fame and honour for his nation and himself.

Daguerreotype portrait of the aged Arthur Wellesley,
1st Duke of Wellington in 1844

Chapter 10

Sir Walter Scott (Part 1)

1771–1832 A.D., Scotland



Portrait of Sir Walter Scott and his dogs, Henry Raeburn

In the heart of the old grey capital of the North lies a pleasant square, with tall, rather gloomy houses surrounding it on every side, shutting out the poorer streets in one direction and the quiet green meadows on the other. This was considered a much healthier place for children than the College Wynd where Mr. Walter Scott, Writer to the Signet, had lived with his wife and family for some years. One by one their children had faded and died, leaving but six little mounds in the churchyard and six locks of sunny hair for their mother to cherish. So it was a happy day for her when there was a flitting from the old house in College Wynd to the pleasant open spaces of George Square, where it was hoped that the last baby, Walter, and his two elder brothers would grow up strong healthy children.

There certainly seemed no cause for anxiety about the baby, for he was as well and happy as a child should be, and by the time he was eighteen months old he could run about by himself, and run swiftly too, when he did not wish to be caught. There was one night when his nurse must have lost all patience with her "laddie." He did not want to go to bed, and whenever she tried to catch him he danced out of her reach, wild with delight and merriment. The child was surely bewitched or "fey," as the Scotch tongue called it, and she shook her head over

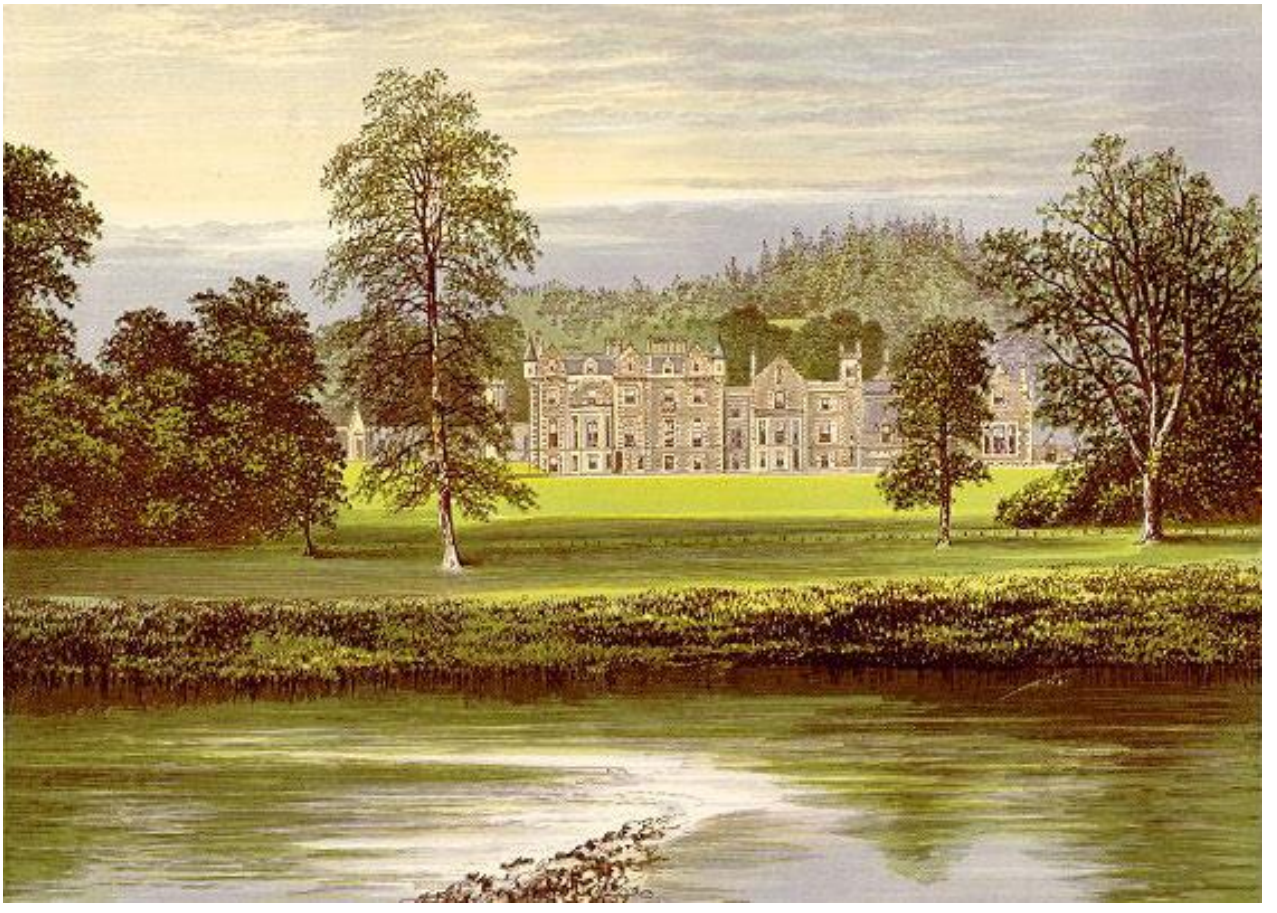
this wild mood of his, as she at last caught him and put him to bed.

The next day there was no more running about, for the baby lay moaning and ill with a teething fever, and when that left him they found, when they were bathing him, that one of his little legs hung limp and useless, with no life or power of movement in it.

Doctors were called in and everything possible was done, but still the leg remained weak and useless, and it seemed as if the child would be a cripple. Then Dr. Rutherford, his grandfather, advised that he should be sent away to the country, where he could be a great deal in the open air, and where perhaps the weak leg might grow strong again.

So it came to pass that little Walter was sent to live with his other grandfather, Robert Scott of Sandyknowe, and the child's first memories were of the Borderlands of Scotland, the Tweed and the Teviot, and the old castle of Smailholm.

Every possible cure was tried for that poor little lame leg, and some of the remedies were very curious ones. Whenever a sheep was killed on the farm, Walter, stripped of his clothes, was wrapped in the warm newly-flayed skin and laid on the floor to crawl about like a veritable Baby Bunting. The old white-haired grandfather watched him anxiously and tried to tempt the funny little figure, wrapped in its sheep's clothing, to move about and use the weak leg, and Walter also remembered an old colonel in a cocked hat and scarlet waistcoat, kneeling down and drawing a watch across the



Abbotsford in Scotland, formerly the home of Sir Walter Scott, from Morris's *Country Seats,* 1880

Hardie meeting between Robert Burns and Walter Scott, Ad Meskens

carpet before the creeping child.

But perhaps the best cure of all was the strong, fresh country air, and the days spent out of doors, when auld Sandy the "cow-bailie" carried Walter about on his back, or set him down to crawl on the thymey grass among the sheep and lambs.

"He was very gleg at the uptake, and soon kenned every sheep and lamb by headmark as well as any of them," said an old servant, Tibby, long afterwards, with great pride.

Lying out there among the grassy knolls, he was content to watch the sheep and the distant hills, to crawl after wild flowers and the "velvet tufts of loveliest green," and he never needed other amusements.

There was one day when a thunderstorm came up suddenly and Miss Janet Scott, his aunt, remembered where he was, and set off in haste to bring him home, for she was afraid he might be lonely and frightened. She need not have been anxious, for Walter was enjoying himself greatly. There he lay on his back watching the sky, clapping his hands at every flash of lightning and shouting, "Bonny! Bonny!"

Everything about the countryside was "bonny" in the child's eyes, and as he grew older he

thought it more beautiful still, when he heard the wonderful tales of the Borderland, "where every field has its battle and every rivulet its song." Auld Sandy would look across to the distant Cheviots and tell of raiders and famous battles, or pointing nearer still to where the Eildons stood, "three crests against the saffron sky," he whispered tales of the Faerie Queen and Thomas the Rhymer, while stories even more wonderful and interesting gathered round the old ruin of Smailholm Tower which stood sentinel on the crags above. Many a tale did Walter hear, too, of his own ancestors, of John the Lamiter; of William the Boltfoot, who, in spite of his lameness, grew up to be one of the boldest knights of all the country-side; of auld Watt of Harden, who swept over the Border with his gallant raiders, and returned with goodly herds of English cattle; of "Beardie," his great-grandfather, who fought for the Stuarts, and refused to cut off his beard since they were banished.

Every kind of tale was a delight to the child, and he was never tired of listening to anyone that would tell him a story, whether he was riding on auld Sandy's back out on the hills or lying on the floor at his grandmother's feet as she sat spinning by the fire. His grandmother's tales, indeed, were as exciting as any history of Robin Hood, and much more interesting, for some of the heroes of whom she told were old family connections, raiders and freebooters though they were, and the stories about their bold deeds were endless. Then, too, there were a few books lying on the window-seat of the little parlour, which Aunt Janet read aloud over and over again until Walter almost knew them by heart.

The Ballad of Hardyknute was the first he learned to repeat, and repeat it he did on every possible occasion, greatly to the annoyance of the parish minister when he called for a quiet chat.

"One may as well speak in the mouth of a cannon as where that child is," he remarked grimly, sitting up, tall and thin, and regarding the shouting child with great disfavour. But they grew to be good friends afterwards, the grave old minister and the little lame ballad-lover.

Walter was four years old when it was decided that he should try what the waters of Bath would do for his lameness, and so with his good Aunt Janet he went up to London by sea, and after seeing some of the sights there, journeyed on to Bath. He must have had a wonderful memory for so small a child, for although he did not again see the Tower of London and Westminster Abbey for twenty-five years, he was astonished as a grown-up man to find how accurate were his recollections of them both.

Chapter 11

Sir Walter Scott (Part 2)

1771-1832 A.D., Scotland

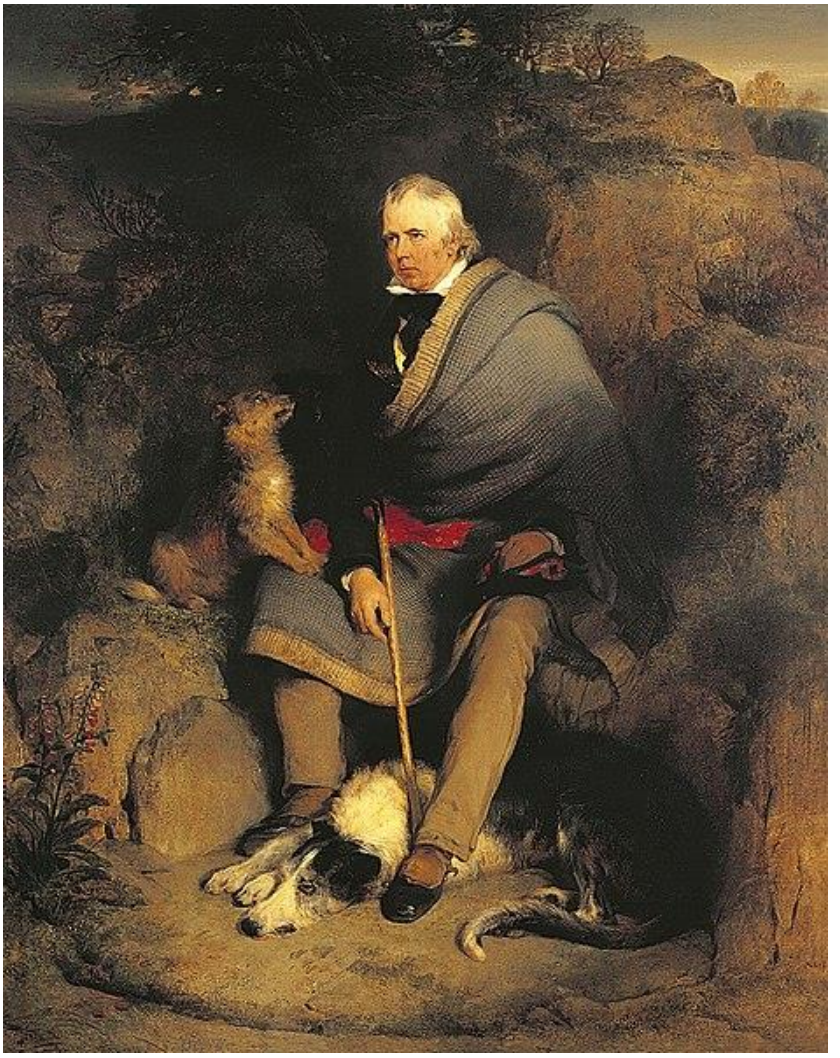
The next year was spent in Bath, and although it must have been a great change from Sandyknowe, there were other joys to make up for the loss of the green meadows and his friend the shepherd. Chiefest joy of all was the arrival of an uncle, Captain Robert Scott, who was a delightful playfellow and a wonderful person for providing treats and amusements. He even took Walter to the theatre to see *As You Like It,* and that was something Walter never forgot. He was so much excited and interested that he could not keep still, and when the quarrel between Orlando and his brother began, the audience must have been amused to hear a little voice cry out in shocked accents, "A'n't they brothers?"

Portrait of Sir Walter Scott, Henry Raeburn

Having lived the life of an only child at Sandyknowe, he did not realise that it was possible for brothers to quarrel, but the knowledge came afterwards when he lived amongst his own brothers in George Square.

The waters of Bath were given a fair trial with but poor results, and then Aunt Janet brought little Walter home again, first to Edinburgh and then back to Sandyknowe.

"The making of him" had begun long ago, when he first began to crawl about the grassy slopes of the old farm, when his



Sir Walter Scott in the Rhymer's Glen, Edwin Henry Landseer

eyes first learned to love the beautiful things he saw, and his ears to listen eagerly to the old tales and ballads, and now before he was six years old there was much that was already made of the man to come.

He could ride fearlessly on his little Shetland pony, and he rode well. He loved all out-of-door things, birds, beasts, flowers, hills, dales, and rivers. All things connected with the past were interesting in his eyes, and he was a firm believer in the divine right of Prince Charlie. Above all he loved with all his heart old tales, old songs and ballads of every sort.

"He is born to be a strolling pedlar," was his father's verdict.

"I was never a dunce, nor thought to be so, but an incorrigibly idle imp, who was always longing to do something else than what was enjoined him," was his own opinion of himself.

There is yet another opinion of him contained in a letter written about this time by the authoress of "The Flowers of the Forest."

She writes, "I last night supped in Mr. Walter Scott's. He has the most extraordinary genius of a boy I ever saw. He was reading a poem to his mother when I went in. I made him read on; it was the description of a shipwreck. His passion rose with the storm. He lifted his eyes and hands. 'There's the mast gone,' says he; 'crash it goes! they will all perish!' The lady goes on to tell how she asked his opinion of Milton and other books he was reading, and was amazed with his answers.

"Pray what age do you suppose this boy to be?" she asks; "name it now before I tell you."

"Why, twelve or fourteen."

"No such thing; he is not quite six years old. He has a lame leg, for which he was a year at Bath, and has acquired the perfect English accent, which he has not lost since he came, and he reads like a Garrick. You will allow this an uncommon exotic."

Two more years were spent at Sandyknowe, and then he was taken for a while again by Aunt Janet to Prestonpans, to try what sea-bathing would do for him. There he made another friend and

heard more of his beloved old tales from an old military captain called Dalgetty, who had never before found such an eager listener as the little lame boy.

But now that Walter was eight years old and was growing so much stronger, his father began to think it was high time that his regular education should begin, and so the pleasant life at Sandyknowe came to an end and Walter went home to George Square, and after a little private teaching was entered at the High School.

Perhaps he had been rather spoilt at Sandyknowe where he was an only child and a favourite with everybody, where his gentle old grandmother ruled with a kindly hand, and where he was the joy of Aunt Janet's heart, strict though she might be. At any rate it was a trying change to find himself of much less importance in a big household, where he had to learn to give and take with other children, and where he could not expect to have his own way or to domineer over the others.

But his mother understood all about it, as mothers do, and helped him to be patient and unselfish. Perhaps the little lame son whom she had been obliged to part from for so many years had a special place nearer her heart than the others, or perhaps she understood him better, for she loved many of the things he did, and Walter soon found that she was always ready to listen to his favourite stories and ballads, and his happiest times were when he was reading to her or reciting long passages which he had learned, sure of her sympathy.

It was no wonder that life was not only more difficult but more stirring and noisy than in the old farm, for in the George Square home there were two brothers older than Walter, two that were younger, and one little sister, Anne. One or other of them was always getting into mischief or hurting himself, but perhaps the most unfortunate of all was little Anne.

When the wind banged the iron gate of the area shut, it was Anne's hand that was caught in the hasp and cruelly crushed. When the children were playing round the old quarry-hole on the south side of the Square, it was Anne who fell in and was nearly drowned. But the worst accident of all was the burning of her little cap when she was alone in the room one day, for her head was terribly hurt, and she was never quite strong and well again.

Chapter 12

Sir Walter Scott (Part 3)

1771–1832 A.D., Scotland

"Careful comforts" those children must have been to the anxious mother, and she rather dreaded the time when her lame boy must go to school and be knocked about by the rough strong boys. But she need not have been anxious about that. Walter was quite able to hold his own, and he was absolutely fearless. He might be lame, but he was a "bonny fechter," as the other boys very soon found out.

The first day that Walter appeared in the High School playground, or "the yards" as it was called, a dispute arose between him and another boy.

Sir Walter Scott, Edwin Landseer

"It's no use to hargle-bargle with a cripple," said the boy contemptuously.

"I'll fight anyone my own size, if I may fight mounted," said Walter. Whereupon one of the elder boys in great delight arranged that the "two little tinklers" should be lashed to a bench and fight the quarrel out; and Walter gave a good account of himself, and carried the respect and admiration of his schoolfellows.

He was more of a success in the yards than in the schoolroom at first, for the class in which he was placed was rather too advanced for him, and he got into the habit of sitting comfortably at the bottom or middle of the class. It was a place which chanced to be near the fire, and that made him the more contented with it.

But although he was rather idle and careless about learning his lessons, he was very quick with his

answers, and had a wonderful memory which sometimes stood him in such good stead that he easily mounted to the top of the class, and then just as easily went down again.

"What part of speech is *with,*" asked the Rector one day.

"A substantive," mumbled the dunce of the class.

"Is *with* ever a substantive?" demanded the Rector of the head boy.

There was no answer; the next boy was also silent, and the question passed down the class until it reached Walter very near the bottom.

"Yes," came the quick answer from him, and he quoted solemnly, "'And Samson said unto Delilah, If they bind me with seven green withs, that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and as another man.'"

And of course up he went to the top of the class.

Statue of Sir Walter Scott at Edinburgh Castle, Edinburgh, Scotland

Many and ingenious were his ways of winning a higher place, and the story of one successful plan he told himself many years after.

"There was a boy," he said, "in my class at school who stood always at the top, nor could I, with all my efforts, supplant him. Day came after day and still he kept his place, do what I would; till at length I observed that, when a question was asked him, he always fumbled with his fingers at a particular button in the lower part of his waistcoat. To remove it, therefore, became expedient in my eyes, and in an evil moment it was removed with a knife. Great was my anxiety to know the success of my measure; and it succeeded too well. When the boy was again questioned, his fingers sought again for the button, but it was not to be found. In his distress he looked down for it; it was to be seen no more than to be felt. He stood confounded, and I took possession of his place, nor did he ever recover it; or even I believe suspect who was the author of his wrong. Often in after life has the sight of him smote me as I passed by him; and often have I resolved to make him some reparation: but it ended in good resolutions."

The masters might shake their heads over your Walter Scott's idleness and "fooling," but they

always found him most interesting, while among the boys he was a decided favourite. It was not only that they admired his pluck and courage and the way he faced up to the great drawback of his lameness, though that alone would have appealed to any boy, for he was such a thorough sportsman, but he had besides a magic gift, as full of enchantment as any wizard's wand, and as compelling as any fairy flute possessed by the Pied Piper of Hamelin fame.

When winter came round and play hours were dark and dreary, and outside games at a standstill, when the boys gathered round "Lucky Brown's" fireside, then began Walter Scott's hour. There was no one that could tell tales as he could. The boys were spellbound as they listened, and they crowded round nearer and nearer not to lose a word, for the magic worked then even as it did in later years, when it earned for him the title of "the Wizard of the North."

Dr. Adam, the Rector, caught a glimpse now and then of what was in the boy, and began to take a greater interest in him, and when Walter saw that more was expected of him, he made it a point of honour to come up to his master's expectations, and so erelong he easily worked his way up to the first form. Neither did his lame leg prevent him winning honours in the playground, and outside the playground as well, for he could climb "the kittle nine stanes" above the precipice of the Castle rock as boldly as anyone, and when the boys sallied out with snowballs to harass the town guard, he was one of the most valiant dread-noughts in spite of his limp. He was a keen fighter, too, in the street fights or "bickers" as they were called, battles between the boys living in different parts of the city, which were carried on with great good-will and energy.

But Walter's fighting days came to an end just then, and his High School days too. He had been growing too quickly, and again his health broke down.

Aunt Janet lived at Kelso now, and she was only too glad to have her boy with her once more, so there Walter spent a quiet holiday time, and in the pleasant garden running down to the Tweed read his beloved books in peace and quietness, in the midst of his beloved "land of romance."

For a short time each day he went to the village grammar school, and there again the boys came under the magic of his spell.

"He was certainly the best story-teller I had ever heard, either then or since," says one of the boys, James Ballantyne, who was afterwards to be the printer of all Sir Walter Scott's works. "He soon discovered that I was as fond of listening as he himself was of relating; and I remember it was a thing of daily occurrence, that after he had made himself master of his own lessons, I, alas, being still sadly to seek in mine, he used to whisper to me, 'Come, slink over beside me, Jamie, and I'll tell you a story.'"

Three generations have grown up since the voice that told those tales was silent, but the magic of his gift still holds men spellbound, and the golden key he placed in their hands has opened the gate of a world of Romance in which he himself used to dwell. The little lame story-teller is gone but his magic lives on, and any child who cares to listen may still hear the invitation, "Come, slink over beside me, Jamie, and I'll tell you a story."

Chapter 13

Elizabeth Fry

1780–1845 A.D., England

It is not always the bravest children who grow up to fight most manfully in the battle of life. When we read of deeds of courage and daring and brave endurance, we are apt to think that the hero or heroine must always have been as fearless and courageous in childhood as in after life, and we forget that out of weakness may come forth strength, and from fearful timidity may spring the highest courage.

We do not know very much about the childhood of Elizabeth Fry, the gentle Quaker lady, who worked with such courage and devotion in our English prisons, and fought single-handed the battle of the weak against the strong, but what we know shows us that the most timid and easily frightened child may learn to become fearless and to fight the Good Fight with marvellous courage and fortitude.

Elizabeth Fry, Charles Robert Leslie

Elizabeth Gurney was born in Norwich on the 21st of May 1780. The Gurneys were a very old family, dating back from the time of William Rufus, when their ancestors came over from the town of Gourney in Normandy and settled in England. For generations the family had been Quakers, but Elizabeth's parents were not inclined to bring their children up too strictly, and they mixed more with the world than many Quakers thought fit to do.

Elizabeth, or Betsy as she was called, was the third daughter in a

Mrs. Fry reading to the prisoners in Newgate, John Johnson

very large family, and her early years were spent either at Norwich or at Bramerton, a little country place on the edge of a common, some miles from Norwich.

The pleasantest memories of Elizabeth's life were all connected with Bramerton, although she was only a tiny child when she lived there. The wild scenery round the common, the comfortable farmhouses, the picturesque village with its school, and the clustering cottages all were interesting to the little "dove-like" maid in her sober dress and Quaker bonnet, as she walked out with her beloved mother. But most interesting of all were the poor people who lived in the cottages, and the little children who bobbed their curtseys and pulled their forelocks when they came trooping out of school. There was an old woman with one arm, "one-armed Betty" as she was called, who was a person of special interest, and a neighbour with the fascinating name of Greengrass, who proved to be worthy of her name by having the most delicious strawberry-beds round the little pond in her garden.

Betsy always loved to be out of doors, and when she was not visiting the cottages with her mother, there was the dear old-fashioned garden in which she could wander about to her heart's content. It was there that she first heard the story of Adam and Eve, and how they were driven out of Paradise. She was quite sure that the Garden of Eden must have been exactly like her own dear beautiful garden, and she was so thankful to think that there was no danger of meeting the angel with the flaming sword round any corner now. In spite of the many pleasant things around her, the world seemed still very full of dangers ready to pounce out and frighten little girls.

For instance, just as she was preparing to go for a delightful drive with her father and mother, what should she spy in a corner of the carriage but a gun? Now there was no telling when a gun might go off suddenly, and the very look of it was a terror to Betsy. The only way out of the difficulty was to say she did not want to go, and to tearfully watch the carriage drive away without her.

Even worse than those treacherous guns were the fears that awaited her when she was put to bed and left alone in the dark. As the light was carried away, Betsy watched it disappear with despairing eyes. It was like the setting of the last star of hope, leaving her in a dark world of terror. All day long the shadow of those dark hours cast a gloom even over the sunny hours spent in the old garden, and sometimes when someone spoke to her suddenly, or even looked at her, she burst into frightened tears. Poor little maid, she was desperately ashamed of those tears, and tried to excuse them by saying that she thought her eyes were very weak.

Illustration from *Elizabeth Fry: the angel of the prisons* by Laura Elizabeth Howe Richards, 1916

In summer-time, when the other children rejoiced at the thought of going to the seaside, and talked of bathing and wading and digging castles on the sands, Betsy was very silent, and another fear crept out and seized her with a cruel grip. She was terrified of bathing. To be carried out into that wide cold sea, to feel everything solid slipping away, to know that in a moment her breath would be stopped and her eyes blinded by a downward plunge into unknown depths, was all something too awful, too hopelessly terrifying to think about. Betsy could only hug herself in silent misery. The joys of heaven were for her all summed up in that one comforting sentence, "And there was no more sea."

She never dreamed of telling anyone about her haunting fears. That was quite an impossible thing to do. Even when they so tormented her that she burst into tears, she would never tell the reason of her unhappiness. The worst of such fears as these is that they must be borne alone.

Betsy was not very strong and not very fond of lessons, and her governess came to the conclusion that she was both stupid and obstinate. She was certainly not very bright where lessons were concerned, and she was rather fond of her own opinion, but she

might have done much better if she had been encouraged a little. Because everyone said she was stupid she never tried to be anything else, but only sighed and wished she was as clever as Catherine or Rachel, her two elder sisters.

She was very fond of Rachel, and they shared their books and pictures and curiosities together, and had a little set of tea-things of their very own.

There was no doubt that if Betsy was not very clever she had an extremely loving little heart, but that very love often added to the number of her fears.

The thought that her dearly loved mother might some day die and leave her was a terrible thought, and she would sometimes follow her about from place to place like a faithful little dog, afraid of letting her out of her sight. At night in the darkness, when this fear drove all the others away and grew so tall and overpowering that there was no room for any other, she used to hide her head under the bedclothes and wish with all her heart that two large walls might crush the whole family dead together, so that no one would be left to mourn for another.

Often in the daytime, when the dear mother was resting and lay asleep in her room, Betsy would steal up close to the bed and listen "with exquisite anxiety" to hear if she were really alive and breathing. There seemed to be no rest for the child from these dark and gloomy fears.

Delicate, timid, rather stupid, terrified of the dark, frightened of the sea, surely this was scarcely the stuff of which a heroine was to be made? So we might think, did we not bear in mind the Master hand that moulds the clay, and realise the wonderful strength and courage which is given to those who are "called to be saints."

Chapter 14

Hans Christian Andersen (Part 1)

1805–1875 A.D., Denmark

H.C. Andersen, Carl Bloch

The ancient town of Odeuse, in Denmark, seems almost as if it was situated on the borders of Fairyland, so full is it of old stories and traditions and curious legends. So it was really the exactly right birthplace for little Hans Andersen, "the future Fairy King," and there he was born on April 2, 1805.

No one could possibly have guessed that this baby held in his tiny mottled fist the golden key to Fairyland, or that he had any connection whatever with fairies. His home was not in the least like a palace, in fact it was only a poor cobbler's room, so small that quite half of it was taken up by the big bed on which the baby lay, while the other half had to serve for workshop, kitchen, and dining-room all in one.

It certainly was a very poor and very small room, but the baby learned to love it as soon as his quick eyes began to look about and take notice of things. There were shining glimpses to be caught of cups and glasses on the top of the chest of drawers, and on the panels of the door were painted beautiful gay pictures of hills and dales and flowers which delighted his heart. Then too, as soon as he grew old enough to toddle out by himself, he brought home all the wild flowers he could find, and with their dear faces smiling at him he thought this room the loveliest home in all the world.

Hans Christian Andersen's childhood home (view from the garden), Munkemøllestræde 3-5, Odense, Denmark

In the evenings when he was tucked away into the big bed and the cotton curtains were drawn round it, he lay and listened to the tapping of the shoemaker's hammer, and the busy life going on in the room, wide awake and perfectly contented.

"How nice and quiet he is, the blessed child," said his mother, peeping in through the curtains to see if he were asleep, and finding him with wide open eyes smiling happily to himself.

That must have been the beginning of the fairies' work, for they certainly kept him happy and amused all through his babyhood. People might have called those fairies the child's own thoughts and fancies, but any sensible child who knows anything at all about fairies knows better than that. The fairies may have come in with the wild flowers or lay hidden in the fresh birch branches that stood behind the polished stove, or swung to and fro in the branches of sweet herbs that hung from the rafters. At any rate there can be no manner of doubt that they must have lived up above in the roof-garden, although that garden was nothing more than a box of earth where parsley and sweet peas grew. Any one who doubts that has only to read "The Snow Queen" to find there an exact description of little Hans' roof-garden, and if there were no fairies there, how could it have found its way into a real fairy tale?

The father of little Hans was, as we have seen, a cobbler, but he was not very clever at his trade, and instead of mending shoes he was much fonder of building castles in the air or reading the books which crowded into the shelf hung close to the window where he worked. He had plenty of time to make toys for his little son, and Hans was the happy possessor of a mill that could work while the miller danced, a peep-show with puppets to act, and all kinds of pictures that changed into different shapes when they were pulled by a string.

Unfortunately this was not the best way of making money, and the cobbler did not grow rich. There came a day, however, when it looked as if fortune meant to smile upon him. The squire of a country village close by needed a shoemaker, and offered a house and a garden, and grass for a cow, to the man who could make a good pair of shoes.

There was great excitement in the cobbler's home when a piece of silk was sent by the squire's lady to be made into a pair of dancing-shoes, and every night Hans, when he said his evening prayers, said a special prayer asking God to help his father to make these shoes most beautifully, so that they might all go to the house with the garden, and the green field for the cow, and live happily ever after.

But when the shoes were finished and the cobbler carried them off rolled up in his apron to the great house, the squire's lady was not at all pleased with them. She said he had quite spoilt her beautiful piece of silk, and she could not think of having such a bungler for the shoemaker.

The poor cobbler listened in silence, and when she had finished he caught up his knife and in a great rage cut the pretty dancing-shoes into ribbons. Then he turned and went sorrowfully home.

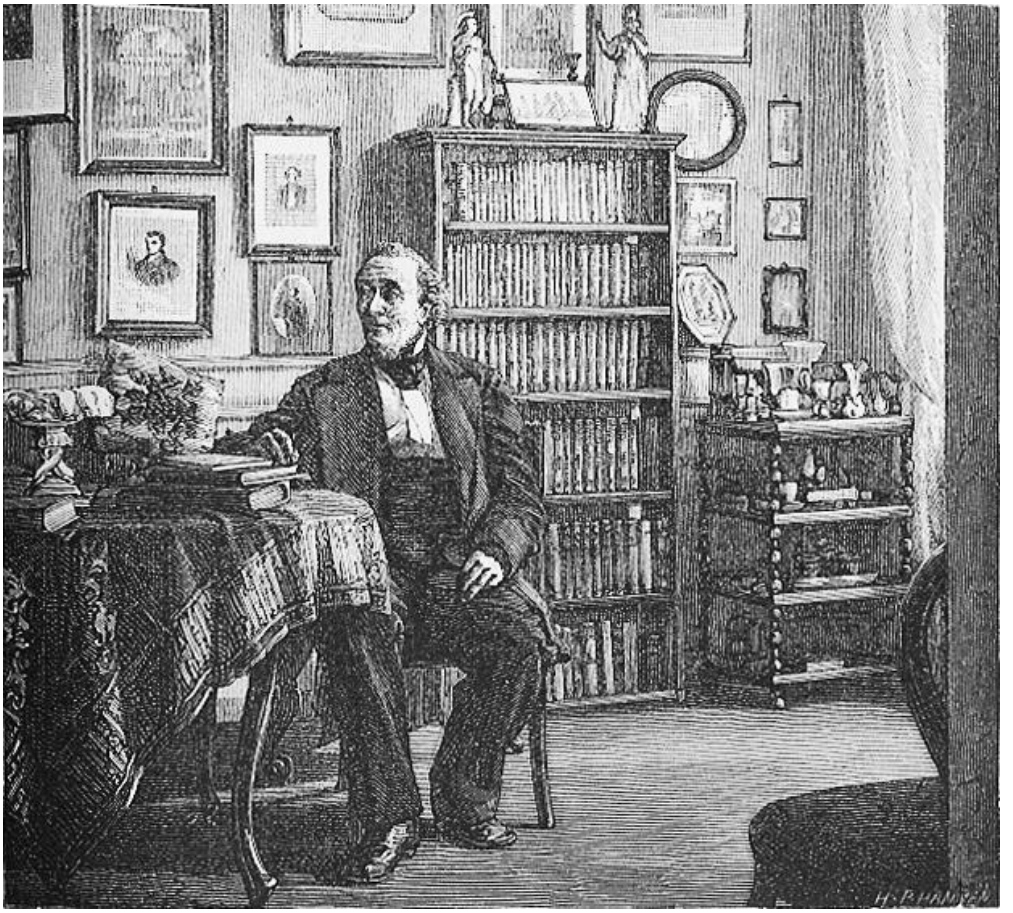
So that dream-castle tumbled to pieces, and Hans wept bitterly because he thought God had paid no attention to his prayers. He was only a very little boy and did not know that God has many ways of answering children's prayers. Perhaps if Hans had gone to live happily in the country as he wished, then he would never have found his way into the much fairer country of Fairyland.

Hans Christian Andersen, Arthur Rackham

Hans had a mother too, as well as a father, but she was not a very wise mother, and she did not look after him very carefully. Sometimes she spoilt him sadly and allowed him to do whatever he liked, whether it was bad or good, and sometimes she did not trouble herself much about him at all. His best and wisest friend was certainly his old grand-

mother, who lived close by, and who used to come every day to see her little grandson. All the nice old grandmothers in those fairy tales are just like that grandmother of his. She was always cheerful and kindly and very wise, with a tiny bent figure and the sweetest of blue eyes. Whenever she came she brought Hans a bunch of flowers, and Hans would climb up to the top of the chest and arrange them in the glasses that stood there. He had wonderful hands for arranging flowers, and he used to say, "Flowers know very well that I am fond of them; even if I were to stick a peg into the ground, I believe it would grow." That was quite true. Flowers know, almost as well as little boys and girls, who are fond of them and who are not.

All the old people who lived near the cobbler's house were fond of Hans, and he loved to go and see them and tell them all the things he knew, until they nodded their heads and said, "What a clever child it is;" then in return they would tell him all sorts of stories which they had heard when they were children, and Hans carefully stored them up in his mind, to tell many years afterwards to other children. There was "The Tinder Box," "The Travelling Companions," and many others that every child knows now.



Hans Christian Andersen in his living room at his home in Nyhavn 18
in Copenhagen, scanned from "Illustrated Danish Literary History,"
second edition, 2nd vol., by P. Hansen, 1902

Chapter 15

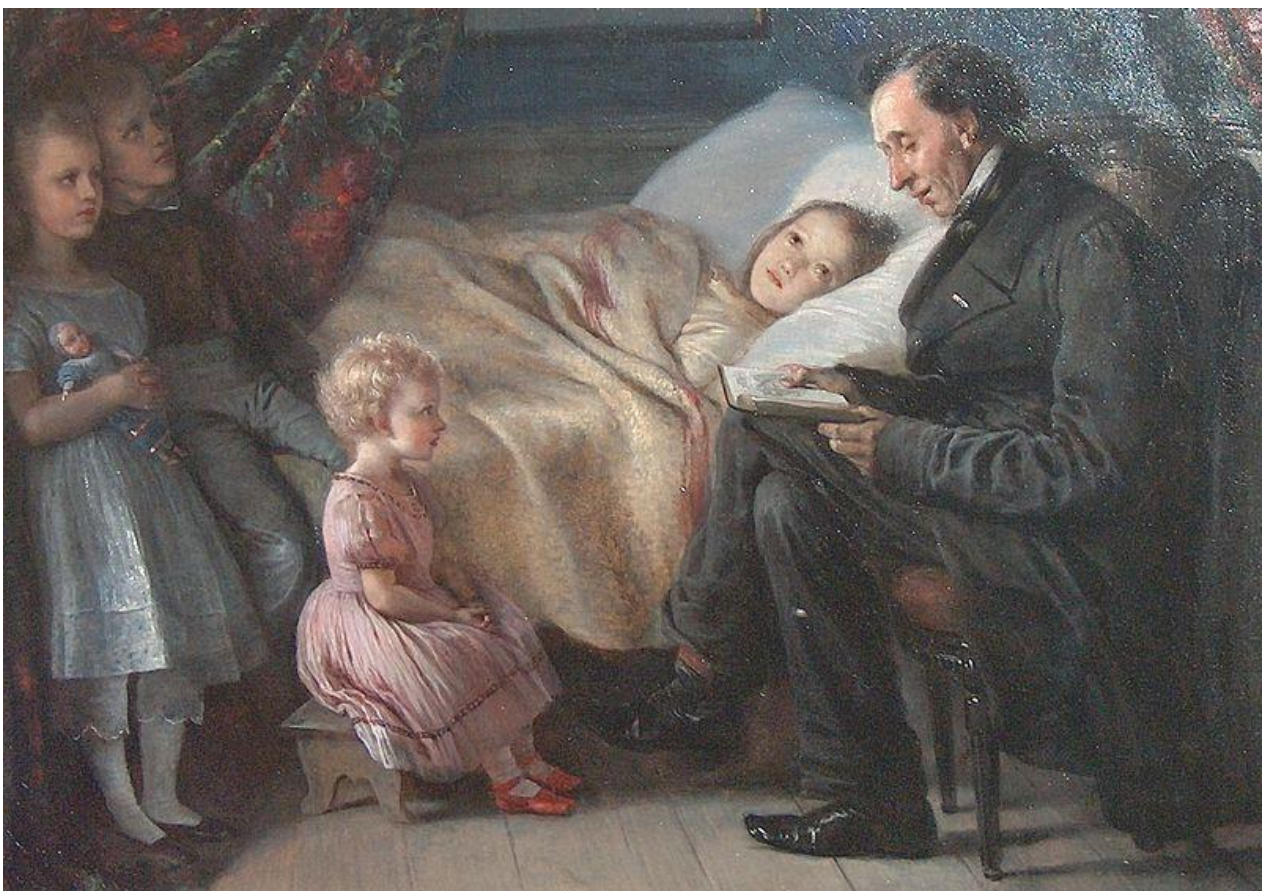
Hans Christian Andersen (Part 2)

1805-1875 A.D., Denmark

But although the old people were fond of Hans he was always a lonely child, and never had anyone of his own age to play with. Even when he went to school he never played games with the other boys. They were so rough that they frightened him, and he was much happier sitting by himself and dreaming his dreams.

He did not stay very long at any school, for his parents allowed him to do very much as he liked, and school was not to his taste.

To begin with, his unwise mother had told the schoolmistress at his first school that Hans was



H C. Andersen reads the story "The Angel" for the children of the painter, Elisabeth Baumann

Inside cover illustration by Arthur Szyk for *Andersen's Fairy Tales* (Grosset & Dunlap, 1945)

never to be whipped, whatever happened, and the good dame quite forgot this one day and gave him a well-deserved tap with the birch-rod.

Hans said never a word, but got up at once, solemnly tucked his book and his slate under his arm, and marched out of the schoolroom. He went straight home and told his mother what had happened, and instead of sending him back to be whipped again, which would certainly have been wise, she took him away from the dame's school and sent him to another.

At this new school Hans was charmed to find a very little girl whom he thought much nicer than the rough boys, and with whom he immediately tried to make friends. The little girl told him that she wanted specially to learn arithmetic, that she might some day be a dairymaid at a grand castle.

Hans at once set to work and drew a splendid castle on his slate, and told her it was a picture of his very own castle, where she should be dairymaid some day.

"For you know," he said, "I am really a great nobleman, and the castle belongs to me, but when I was a baby the fairies came and took me out of my cradle and carried me off to the cobbler's cottage."

He thought his new friend would love his make-believe stories, just as the old people did, but the stolid little dairymaid looked at him coldly. She did not believe in fairies at all, and she thought that Hans was not telling the truth, or that he was quite mad and foolish.

Poor Hans never tried to tell any more tales after that, but he went on dreaming them all the same.

Of course if a boy spends his time dreaming about fairies he is apt to leave his lessons unlearned, and that was exactly what happened to Hans. He was always in disgrace and never knew his lessons, and his angry master did not feel in the least less angry when the boy presented him with large bunches of wild flowers. The flowers were beautiful, but they could not make up for idleness.

Hans could easily have learned his lessons if he had tried, but he was not fond of lessons and was a great deal too fond of only doing what he liked best. He loved to make doll's clothes and to sit in the yard near the gooseberry bush and watch its leaves unfolding from day to day. There he sat under a tent which he rigged up out of his mother's apron and a broomstick, as happy as a king, and no one sent him back to school or made him learn his lessons.

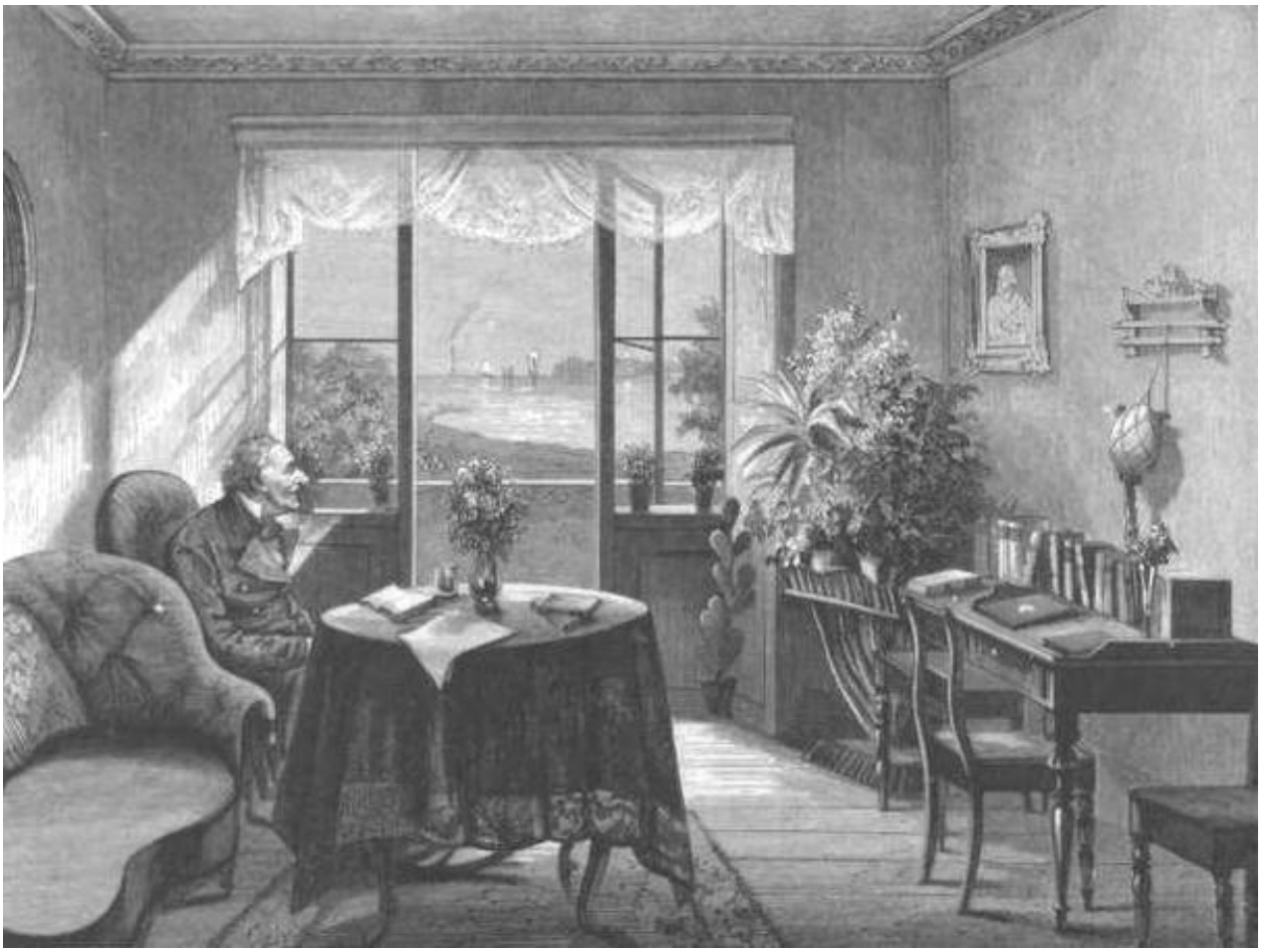
After the sad business of the dancing-shoes, the poor cobbler grew less and less inclined to work, and at last went off to be a soldier, hoping to return covered with glory. That castle also tumbled to pieces, for the poor man died before he began to fight. Then his widow married again, and little Hans was left more than ever to himself.

By this time the boy was eleven years old and was growing into a long, lanky, queer-looking lad, with a face that was almost comic in its ugliness.

If ever there was an Ugly Duckling it was Hans Andersen. All the other boys laughed at him, teased him, chased him away and shouted after him, until the poor awkward child longed to run away and hide himself from the cruel, unkind world.

No one understood him, no one knew all the wonderful things that he thought about and the great things that he meant to do. He had begun to read Shakespeare, and had made up his mind to be a great writer of plays, but when it was discovered that Hans Andersen was conceited enough to think he could write, the boys shouted all the more scornfully after him, "There goes the play-scribbler," and tormented him more cruelly than

Hans Christian Andersen photographed in the backyard of Amaliegade 9 in Copenhagen, Denmark



Hans Christian Andersen's living room at the country house "Rolighed," unknown artist

ever.

Hans had a dim idea that the higher born, nobler people would understand him better and treat him more kindly, and certainly one or two of the great families took an interest in the poor cobbler's son. It amused them to hear him recite whole plays from memory, and to see the poetry he tried to write when he knew little about spelling and less about grammar. The boy was certainly clever in some ways, but what could be done with a boy who had left school almost as ignorant as when he went to it?

About this time there dawned a great day in Hans Andersen's life, the day of his confirmation at St. Knut's Church. It was the Sunday after Easter, and the boy had been thinking a great deal of the promises he was about to make, eager to begin the new life, and anxious to become a true and loyal servant of God.

But it was so difficult to keep his mind from straying to other things. There was his new coat, which had been made for him out of his father's old one. The very thought of it filled him with pride, and above all there was his new pair of boots. He had never worn a pair of boots before, and these were quite new. His only fear was that the people might not notice them, and he was so glad

when they creaked loudly as he walked up the aisle. They made so much noise that no one could help looking at them.

Then suddenly as he walked up, filled with delight over his coat and the creaking of his new boots, he remembered where he was and what he was doing, and he hung his head with shame to think that at such a time he should think more of his new boots than about God.

He never forgot how he felt that day, and he remembered it with sorrowful shame for many long years afterwards. Indeed it was the remembrance of those very confirmation boots which made him write the story of "The Red Shoes."

But now it was time that Hans set to work in earnest, for after being confirmed he was a child no longer. His mother did not know what to do with him, but Hans had quite made up his mind to go away to Copenhagen to make his fortune.

"You go through a frightful lot of hardships first," he explained, "and then you become famous."

So the Ugly Duckling set out to see the world, quite certain that he was going to live happily ever afterwards, as the fairy tales say.

He little guessed all that lay before him, and how truly "frightful" those hardships were to be. All that he had neglected to learn had still to be learned, he was to suffer hunger and cold and bitter want, and again, like the Ugly Duckling, to be driven away, laughed at, despised, and persecuted.

But the beautiful ending to the fairy tale was to be his too. Hans Andersen, the queer, uncouth boy, was to become Hans Andersen the author, whose beautiful thoughts and dream pictures made him famous throughout all lands, and who, with the golden key, unlocked for all children the gates of Fairyland.

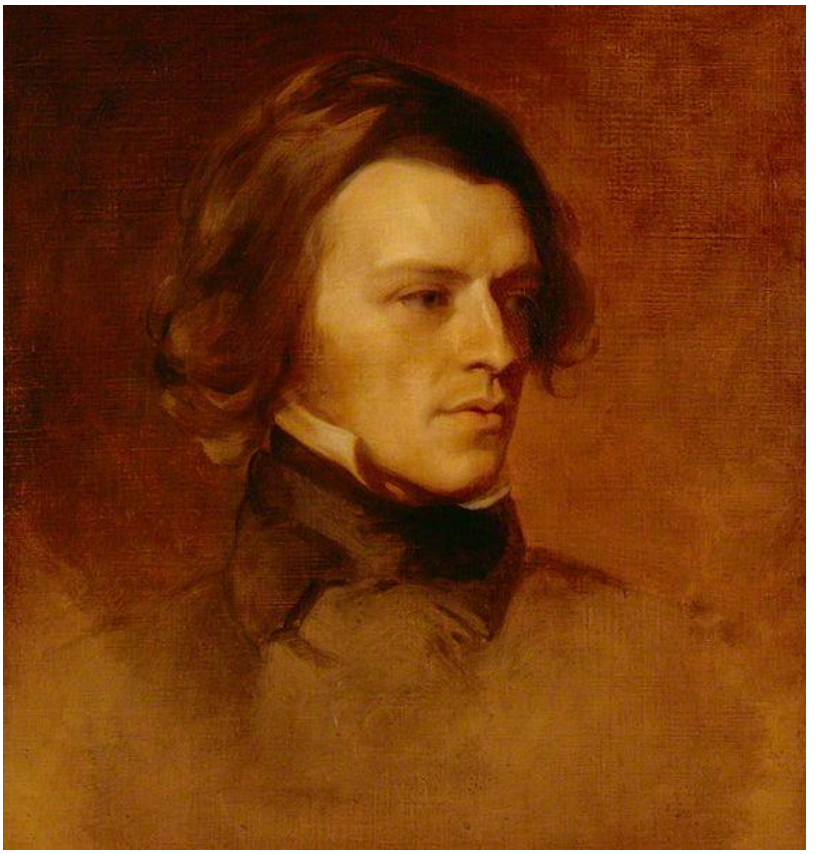
Like the swan who had once been the Ugly Duckling, "he now felt glad at having suffered sorrow and trouble, because it enabled him to enjoy so much better all the pleasure and happiness around him."

At the end he forgot all the hardships and sorrows of his life. He only remembered the beautiful things, and kept always the sunny heart of a little child, so that he could say at the last, when he came to the very end of the fairy tale, "Oh, how happy I am! How beautiful the world is! Life is so beautiful! It is just as if I were sailing into a land far, far away, where there is no pain, no sorrow."

Chapter 16

Alfred Tennyson

1809–1892 A.D., England



Alfred Lord Tennyson, Samuel Laurence

On the pleasant slopes of a Lincolnshire wold, there nestles the little village of Somersby, and here in the rectory, on a summer evening of 1809, Alfred Tennyson was born. Outside the moors were purple with heather, the woodbine peeped through the nursery window, the roses and lilies in the rectory garden, thick with buds and blossoms, whispered to each other in the summer breeze, the tall hollyhocks and sunflowers kept guard behind them, and the air was sweet with the scent of lavender. Down by the brook which ran at the foot of the field beyond the garden there were "brambley wildernesses," and "sweet forget-me-nots" spread like a sheet of blue. It seemed a fitting world to welcome the coming of a poet.

The baby that had just opened its eyes upon this flowery summer world was a very strong, sturdy boy.

> "'Here's a leg for a babe of a week!' says the doctor; and he would be bound,
> There was not his like that year in twenty parishes round."

He was only two days old when he was baptized by his father, Dr. Tennyson, the rector of Somersby, who gave him the name of Alfred, almost before the baby's eyes were accustomed to the light.

There were three older children in the rectory, and this new baby soon became the old one, for

brothers and sisters followed fast on each other's heels, until at last there were twelve of them, eight boys and four girls, like little steps and stairs one above another. It was just as well, perhaps, that the rectory was not a small one, so that the rector could write his sermons in peace, undisturbed in his library by the children's noise. Not that he was easily disturbed when once he was among his beloved books, for then he seemed to live in a world apart and forgot that the nursery and school-room were echoing with the sound of twelve little voices.

Later on, as the children grew older, they often found their way into their father's library, and he taught them to love his books, and showed them the way into a new world of delight.

How the children loved their home! There was the dining-room, with its stained-glass windows that threw coloured lights upon the walls where the sun shone, "Butterfly souls" as someone called them; there was the sunny drawing-room lined with bookshelves, its yellow-curtained windows looking out on to the smooth green lawn and gay garden beyond; there, too, was the cheerful bow-windowed nursery, but best of all they loved their mother's room. It was always a paradise to them, for to be with their beautiful mother meant having the best and merriest of times.

The children all took after their mother in their love for animals, and she taught them from their infancy to be kind and pitiful towards "all wounded things." It was so well known in the village that Mrs. Tennyson could not bear to see an animal ill-treated, that it became a favourite plan of the boys to drag their dogs close to her window and then begin to beat them, hoping that she would bribe them to leave off or even perhaps buy the dog to save it from ill-usage.

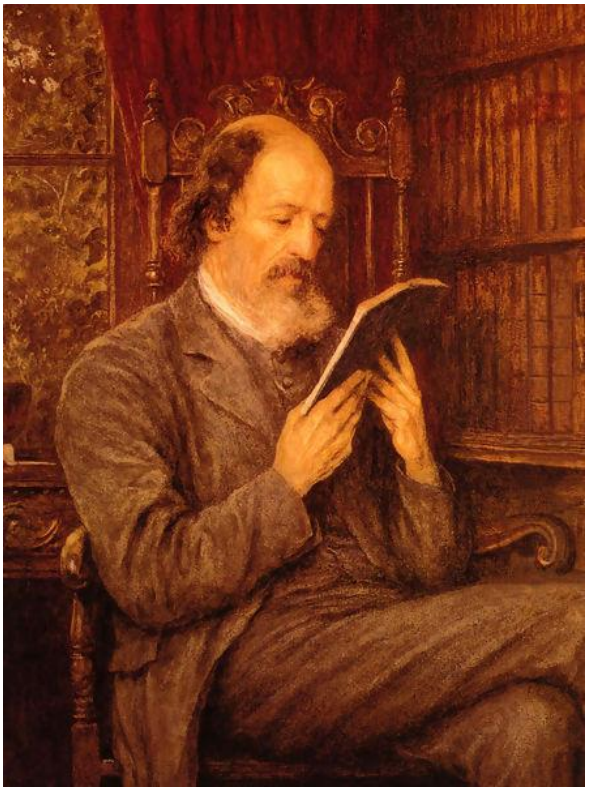
Farringford, Lord Tennyson's residence

Perhaps of all the children it was Alfred who was most keen on watching the habits of birds and beasts and creeping things, and in the woods close by he was a continual trial to the gamekeepers. No sooner had they set a snare than "Master Alfred" would be sure to come along and spring it.

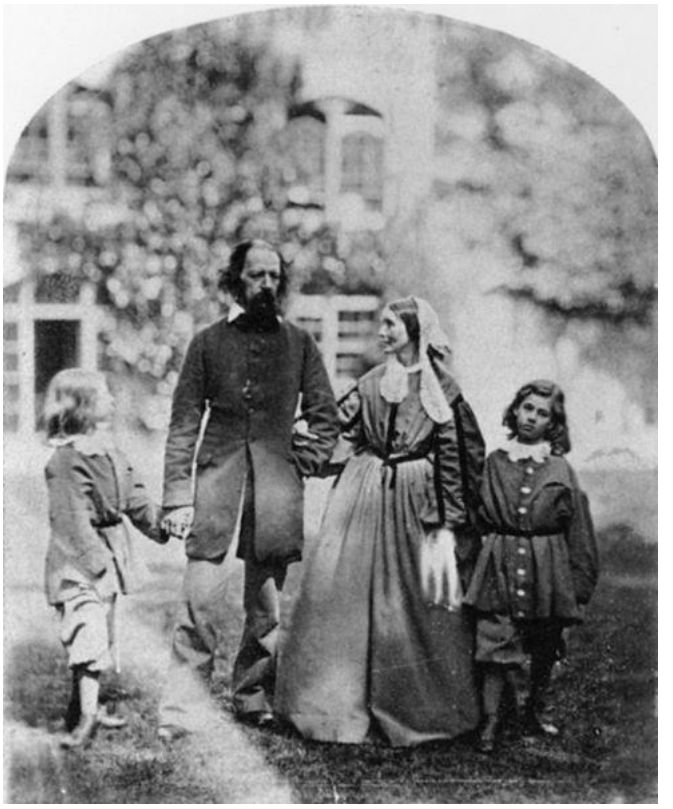
"If ever we catch that there young gentleman who is for ever springing the gins, we'll duck him in the pond," they wrathfully exclaimed.

The rectory children were all clever and fond of reading, and were never tired of making up stories and inventing new games. It was just the kind of family to play delightful games, for there were plenty of children to play them, but these special children possessed a special gift of inventing new plays, and that made it still more delightful.

There was the game of battles, when each side planted a willow wand upright in the ground for a king, and stuck firmer sticks around him for a guard. Then the enemy advanced with stones, which they hurled at the willow kings until one or other was laid low. There were mimic tournaments, and gallant defences of stone heaps which they pretended were ancient castles, and the boys were very fond of climbing on to the roof of an old farmhouse near their garden, and making believe they were watching for advancing invaders from the battlements.

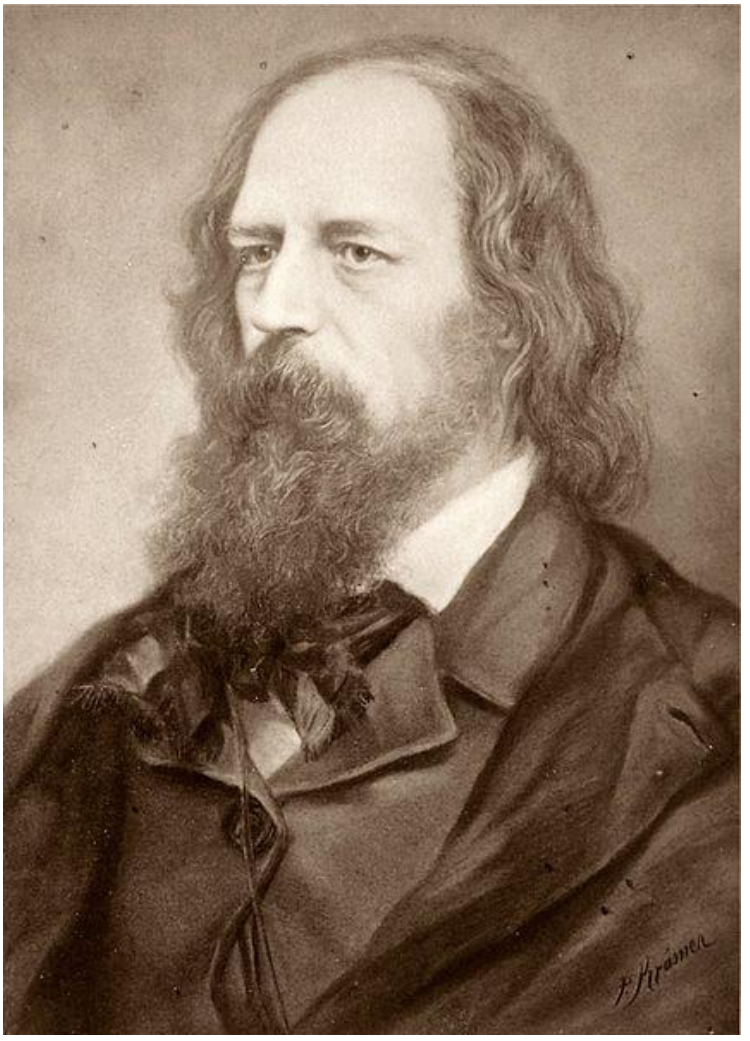


Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Helen Allingham



Photograph of Alfred and Emily Tennyson with their sons at Farringford

But perhaps what they loved to do best of all was to write stories, and these they would sometimes hide under the vegetable dishes at dinner, and when dinner was over bring them out and read them aloud. The stories were all wonderfully good, but there was no doubt that the boy who made the best stories and invented the most thrilling games



Alfred Lord Tennyson, based on a painting by P.Krämer

was Alfred. Knights and ladies, wizards, enchantresses, dragons, demons, and witches came trooping forth at his word of command. He loved the sound of words and the musical rhythm of poetry, and even before he could read he had a way of stringing words together just for the sake of the music in them.

Running outside on a stormy day while yet still a baby, the wind tossing his dark hair and whistling in his ears, he would spread out his arms wide in delight and chant aloud: "I hear a voice that's speaking in the wind." Long afterwards he tells how the words "far, far away" always acted upon him like a charm. As he grew bigger his lines grew longer, and he had a song for everything he saw. He would begin:

> "When winds are east and violets blow,
> And slowly stalks the parson crow,"

making up hundreds of lines as he went along.

When Alfred was seven years old he had to decide whether he would go to sea or go to school. He loved the sea with all his heart, but then again he had an idea that school was a palace of delight, and so when the question was put, "Will you go to sea or to school?" he answered promptly, "To school."

Alas! the palace of delight soon proved to be but a dream, and the stern reality had no delight about it whatever. The master of the Louth Grammar School, to which he was sent, was one of the old-fashioned kind who believed in much flogging, and of course there were boys ready to bully and ill-use all small new boys, and Alfred came in for his share.

The romance he had woven around the idea of school life very soon faded when he found himself sitting shivering with cold on the stone steps of the school-house, holding his poor aching little head, which had just been well punched to remind him that he was a new boy. It was not a pleasant thing to learn lessons when his head ached and his fingers were too frozen to hold a pen, and Alfred hated that school.

There was an old wall covered with wild weeds opposite the school windows, and the sight of the waving grasses and cushions of moss was like the friendly greeting of old friends to the lonely

child, and this was the only pleasant memory that he carried away from school. How overjoyed he was when the happy day came for him to return to the rectory and do his lessons with his father! His father was stern perhaps, but lessons were a different thing with him. Years afterwards, when Tennyson was telling his own son about these lessons and how much he hated Horace because he was the author so "thoroughly drummed" into him, he went on to say sadly:

> "And now they use me as a lesson-book at schools, and they will call me 'that horrible Tennyson.'"

It was good to leave the hated school and to be back at the rectory, in his own particular little attic-room, where from the window he could watch the stars and smell again the scent of the roses and lilies, and dream his dreams and make words into music. Flowers, birds, and beasts were all his friends, and he knew their ways and their language in a wonderful way. One night, leaning out of his attic window, he heard the cry of a baby owl, and when he answered it, the tiny fluffy ball of feathers came flying in, and nestling close to him, ate its supper from his hand and after that took up its abode at the rectory.

Statue of Alfred Tennyson in Trinity College Chapel, Cambridge, England (photo courtesy of Andrew Dunn)

Very often, too, at night he would steal out into the darkness through the garden where "the lilies and roses were all awake," out on to the moors, to watch the sheep with the shepherd, and to lie on the heather looking up at "the great star-patches" until the dawn came up.

Perhaps it was then that "the gleam" first floated dimly before his eyes, and the voice came which bade him follow the highest and do his best to ennoble the world with the gift which God had given him.

> "Great the master
> And sweet the magic;
> In early summers
> Over the mountain

On human faces
And all around me
Moving to melody
Floated the gleam."

So the boy lying there under the stars saw the vision and heard the message which was to rule his life.

Chapter 17

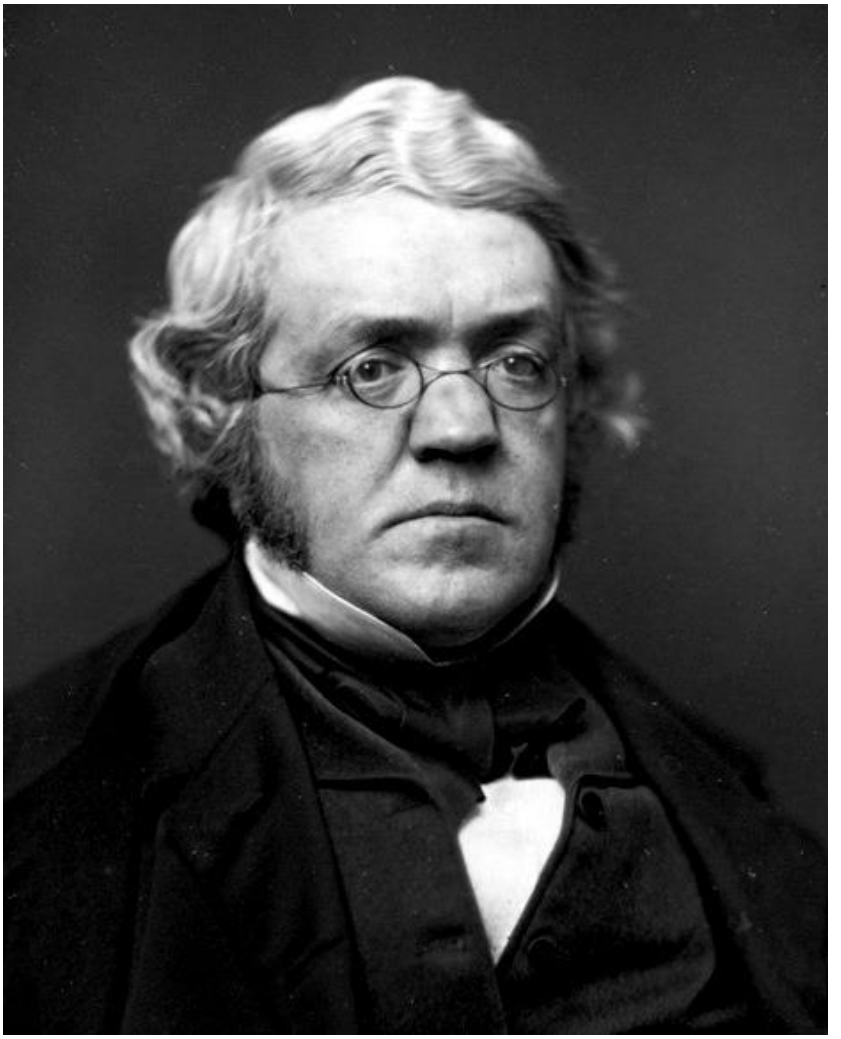
William Makepeace Thackeray (Part 1)

1811-1863 A.D., British but born in India

Looking back on the days of childhood, so much is wrapped in the mist of forgetfulness that it is often difficult to know what is fact and what is fancy. But here and there in most of our memories the mist is suddenly torn apart and some special thing stands out as clear and distinct as all the rest is dim and blurred.

Little William Makepeace Thackeray had but misty recollections of the first five years of his life spent in India. There was a confused remembrance of dark faces, a pleasant river, many servants to do his bidding, and a busy kindly father. Then from the midst of the shifting memories there sprang out clear and distinct a scene which he never forgot.

Two little boys were walking down a ghaut, or river stair, to where a boat was waiting to carry them to a big ship which would soon set sail for England. They had said good-bye to their



Daguerreotype photograph of William Makepeace Thackeray by Jesse Harrison Whitehurst

mothers, and the mothers were left behind. That was the misery which tore away the kindly mist of forgetfulness which never again closed round the remembrance of that parting.

The two little boys who climbed down those steps were William Thackeray and his cousin Richmond Shakespeare.

William was five years old, and India was not a healthy place for children of that age. Five years ago, in 1811, he had been born at Alipur, at the official residence of his father, who had held a high post in the Indian Civil Service, but who had died when his little son was only four years old. William did not remember his father, it was his young beautiful mother that he clung to with all the love of his childish heart.

Of course it was very exciting to live on a ship where everything was strange and new, and where he and his cousin could enjoy all kinds of adventures and games, but nothing made him forget that he had said good-bye to his mother, and that he was going further and further away from her. Other faces faded from his memory, but no mist of forgetfulness ever blotted out his mother's face.

However, days are long and time moves slowly when one is only five years old, and although William did not forget, he soon learned to be happy on board ship. The days were so much alike that nothing stood out very clearly in his memory until they reached the island of St. Helena, when his black servant took him ashore, and he went on a long, long walk across the island. The next thing he remembered was that they came to a garden, where a lonely man walked to and fro, his head bowed and one hand thrust into his bosom. The servant bade William look well at him.

"That is he," he whispered, "that is Bonaparte. He eats three sheep every day, and all the children he can lay hands on."

William shuddered. That must be an ogre indeed! It was enough to terrify any little boy, although the ogre really did not look so very large or fierce. Still, if he could eat three sheep and a child or two for dessert he must be a terrible ogre indeed, and William was not at all sorry when the ship set sail and the island and the terror were left behind.

Poor ogre, walking there in his loneliness and despair! He had frightened half the world, and now in his prison garden he could still strike terror to the heart of one small boy.

Arrived in England, William was given over into the charge of his great-uncle, Peter Moore, of the Manse of Hadley, where there was quite a little colony of Thackeray relations. Everything was very grand and stately in his uncle's house, but it was very different when he went to stay with his mother's grandfather and aunt at Fareham in Hampshire. There everything was very simple, and yet William was as happy in one place as the other, and it was only when his school-days began that all the sunshine seemed to fade out of his life.

The small school to which he and his cousin Richmond were sent was supposed to be a very good one, and the parents in India were quite satisfied that it was all that they could wish, but the fact was the master was a "horrible tyrant," who made the children utterly wretched.

William was "a tender little thing, just put into short clothes" (that is to say, short jackets), and he felt the cold of the English winter bitterly, and still missed his mother and the sunshine of India. It was so very cold at school. His poor little fingers and toes ached with chilblains, and he was even cold inside, because he had so little to eat, and the kind of food was so nasty. Every night he knelt by the side of his bed the bed that was so hard and uncomfortable and, in trembling fear of being bullied and laughed at, he could only sob out a very short prayer. "Pray God I may dream of my

mother." But even if the dreams came, the next morning came too, so there was another long miserable day to be faced. "What a dreadful place that private school was; cold, chilblains, bad dinners, not enough victuals, and caning awful."

It was a happy day for William when he left that school, but the happiness did not last long, for his next school at Chiswick was almost as bad. Not that William ever dreamed of complaining, he accepted it all as inevitable, and his aunt could have known but little of his sufferings. It was by her dictation that he wrote to his mother in India to tell her how happy he was, because he had "so many good little boys to play with." Then having written and posted the glowing account of his happiness, William made up his mind that he could stand his misery no longer and that he would run away from school.

It was an easy matter to slip past the front door and through the fine iron gates of Walpole House, and William managed to run as far as the end of Chiswick Lane, but there the road to Hammersmith looked so wide and so frightening that his heart sank and he turned and ran back again. It was a lucky thing for him that he was able to slip back into his place before he was missed, or there would certainly have been an exhibition of "caning awful."

In after years Thackeray, in one of his great novels, draws a picture of this school of his and calls it "Miss Pinkerton's Academy" and describes the departure of one of the pupils and how she flings a copy of Johnson's Dictionary out of the carriage window and exclaims, "So much for the Dictionary. Thank God I'm out of Chiswick."

That most likely was exactly what Thackeray himself felt when he said good-bye to Walpole House, and at the age of ten and a half was entered as a scholar at Charterhouse.

Life looked much brighter then. His mother and his stepfather had come home from India, and that alone was enough to line every cloud with silver. Through all his life, Thackeray's love for his beautiful mother was so strong and filled his heart so entirely that for her sake he was always gentle and courteous to every woman, and it taught him, too, to have a special tenderness for children and all who were weak or helpless, or who needed a helping hand. It was like a golden thread running through all his life.

School was still a trial and a horror to him, but now there were always the holidays to look forward to, and so it was possible to endure. Every week he secretly took out the pocket-book which his mother had given him and marked off, from the calendar, another seven days from the black list that stretched itself out before "that blessed day," the reddest of red-letter days, when the holidays would begin.

Dr. Russell, the head-master of Charterhouse, was not the sort of man to help and encourage a sensitive and rather timid boy such as Thackeray was at ten years old. He was like a "hungry lion," and his roar alone struck terror to the hearts of the small boys when they were first presented to him at school.

It is always a dreadful experience to be a new boy, and Thackeray shook in his shoes when his turn came to be interviewed by the master.

"Take that boy and his box to the matron," thundered Dr. Russell in his most terrific voice, pointing at Thackeray as if he were a criminal about to be executed, "and make my compliments to the junior master and tell him the boy knows nothing and will just do for the lowest form."

The poor little culprit slunk out after the janitor and felt this was not a very cheerful beginning

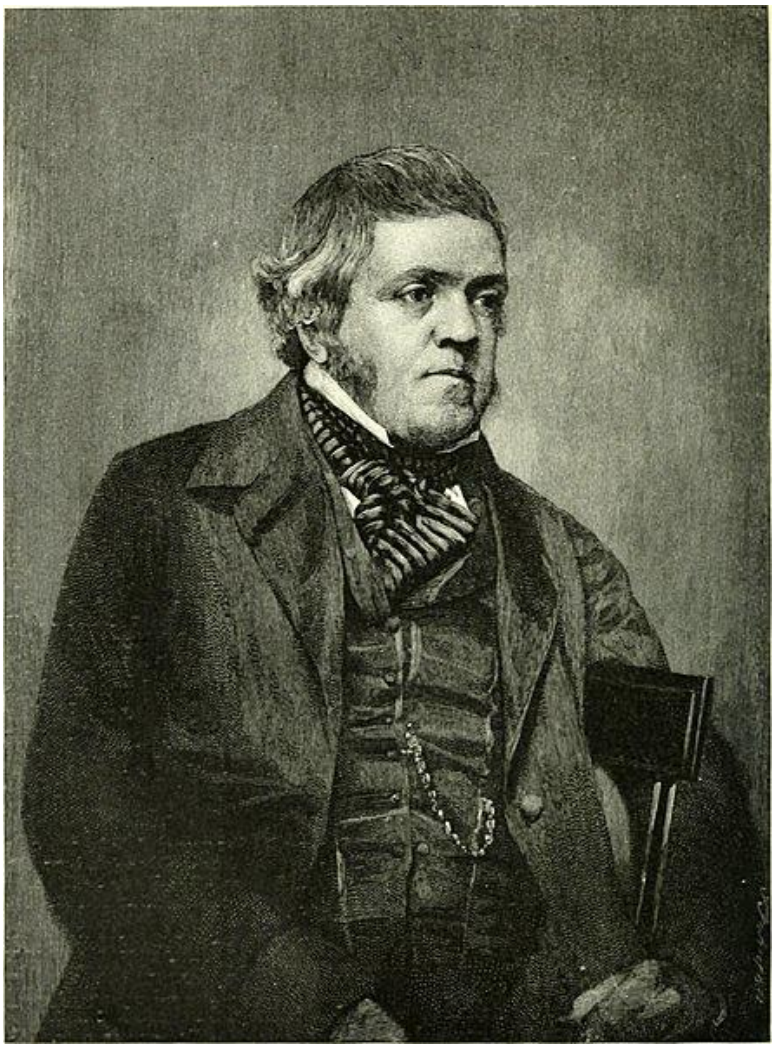
at the new school, but he soon learnt to know that the head master's bark was worse than his bite, and that although he was stern and unsympathetic and "a beast," he was "a just beast."

The junior master in whose care he was placed at first did not help to make things more comfortable, and the boys at his house were obliged to rough it in many ways. There were fifty boys in the house, and they had all to wash "in a leaden trough, under a cistern, with lumps of fat, yellow soap floating about in the ice and water."

Chapter 18

William Makepeace Thackeray (Part 2)

1811-1863 A.D., British but born in India



"Thackeray when about Thirty Years Old." Illustration from *Scribner's Magazine,* July-December 1894, Thomas Johnson

Thackeray never enjoyed his school-days. He did not shine either in games or in lessons, and he made but few friends, although he was a great favourite with those who really learned to know him. The lessons he was obliged to learn, especially Greek and Latin, he hated with all his heart.

"When I think of that Latin grammar," he writes in after years, "and of other things which I was made to learn in my youth, upon my conscience, I am surprised that we ever survived it. When we think of the boys who have been caned because they could not master that intolerable jargon! What a pitiful chorus those poor little creatures send up!" And then he adds, "I have the same recollection of Greek in youth that I have of castor oil."

At first when, through carelessness or backwardness, Thackeray blundered in his lessons, it was torture to him to be held up to ridicule by the headmaster, and he could only just manage to keep back the tears as the reproof was thundered

out.

"Your idleness is incorrigible, and your stupidity beyond example. You are a disgrace to your school and to your family, and I have no doubt will prove so in after life to your country," roared the "hungry lion." "A boy, sir, who does not learn his Greek play, cheats the parent who spends money for his education. A boy who cheats his parent is not very far from robbing or forging upon his neighbour. A man who forges on his neighbour pays the penalty of his crime on the gallows. And it is not such a one that I pity (for he will be deservedly cut off), but his maddened and heart-broken parents, who are driven to a premature grave by his crimes, or if they live, drag on a wretched and dishonoured old age. Go on, sir, and I warn you that the very next mistake you make shall subject you to the punishment of the rod."

But erelong all these terrible threats fell flat, and Thackeray went his own way undisturbed by thoughts of future disgrace.

"I was not a brilliant boy at school," he tells us; "the only prize I ever remember to have got was in a kind of lottery in which I was obliged to subscribe with seventeen other competitors, and of which the prize was a flogging. That I won. But I don't think I carried off any other. Possibly from laziness, or if you please from incapacity, but I certainly was rather inclined to be on the side of the dunces."

Thackeray was always rather inclined to be on the side of the dunces. They were such pleasant companions, and so much more desirable than the learned prigs who could "turn off Latin hexameters by the yard and construe Greek quite glibly." He was quite sure that in the long run the dunces never turned out to be half such dull men as the prigs.

Now although Thackeray called himself a dunce and hated his lessons, there was nothing he cared for so much as books, only the books must be the ones he chose for himself and not lesson-books.

He had as great an appetite for story-books, especially those full of "fighting, escaping, robbing and receiving," as he had for the raspberry open jam-tarts which were the most delicious delicacy on earth to the Charterhouse boys. In and out of school hours he had always a book handy. He was whipped and he learned his lessons, but neither whippings nor lessons did him much good. It was from the books which he read with such delight that he learned most of what was worth knowing. Kenilworth, Waverley, the Pirate, all the magical stories of the Wizard of the North were the real teachers of Thackeray, and it has been said that Sir Walter Scott and not Dr. Russell was his head-master.

The desk in front of him would be piled up with large, serious-looking books, Latin and Greek and dictionaries, and it would seem as if he were studying diligently. "Yes, but behind the great books which he pretends to read, there is a little one with pictures, which he is really reading. He, of course, is so much engrossed that he does not notice one of the masters stealing up behind and looking over his shoulder, with a book in each hand, and the first thing he knows is that his head is laid against one book and smacked with the other, to teach him not to study the Waverley Novels in lesson-time."

With the exception of Horace, Thackeray never came to love any of the Greek or Latin authors, but he delighted in Fielding, Steele, Goldsmith, and Sterne.

The other boys looked askance at him at first, for they rather mistrusted anyone who loved

reading, but when they found out that the stories he read were the kind of tales that could be told over again in the dormitories at night, they began to regard him with respect. He could also draw most delightful caricatures, and that helped to make him still more popular.

Like most schoolboys, Thackeray was fond of "tuck" and had an extremely healthy appetite for unwholesome dainties. Of pasty "I have often eaten half-a-crown's worth (including, I trust, ginger-beer) at our school pastry-cook's," he tells us.

But money was not always plentiful, and once he spent a most miserable term all for the want of three and sixpence. He had bought a pencil-case from a companion (a young Shylock of the school), hoping to pay for it out of some expected tips, but the tips never came, and the debt hung like a millstone about his neck. The owner of the pencil dunned him for the money from May till August, when the holidays began, and then Thackeray most thankfully paid him out of the five shillings which his tutor gave him to pay expenses on his homeward journey. That only left him one and six, but his tutor had also entrusted to his care one pound five shillings which he was to carry home to his parents, the last school account having been overpaid.

The coach started for Tunbridge Wells from Fleet Street at seven o'clock in the morning, and Thackeray was so afraid of being too late that he arrived at six, without having had any breakfast.

One shilling had gone to pay his cab, and the last sixpence he had bestowed on the porter, so he had not a penny of his own to spend, and he began to be exceedingly hungry. A schoolfellow was enjoying a delicious-looking breakfast in the inn coffee-room, but Thackeray sat outside growing more and more hungry every minute. There was, of course, the one pound five shillings which had been entrusted to his care, but he was quite sure it would be most dishonest to touch that.

Presently, as he gazed mournfully around, his eyes caught sight of a placard hanging in a little shop-window close by, on which was printed, "Coffee twopence, round of buttered toast twopence."

Hunger suggested that fourpence was a very small sum to appropriate, and the voice of hunger was so loud that it quite drowned the voice of conscience, which scarce spoke above a whisper when it murmured that the money was not his to spend.

William Makepeace Thackeray, Ernest Edwards

That cup of coffee, "muddy and not sweet enough," and that round of toast, "rancid and not buttered enough," was the most delicious breakfast Thackeray had ever eaten, but when every crumb and all the coffee-grounds were finished and hunger was satisfied, conscience began to make itself most disagreeable.

All the way home Thackeray could think of nothing but that fourpence which he had had no right to spend. Every milestone he passed (milestones which he had always before greeted with such wild delight on his way home) were like fingers of reproof pointing at him. The moment he arrived and saw his parents he began at once to confess.

"Bless the boy, how hungry he must be," was all his mother said; and his stepfather told him cheerily that he ought to have gone in and had a proper breakfast at the inn. They laughed together over the boy's distress and the fatal fourpence, but the story shows us what an upright, conscientious boy young Thackeray was.

Perhaps it was the remembrance of such times, when tips were scarce, that made Thackeray afterwards so fond of tipping every boy he knew. He never saw a boy without wanting to tip him, and when people shook their heads and said it was unwise, he had no patience with them.

"It is all very well, my dear sir, to say that boys contract habits of expecting tips from their parents' friends, that they become avaricious and so forth. Avaricious! fudge! Boys contract habits of tart and toffee eating which they do not carry into after life…. No, if you have any little friends at school, out with your half-crowns, my friend, and impart to those little ones the fleeting joys of their age."

So the days at Charterhouse went by and Thackeray began to leave his childhood behind him. He carried away little love for his school-days at Charterhouse, but without the remembrance of those days he could never have written some of the best chapters of his immortal novels. It was the hours spent there with his beloved story-books which made him long to write stories himself, and his great ambition was to write a book which boys would enjoy.

"If the gods would give me the desire of my heart I should be able to write a story which boys would relish for the next few dozen centuries," he said.

We all build our castles in the air, and have our great ambitions, but only to a very few do the gods grant the fulfilment of a wish, such as was granted to William Makepeace Thackeray.

Chapter 19

Robert Browning

1812-1889 A.D., England

It was in the month of May, when the pear tree in the garden was white with blossom, when the wise thrush was singing his song twice over, and the white-throat and the swallows were building their nests, that the poet Robert Browning was born.

Camberwell then, in the year 1812, was still a country place, for London was quite three miles away, and the house where the poet was born had its garden gay with flowers, its fruit trees and strawberry beds, all untouched by the London smoke.

Robert Browning, Michele Gordigiani

So it was a very pleasant flowery world upon which the baby first opened his eyes, and it was a world full of music, too, for the nightingale and the thrush sang outside the window in the garden where the pear tree scattered its blossoms and dewdrops upon the clover field beyond.

The little yellow-haired baby was rather a disturber of the peace in that quiet country home. His book-loving father and his gentle mother were not accustomed to anyone so full of life and energy, or one who possessed so passionate a temper. It was certainly his grandfather's temper over again which Robert showed so early, and his grandfather's temper was one before which everyone quailed.

As soon as the baby could speak he began to clamour for "something to do," and he was never happy until he was given some live thing to

Portraits of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning, Thomas B. Read

play with. From the very beginning of his childhood Robert loved everything that was alive.

What was to be done when the baby refused to take his "nasty medicine"? In vain his mother pleaded and reasoned and promised punishment. It was no use. No, he was not going to take it unless—and a gleam of hope shone through the stormy skies.

"Unless what?" asked his mother anxiously.

"Unless you give me a speckled frog," answered the young tyrant calmly, and feeling quite sure that the speckled frog would soon be forthcoming, he made up a rhyme on the spot to suit the occasion.

> "Good people all, who wish to see
> A boy take physic, look at me."

Meanwhile his patient mother might have been seen through the window searching carefully among the strawberry beds for that speckled frog, and never resting until she had found one.

She had a great deal of sympathy for her little son's desire, for she too loved all living things, and understood them in a way that was most wonderful. She might almost have had some of the old magic nature of the woodland fawn in her, for not only birds and animals came to her at her call, but she lured even the butterflies about her as she walked in the garden.

The love of animals, of flowers and of music, were all inherited from his gentle mother, by the boy who possessed his grandfather's temper. To hear his mother play was a pleasure almost too keen

for the child, and when she went to the piano in the twilight, and the sound reached him as he lay half asleep in his little bed, it was like the call of the magic piper of Hamelin. Out of bed he climbed, and with bare feet pattering on the floor, the little figure in its nightgown crept closer and closer to the music, never making a sound, and listening entranced until the music stopped. Then, like a little whirlwind, he threw himself into his mother's arms and clasped her tightly round her neck, whispering, "Play, play," between his sobs.

So, too, his mother's love of flowers was shared by her eager little son and the days they spent together in the garden were very happy ones. Flowers to him were almost like living friends, coming only second to his beloved pets.

There was quite a small menagerie in the garden, collected at various times by Robert and his mother, beginning, perhaps, with the speckled frog. There was a monkey and an eagle, owls and magpies, hedgehogs and snakes, and any "poor thing" that needed a home. The boy had a very tender heart where animals were concerned. Stray cats were carried tenderly home, and even insects were carefully treated, and great was his delight in winter when he could warm a frozen lady-bird

Illustration from *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* by Robert Browning, 1888

Robert Browning, From The Project Gutenberg eBook, *Great Britain and Her Queen,* by Anne E. Keeling

back to life. Even in storybooks he could not bear to hear of the death of any animal, and he shed many bitter tears over the end of his favourites.

At two years old little Robert was "a wonder at drawing," as he was about many other things, and as the Dulwich Gallery had just been opened and was only "a green half-hour's walk across the fields," he early learned to know the pictures there. Books and pictures were what his father loved best, and Robert quickly learnt to love them too.

Long before he could read, the child began to make up verses and string long rhymes together, and he would stand by the dining-room table and recite while he beat time with his hands on the table's edge, which was about on a level with his small nose. By the time he was five he could read and write easily, and began to work on his first "composition." Now he began to feel sure that those rhymes and verses were rather foolish, and it was time to set to work on something more serious. So the "composition" was quite a different thing. He tried to make it something like the scraps of Ossian he had read, and when it was finished he felt it to be a fine piece of work indeed and worth being preserved, so for the sake of future generations he laid it carefully under the cushion of a big arm-chair.

His book-loving father was very proud of Robert's cleverness, and the boy was allowed to live in the library as much as he liked and to read any book he fancied. And what a golden store of knowledge the boy gathered from those books. Books about history, about the lives of great men, about art and music, they all were eagerly read and never forgotten by that wonderful boy.

That was his real education, for school did but little for him and he hated it with all his heart. Rules and restraints were like a heavy chain to him, making him feel like a prisoner, and when at eight years old he was sent as a weekly boarder to the Rev. Thomas Ready's school at Peckham, he considered it "undiluted misery."

The Misses Ready were kind, good ladies who looked after and taught the younger children, and poor little Robert, who already knew almost all Pope's Homer by heart, was obliged to listen to Watts' hymns while he had his hair brushed and oiled once a week, by one of the kind ladies.

Later on when he passed into the master's hands he was no happier, for he had no great respect for Mr. Ready's learning. He was sure his father knew a great deal more than his schoolmaster, just as his father's books were so infinitely superior to any that could be found in the master's library. The bigger boys bullied him, and all the restraints of school chafed and tried his temper more and more. His only happy times were when he was at home looking after his beloved animals, riding his pony, reading in his father's library, or climbing up to the top of Camberwell hill.

Those long lonely rambles were perhaps his greatest joys, after all. Up there on the hill, lying flat on the grass under the trees, he was free to think his long, long thoughts, free to make friends with the birds that came shyly hopping nearer and nearer as he wooed them, free to watch for hours each tiny insect, each springing blade of grass and budding leaf, free to notice, mark, and remember every detail of nature's handiwork.

It was afterwards, when the boy had grown into the man, that the poet gave to the world that "abundant music" which filled his soul, but it was now, during his childhood, that the music was stored, note by note. Some he gathered from the wisdom in his father's books, some strain he caught when gazing at the pictures in the gallery he so loved, many melodies he learned from Mother Earth as he lay so close to her upon the long grass, guessing her secrets and listening to her voice, but the golden store grew day by day, as he lived and learned and looked.

> "Overhead the tree tops meet,
> Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet;
> There was naught above me, and naught below
> My childhood had not learned to know."

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