Section i

EARLY YEARS AT CAMBRIDGE

A FOX-HUNTING PARSON OF GOOD FAMILY in this county was in the habit of expressing his contempt for the *canaille*, by saying, "That fellow never had a grandfather!" I am not one of those who lay much stress upon ancestry, thinking that

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Avos et proavos vix ea nostra voco.

My grandfather was a Fellow of St John's College, and subsequently Precentor and Prælector Theologicus of Ely Cathedral. He died in 1763, leaving two sons, both Fellows of St John's, of whom my father was the younger. But I am desirous to go back a step further, and claim relationship with that most excellent prelate, Bishop Gunning, who left to the Church all he received from it, dividing among his relations his savings from a small paternal estate, which is now in possession of the Rev. William Gunning, Archdeacon of Bath.

Many of my readers will probably have seen the monument of the good old Bishop in Ely Cathedral, and will agree with me in thinking that his epitaph is his best eulogy. Another undying memorial, also, remains in that beautiful Prayer for "All Sorts and Conditions of Men", of which he was the composer.

There is also a monument in Ely Cathedral to the memory of James Bentham, the renowned historian, whose fame is too well known to require comment from me. I could never pass this monument in after life without associating the remembrance of his excellent brother Jeffery, who was one of the Minor Canons for nearly fifty years, and a schoolmaster of great repute in that city. His manners were simple and unaffected; he was much beloved by his pupils (of whom I was one); and he contrived so skilfully to combine amusement with instruction, that nothing seemed to us a task. Our play-ground was very extensive; we had the range of the whole College. In bad weather, we sheltered ourselves in the Cathedral; and, incredible as it may seem, we spun our tops and trundled our hoops without interruption. These practices have long since been abolished; and my friend the Dean, with that taste and liberality for which he has always been so justly distinguished, has devoted his time and money to the restoration of that noble structure. May it please God to spare him to see the completion of his great work—a work done with the same spirit as that with which the original pile was raised by its first founders, with whose names his own must for ever remain so justly associated!

It was with much regret I left Ely, as the state of health of our good master obliged him to dis-

continue his school. I was then sent to the Rev. Edward Waterson, of St John's; and when the Earl of Bristol presented him to the living of Sleaford, in Lincolnshire, with the endowed school there, I followed him, and remained his pupil until I came to college.

I can well remember, when my father came to see me for a few days, his going to the Quarter Sessions, where he was both surprised and pleased to recognise his old college friend, Sir Francis Whichcote, sitting as chairman: they renewed their acquaintance, and my father willingly agreed to spend a day and night at Aswarby. In the morning, the Baronet drove over for him; and after spending a most agreeable day, they smoked their pipes together in the evening, and talked over their college adventures. Sir Francis pressed my father very earnestly to remain a week with him; and to his reply, that he had three churches awaiting him the following Sunday, Sir Francis said he would send a guinea to the churchwardens of each parish, to be laid out as they thought proper, which sum, he remarked, would be a satisfactory excuse for the absence of the parson, unless Cambridgeshire differed very much from Lincolnshire.

That at this period the power of a magistrate was very great, and exercised with very little scruple, the following anecdote will prove:

As Sir Francis was dressing next morning, he perceived the under-groom making very free with his wall fruit. When breakfast was finished, he wrote a note addressed to the keeper of the House of Correction at Folkingham, which he ordered the culprit to take without delay. The note contained the following words: "Give the bearer a dozen lashes; he will guess the reason". This he signed with his initials. Whether the offender was conscience-smitten, or, what is still more probable, took advantage of the wet wafer to acquaint himself with the contents, I know not; but he bribed a helper in the stable, by the promise of a pot of beer and the loan of a horse, to take it for him. The governor, after reading the note, ordered the bearer to be tied up, and the directions were scrupulously obeyed, to the infinite surprise and consternation of the poor fellow, who had no idea of why he was thus treated until his return, when his account of what had taken place caused much merriment in the stable-yard. The tale very soon came to the ears of the Baronet, who laughed very heartily, and took no other notice of it than fining the delinquent half-a-crown for the privilege of being flogged by deputy, and ordered it to be given to the suffering party.

It was my father's intention to have me admitted at St John's; but my county was at that time filled by the Bishop of Ely's Fellow, named Hitch, and

Zachary Brooke (son of the Margaret Professor of Divinity), was already admitted.

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After some deliberation, my father decided upon entering me a Sizar at Christ's College, under Parkinson and Seale, at that time Tutors: with the former he was well acquainted. There, also, my county was filled[1]; but the occupant was the Senior Fellow, the Rev. Adam Wall, consequently a vacancy might be expected at no very distant period. The number of admissions at Christ's in my year was only three; two of the men professed not to read, and I was ignorant of the first proposition in Euclid. There had been a contest for the Mastership in 1780, when Mr Barker was elected in opposition to Mr Parkinson. The disappointment of the latter was very great, as he was engaged to a Miss Charlotte Bridge, the most beautiful woman of the day. She was the daughter of a barrister residing on his own property at Harston, in this county. She had lost her mother some years; and her father died soon after her engagement to Parkinson, leaving a son who inherited the estate, and three daughters, who came into a fortune of 1500*l.* each. When I came to college, Miss Charlotte

[1] The statutes then in force at several of the colleges did not allow the election of more than two Fellows from the same county. The statutes of Christ's College were still more restrictive, expressly providing, with regard to the twelve Foundation Fellowships, that there should not be two natives of the same county Fellows at the same time.

Bridge was residing with a clergyman's widow at Kennet, in Suffolk; and, though distant from Cambridge at least eighteen miles, Parkinson generally went over three times a-week.

We were lectured immediately after chapel, and generally in a very hasty manner, as Parkinson not unfrequently was equipped in boots and spurs, which his gown but ill concealed, and his servant was waiting with his horse ready to take him into Suffolk. We were usually dismissed with a recommendation to be better prepared for the next lecture. Addressing me particularly one morning, he said, "When you meet with any difficulty, come to me, and I will explain it". It was not long before a difficulty occurred, and I applied for his assistance. He received me very kindly, but I fear he found me incorrigibly stupid; for, after two or three ineffectual attempts to remove the difficulties that puzzled me, he generally added, in a peevish tone, "I cannot make it any plainer, Sir; it requires only common sense to understand it". Disheartened by the difficulties I met with, and annoyed at his contemptuous mode of treating my applications, I determined to give up reading altogether.

Finding this to be the case—for I frankly told him of my intention—he released me from attending his lectures the remainder of the term, remarking that I could doubtless pass my time more

pleasantly, and perhaps more profitably, in my own room. The occasional outbreaks of impatience and ill-humour which Parkinson manifested, when applied to by his pupils to solve difficulties that came in their way, were very foreign to his natural character; and were I to say nothing further, I should have given a very unfavourable, and at the same time a very unfair impression of him, for he was, in truth, one of the most kind-hearted and benevolent men breathing; and in spite of his occasional peevishness, I believe him to have been much interested for all his pupils, and more especially for myself, for it was in consequence of his advice that my father sent me to Christ's College. His natural temper was much changed by the peculiarity of his situation. The lady, to whom he had been engaged several years, was much younger than himself; she was a person of surpassing beauty, and attracted general admiration wherever she went. She was not only considered the *belle* of Cambridgeshire, but at the Bury balls, which were at that time particularly noted for the assemblage of rank, fashion, and beauty, she had rarely a rival. At Bath, which place she occasionally visited, she was much sought; and having the reputation of being an excellent horsewoman, wherever she rode, the gay and fashionable were sure to follow. Parkinson had fully expected to obtain the Mastership of Christ's in 1780, in which case their marriage

would very soon have taken place. The disappointment was severely felt by both parties. The prospect of a living worth accepting was very remote, and when obtained, the comforts of a rectory house would have been, in the lady's estimation, very far inferior to what she had anticipated in the splendour of a college Lodge. She had refused several offers of marriage during her engagement, and these facts were supposed not to have been unfrequently alluded to by her in terms vexatious to Parkinson. Certain it is that an estrangement eventually took place; and, in the course of a few months, she married Mr Wilshire, an Oxonian, whose father was the wealthy proprietor of a waggon establishment at Bath.

In addition to the severe mental disquiet Parkinson was undergoing, in consequence of his unfortunate engagement, he had involved himself in pecuniary difficulties, principally on the lady's account. The expense attendant on her having two horses and a groom was doubtless defrayed by him, her own income being very limited. He also owed a large sum to the college cook, who, being about to resign his situation, became urgent for payment.

Under all these circumstances, many allowances might have been made for Parkinson's occasional hastiness of temper, for there were times when he seemed quite conscious of it himself. Meeting me accidentally, after I had expressed somewhat ab-

ruptly my determination not to read, he asked me to breakfast with him. He conversed in the most kind and friendly manner respecting my future proceedings, and urged me very earnestly not to lead an idle life in college; he spoke of the disappointment of my friends, and my own regret when I reflected that I had wasted the most valuable years of my life, and lost opportunities never to be recovered. He assured me that the difficulties of which I complained were *not insurmountable*, and that the elements of every science were difficult and disagreeable. He entreated me, in the most impressive manner, not to throw away the Christmas vacation, and concluded by renewing his offers of assistance. There was something so friendly and even affectionate in his advice and expostulations, that I felt heartily ashamed of my past conduct, and resolved on future amendment. I stammered out my thanks, and we parted on the best terms.

Returning from Parkinson's room in this frame of mind, I had the good fortune to meet with Mr Hartley. Hartley was a Yorkshireman, one year my senior in college; he was an excellent classic, a hard reading man, and of irreproachable character. He took the degree of sixth Wrangler in Littledale's year, but did not get either of the classical medals, for which he was a candidate: these were obtained by Jonathan Raine, of Trinity, and Clement Chevallier, of Pembroke.

Hartley and I dined at the same table; but as our pursuits were very different, we were, at the time to which I am alluding, only on speaking terms. The conversation I had held with Parkinson had in two hours effected a complete change in me. I no longer considered Hartley a "*confounded quiz*", a name which the idle and the profligate were in the habit of applying to one of the most respectable of the undergraduates; but I began to look upon him as—in fact he was—one of the most meritorious men in our Society.

When, upon this occasion, we came in contact, I did not return his salutation in the distant manner I had accustomed myself to, but met him with much cordiality. We entered into conversation, and agreed to walk together until dinner-time. He comforted me by the assurance that, at the rate Parkinson travelled over his lectures, it was impossible for any one, not previously acquainted with the subject, to understand or to keep up with him. We spent the evening together, and he convinced me that the difficulties which disheartened me generally arose from not comprehending thoroughly the preceding proposition. He urged me to resume my reading, and to call on him as often as I required his assistance. This offer was made so heartily, and pressed upon me with so much earnestness, that I accepted it without hesitation.