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A. Hingston Quiggin
Excerpt
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Chapter I
CHILDHOOD AND BOYHOOD
1855–1875

ALFRED CORT HADDON was born on May 24, 1855, the first son and second child of John Haddon, Printer, of London, and of Caroline (née Waterman) his wife.

But that is not how a biography should begin. The life of a man and the work that he did cannot be comprehended within the bounds of his own span of years, even though they number four score and five; destiny has been busy for generations, and the foundations are laid in the lives and characters of his forbears and the influences of his home.

It is curious that anyone so convinced of the importance of heredity as was A. C. H. should have been so reticent and indeed careless about his own. He openly despised that form of ancestor worship that engenders or is engendered by snobbery, and was far more deeply interested in the genealogies of the Torres Straits Islanders than in that of the Haddons; he maintained a life-long devotion to his younger sister and a keen interest in all his relatives, but he was far too much occupied in planning the family future to bother about its past.

Fortunately the family tree has been preserved in ‘the stud book’ as he called it, which contains a diligent account of ‘the numerous Haddons who in many walks

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of life have done their duty in bygone centuries and contributed no unworthy share to the building up of the national life of England'.¹ The book contains reproductions of the portraits of many of the Haddon worthies and these are significant.

There is the great-grandfather John (1744–1818), a pleasant-looking curly-haired gentleman-farmer of Naseby, farming the land, still open field, over which the famous battle was fought a century earlier, and ploughing up the bullets which his sons collected as treasures. He joined the Baptists when to do so attracted contempt and derision which developed into open hostility; but opposition only stiffened his convictions. His house was licensed for preaching and he had many preachers and missionaries among his guests, for he was especially interested in foreign missions, to which he gave practical support, financing the training of his own farm bailiff to become a missionary in India.

The portrait of his son, also John Haddon (1784–1855), shows that he was not destined for a farmer's life. He has the face of a scholar and was noted for his literary tastes, though it was as a business man that he made his mark. He was apprenticed to a printer at the age of fifteen, and after a year went to London to seek his fortune. In 1814 he founded the printing business which celebrated its centenary in 1914 with a booklet 'set in Haddon types and printed throughout on up-to-date machinery supplied by John Haddon & Co.' This John, like his father the farmer, was a strong Nonconformist, but not a narrow-minded one. 'I prefer to find points of

W. G. Cruft, *A History of the Haddons of Naseby*. 1915.

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contact, not of difference, with my fellow Christians', he used to say, and he showed his indifference to the socio-religious conventions of his day by himself escorting his youngest sister to Grætna Green to be married to her sister's widower. He was closely associated with the Baptists and printed much of their literature, especially that for foreign missions, in which, like his father, he was particularly interested. The missionaries, many of whom were personal friends, used to ask for goods to be sent out with the books and pamphlets, and so the general commission agency grew up which brought John Haddon and Co. in touch with all parts of the world. John Haddon's second wife was a Miss Cort from whom her famous grandson took his second name. She had been given the best education to be had in her day, and evidently profited by it, for she was a highly cultured woman, handing on her love of poetry and her skill as an artist (Bonington, Turner's master, was her teacher) to her eleven children. Their home is described as being

ruled by single-minded Christian folk, caring intensely for all movements making for righteousness and the good of the people; with limited means and eleven children; entertaining very constantly all sorts of philanthropists and missionaries, and using hospitality unstintingly to all who needed it... A good education for all was reckoned a necessity, and interest in religious and philanthropic causes a serious duty.¹

The eldest of these eleven children was the third John Haddon (1823–1904), who after his apprenticeship entered his father's business and became sole proprietor in

¹ H. M. B., *Five Sisters and a School*. 1905.

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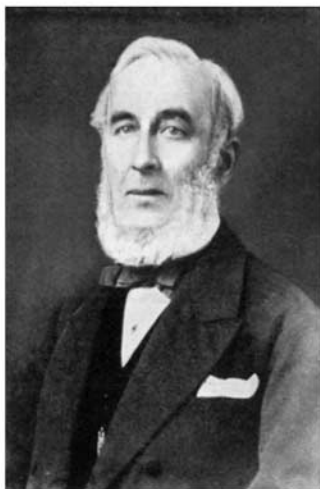
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1855. But philanthropy and religion interspersed with music and gardening were nearer his heart than business and the business suffered in consequence. He trustfully entered into unsuccessful partnerships and the family fortunes are reflected in the constant moving from house to house and the difficulties in meeting the increasing expenses of the growing family. In the 60's his children's early recollections were of country houses outside London, of large gardens and of neighbouring woods in which they ran wild. In the 70's and 80's these spacious memories are replaced by fainter impressions of a succession of houses in New Barnet, in Finchley, in Lewisham and in St George's Road, Wimbledon. Their mother recognises as among the crosses she has to bear that she must appear stingy in housekeeping, having 'to put on the screw and seem grudging over little things, being under-servanted and considered a bad manager. . . . But I say to myself "*He* knows, even if my husband doesn't".' In 1888 a cousin, Walter Haddon, joined the firm as a partner and he became sole proprietor in 1890. Thenceforward the business prospered and grew into the world-wide position which it occupies to-day. But John Haddon's active interest in it came to an end.

The portrait of this John Haddon, the Baptist deacon and constant Sunday school teacher up to the age of seventy (Pl. I), has been likened to that of the Deity in *Green Pastures*, and it suggests that there may have been some lack of common sympathy between him and his original and irreverent son. But there was no divergence of views and no irreverence throughout the period with which this chapter deals.

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PLATE I



JOHN HADDON



MRS JOHN HADDON



A. C. H. as schoolboy



A. C. H. as undergraduate

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The picture of John's wife and Alfred's mother (Pl. I) is a happier and a livelier one. She used to quote

Round how mere a log did twine
 Those frail tendrils of the vine,

the log representing her revered but unimaginative husband, round whom she dutifully and affectionately twined for forty-five years. Caroline Waterman was twenty-six when she married John Haddon, at Highbury Chapel, Bristol, on March 29, 1853. With characteristic juxtaposition of business, sentiment and a somewhat ponderous attempt at humour the bridegroom writes on March 31:

I should like to pay off the £100. Can you call here or meet me in the City any hour? John is no longer his own Master—he now lives to please his Lady. Last Tuesday was the happy day at Bristol. P.S. You will have cards.

Their first child, Edith, was born before the year was out; Alfred came seventeen months later (May 24, 1855); Laura in June of the following year. So there were three children under three to look after. Mrs Haddon turned her full-time job to good account. She devoted herself to her children from the first, and as they grew older, taught them their lessons and took them for walks, spending long picknicky days in Hadley Woods close by, giving that best form of education, sympathetic and intelligent companionship. But all the time she was writing. She wrote numerous anonymous articles for various periodicals, all on religious topics, and she published several books under the name of Caroline Hadley. Necessity is the mother of much literary effort, and the first necessity was to add to the dwindling family income to meet the increasing family

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expenses. So the walks with the children and their daily education became her sources of inspiration. The stories she told them—all out of the Bible—were published as *Stories of Old, Stories of the New Testament* and *Stories of the Apostles*; *Children's Sayings* (1862) shows the reactions to her teaching. Best of all, *Woodside, Look, Listen and Learn* (not published until 1887) shows the training of the children in what we should now call Nature Study. This book was a great success and ran into a second edition. But the greater success came in 1901, when A. C. H. dedicated his *Head-Hunters* 'to my Mother who first taught me to observe'.

Children's Sayings is a set of moral tales based on familiar outbursts such as 'I can't do it' (Alfred); 'I will, I won't' (Edith); 'It doesn't matter' (? Laura). Alfred has a chapter all to himself with a story of a spelling lesson, which ends with

Alfred was of a very loving nature and he found that if he really wanted to help others he must take a great deal of pains and trouble himself. So love made him painstaking and painstaking did not bring trouble but happiness.

No amount of painstaking ever made him an impeccable speller, and when he came to write books for himself he always kept a dictionary within reach and never allowed a doubtful word to pass unconfirmed. Probably the memory of what he learnt at his mother's knee was enshrined in his favourite quotation from John Ray, 'Nothing is insuperable to Pains and Patience'.

Whether from choice or from necessity Mrs Haddon undertook the education of the children from their early

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years, and her sister, ‘Aunt Agitate’ as they disrespectfully called her, took over the work when Mrs Haddon was preoccupied with the new baby, Arthur Trevor, who was born in 1864.

This was a time of happy healthy childhood. Edith, whose nickname was ‘Peacock’, always a little aloof; Alfred and Laura (‘Spitfire’) always in and out of scrapes and always together. They were allowed to do much as they liked, and, in overalls, to get as dirty as they liked, an unusual privilege in those days. They collected everything, from little bits of quartz or coloured stones in rubbish heaps to precious rarities and curiosities from overseas; they ground down pieces of brick to make coloured paste; they collected the usual caterpillars, moths, butterflies and birds’ eggs and kept a slowworm in the house until it disappeared as is the way with slowworms. The sisters helped their brother, who was the collector-in-chief, and his special treasures were preserved in bottles. All the second-hand shops within reach were ransacked for bargains, though the diaries record whole afternoons spent going from shop to shop without making a purchase. Even in these early days he earned the title of ‘head-hunter’ which clung to him through life, for somehow or other he acquired some human skulls. He hoped to scare his sisters with them, placing them, dimly illuminated, in a row on a shelf, turning out the light and hiding the matches. He was disappointed when the girls showed no alarm.

There was one great advantage derived from the father’s business, however much detested in later days; paper, pencils and pens were abundantly supplied and

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constantly in use. John Haddon was himself a good black and white artist and took his sketch-book with him wherever he went. His son used to say—and to prove—that ‘a poor sketch is worth a page of description’, and some of his early sketches are preserved in a scrap-book. There is ‘My First Horse (the first drawing I remember doing. 1864. aged 9)’, whose anatomical impossibilities are drawn from memory, not from observation. A livelier elephant follows in 1866, and on the same page comes the picture so familiar later as a slide in his lectures on Art or Ethnography, of the Bushman hunter disguised as an ostrich. The subjects are mostly animals and copied from books, but there are sketches from nature made on an exciting visit to Minehead when the train broke down on the branch railway as he records in his note-book. The adventure is described and illustrated by a sketch of the uncoupled train. There are also sketches of the quay, the church, with an ambitious attempt at the complicated interior, and the bathing beach ‘with the only two machines’; similar but better finished sketches in John Haddon’s book show that father and son were working side by side.

The collection of sketches reflects the boy’s tastes and soon shows increasing skill in drawing birds and butterflies (from books) and silkworms (his own); later come a ‘fancy geological composition’ full of prehistoric beasts, and (after he had obtained the feather of a wild peacock from obliging Uncle Ferguson in Ceylon) ‘Sketches illustrating Darwin’s theory as to the development of the ocelli of the Peacock from actual specimens. 1871’. These are finely drawn with infinite care and patience. This habit

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of making sketches correct down to the minutest detail to illustrate his notes was invaluable for his later work. Accuracy rather than artistic production was the one thing aimed at; he drew, as he wrote, not to please the eye, or the ear, but faithfully to register facts.

His schooling seems to have been scrappy and precarious. For some time after the tutelage of 'Aunt Agitate' he went to a dames' school for small boys and girls at Highgate, kept by the Misses Gostell. Miss Gostell was a pioneer in her day, and he owed much to her teaching as he gratefully acknowledged. Many years afterwards she was still lending him books on geology 'to keep as long as you like', and he gave practical proof of genuine friendship by consenting to act as groomsman when the younger Miss Gostell was being married.

For a term or two in 1866 he was at the City of London School,¹ and from January 1867, when he was eleven, to June 1868, when he was just thirteen, he was a boarder at Mill Hill, then well outside London. This school, which had been founded with such high hopes and high principles early in the century to provide education for the sons of dissenters (ineligible for entrance at the established schools), was then at its lowest ebb, and the numbers had dropped from the hundred for whom it was designed to thirty or forty. The fees (fifty-three guineas a year inclusive) allowed scarcely enough for board and lodging and no margin for upkeep. The assistant masters (at £60 to £80 a year) were mostly transient and ineffective. Headmasters in quick succession attempted

¹ Cf. A. E. Douglas-Smith, *The City of London School*, 1937, p. 159.