

## I.

A COLLEGE BIOGRAPHER'S  
NIGHTMARE

*(As described after dinner).*

. . . It was a strange encounter altogether, as such experiences are apt to be; but I think there was a certain moral in it. What I had been doing or reading, to prompt such fancies, I will not undertake to say; but the scene took the form of a sort of Vision of Judgment. The locality in which I found myself was rather puzzling to me. It was not this Hall, nor was it our Chapel, though there were features in it which resembled them both; but enlarged beyond all recognition. It was filled from end to end with a vast crowd, which seemed to stretch out interminably in rank beyond rank.

The occupants evidently came from many, and some from remote districts of the country; and by their dress and deportment seemed to extend from very early times down to our own day. There were medieval prelates amongst them: some of these of saintly aspect: men—as I felt sure—, of State, and learning and piety. Others of them, however, were clad in warlike garb:—I noticed one stalwart Irish archbishop, beneath whose priestly garments, as those about made hasty way for him, I caught the glint of a coat of mail. And there was much

B

blood on the sword of a certain lordly bishop of a neighbouring diocese. There were many monks, too, in the throng; mostly Benedictines, in their black garb, from the once famous Houses of Norwich and Bury; mingled with Cluniacs from Lewes, and a group of Augustinian canons in their sober garments. Not a few of the monks had held office as abbots or priors, and I thought that one or two had mitres on their shaven heads. Others, I felt sure, must have stood high in the courts of Rome and Avignon. Here and there was a friar, grey or black. And there were not a few seminary priests, from Douay, Rheims and Valladolid, lurking in the throng; some of these, I noticed, had halters round their necks. Mixed with all these was many a gay and gallant gentleman, some with the velvet cloak, ruff and rapier which marked them as of Elizabethan date; others in the bag wig and coloured coat, of later times. Some of their faces did not seem quite strange to me: could I have seen them anywhere on these walls? But the bulk of the crowd before me was composed of Anglican clergy, mostly in cassock, wig and bands:—as to whether they would consent to wear the surplice also, there was evidently a bitter dispute. They seemed to fill the room, in crowds past all counting.

There was evidently some matter of common interest pervading that strange assembly, but what this was did not seem at first apparent. There was a universal hum of deep dissatisfaction from far and near, which gradually

assumed a tone of bitter complaint and remonstrance. It was directed against some one whose name I tried in vain to catch, who, they declared, had scandalously misdescribed their careers in life. Some of them urged complaints which were perhaps not altogether without ground. But, little as one is apt to be surprised on such an occasion, it did seem to me that some of the objectors were a little touchy and unreasonable. One complained that he had held a rectory, and "that fellow had put him down as a vicar"; another had preached a sermon, "and a visitation sermon, too," and no notice taken of it. There were perpetual curates who had been described as if they were merely transitory. And so on. Nor did the laymen seem better pleased. There were squires who had been called yeomen, yeomen who had been called farmers, and so on, upwards and downwards. More than one portly country gentleman remarked that he should have thought that the dignity of the King's Commission of the Peace might at least be mentioned if the security of the country was to be upheld. Somewhere, in the midst of the throng I saw the gold-headed end of a cane violently shaken, and from beneath came a voice complaining that the holder had been F.R.C.P.; and that instead of an 'F' he was insulted with a scurvy 'M.' One pointed to a portrait on the wall, with a name attached; "They dare to call that *me!*" Some remarked that, though there was a monument to attest the fact, no notice of death was recorded.

Another, in a threatening tone, asserted that years before his death he had been foully killed by his biographer. Many of them had been studying some authority which they called 'D.N.B.'; but their complaints were not so much directed at the blunders which they said they found there, as against a certain delinquent who 'ought to have prevented such mistakes.'

Their attitude grew ever more and more menacing, and became so persistently directed against myself, as one after another pressed forwards, that I began to get alarmed. Then, with that strange intuition which one is apt to display at such moments, I suddenly reckoned up their number. I forget the exact figure, but it amounted to nearly 9000. Hardly had I done so when there came, from far and near, a simultaneous yell: "That's the man, there he is!" Then the truth flashed on my mind. They were the men whose lives I had written, and I awoke with a scream.

## II.

## 'THE MEMORY OF OUR BENEFACTORS.'

*(Address delivered on the occasion of the 550th anniversary of the foundation of the College, June 22, 1898.)*

I have been deputed to propose a Toast, or rather a Memory, of the kind usually drunk in silence; for, of the many included within its scope, few indeed are within our present reach:—to be encouraged by our praise, or warmed by our thanks. It is the Memory of our Benefactors: of that great cloud of witnesses,—witnesses to the nearness of the present and the past,—which compass us about in every ancient English Institution, whether religious, civic, or academic. They are a very numerous body, and include almost every rank and station in life. Our Commemoration Service, long as it may seem, literally does not contain a tithe of those who “in their day bestowed charitably for our comfort of the temporal things given to them.” The small and the great are there.

Take a few representative cases to illustrate the variety of age, condition, and motives, under which these gifts have been made. Here is a broken-hearted mother, in despair at the sudden and violent death of her only son. Dean Nowell, of St. Paul's, gives the account, and I should spoil it by repeating it in any words but

his own. He says: "The mother fell into sorrows uncomfortable; whereof I, being of her acquaintance, having intelligence did with all speed ride unto her house near to Hoddesdon, to comfort her the best I could. And I found her crying or rather howling continually, Oh my son! my son! And when I could by no comfortable words stay her from that cry and tearing of her hair, God, I think, put me in mind at the last to say: 'Comfort yourself, good Mrs. Frankland, and I will tell you how you shall have twenty good sons to comfort you in these your sorrows which you take for this one son.' To the which words only she gave ear, and looking up, asked, 'How can that be?' And I said unto her, 'You are a widow, rich and now childless, and there be in both Universities so many poor toward youths that lack exhibition; for whom, if you would found certain fellowships and scholarships, to be bestowed upon studious young men, who should be called Mrs. Frankland's scholars, they would be in love toward you as dear children, and will most heartily pray to God for you during your life; and they and their successors after them, being still Mrs. Frankland's scholars,<sup>1</sup> will honour your memory for ever and ever.'" This being said, "I will," quoth she, "think thereupon earnestly." That was the origin of one of our endowments; and there is little doubt that, if

---

<sup>1</sup> It does not seem to have occurred to the good Dean that some future Commission would simplify matters by retaining the endowments of the various Scholarships, and suppressing the names of the donors.

‘THE MEMORY OF OUR BENEFACTORS’ 7

we knew as much of the facts in other cases, we should find that such a story of a broken heart, or of the hope deferred that makes the heart sick, lay behind the dry legal phrases of not a few of the dusty deeds in our College treasuries. Here again is some solid citizen of Norwich or of London, who has accumulated an honest fortune; and is making up his mind, in a comfortable state of well-being and well-doing, how to dispose of some of it. He is advised that the exhibition of a young scholar,—one of the “poor toward youths” of Dean Nowell,—would be a wise and useful way of employing some of his surplus wealth. In early times a considerable part of the endowments came from men of the trading class who had no apparent connexion with any college. Here it is a wealthy bishop or archbishop who is aiming at an increase in the number of the learned clergy. Here a statesman, who wants to encourage the canonists and civilians. Here a poor priest, in some far off parsonage, whose thoughts fondly revert to the library of his youth; and who, in giving us a book or two, gives perhaps all he has to leave. Not a few of the ancient MSS. still on our shelves belong to this class. Here it is a knight or a country squire, who conveys land or an advowson, or founds a chantry under the patronage of the college. Bishop Shaxton, of Salisbury, coming back here to die in his old age, leaves the rent of a house “to solace the company at home yearly at Christmas.” A young student, cut off in his commencing career, leaves a cup, that his memory may not

die out amongst his comrades. One gives with the cheerful recollection of well-spent hours: he thinks it "his duty to cast in his mite into that fund which he has so abundantly enjoyed." Another, in a spirit of remorseful retrospect, recalls "the twenty unprofitable years I spent there by my negligence and folly."

I suppose that any one who listens to such a long Roll-call, stretching over century after century, as that which constitutes a list of College Benefactors, inevitably falls into an attitude of criticism. He begins to judge the wisdom of the ends designed: the foresight of the means provided. Has it ever occurred to you, Gentlemen, to conceive this attitude of judgment reversed? If that varied host of charitable donors could be raised to life again,—purged, we may assume, of prejudice and narrowness, but retaining each the special interest which he once had at heart,—and constituted a commission to enquire into the way in which we had used their benefactions, how should we fare at their hands? I apprehend that such an assembly is one which few of us here present could face without a certain anxiety. Not a man in this room but has benefitted in some way, at school or at college, by the fruits of endowment; and some amongst us have fed freely on them. But those of us who are in the position of trustees might well feel some trepidation. Personally, I think that something might turn on the question as to who should preside over such a commission. If it were Bateman, bishop of Norwich, we might



‘THE MEMORY OF OUR BENEFACTORS’ 9

entertain some hope; for he was a thorough man of the world, versed in the ways of royal and of papal courts: he would know well how to make allowance for weakness, and for changes of thought and feeling. But with Dr. Caius in the chair it would be another matter. He was a severe man: rigid in his own conception of duty; stern in his exaction of duty from others. He had too a deep love and veneration for the past.

On one point indeed, and that an important point, we should not have much to fear. The stewardship has on the whole always been sound and conscientious. Each succeeding age has rightly regarded itself as a trustee: bound to guard carefully what it had received from those before, and to hand it on undiminished to those who came after. No estate, I believe, even in the worst of times, has been lost by fraud or negligence. There has been little or none of that greed which sacrifices the future to the present, and which was sometimes such a scandal in the monasteries and in many civic corporations.

But in matters of sentiment and association rather than of property, it would be far otherwise, and the story of neglect and loss is a sad one. As I walk by our chapel door I seem to see William Rougham, second master of the college, who beckons me in with an air of authority, and introduces me to a small but dignified assemblage. Rougham himself is a man of mark; wealthy and liberal. By his side is Henry de Spencer, the famous bishop of

Norwich, the great warrior prelate of his age, fresh from his rout and slaughter of the Norfolk rebels. There too is John of Ufford, son of the Earl of Suffolk, the first known fellow-commoner of the college. They are examining, with a certain curiosity, our present display of glass;—but they want to know what has become of the windows which each of them presented 500 years ago. Rougham has some cause to feel aggrieved, for the window which he placed there expressly recorded that he was the builder of the chapel; and as to the bishop, it is perhaps as well for us that he is not now stalking about here in his coat of mail.

I slink away, and seek refuge in the library. There, again, is a distinguished company. William Lindwood, bishop of St. Davids, who died in 1446; with his contemporaries, the arch-deacon of Norfolk and the chancellor of Salisbury; also Thomas Boleyn, master of the college, and grand uncle of the unfortunate queen. There also are two or three of our earliest fellows; rectors of important parishes in London and elsewhere. They frankly admit that the ancient library they knew so well, and amongst whose chained volumes they used to work, had to go. But could no place be found for the windows which each of them placed in the ancient room? The bishop hints that he should have thought that the author of the Provincial Constitutions was one of whose connection with them any college might have been glad to retain such evidence. I evade the subject by begging the bishop to inspect our