CHAPTER I

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS

Extraction—"H. B."—Four Remarkable Brothers—My Mother's Family Tree—An Unrecognized Genius—My First Knockout—Thackeray—The Fenians—Early Reading—My First Story.

I WAS born on May 22, 1859, at Picardy Place, Edinburgh, so named because in old days a colony of French Huguenots had settled there. At the time of their coming it was a village outside the City walls, but now it is at the end of Queen Street, abutting upon Leith Walk. When last I visited it, it seemed to have degenerated, but at that time the flats were of good repute.

My father was the youngest son of John Doyle, who under the *nom de crayon* of "H. B." made a great reputation in London from about 1825 to 1850. He came from Dublin about the year 1815 and may be said to be the father of polite caricature, for in the old days satire took the brutal shape of making the object grotesque in features and figure. Gilray and Rowlandson had no other idea. My grandfather was a gentleman, drawing gentlemen for gentlemen, and the satire lay in the wit of the picture and not in the misdrawing of faces. This was a new idea, but it has been followed by most caricaturists since and so has become familiar. There were no comic papers in those days, and the weekly cartoon of "H. B." was lithographed and distributed. He exerted, I am told, quite an influence upon politics, and was on terms of intimacy with many of the leading men of the day. I can remember him in his old age, a very handsome and dignified man with features of the strong Anglo-Irish, Duke of Wellington stamp. He died in 1868.

My grandfather was left a widower with a numerous

family, of which four boys and one girl survived. Each of the boys made a name for himself, for all inherited the artistic powers of their father. The elder, James Doyle, wrote "The Chronicles of England," illustrated with coloured pictures by himself—examples of colour-printing which beat any subsequent work that I have ever seen. He also spent thirteen years in doing "The Official Baronage of England," a wonderful monument of industry and learning. Another brother was Henry Doyle, a great judge of old paintings, and in later years the manager of the National Gallery in Dublin, where he earned his C.B. The third son was Richard Doyle, whose whimsical humour made him famous in "Punch," the cover of which with its dancing elves is still so familar an object. Finally came Charles Doyle, my father.

The Doyle family seem to have been fairly well-to-do, thanks to my grandfather's talents. They lived in London in Cambridge Terrace. A sketch of their family life is given in "Dicky Doyle's Diary." They lived up to their income, however, and it became necessary to find places for the boys. When my father was only nineteen a seat was offered him in the Government Office of Works in Edinburgh, whither he went. There he spent his working life, and thus it came about that I, an Irishman by extraction, was born in the Scottish capital.

The Doyles, Anglo-Norman in origin, were strong Roman Catholics. The original Doyle, or D'Oil, was a cadet-branch of the Staffordshire Doyles, which has produced Sir Francis Hastings Doyle and many other distinguished men. This cadet shared in the invasion of Ireland and was granted estates in County Wexford, where a great clan rose of dependants, illegitimate children and others, all taking the feudal lord's name, just as the de Burghs founded the clan of Burke. We can only claim to be the main stem by virtue of community of character and appearance with the English Doyles and the unbroken use of the same crest and coat-of-arms.

My forbears, like most old Irish families in the south, kept to the old faith at the Reformation and fell

victims to the penal laws in consequence. These became so crushing upon landed gentry that my great-grandfather was driven from his estate and became a silk-mercer in Dublin, where "H. B." was born. This family record was curiously confirmed by Monsignor Barry Doyle, destined, I think, for the highest honours of the Roman Church, who traces back to the younger brother of my great-grandfather.

I trust the reader will indulge me in my excursion into these family matters, which are of vital interest to the family, but must be tedious to the outsider. As I am on the subject, I wish to say a word upon my mother's family, the more so as she was great on archæology, and had, with the help of Sir Arthur Vicars, Ulster King of Arms, and himself a relative, worked out her descent for more than five hundred years, and so composed a family tree which lies before me as I write and on which many of the great ones of the earth have roosted.

Her father was a young doctor of Trinity College, William Foley, who died young and left his family in comparative poverty. He had married one Katherine Pack, whose death-bed—or rather the white waxen thing which lay upon that bed—is the very earliest recollection of my life. Her near relative—uncle, I think—was Sir Denis Pack, who led the Scottish brigade at Waterloo. The Packs were a fighting family, as was but right since they were descended in a straight line from a major in Cromwell's army who settled in Ireland. One of them, Anthony Pack, had part of his head carried off at the same battle, so I fear it is part of our family tradition that we lose our heads in action. His brain was covered over by a silver plate and he lived for many years, subject only to very bad fits of temper, which some of us have had with less excuse.

But the real romance of the family lies in the fact that about the middle of the seventeenth century the Reverend Richard Pack, who was head of Kilkenny College, married Mary Percy, who was heir to the Irish branch of the Percys of Northumberland. By this alliance we all connect up (and I have every generation by name, as marked out by my dear mother) with that

illustrious line up to three separate marriages with the Plantagenets. One has, therefore, some strange strains in one's blood which are noble in origin and, one can but hope, are noble in tendency.

But all this romance of ancestry did not interfere with the fact that when Katherine Pack, the Irish gentlewoman, came in her widowhood to Edinburgh, she was very poor. I have never been clear why it was Edinburgh for which she made. Having taken a flat she let it be known that a paying-guest would be welcome. Just at this time, 1850 or thereabouts, Charles Doyle was sent from London with a recommendation to the priests that they should guard his young morals and budding faith. How could they do this better than by finding him quarters with a well-born and orthodox widow? Thus it came about that two separate lines of Irish wanderers came together under one roof.

I have a little bundle of my father's letters written in those days, full of appreciation of the kindness which he met with and full, also, of interesting observations on that Scottish society, rough, hard-drinking and kindly, into which he had been precipitated at a dangerously early age, especially for one with his artistic temperament. He had some fine religious instincts, but his environment was a difficult one. In the household was a bright-eyed, very intelligent younger daughter, Mary, who presently went off to France and returned as a very cultivated young woman. The romance is easily understood, and so Charles Doyle in the year 1855 married Mary Foley, my mother, the young couple still residing with my grandmother.

Their means were limited, for his salary as a Civil Servant was not more than about £240. This he supplemented by his drawings. Thus matters remained for practically all his life, for he was quite unambitious and no great promotion ever came his way. His painting was done spasmodically and the family did not always reap the benefit, for Edinburgh is full of water-colours which he had given away. It is one of my unfulfilled schemes to collect as many as possible and to have a Charles Doyle exhibition in London, for the

critics would be surprised to find what a great and original artist he was—far the greatest, in my opinion, of the family. His brush was concerned not only with fairies and delicate themes of the kind, but with wild and fearsome subjects, so that his work had a very peculiar style of its own, mitigated by great natural humour. He was more terrible than Blake and less morbid than Wiertz. His originality is best shown by the fact that one hardly knows with whom to compare him. In prosaic Scotland, however, he excited wonder rather than admiration, and he was only known in the larger world of London by pen and ink book-illustrations which were not his best mode of expression. The prosaic outcome was that including all his earnings my mother could never have averaged more than £300 a year on which to educate a large family. We lived in the hardy and bracing atmosphere of poverty and we each in turn did our best to help those who were younger than ourselves. My noble sister Annette, who died just as the sunshine of better days came into our lives, went out at a very early age as a governess to Portugal and sent all her salary home. My younger sisters, Lottie and Connie, both did the same thing; and I helped as I could. But it was still my dear mother who bore the long, sordid strain. Often I said to her, "When you are old, Mammie, you shall have a velvet dress and gold glasses and sit in comfort by the fire." Thank God, it so came to pass. My father, I fear, was of little help to her, for his thoughts were always in the clouds and he had no appreciation of the realities of life. The world, not the family, gets the fruits of genius.

Of my boyhood I need say little, save that it was Spartan at home and more Spartan at the Edinburgh school where a tawse-brandishing schoolmaster of the old type made our young lives miserable. From the age of seven to nine I suffered under this pock-marked, one-eyed rascal who might have stepped from the pages of Dickens. In the evenings, home and books were my sole consolation, save for week-end holidays. My comrades were rough boys and I became a rough boy, too. If there is any truth in the idea of reincarnation—a point

on which my mind is still open—I think some earlier experience of mine must have been as a stark fighter, for it came out strongly in youth, when I rejoiced in battle. We lived for some time in a *cul de sac* street with a very vivid life of its own and a fierce feud between the small boys who dwelt on either side of it. Finally it was fought out between two champions, I representing the poorer boys who lived in flats and my opponent the richer boys who lived in the opposite villas. We fought in the garden of one of the said villas and had an excellent contest of many rounds, not being strong enough to weaken each other. When I got home after the battle, my mother cried, "Oh, Arthur, what a dreadful eye you have got!" To which I replied, "You just go across and look at Eddie Tulloch's eye!"

I met a well-deserved setback on one occasion when I stood forward to fight a bootmaker's boy, who had come into our preserve upon an errand. He had a green baize bag in his hand which contained a heavy boot, and this he swung against my skull with a force which knocked me pretty well senseless. It was a useful lesson. I will say for myself, however, that though I was pugnacious I was never so to those weaker than myself and that some of my escapades were in the defence of such. As I will show in my chapter on Sport, I carried on my tastes into a later period of my life.

One or two little pictures stand out which may be worth recording. When my grandfather's grand London friends passed through Edinburgh they used, to our occasional embarrassment, to call at the little flat "to see how Charles is getting on." In my earliest childhood such a one came, tall, white-haired and affable. I was so young that it seems like a faint dream, and yet it pleases me to think that I have sat on Thackeray's knee. He greatly admired my dear little mother with her grey Irish eyes and her vivacious Celtic ways—indeed, no one met her without being captivated by her.

Once, too, I got a glimpse of history. It was in 1866, if my dates are right, that some well-to-do Irish relatives asked us over for a few weeks, and we passed that time in a great house in King's County. I spent much of it with the horses and dogs, and became

friendly with the young groom. The stables opened on to a country road by an arched gate with a loft over it. One morning, being in the yard, I saw the young groom rush into the yard with every sign of fear and hastily shut and bar the doors. He then climbed into the loft, beckoning to me to come with him. From the loft window we saw a gang of rough men, twenty or so, slouching along the road. When they came opposite to the gate they stopped and looking up shook their fists and cursed at us. The groom answered back most volubly. Afterwards I understood that these men were a party of Fenians, and that I had had a glimpse of one of the periodical troubles which poor old Ireland has endured. Perhaps now, at last, they may be drawing to an end.

During these first ten years I was a rapid reader, so rapid that some small library with which we dealt gave my mother notice that books would not be changed more than twice a day. My tastes were boylike enough, for Mayne Reid was my favourite author, and his "Scalp Hunters" my favourite book. I wrote a little book and illustrated it myself in early days. There was a man in it and there was a tiger who amalgamated shortly after they met. I remarked to my mother with precocious wisdom that it was easy to get people into scrapes, but not so easy to get them out again, which is surely the experience of every writer of adventures.

CHAPTER II

UNDER THE JESUITS

The Preparatory School—The Mistakes of Education—Spartan Schooling—Corporal Punishment—Well-known School Fellows—Gloomy Forecasts—Poetry—London Matriculation—German School—A Happy Year—The Jesuits—Strange Arrival in Paris.

I WAS in my tenth year when I was sent to Hodder, which is the preparatory school for Stonyhurst, the big Roman Catholic public school in Lancashire.

It was a long journey for a little boy who had never been away from home before, and I felt very lonesome and wept bitterly upon the way, but in due time I arrived safely at Preston, which was then the nearest station, and with many other small boys and our black-robed Jesuit guardians we drove some twelve miles to the school. Hodder is about a mile from Stonyhurst, and as all the boys there are youngsters under twelve, it forms a very useful institution, breaking a lad into school ways before he mixes with the big fellows.

I had two years at Hodder. The year was not broken up by the frequent holidays which illuminate the present educational period. Save for six weeks each summer, one never left the school. On the whole, those first two years were happy years. I could hold my own both in brain and in strength with my comrades. I was fortunate enough to get under the care of a kindly principal, one Father Cassidy, who was more human than Jesuits usually are. I have always kept a warm remembrance of this man and of his gentle ways to the little boys—young rascals many of us—who were committed to his care. I remember the Franco-German War breaking out at this period, and how it made a ripple even in our secluded backwater.

From Hodder I passed on to Stonyhurst, that grand mediæval dwelling-house which was left some hundred and fifty years ago to the Jesuits, who brought over their whole teaching staff from some college in Holland in order to carry it on as a public school. The general curriculum, like the building, was mediæval but sound. I understand it has been modernized since. There were seven classes—elements, figures, rudiments, grammar, syntax, poetry and rhetoric—and you were allotted a year for each, or seven in all—a course with which I faithfully complied, two having already been completed at Hodder. It was the usual public school routine of Euclid, algebra and the classics, taught in the usual way, which is calculated to leave a lasting abhorrence of these subjects. To give boys a little slab of Virgil or Homer with no general idea as to what it is

all about or what the classical age was like, is surely an absurd way of treating the subject. I am sure that an intelligent boy could learn more by reading a good translation of Homer for a week than by a year's study of the original as it is usually carried out. It was no worse at Stonyhurst than at any other school, and it can only be excused on the plea that any exercise, however stupid in itself, forms a sort of mental dumb-bell by which one can improve one's mind. It is, I think, a thoroughly false theory. I can say with truth that my Latin and Greek, which cost me so many weary hours, have been little use to me in life, and that my mathematics have been no use at all. On the other hand, some things which I picked up almost by accident, the art of reading aloud, learned when my mother was knitting, or the reading of French books, learned by spelling out the captions of the Jules Verne illustrations, have been of the greatest possible service. My classical education left me with a horror of the classics, and I was astonished to find how fascinating they were when I read them in a reasonable manner in later years.

Year by year, then, I see myself climbing those seven weary steps and passing through as many stages of my boyhood. I do not know if the Jesuit system of education is good or not; I would need to have tried another system as well before I could answer that. On the whole it was justified by results, for I think it turned out as decent a set of young fellows as any other school would do. In spite of a large infusion of foreigners and some disaffected Irish, we were a patriotic crowd, and our little pulse beat time with the heart of the nation. I am told that the average of V.C.'s and D.S.O.'s now held by old Stonyhurst boys is very high as compared with other schools. The Jesuit teachers have no trust in human nature, and perhaps they are justified. We were never allowed for an instant to be alone with each other, and I think that the immorality which is rife in public schools was at a minimum in consequence. In our games and our walks the priests always took part, and a master perambulated the dormitories at night. Such a system may weaken self-respect and self-help, but it at least minimizes temptation and scandal.

The life was Spartan, and yet we had all that was needed. Dry bread and hot well-watered milk was our frugal breakfast. There was a "joint" and twice a week a pudding for dinner. Then there was an odd snack called "bread and beer" in the afternoon, a bit of dry bread and the most extraordinary drink, which was brown but had no other characteristic of beer. Finally, there was hot milk again, bread, butter, and often potatoes for supper. We were all very healthy on this *régime*, with fish, on Fridays. Everything in every way was plain to the verge of austerity, save that we dwelt in a beautiful building, dined in a marble-floored hall with minstrels' gallery, prayed in a lovely church, and generally lived in very choice surroundings so far as vision and not comfort was concerned.

Corporal punishment was severe, and I can speak with feeling as I think few, if any, boys of my time endured more of it. It was of a peculiar nature, imported also, I fancy, from Holland. The instrument was a piece of india-rubber of the size and shape of a thick boot sole. This was called a "Tolley"—why, no one has explained, unless it is a Latin pun on what we had to bear. One blow of this instrument, delivered with intent, would cause the palm of the hand to swell up and change colour. When I say that the usual punishment of the larger boys was nine on each hand, and that nine on one hand was the absolute minimum, it will be understood that it was a severe ordeal, and that the sufferer could not, as a rule, turn the handle of the door to get out of the room in which he had suffered. To take twice nine upon a cold day was about the extremity of human endurance. I think, however, that it was good for us in the end, for it was a point of honour with many of us not to show that we were hurt, and that is one of the best trainings for a hard life. If I was more beaten than others it was not that I was in any way vicious, but it was that I had a nature which responded eagerly to affectionate kindness (which I never received), but which rebelled against threats and took a perverted pride in showing that it would not be cowed by violence. I went out of my way to do