

## CHEERFUL YESTERDAYS.

## II.

## A CHILD OF THE COLLEGE.

I COME back to Cambridge every autumn, when the leaves are falling from the trees, and the old university, like the weird witch-hazel in the groves, puts out fresh blossoms at the season when all else grows sere. It is a never failing delight to behold the hundreds of new-comers who then throng our streets: boys with smooth and unworn faces, full of the zest of their own being, taking the whole world as having been made for them, — which indeed it was; willing to do any needful kindness to an elder human being, as in rescuing him from carriage-wheels or picking him out of the mud, but otherwise as wholesomely indifferent to his very existence as if he were a lamp-post or a horseless vehicle. If he be wise, he joyfully accepts the situation, and takes in it something of the pride which a father feels when his youngest son overtops him by a head. Instead of grudging to the new-comers this empire of the immediate future, I feel always impelled to welcome them to it; in behalf of the human race, I rejoice to see its vigor so lustily maintained; the visible self-confidence is well founded, and has the facts on its side. The future is theirs to command, not ours; it belongs to them even more than they think it does, and this is undoubtedly saying a good deal.

This ready self-subordination to these kings of to-morrow may come, in my own case, from the fact that I am, more than any one else now living in Cambridge, except perhaps John Holmes and Professor Norton, a child of the college; and the latter is my junior, and was once in my eyes one of these very boys. All three of us were, so to speak,

born in the college, bred to it, and interested from earliest recollection in its men. Never having been or having wished to be one of its officials, I look upon its annual harvest of youthful life with all the more dispassionate interest. Living in a college town is, after all, very much like dwelling just outside of a remarkably large glass beehive, where one can watch all day long the busy little people inside; can see them going incessantly to and fro at their honey-making, pausing occasionally to salute or sting one another, — and all without the slightest peril to the beholder. Life becomes rich in this safe and curious contemplation, and this is a pursuit which every boy in a college town begins very early. It was thus that Charles Parsons and I, from the time we were allowed to go alone in the street, studied the little academical world on whose edge we dwelt.

At ten years of age, it is certain, we could repeat the list of every undergraduate class alphabetically, and prided ourselves on knowing every student by sight. This was not so incredible as it would now seem, for the classes rarely had more than fifty each, the whole college counting little more than half as many as a single class now numbers. All these young fellows we not merely knew, but studied individually, — their nicknames, their games, their individual haunts: we watched them at football or cricket; had our favorites and our butts; waited anxiously for the time when, once or twice a year, the professor of chemistry gave many of them "exhilarating gas," as it was called, on the triangle then known as the Delta, and they gesticulated, made speeches, or recited poetry, as unconscious of their self-revelation as an autobiographer.

Sometimes in summer evenings — for

the college term then lasted until the middle of July — we would amuse ourselves by selecting in the street some single student, and trailing him from place to place, like the Indians of whom we had read in Cooper's novels; following wherever he went, watching, waiting, often losing and then finding him again, and perhaps delaying our own early bedtime that we might see him through some prolonged evening call, though he was all unconscious of our watchful care. I can still breathe the aroma of the lilac-bushes among which we ensconced ourselves, and catch a glimpse of the maiden who possibly appeared to bid him a demure good-night. On other days there was the Harvard Washington Corps, or college military company, to watch at its drill on the common, or on its proud march to the suburban tavern where it dined, — Porter's, at what is now North Cambridge, — and its sometimes devious return. O ecstasy of childish love for costume and rhythm and glory! In later life I have ridden at the head of a thousand marching men, and felt no such sense of exaltation above the low earth as when I first saw my favorite elder brother, in the prescribed white trousers and black coat, with epaulets and befrogged sleeves, marching as second lieutenant before one of the swaying platoons of the "College Company."

With all this precocious interest in the students, it is needless to say that I awaited with absorbing eagerness the time when I should enter that great little world into which my immediate playmate had preceded me; and that it was a blissful moment when I at last found myself, one autumn morning, admitted on examination, without conditions, and standing on the steps of University Hall, looking about with a new sense of ownership on the trees my father had planted. I was not yet fourteen, and was the youngest in my class; but never since in life have I had such a vivid sense of a ca-

reer, an opportunity, a battle to be won. This is what gilds the memory of college life: that we dwelt there like Goethe's fairy Melusina or the heroine of O'Brien's *Diamond Lens*, in a real but miniature world, a microcosm of the visible universe. It seems to me that I never have encountered a type of character in the greater world which was not represented more or less among my classmates, or dealt with any thought or principle which was not discussed in elementary form in our evening walks up Brattle Street.

Harvard College was then a comparatively small affair, as was the village in which it existed; but both had their day of glory, which was Commencement Day, now a merely academic ceremonial, but then a public festival for eastern Massachusetts. It has been so well described by both Lowell and John Holmes that I will not dwell upon it in detail. The streets were filled with people, arriving from far and near; there were booths, fairs, horse-races, encampments of alleged gamblers in outlying groves. Perhaps the most striking single illustrations of the day's importance lay in the fact that the banks in Boston were closed on that day, and that Boston gentlemen, even if not graduates of the college, often came to Cambridge for a day or two, at that time, taking rooms and receiving their friends. My grandfather, Stephen Higginson, used to come over from Brookline, take quarters in this way at Porter's tavern (the Boylston Street Porter), and keep open house, with probable punch-bowl. For the rest of the year Cambridge relapsed into a kind of privacy, except that three days of "Exhibition" — a sort of minor Commencement, with public exercises — were distributed through the terms. At ordinary times the external status of the college was more like that of some country academy than that of an embryo university. There were but seven buildings inside the college yard, and

but one outside. There are now about 3000 students, of various grades and departments, registered in Cambridge; in 1837, when I entered, there were but 305 such students; and in 1841, when I graduated, but 366. In like manner, Cambridge is now a city of some 85,000 inhabitants, whereas in 1840 it had but 8409, distributed among three villages, of which Old Cambridge, grouped round the college buildings, had less than half. Yet, after all, these figures make little difference to the boy; a crowd is a crowd, whether it be counted by hundreds or thousands, for you see at the most only those immediately pressing round you. For us, I repeat, the college was a world; whether larger or smaller on the outskirts was of secondary importance.

It is mistakenly assumed by clergymen and editors that this little community, in its village days, was necessarily more virtuous, or at least more decorous, than now. The fact is all the other way; for the early drinking habits of society still flourished, and the modern temperance agitation was but beginning. When Allston, the painter, kept the records of the Hasty Pudding Club, in rhyme, he thus described the close of the annual dinner of that frugal body:—

“And each one to evince his spunk  
Vied with his neighbor to get drunk;  
Nor tedious was the mighty strife  
With these true-blooded blades of life,  
For less than hours two had gone  
When roaring mad was every one.”

Allston left college in 1800, forty years before my day; yet it was in my own time that the Rev. Dr. John Pierce recorded in his Diary that he had seen men intoxicated at ΦΒΚ dinners who were never seen in this condition at any other time. We boys used to watch the Harvard Washington Corps on its return from the dinner at Porter's, quite secure that some of our acquaintances would stagger out of the ranks and find lodgment in the gutter. The

regular Class Day celebration was for the seniors to gather under Liberty Tree and serve out buckets of punch to all comers. Robbing hen-roosts was common enough, and youths of good standing in my own class would organize marauding expeditions, with large baskets, to bring back pears and melons from the market gardens in what is now Belmont. These things hurt no one's reputation at that day, whereas now to be suspected of them would dethrone the most popular man: he would be voted a “cad” or a “mucker;” he would be dropped from his clubs. As for the drinking habit, I have no statistics to offer, but an intoxicated student is the rarest possible sight in the streets of Cambridge. This may not involve a clear gain in morality, but the improvement in gentlemanliness is enormous.

The college of that period has been sometimes described as drawing its students from a smaller geographical range than at present. This was of course true in a general way, yet in one respect the precise contrary was the case. In that ante-bellum period, the Southern students were a noticeable element in the college, and a very conspicuous one in the Law School, being drawn thereto by the great reputation of Judge Story; and as these youths were all reared under the influence of slavery, they contributed a far more distinctive element in Cambridge society than anything now to be seen there. The difference between the richest student from New York or California and the very poorest and most abstemious boy from some New England farm is not nearly so marked as that which then distinguished the demeanor of the average Southern from the average New England student. As a rule, the Southerners were clearly the favorites in Cambridge society: they usually had charming manners, social aptitudes, imperious ways, abundant leisure, and plenty of money; they were graceful dancers, often musical and some-

times well taught. On the other hand, they were often indolent, profligate, and quarrelsome; they were almost wholly responsible for the "town and gown" rows, now extinct, but then not infrequent. Contributing sometimes the most brilliant young men to the Law School, they furnished also a class who, having been brought up on remote plantations and much indulged, had remained grossly ignorant. I remember one in particular who was supposed to have entered the Law School, but who proved to be taking private lessons in something from Charles Devens, afterwards judge and major-general. A mystery hung about the matter till it was found that the youth, who was as showy as any of his companions in dress and bearing, was simply learning to read and write.

Let us now turn back to the condition of intellectual affairs. The entrance examination of those days was by no means the boys' play that is sometimes asserted. It represented, no doubt, a year less of work than the present examination; yet it included some points not now made obligatory, as for instance the rendering of English into Greek and Latin. We were also called upon to translate at sight from authors not previously read, although this provision did not appear in the catalogues, and is usually cited as of more recent origin. Once within, my class was lucky enough to encounter a very exceptional period, — the time, namely, when a temporary foray into the elective system took place, anticipating in a small way the very desirable results which have followed from its later application; although that first experiment was, unluckily, discontinued in a few years, under a more conservative president. Meanwhile, the class of 1841 was one of the very few which enjoyed its benefits. Under the guidance of George Ticknor, the method had long been applied to the modern languages; but we were informed one day, to our delight, that it was to be extended also

to mathematics, with a prospect of further expansion. As a matter of fact, the word "elective" did not appear on the college catalogues until 1841–42, but for two years previous this special announcement about mathematics was given in a footnote. The spirit of a new freedom began at once to make itself felt in other departments; the Latin and Greek professors, for instance, beginning to give lectures, though in an irregular way, in addition to their usual duty of extracting from us what small knowledge we possessed. The reason why the experiment was made with mathematics was understood to be that Professor Peirce had grown weary of driving boys through the differential calculus by force, and Professor E. T. Channing had declared that all taste for mathematics was a matter of special inspiration. For myself, I eagerly took this study as an elective, with about ten classmates; nor had I any reason to repent the choice.

Professor Benjamin Peirce, our mathematical teacher, was then put, by general opinion, at the head of American mathematicians, — a place which, I believe, he still retains by tradition. In his later years, and after the abandonment of the temporary elective method, he may have become discouraged or apathetic, but when I knew him he was in his prime, and he was to me of all teachers the most inspiring and delightful. He was then a very handsome man, with the most eager and ardent manner, alternating with deep absorption, and he gave beyond all others the effect of original and creative genius. We studied, by an added stroke of good luck, his *Curves and Functions*, which was just passing through the press, and the successive parts of which were bound up for our use. This added to the charm; it seemed like mathematics in the making. I was already old enough to appreciate the wonderful compactness and close reasoning of these volumes, and to enter with eager zest into filling the intermediate

gaps afforded by the long steps often taken from one equation to another. Dr. Bowditch, the translator of Laplace's *Mécanique Céleste*, used to say that whenever he came to one of Laplace's "Whence it plainly appears," he was in for an hour or two of toil in order to make this exceeding plainness visible. It was often so with Peirce's books, but this enhanced the pleasure of the chase. He himself took part in it: a thought would sometimes flash into his mind, and he would begin to work it out on the blackboard before our eyes; forgetting our very existence, he would labor away with the chalk, writing out with lightning rapidity a series of equations, smaller and smaller, chasing his scientific prey down into the utmost right-hand corner of the blackboard, and finally turning to us with a sigh when the pursuit was ended. Again was the science of mathematics being created before our very eyes; it was like being present at the first discoveries of some old Greek or Arabian geometrician. Peirce had also the delightful quality of being especially interested in all of this his first voluntary class, and indeed of greatly overrating their merits. When I left college, he gave me an indorsement which took my breath away, and had me placed, at eighteen, on the examining committee in his department. Years after, when in a fair way to pass some time in jail after an anti-slavery riot, I met him, and said that I had reserved that period of imprisonment for reviewing mathematics and reading Laplace. His fine eyes kindled, and he replied, "In that case, I sincerely hope that you may go there." He was then vehemently opposed to the abolitionists, and it seemed a double blessing to gag one of them and at the same time create a mathematician. The indictment was, unluckily, quashed, so that both his hopes were disappointed.

Next to Peirce's teaching came, without question, both in stimulus and in attractions, the English course of Profes-

sor Edward Tyrrel Channing. Professor Wendell has lately spoken of the present standard of training in English composition at Harvard as if it were quite a new thing; but with some opportunity of observing it, I have never had reason to think it any new departure as compared with that given by Professor Channing, down to 1841 at least. The evidence would seem to be that between that period and 1846, when Professor Child graduated, Professor Channing had in some way lost his hold upon his pupils as his years advanced; so that when Professor Child succeeded to the chair, in 1851, it was with a profound distrust in the whole affair, insomuch that the very department of rhetoric and oratory came near being wiped out of existence, and was saved by the indignant protest of the late Charles Francis Adams. Certain it is that this department was, in my time, by far the most potent influence in determining college rank, and therefore in stimulating ambition. We wrote themes every fortnight and forensics once a month; and as these were marked on a scale of 48, and ordinary recitations on a scale of 8, the importance of this influence may be seen. Never in my life have I had to meet such exacting criticism on anything written as came from Professor Channing, and never have I had any praise so encouraging as his. My marks were often second in the class, sometimes equaling — O day of glory! — those of my classmate, Francis Edward Parker, who was easily first; and to have a passage read to the class for praise, even anonymously, was beyond all other laurels, though the satisfaction might be marred occasionally by the knowledge that my elder sister had greatly helped in that particular sentence. When it is considered that Channing's method reared most of the well-known writers whom New England was then producing, — that it was he who trained Emerson, C. F. Adams, Hedge, A. P. Peabody, Felton, Hillard, Win-



throp, Holmes, Sumner, Motley, Phillips, Bowen, Lovering, Torrey, Dana, Lowell, Thoreau, Hale, Thomas Hill, Child, Fitzedward Hall, Lane, and Norton, — it will be seen that the classic portion of our literature came largely into existence under him. He fulfilled the aspiration attributed to Increase Mather when he wished to become president of Harvard College: to mould not merely the teaching, but the teachers, — *non lapides dolare, sed architectos*.

The controlling influence of a college is determined, of course, by its officers, and I have never felt that we had anything in respect of which we could complain. The experience lately described by an elder contemporary of discovering that he personally knew more than at least the tutors of his time was one which never troubled me. Two of the four tutors, Bowen and Lovering, were men eminent as scholars from youth to old age; the third, Jones Very, was a man of genius; and the fourth, Charles Mason, — now Judge Mason, of Fitchburg, — certainly knew incomparably more of Latin than I did. Of the older professors, Felton was a cultivated Greek scholar, and Beck brought to Latin the thoroughness of his German drill. I need not say what it was to read French with Longfellow; and it is pleasant to remember that once — during one of those preposterous little rebellions which then occurred every two or three years, and which have wholly disappeared under a freer discipline — when the students were gathered in the college yard, and had refused to listen to several professors, there was a hush when Longfellow appeared, and my classmate, John Revere, cried out, "We will hear Professor Longfellow, for he always treats us like gentlemen." Longfellow was the first, I think, to introduce the prefix "Mr." in addressing students, a thing now almost universal.

For our other modern-language teachers, we had Pietro Bachi, a picturesque

Italian refugee; in German, Bernard Roelker, since well known as a lawyer in New York; and we had that delightful old Francis Sales, whom Lowell has commemorated, as our teacher of Spanish. In him we had a man who might have stepped bodily out of the *Gil Blas* and *Don Quixote* he taught. We never knew whether he was French or Spanish. He was then about sixty-five, and his robust head and shoulders, his pigtail and powdered hair, with his quaint accent, made him seem the survival of some picturesque and remote age. He was, moreover, extremely indulgent, gave the highest marks for recitations, and was in all respects a favorite. A classmate who sat next me, George Hay, took delight in inflicting upon the innocent old man the most incredible or old-fashioned English oaths as equivalent to the quaint Spanish expletives; and when he gravely introduced "Odds' fish" or "Gogzounds," Mr. Sales would look bewildered for a moment, and then roll out his stentorian "Ha! ha! ha! By Jorge!" in a way to add still further to the list of unexpected phrases, and to make the dusty room in Massachusetts Hall jubilant for that day.

President Quincy was popular among us, but lost direct weight in our minds through his failure of memory and the necessity of constantly telling him who we were. Dr. Walker we admired because of his wise and sententious preaching, and his reputation, not unjustified, of peculiar penetration into character. Jared Sparks lectured on history, under great disadvantages; and I have always been gratified that it was from him — a man accounted unimaginative — that for the first time the thought was suggested to us of the need of imagination to an historian, not for the purpose of invention, but for recreating a given period and shaping it in the representation. Dr. Harris, the librarian and naturalist, was always a delightful teacher and friend, though the chief enjoyment of

him included attendance on a private class in entomology in the evening, for which we got no college credits. Sometimes we took walks with him, or brought him new plants or butterflies. I was secretary of the college Natural History Society for a time, and in looking back on the various reports written by me for its meetings, it is interesting to see that this wholly voluntary work had a freshness and vigor beyond what I can now trace in any of the "themes" of which Professor Channing thought so well. There is no greater mark of progress in the university than the expansion of its electives to include the natural sciences. My own omnivorousness in study was so great that I did not suffer very much from our restricted curriculum; but there were young men in my time who would have graduated in these later days with highest honors in some department of physics or biology, but who were then at the very foot of the class, and lost for life the advantage of early training in the studies they loved. Akin to this modern gain and equally unquestionable is the advantage now enjoyed in the way of original research. Every year young men of my acquaintance come to me for consultation about some thesis they are preparing in history or literature, and they little know the envy with which they inspire their adviser; that they should be spared from the old routine to investigate anything for themselves seems such a happiness.

There is not the slightest doubt in my mind, as an extra-collegiate observer, of the vast improvement made by the elective system; and I should like to see it extended yet more widely, so as to annul absolutely all distinction in grade between "academic" and "scientific" courses. The day of universal scholarship, when Plutarch or Bacon could go the round of knowledge and label every item, is as extinct as the saurian epoch. The world is simply too large. The most enthusiastic scholar must forego

ten times as many paths as he can pursue, and must resign himself to be a specialist. It is inevitable, but it has obvious disadvantages. The last of the old-fashioned Cambridge scholars of whom one could ask a miscellaneous question, with prospect of answer, died with the late Professor Torrey. I now know that I can make no inquiry so difficult but there is probably some man in Cambridge who can answer it; yet it may take a week of investigation to ascertain just who that man is. On the other hand, the things which these wise men do not know are constantly surprising, at least to a survivor of the old miscellaneous method. I have had a professor of political economy stop me in the street to ask who Charles Brockden Brown was; and when I suggested to a senior student who was seeking a lecturer for some society that he might ask John Fiske, he replied that he had never heard his name. Now, I knew all about Charles Brockden Brown before I was twelve years old, from Sparks's *American Biography*, and it was not easy to see how any one could read the newspapers, even three or four years ago, and not be familiar with the name of John Fiske. Yet this specialization extends, in truth, to all classes of the community. A Boston lawyer, the other day, told a friend of mine that, in his opinion, the Harvard professors were less eminent than formerly. My friend replied with truth that the only difference was that they were less likely to be all-round men, known to everybody; but that the teachers of to-day were more likely to be eminent in some particular department, in which they usually knew far more than their predecessors. "There is, for instance," he said, "Professor Farlow, who has an international reputation as an authority in cryptogamic botany." "I never even heard of him," said the lawyer, "nor of cryptogamic botany, either."

The same change is apparent in the

varying standards of athletic exercise. To those who loved, as I did, the old-time football, — the very thud of the ball, the scent of bruised grass, the mighty rush of a hundred men, the swift and cool defense, — there is something insufficient in the presence of a whole university sitting and shivering in the chill wind around an arena where a few picked gladiators push and wrestle; while those who know every point of the new contest feel a natural contempt for the crudities of the old. So those who now regard with surprise, or even lift with irreverence, the heavy three-cornered bats and large balls of the game we called cricket — the very implements used by my own class are deposited at the Hemenway Gymnasium — do not know that their comments are like those of Saladin on the heavy sword of King Richard, which ponderous weapon, after all, did good service in its day. The joy of athletic exercises is a part of the youth to which they belong, and does not depend upon the advance of science; nor is the admiration of their heroes a matter of to-day only. I never saw the late Charles Franklin Shimmie, of Boston, up to his dying day, that I did not recall the thrill of admiration for his unequalled “rushes” on the football field; and when we casually met, we always talked about them. Of the two best bowlers in my class, the one, Charles Sedgwick, was at the head of the class in scholarship, and the other, Eben William Rollins, was far down in the rank list, but they were equally our heroes at the cricketing hour. The change chiefly perceptible to me to-day is that whereas we were proud of Sedgwick’s scholarship as well as of his bowling, it is likely that, in the present intense absorption in what may be called vicarious athletics, any amount of intellectual eminence would count but as the dust on the fly-wheel. In this respect we go a little further just now, I fancy, than our English kinsfolk. It is a rare thing in our American Cambridge to

hear of any student as being admired for his scholarship; but when I was taken, twenty years ago, to see the intercollegiate races at the older Cambridge, my friends were as careful to point out the men who were “great swells” in chemistry or in Greek as to call my attention to “the celebrated stroke, Goldie.”

The class to which I belonged — the class of 1841 — was compact and tolerably well united, though small. It had perhaps more than the usual share of class feeling, which probably dated from the time when we had the rare experience of defeating the sophomores at the opening game of football. There was an impression that the Faculty were rather afraid of us, a view which would probably have much astonished those worthy gentlemen had it ever reached their ears. The strongest impression which is conveyed by looking back on our number collectively, after a half century’s lapse, is that of the utter impossibility of casting in advance the horoscope of a whole set of young men. The class numbered several who afterwards won distinction in different walks in life; and while the actual careers of some might have been predicted, there were other lives which could not possibly have been anticipated by any of us. It required no great foresight to guess that Edward Clarke and Francis Minot would be physicians, and even eminent ones; that Rufus Woodward, of Worcester, would also be a physician, and a naturalist besides; that Thomas Church Haskell Smith, of Ohio, who was universally known among us as “Captain Smith,” and was the natural leader of the class, in case of civil war would become Major-General Smith, and chief of staff in the Army of the Potomac. Wickham Hoffman, of New York, showed in college the same steadfast and manly qualities which made him also prominent during the war as a staff officer at New Orleans, and afterwards as secretary of the American legation during the siege of Paris. Other



instances might be cited ; but, on the other hand, our class produced three men, all well known in later life, whose precise paths were such as no one of the class could ever by any possibility have guessed. Frank Parker, our first scholar, might naturally, we should all have said, reach the Supreme Bench in rapid strides ; our ambition for him was unbounded ; but that he should, instead of this, become the greatest business lawyer in Boston, that he should have charge of vast estates, that he should die rich, that his pall-bearers should be bank presidents and millionaires, this was something that no one could have credited in advance. He had to be very economical in college, as had most of us, — he could go without what he wanted, — but certainly I never surmised in him any peculiar gift for the especially judicious investment of a half dollar. It is a curious illustration of what it is now the fashion to call “heredity” that when this same remark was made to the late Dr. A. P. Peabody, who had been Parker’s pastor, he replied that it was perfectly true so far as it went, but that any one who had known Parker’s father would have comprehended the whole affair. The latter, he said, although a clergyman, was the business adviser of half the men in his parish.

In another instance, which was yet more remarkable, I know of no such explanation. Not a classmate of Henry Fowle Durant’s would ever have dreamed of the two achievements which have probably secured for his name a longer remembrance than will be awarded to any other member of the class ; no one would have deemed it possible that he would make a fortune by the practice of criminal law, and then devote it to founding a woman’s college. He lived out of the college yard, was little known in the class, was to all appearances indolent or without concentration ; one of the men whose favorite literature lies in old English plays. His very name was not that by which he afterwards

became noted ; it being originally Henry Welles Smith, and being changed subsequently to gratify a relative who was also his benefactor.

Stranger than even this transformation of name and career was the third bit of the unexpected. The only member of the class who ever landed in the state’s prison was precisely and unequivocally the most dignified and respectable man we mustered, — a man absolutely stainless as we knew him, whose whole aspect and bearing carried irresistible weight, and who was chosen by acclamation as the treasurer of our class fund. In truth, it was his face and manner that were his ruin ; he was a lawyer and had charge of estates ; trustful widows and orphans thronged round him and believed in him up to the moment the prison doors opened to receive him ; he could no more resist such perilous confidence than could Shakespeare’s Autolycus, and might say with him, “If I had a mind to be honest, I see Fortune would not suffer me.”

My only really intimate friend in the class was Parker, already named, who, although two years older than myself, and of more staidness of temperament and maturity of character, had great influence over me, and was wonderfully patient with my often serious errors. I frequently spent nights at his room, and we had few secrets from each other. All this was in a certain way creditable to us both, — though more so to him, in proportion as he was the superior, — inasmuch as it was a period when the ambition for college rank was intensely strong, and we were running neck and neck for the first place, through the time of our greatest intimacy. He was the better writer, reasoner, and classicist ; while I was fond of mathematics, which he hated, and was more successful than he in modern languages. Later, I discovered that we had been extremely close together in rank, most of the time, I sometimes passing him ; and that he

came out first by only some thirty or forty marks among many thousands. It was the only fitting conclusion; and as we were greatly separated, in maturer life, by his conservative and my radical tendencies, I rejoice to record this tribute to his memory. He had, even while in college, a certain cynicism, which was later very much developed, and rather marred his popularity; but his influence on us all was of the greatest value, as it was afterwards in the whole community where he lived.

I formed in college two other friendships, outside my own class, both with men who subsequently rendered real service to literature and art. One was the late Charles Callahan Perkins, who became the author of works on the Tuscan and Italian sculptors, and practically the founder of the Normal Art School in Boston, and of the whole system of art instruction in the public schools of Massachusetts. He was my room-mate during the senior year, and a most attractive person; handsome, refined, manly, without brilliant gifts, but with the most cultivated tastes and — a convenience quite rare among us — a liberal income. He was one of the few instances I have known of a man's being really helped and enlarged in his career by the possession of wealth — or what then passed for wealth — in youth. The other companion, who did more for my literary tastes than all other friends, was the late Levi Lincoln Thaxter, who in after-life helped more than any one to make Browning and Fitzgerald known in this country, — they being more widely read here in each case, for a time, than in their own land. This was the more remarkable as Thaxter never saw either of them, although he corresponded with Browning, who also wrote the inscription for his grave. Thaxter was about my age, though he was, like Perkins, two years younger in college; he was not a high scholar, but he was an ardent student of literature, and came much

under the influence of his cousin, Maria White, and of Lowell, her betrothed. Thaxter first led me to Emerson and to Hazlitt; the latter being for us both a temporary, and the former a lifelong source of influence. We were both lovers of Longfellow, also, and used to sit at the open window every New Year's Eve and read aloud his *Midnight Mass* to the *Dying Year*. Thaxter was an enthusiastic naturalist, which was another bond of union, and has bequeathed this taste to his youngest son, now an assistant professor of botany in Harvard University. To him I owe, finally, the rare privilege of borrowing from Maria White the first thin volumes of Tennyson's poems, which seemed to us, as was once said of Keats, to "double the value of words;" and we both became, a few years later, subscribers to the original yellow-covered issue of Browning's *Bells* and *Pomegranates*. Thaxter's personal modesty and reticence, and the later fame of his poet-wife, Celia, have obscured him to the world; but he was one of the most loyal and high-minded of men.

At my graduation I was four months short of eighteen, and my purpose was to teach for a few years, and then to study law. This early maturity had, however, one obvious advantage: that it would plainly give me more time to turn round, to pursue general study, and, if need be, to revise my choice of a pursuit. I ultimately used the interval for just these purposes, and was so far a gainer. In all other respects my youthfulness was a great disadvantage, and I have often dissuaded others from following my example in entering college too young. If they disregard the remonstrance, as is usually the case, great patience and charity are due them. The reason for this is that precocity scarcely ever extends through all the faculties at once, and those who are older than their years in some respects are almost always younger in others, — this being nature's way of restoring the balance.

Even if intellect and body are alike precocious, the judgment and the moral strength may remain weak and immature. Development in other respects, therefore, creates false expectations and brings unforeseen temptations of its own. This was, at any rate, the result in my case, although it took me several years

to find it out. The experience of those years, during that seething and exciting period marked by what the outside world called vaguely "Transcendentalism," and the enthusiasts inside the movement sometimes termed "the Gospel of the Newness," will be the subject of the next paper.

*Thomas Wentworth Higginson.*

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## WILLIAM MORRIS: THE MAN AND HIS WORK.

"WHEN Topsy dies, people will say, 'There goes the last of the Vikings.'" It is, alas, some fifteen years since I heard Dante Gabriel Rossetti speak these words in his studio one evening. Tired with his day's painting, he was talking of some early work which he, William Morris, and Burne-Jones had done in a common spirit, and this led to a discussion as to what was Morris's best achievement as a poet. One of the two others who were present declared for *The Earthly Paradise*; the other preferred the *Vol-sung* epic. Rossetti said that, speaking along the line of poetry as poetry, Topsy (a favorite name for Morris, almost invariably used by Rossetti, if I remember aright, first given by him on account of the shaggy locks and "Berserker" appearance of his friend) had never done anything to surpass his first volume, *The Defence of Guenevere*. Thereafter, alluding to some stupid remark that had been made in public about William Morris being merely a craftsman who also wrote poetry, he spoke of him with the utmost enthusiasm, of the man as poet, as creative artist, as a craftsman of extraordinary skill, knowledge, and initiative, and of the rare worth of the man as a man. It was then, apropos of his appearance, manner, and northern intensity of vigor, that he added, "When Topsy dies, people will say, 'There goes the last of the Vikings.'" Another fre-

quent name for Morris with Rossetti, and one readily adopted by other friends, was "the Skald." The circumstances which gave rise to the nickname are indicated in a letter from Rossetti (dated August, 1871) when he was staying at Kelmscott Manor, which at that time he shared with William Morris.

"Morris is expected here in about a month now, doubtless with wonderful tales of Iceland. But what is the use of going there if you are not allowed to make people stare well when you come back? An Icelandic paper which he sent, reporting his arrival, describes him as 'William Morris, Skald.'" "

For a long time thereafter, Morris was called by this appellation, which delighted him. Hammersmith, with all its commonplace and ignominious littlenesses, fell away from him when he could think of himself, or hear himself spoken of, as a skald, as the weaver of sagas, of heroic poems and chronicles for heroic men.

A skald, a viking indeed, was William Morris. I have never met any man who gave an impression of more exhaustless vitality. There never was a man who lived a fuller life; he was the very incarnation of ceaseless mental and bodily energy. Once he was asked if he were subject to that extreme despondency which so often accompanies the essentially poetic temperament. "I dare-