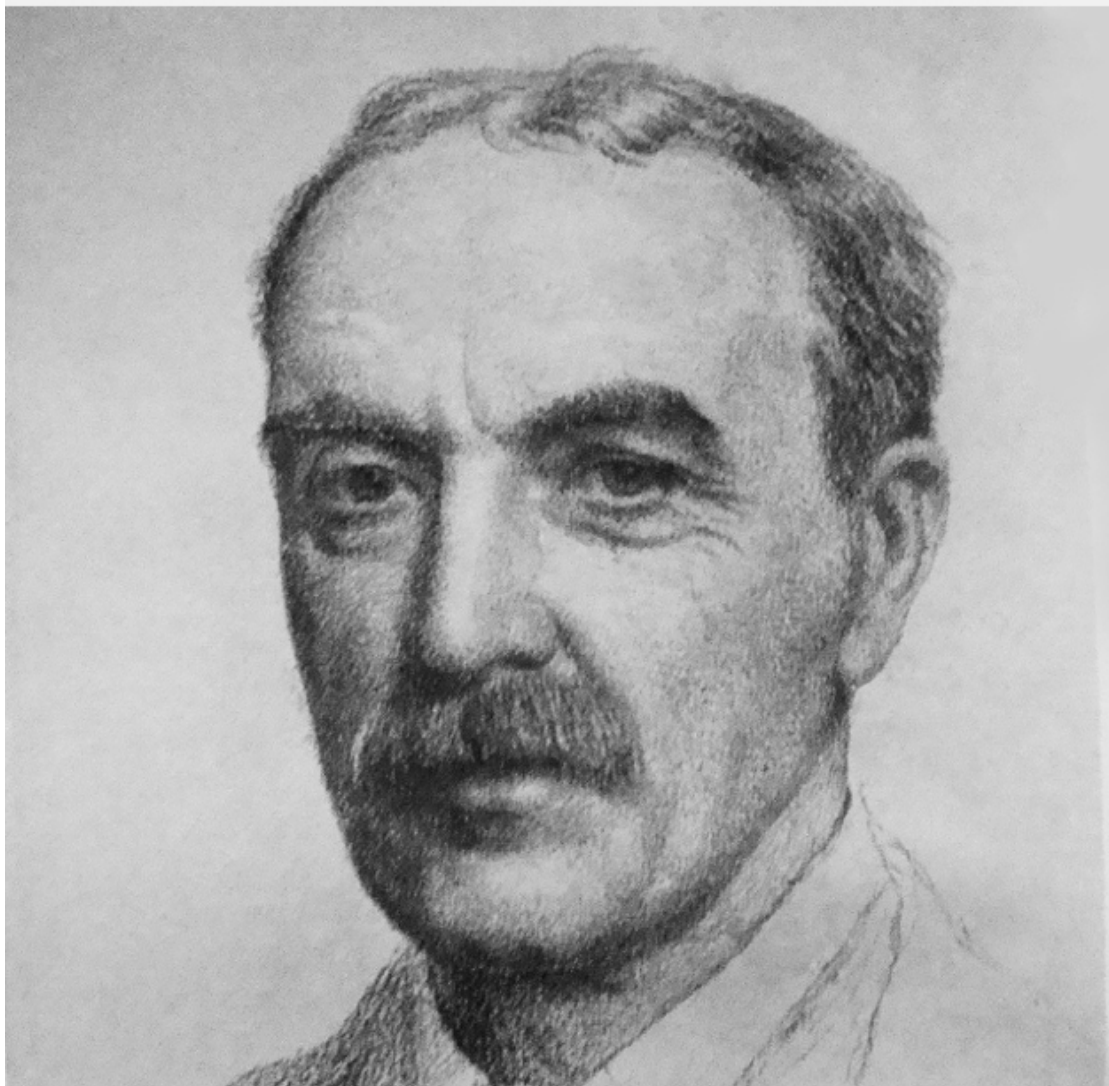




DELPHI
CLASSICS

Hale White

Complete Works



Series Sixteen

The Complete Works of

HALE WHITE

(1831-1913)



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The Delphi Classics Catalogue

W. Hale White

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Version 1

The Complete Works of

HALE WHITE



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Complete Works of Hale White



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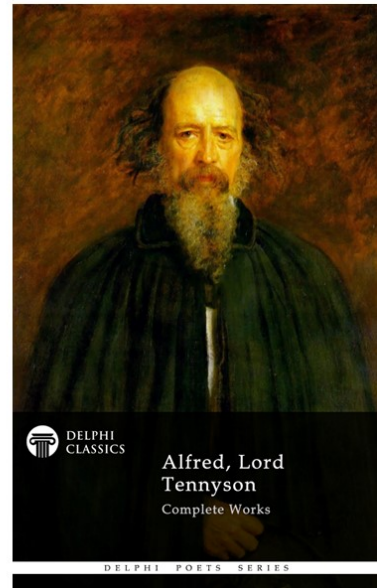
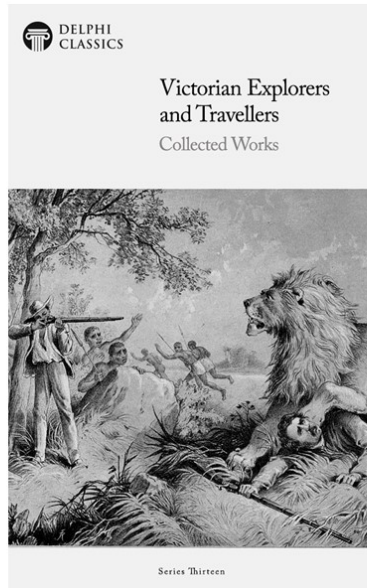
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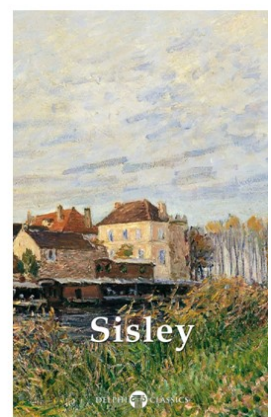
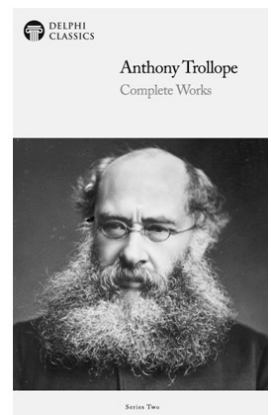
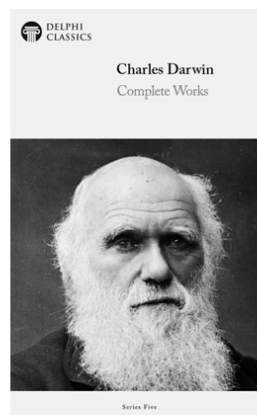
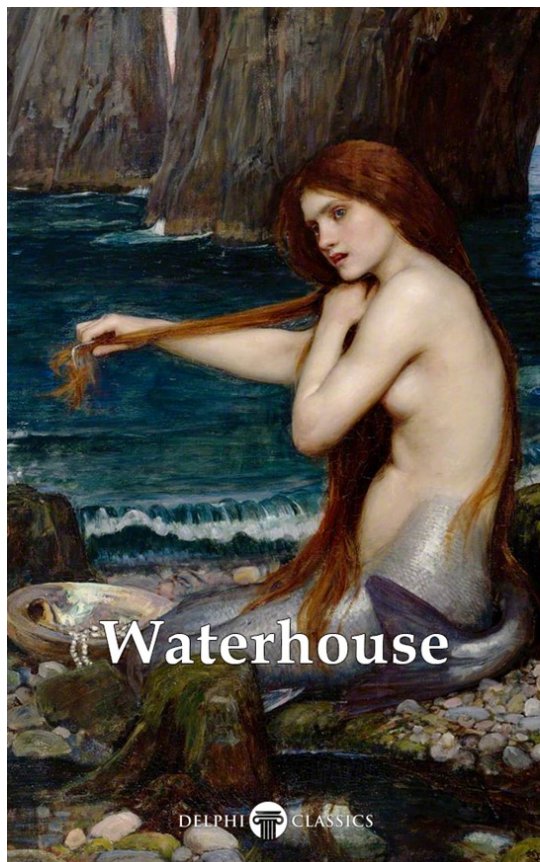
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THE VICTORIANS



Explore the world of the Victorians...



The Mark Rutherford Novels



Bedford, a market town in Bedfordshire, c. 1890 — Hale White's birthplace



Bedford today



5 High Street, Bedford — the site of White's birthplace, where in 1831 his father ran the town's bookshop.



Plaque commemorating the site of the birthplace

The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford (1881)



The late Victorian novelist Hale White was born in Bedford in 1881. His father, William White, a bookseller and a member of the Nonconformist community of the Bunyan Meeting, became well known as a doorkeeper at the House of Commons and wrote sketches of parliamentary life for *The Illustrated Times*. Young White was educated at Bedford Modern School, then known as the English School, until the family moved to London. In 1848 he entered the Countess of Huntingdon's College, Cheshunt to train for the Congregational Ministry. He developed increasingly unconventional views and in 1850 wrote to Thomas Carlyle, who responded with a full reply encouraging him to stand by his convictions. White later entered New College, London, but the continuing development of his views prevented him taking up that career and he became known as a dissenter.

In 1852 he was employed by John Chapman to work as a personal assistant and subscription tout at *The Westminster Review*. White was an early proponent of women's rights. He worked alongside the novelist George Eliot for *The Westminster Review* and the two became friends, both lodging at 142 Strand, London, which was owned by John Chapman. White later wrote an article about his friendship with Eliot for *The Bookman* in August 1902 entitled "George Eliot as I Knew Her".

In 1854, White joined the civil service, first as a clerk at the Registrar General's Office at Somerset House and later at the Admiralty. In 1861 he began writing newspaper articles to increase his income. As a journalist he wrote for *The Aberdeen Herald*, *The Birmingham Post*, *The Morning Star*, *The Nonconformist*, *The Rochdale News* and *The Scotsman*. Over fourteen years he wrote parliamentary sketches for *The Birmingham Post*. It was not until then that he turned his attention to writing fiction.

A landmark work of late Victorian literature, White's first novel, *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford* (1881), blends fictional narrative with White's personal experiences as a Dissenting minister. Published under the double pseudonym of "Mark Rutherford" and edited by "Reuben Shapcott," the novel serves as a profound psychological study of the Victorian "crisis of faith". It chronicles the spiritual and intellectual journey of its protagonist, a young man raised in a strict, narrow Calvinist environment. Rutherford enters a Dissenting college to train for the ministry, despite growing internal doubts. He eventually takes a post as a minister in a small Midlands town (largely modelled on the author's Bedford), where he finds the congregation's rigid dogmatism and intellectual shallowness suffocating.

The novel chronicles Rutherford's gradual loss of faith. Influenced by the rationalist arguments of a local radical named Mardon, Rutherford starts to question the traditional doctrines of his faith. His growing "apostasy" leads to his resignation from the pulpit. Seeking a new and secular life, Rutherford moves to London — the "modern Babylon" — where he faces poverty and social isolation while working for a skeptical publisher. During this time, he meets Theresa (a character inspired by George Eliot), whose intellectual depth provides him with a brief sense of companionship and moral order.

One of the enduring themes of the novel is the 'Crisis of Faith'. The book was written at the height of Victorian religious skepticism, driven by scientific progress and higher biblical criticism. White provides a scathingly satirical yet vivid portrayal of Nonconformist "Dissent" culture — small-town religious communities that were often intellectually narrow and socially judgmental. A great deal of the plot mirrors

White's own life, including his expulsion from New College, London, for questioning the inspiration of the scriptures.

Although never a runaway bestseller, the novel gained a "steady 70-year plateau" of critical acclaim for its "quiet intensity" and direct, unornamented prose. Intellectuals like George Orwell, who called its sequel "one of the best novels in English," and André Gide praised its psychological depth. W. H. Massingham famously compared White's imaginative genius to that of John Bunyan. For many Victorian readers, *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford* was a cathartic experience, offering an "unflinching look" at the pain of losing one's faith and the "ordeals of the heart" that followed. It is credited by some as helping evolve the novel form by blending deep introspection with social history.



White, aged 12, with his father



Portrait of White's friend George Eliot by Samuel Laurence, c. 1860

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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF
MARK RUTHERFORD,

DISSENTING MINISTER.

EDITED BY HIS FRIEND,
REUBEN SHAPCOTT.

LONDON:
TRÜBNER & CO., LUDGATE HILL.
1881.

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The first edition's title page

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION



THE PRESENT EDITION is a reprint of the first, with corrections of several mistakes which had been overlooked.

There is one observation which I may perhaps be permitted to make on re-reading after some years this autobiography. Rutherford, at any rate in his earlier life, was an example of the danger and the folly of cultivating thoughts and reading books to which he was not equal, and which tend to make a man lonely.

It is all very well that remarkable persons should occupy themselves with exalted subjects, which are out of the ordinary road which ordinary humanity treads; but we who are not remarkable make a very great mistake if we have anything to do with them. If we wish to be happy, and have to live with average men and women, as most of us have to live, we must learn to take an interest in the topics which concern average men and women. We think too much of ourselves. We ought not to sacrifice a single moment's pleasure in our attempt to do something which is too big for us, and as a rule, men and women are always attempting what is too big for them. To ninety-nine young men out of a hundred, or perhaps ninety-nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a hundred thousand, the wholesome healthy doctrine is, "Don't bother yourselves with what is beyond you; try to lead a sweet, clean, wholesome life, keep yourselves in health above everything, stick to your work, and when your day is done amuse and refresh yourselves."

It is not only a duty to ourselves, but it is a duty to others to take this course. Great men do the world much good, but not without some harm, and we have no business to be troubling ourselves with their dreams if we have duties which lie nearer home amongst persons to whom these dreams are incomprehensible. Many a man goes into his study, shuts himself up with his poetry or his psychology, comes out, half understanding what he has read, is miserable because he cannot find anybody with whom he can talk about it, and misses altogether the far more genuine joy which he could have obtained from a game with his children or listening to what his wife had to tell him about her neighbours.

"Lor, miss, you haven't looked at your new bonnet to-day," said a servant girl to her young mistress.

"No, why should I? I did not want to go out."

"Oh, how can you? why, I get mine out and look at it every night."

She was happy for a whole fortnight with a happiness cheap at a very high price.

That same young mistress was very caustic upon the women who block the pavement outside drapers' shops, but surely she was unjust. They always seem unconscious, to be enjoying themselves intensely and most innocently, more so probably than an audience at a Wagner concert. Many persons with refined minds are apt to depreciate happiness, especially if it is of "a low type." Broadly speaking, it is the one thing worth having, and low or high, if it does no mischief, is better than the most spiritual misery.

Metaphysics and theology, including all speculations on the why and the wherefore, optimism, pessimism, freedom, necessity, causality, and so forth, are not only for the most part loss of time, but frequently ruinous. It is no answer to say that these things force themselves upon us, and that to every question we are bound to give

or try to give an answer. It is true, although strange, that there are multitudes of burning questions which we must do our best to ignore, to forget their existence; and it is not more strange, after all, than many other facts in this wonderfully mysterious and defective existence of ours. One fourth of life is intelligible, the other three-fourths is unintelligible darkness; and our earliest duty is to cultivate the habit of not looking round the corner.

“Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God hath already accepted thy works. Let thy garments be always white, and let not thy head lack ointment. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which He hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in life.”

R. S.

*This is the night when I must die,
And great Orion walketh high
In silent glory overhead:
He'll set just after I am dead.*

*A week this night, I'm in my grave:
Orion walketh o'er the wave:
Down in the dark damp earth I lie,
While he doth march in majesty.*

*A few weeks hence and spring will come;
The earth will bright array put on
Of daisy and of primrose bright,
And everything which loves the light.*

*And some one to my child will say,
“You'll soon forget that you could play
Beethoven; let us hear a strain
From that slow movement once again.”*

*And so she'll play that melody,
While I among the worms do lie;
Dead to them all, for ever dead;
The churchyard clay dense overhead.*

*I once did think there might be mine
One friendship perfect and divine;
Alas! that dream dissolved in tears
Before I'd counted twenty years.*

*For I was ever commonplace;
Of genius never had a trace;
My thoughts the world have never fed,
Mere echoes of the book last read.*

*Those whom I knew I cannot blame:
If they are cold, I am the same:*

*How could they ever show to me
More than a common courtesy?*

*There is no deed which I have done;
There is no love which I have won,
To make them for a moment grieve
That I this night their earth must leave.*

Thus, moaning at the break of day,
A man upon his deathbed lay;
A moment more and all was still;
The Morning Star came o'er the hill.

But when the dawn lay on his face,
It kindled an immortal grace;
As if in death that Life were shown
Which lives not in the great alone.

Orion sank down in the west
Just as he sank into his rest;
I closed in solitude his eyes,
And watched him till the sun's uprise.

CHAPTER I. CHILDHOOD



NOW THAT I have completed my autobiography up to the present year, I sometimes doubt whether it is right to publish it. Of what use is it, many persons will say, to present to the world what is mainly a record of weaknesses and failures? If I had any triumphs to tell; if I could show how I had risen superior to poverty and suffering; if, in short, I were a hero of any kind whatever, I might perhaps be justified in communicating my success to mankind, and stimulating them to do as I have done. But mine is the tale of a commonplace life, perplexed by many problems I have never solved; disturbed by many difficulties I have never surmounted; and blotted by ignoble concessions which are a constant regret.

I have decided, however, to let the manuscript remain. I will not destroy it, although I will not take the responsibility of printing it. Somebody may think it worth preserving; and there are two reasons why they may think so, if there are no others. In the first place it has some little historic value, for I feel increasingly that the race to which I belonged is fast passing away, and that the Dissenting minister of the present day is a different being altogether from the Dissenting minister of forty years ago.

In the next place, I have observed that the mere knowing that other people have been tried as we have been tried is a consolation to us, and that we are relieved by the assurance that our sufferings are not special and peculiar, but common to us with many others. Death has always been a terror to me, and at times, nay generally, religion and philosophy have been altogether unavailing to mitigate the terror in any way. But it has been a comfort to me to reflect that whatever death may be, it is the inheritance of the whole human race; that I am not singled out, but shall merely have to pass through what the weakest have had to pass through before me. In the worst of maladies, worst at least to me, those which are hypochondriacal, the healing effect which is produced by the visit of a friend who can simply say, "I have endured all that," is most marked. So it is not impossible that some few whose experience has been like mine may, by my example, be freed from that sense of solitude which they find so depressing.

I was born, just before the Liverpool and Manchester Railway was opened, in a small country town in one of the Midland shires. It is now semi-manufacturing, at the junction of three or four lines of railway, with hardly a trace left of what it was fifty years ago. It then consisted of one long main street, with a few other streets branching from it at right-angles. Through this street the mail-coach rattled at night, and the huge waggon rolled through it, drawn by four horses, which twice a week travelled to and from London and brought us what we wanted from the great and unknown city.

My father and mother belonged to the ordinary English middle class of well-to-do shop-keepers. My mother's family came from a little distance, but my father's had lived in those parts for centuries. I remember perfectly well how business used to be carried on in those days. There was absolutely no competition, and although nobody in the town who was in trade got rich, except the banker and the brewer, nearly everybody was tolerably well off, and certainly not pressed with care as their successors are now. The draper, who lived a little way above us, was a deacon in our chapel, and every morning, soon after breakfast, he would start off for his walk of about four miles, stopping by the way to talk to his neighbours about the events of the

day. At eleven o'clock or thereabouts he would return and would begin work. Everybody took an hour for dinner — between one and two — and at that time, especially on a hot July afternoon, the High Street was empty from end to end, and the profoundest peace reigned.

My life as a child falls into two portions, sharply divided — week-day and Sunday. During the week-day I went to the public school, where I learned little or nothing that did me much good. The discipline of the school was admirable, and the headmaster was penetrated with a most lofty sense of duty, but the methods of teaching were very imperfect. In Latin we had to learn the Eton Latin Grammar till we knew every word of it by heart, but we did scarcely any retranslation from English into Latin. Much of our time was wasted on the merest trifles, such as learning to write, for example, like copperplate, and, still more extraordinary, in copying the letters of the alphabet as they are used in printing.

But we had two half-holidays in the week, which seem to me now to have been the happiest part of my life. A river ran through the town, and on summer Wednesdays and Saturdays we wandered along its banks for miles, alternately fishing and bathing. I remember whole afternoons in June, July, and August, passed half-naked or altogether naked in the solitary meadows and in the water; I remember the tumbling weir with the deep pool at the bottom in which we dived; I remember, too, the place where we used to swim across the river with our clothes on our heads, because there was no bridge near, and the frequent disaster of a slip of the braces in the middle of the water, so that shirt, jacket, and trousers were soaked, and we had to lie on the grass in the broiling sun without a rag on us till everything was dry again.

In winter our joys were of a different kind but none the less delightful. If it was a frost, we had skating; not like skating on a London pond, but over long reaches, and if the locks had not intervened, we might have gone a day's journey on the ice without a stoppage. If there was no ice, we had football, and what was still better, we could get up a steeplechase — on foot straight across hedge and ditch.

In after-years, when I lived in London, I came to know children who went to school in Gower Street, and travelled backwards and forwards by omnibus — children who had no other recreation than an occasional visit to the Zoological Gardens, or a somewhat sombre walk up to Hampstead to see their aunt; and I have often regretted that they never had any experience of those perfect poetic pleasures which the boy enjoys whose childhood is spent in the country, and whose home is there. A country boarding-school is something altogether different.

On the Sundays, however, the compensation came. It was a season of unmixed gloom. My father and mother were rigid Calvinistic Independents, and on that day no newspaper nor any book more secular than the Evangelical Magazine was tolerated. Every preparation for the Sabbath had been made on the Saturday, to avoid as much as possible any work. The meat was cooked beforehand, so that we never had a hot dinner even in the coldest weather; the only thing hot which was permitted was a boiled suet pudding, which cooked itself while we were at chapel, and some potatoes which were prepared after we came home. Not a letter was opened unless it was clearly evident that it was not on business, and for opening these an apology was always offered that it was possible they might contain some announcement of sickness. If on cursory inspection they appeared to be ordinary letters, although they might be from relations or friends, they were put away.

After family prayer and breakfast the business of the day began with the Sunday-school at nine o'clock. We were taught our Catechism and Bible there till a quarter past ten. We were then marched across the road into the chapel, a large old-fashioned

building dating from the time of Charles II. The floor was covered with high pews. The roof was supported by three or four tall wooden pillars which ran from the ground to the ceiling, and the galleries by shorter pillars. There was a large oak pulpit on one side against the wall, and down below, immediately under the minister, was the "singing pew," where the singers and musicians sat, the musicians being performers on the clarinet, flute, violin, and violoncello. Right in front was a long enclosure, called the communion pew, which was usually occupied by a number of the poorer members of the congregation.

There were three services every Sunday, besides intermitting prayer-meetings, but these I did not as yet attend. Each service consisted of a hymn, reading the Bible, another hymn, a prayer, the sermon, a third hymn, and a short final prayer. The reading of the Bible was unaccompanied with any observations or explanations, and I do not remember that I ever once heard a mistranslation corrected.

The first, or long prayer, as it was called, was a horrible hypocrisy, and it was a sore tax on the preacher to get through it. Anything more totally unlike the model recommended to us in the New Testament cannot well be imagined. It generally began with a confession that we were all sinners, but no individual sins were ever confessed, and then ensued a kind of dialogue with God, very much resembling the speeches which in later years I have heard in the House of Commons from the movers and seconders of addresses to the Crown at the opening of Parliament.

In all the religion of that day nothing was falser than the long prayer. Direct appeal to God can only be justified when it is passionate. To come maundering into His presence when we have nothing particular to say is an insult, upon which we should never presume if we had a petition to offer to any earthly personage. We should not venture to take up His time with commonplaces or platitudes; but our minister seemed to consider that the Almighty, who had the universe to govern, had more leisure at His command than the idlest loungee at a club. Nobody ever listened to this performance. I was a good child on the whole, but I am sure I did not; and if the chapel were now in existence, there might be traced on the flap of the pew in which we sat many curious designs due to these dreary performances.

The sermon was not much better. It generally consisted of a text, which was a mere peg for a discourse, that was pretty much the same from January to December. The minister invariably began with the fall of man; propounded the scheme of redemption, and ended by depicting in the morning the blessedness of the saints, and in the evening the doom of the lost. There was a tradition that in the morning there should be "experience" — that is to say, comfort for the elect, and that the evening should be appropriated to their less fortunate brethren.

The evening service was the most trying to me of all these. I never could keep awake, and knew that to sleep under the Gospel was a sin. The chapel was lighted in winter by immense chandeliers with tiers of candles all round. These required perpetual snuffing, and I can see the old man going round the chandeliers in the middle of the service with a mighty pair of snuffers which opened and shut with a loud click. How I envied him because he had semi-secular occupation which prevented that terrible drowsiness! How I envied the pew-opener, who was allowed to stand at the vestry door, and could slip into the vestry every now and then, or even into the burial-ground if he heard irreverent boys playing there! The atmosphere of the chapel on hot nights was most foul, and this added to my discomfort. Oftentimes in winter, when no doors or windows were open, I have seen the glass panes streaming with wet inside, and women carried out fainting.

On rare occasions I was allowed to go with my father when he went into the villages to preach. As a deacon he was also a lay-preacher, and I had the ride in the gig out and home, and tea at a farm-house.

Perhaps I shall not have a better opportunity to say that, with all these drawbacks, my religious education did confer upon me some positive advantages. The first was a rigid regard for truthfulness. My parents never would endure a lie or the least equivocation. The second was purity of life, and I look upon this as a simply incalculable gain. Impurity was not an excusable weakness in the society in which I lived; it was a sin for which dreadful punishment was reserved. The reason for my virtue may have been a wrong reason, but, anyhow, I was saved, and being saved, much more was saved than health and peace of mind.

To this day I do not know where to find a weapon strong enough to subdue the tendency to impurity in young men; and although I cannot tell them what I do not believe, I hanker sometimes after the old prohibitions and penalties. Physiological penalties are too remote, and the subtler penalties — the degradation, the growth of callousness to finer pleasures, the loss of sensitiveness to all that is most nobly attractive in woman — are too feeble to withstand temptation when it lies in ambush like a garrotter, and has the reason stunned in a moment.

The only thing that can be done is to make the conscience of a boy generally tender, so that he shrinks instinctively from the monstrous injustice of contributing for the sake of his own pleasure to the ruin of another. As soon as manhood dawns, he must also have his attention absorbed on some object which will divert his thoughts intellectually or ideally; and by slight yet constant pressure, exercised not by fits and starts, but day after day, directly and indirectly, his father must form an antipathy in him to brutish, selfish sensuality. Above all, there must be no toying with passion, and no books permitted, without condemnation and warning, which are not of a heroic turn. When the boy becomes a man he may read Byron without danger. To a youth he is fatal.

Before leaving this subject I may observe, that parents greatly err by not telling their children a good many things which they ought to know. Had I been taught when I was young a few facts about myself, which I only learned accidentally long afterwards, a good deal of misery might have been spared me.

Nothing particular happened to me till I was about fourteen, when I was told it was time I became converted. Conversion, amongst the Independents and other Puritan sects, is supposed to be a kind of miracle wrought in the heart by the influence of the Holy Spirit, by which the man becomes something altogether different to what he was previously. It affects, or should affect, his character; that is to say, he ought after conversion to be better in every way than he was before; but this is not considered as its main consequence. In its essence it is a change in the emotions and increased vividness of belief. It is now altogether untrue. Yet it is an undoubted fact that in earlier days, and, indeed, in rare cases, as late as the time of my childhood, it was occasionally a reality.

It is possible to imagine that under the preaching of Paul sudden conviction of a life misspent may have been produced with sudden personal attachment to the Galilean who, until then, had been despised. There may have been prompt release of unsuspected powers, and as prompt an imprisonment for ever of meaner weaknesses and tendencies; the result being literally a putting off of the old, and a putting on of the new man. Love has always been potent to produce such a transformation, and the exact counterpart of conversion, as it was understood by the apostles, may be seen

whenever a man is redeemed from vice by attachment to some woman whom he worships, or when a girl is reclaimed from idleness and vanity by becoming a mother.

But conversion, as it was understood by me and as it is now understood, is altogether unmeaning. I knew that I had to be "a child of God," and after a time professed myself to be one, but I cannot call to mind that I was anything else than I always had been, save that I was perhaps a little more hypocritical; not in the sense that I professed to others what I knew I did not believe, but in the sense that I professed it to myself. I was obliged to declare myself convinced of sin; convinced of the efficacy of the atonement; convinced that I was forgiven; convinced that the Holy Ghost was shed abroad in my heart; and convinced of a great many other things which were the merest phrases.

However, the end of it was, that I was proposed for acceptance, and two deacons were deputed, in accordance with the usual custom, to wait upon me and ascertain my fitness for membership. What they said and what I said has now altogether vanished; but I remember with perfect distinctness the day on which I was admitted. It was the custom to demand of each candidate a statement of his or her experience. I had no experience to give; and I was excused on the grounds that I had been the child of pious parents, and consequently had not undergone that convulsion which those, not favoured like myself, necessarily underwent when they were called.

I was now expected to attend all those extra services which were specially for the church. I stayed to the late prayer-meeting on Sunday; I went to the prayer-meeting on week-days, and also to private prayer-meetings. These services were not interesting to me for their own sake. I thought they were, but what I really liked was clanship and the satisfaction of belonging to a society marked off from the great world.

It must also be added that the evening meetings afforded us many opportunities for walking home with certain young women, who, I am sorry to say, were a more powerful attraction, not to me only, but to others, than the prospect of hearing brother Holderness, the travelling draper, confess crimes which, to say the truth, although they were many according to his own account, were never given in that detail which would have made his confession of some value. He never prayed without telling all of us that there was no health in him, and that his soul was a mass of putrefying sores; but everybody thought the better of him for his self-humiliation. One actual indiscretion, however, brought home to him would have been visited by suspension or expulsion.

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End of Sample