

CHARLES KINGSLEY

SIR WALTER
RALEIGH AND
HIS TIME

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Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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‘Truth is stranger than fiction.’ A trite remark. We all say it again and again: but how few of us believe it! How few of us, when we read the history of heroical times and heroical men, take the story simply as it stands! On the contrary, we try to explain it away; to prove it all not to have been so very wonderful; to impute accident, circumstance, mean and commonplace motives; to lower every story down to the level of our own littleness, or what we (unjustly to ourselves and to the God who is near us all) choose to consider our level; to rationalise away all the wonders, till we make them at last impossible, and give up caring to believe them; and prove to our own melancholy satisfaction that Alexander conquered the world with a pin, in his sleep, by accident.

And yet in this mood, as in most, there is a sort of left-handed truth involved. These heroes are not so far removed from us after all. They were men of like passions with ourselves, with the same flesh about them, the same spirit within them, the same world outside, the same devil beneath, the same God above. They and their deeds were not so very wonderful. Every child who is born into the world is just as wonderful, and, for aught we

know, might, *mutatis mutandis*, do just as wonderful deeds. If accident and circumstance helped them, the same may help us: have helped us, if we will look back down our years, far more than we have made use of.

They were men, certainly, very much of our own level: but may we not put that level somewhat too low? They were certainly not what we are; for if they had been, they would have done no more than we: but is not a man's real level not what he is, but what he can be, and therefore ought to be? No doubt they were compact of good and evil, just as we: but so was David, no man more; though a more heroical personage (save One) appears not in all human records but may not the secret of their success have been that, on the whole (though they found it a sore battle), they refused the evil and chose the good? It is true, again, that their great deeds may be more or less explained, attributed to laws, rationalised: but is explaining always explaining away? Is it to degrade a thing to attribute it to a law? And do you do anything more by 'rationalising' men's deeds than prove that they were rational men; men who saw certain fixed laws, and obeyed them, and succeeded thereby, according to the Baconian apophthegm, that nature is conquered by obeying her?

But what laws?

To that question, perhaps, the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews will give the best answer, where it says, that by faith were done all the truly great deeds, and by faith lived all the truly great men who have ever appeared on earth.

There are, of course, higher and lower degrees of this faith; its object is one more or less worthy: but it is in all cases the belief in certain unseen eternal facts, by keeping true to which a man must in the long run succeed. Must; because he is more or less in harmony with heaven, and earth, and the Maker thereof, and has therefore fighting on his side a great portion of the universe; perhaps the whole; for as he who breaks one commandment of the law is guilty of the whole, because he denies the fount of all law, so he who with his whole soul keeps one commandment of it is likely to be in harmony with the whole, because he testifies of the fount of all law.

I shall devote a few pages to the story of an old hero, of a man of like passions with ourselves; of one who had the most intense and awful sense of the unseen laws, and succeeded mightily thereby; of one who had hard struggles with a flesh and blood which made him at times forget those laws, and failed mightily thereby; of one whom God so loved that He caused each slightest sin, as with David, to bring its own punishment with it, that while the flesh was delivered over to Satan, the man himself might be saved in the Day of the Lord; of one, finally, of whom nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of a thousand may say, 'I have done worse deeds than he: but I have never done as good ones.'

In a poor farm-house among the pleasant valleys of South Devon, among the white apple-orchards and the rich water-meadows, and the red fallows and red kine, in the year of grace 1552, a boy was born, as beautiful as day, and christened Walter

Raleigh. His father was a gentleman of ancient blood: few older in the land: but, impoverished, he had settled down upon the wreck of his estate, in that poor farm-house. No record of him now remains; but he must have been a man worth knowing and worth loving, or he would not have won the wife he did. She was a Champernoun, proudest of Norman squires, and could probably boast of having in her veins the blood of Courtneys, Emperors of Byzant. She had been the wife of the famous knight Sir Otho Gilbert, and lady of Compton Castle, and had borne him three brave sons, John, Humphrey, and Adrian; all three destined to win knighthood also in due time, and the two latter already giving promises, which they well fulfilled, of becoming most remarkable men of their time. And yet the fair Champernoun, at her husband's death, had chosen to wed Mr. Raleigh, and share life with him in the little farm-house at Hayes. She must have been a grand woman, if the law holds true that great men always have great mothers; an especially grand woman, indeed; for few can boast of having borne to two different husbands such sons as she bore. No record, as far as we know, remains of her; nor of her boy's early years. One can imagine them, nevertheless.

Just as he awakes to consciousness, the Smithfield fires are extinguished. He can recollect, perhaps, hearing of the burning of the Exeter martyrs: and he does not forget it; no one forgot or dared forget it in those days. He is brought up in the simple and manly, yet high-bred ways of English gentlemen in the times of 'an old courtier of the Queen's.' His two elder half-

brothers also, living some thirty miles away, in the quaint and gloomy towers of Compton Castle, amid the apple-orchards of Torbay, are men as noble as ever formed a young lad's taste. Humphrey and Adrian Gilbert, who afterwards, both of them, rise to knighthood, are—what are they not?—soldiers, scholars, Christians, discoverers and 'planters' of foreign lands, geographers, alchemists, miners, Platonical philosophers; many-sided, high-minded men, not without fantastic enthusiasm; living heroic lives, and destined, one of them, to die a heroic death.

From them Raleigh's fancy has been fired, and his appetite for learning quickened, while he is yet a daring boy, fishing in the gray trout-brooks, or going up with his father to the Dartmoor hills to hunt the deer with hound and horn, amid the wooded gorges of Holne, or over the dreary downs of Hartland Warren, and the cloud-capt thickets of Cator's Beam, and looking down from thence upon the far blue southern sea, wondering when he shall sail thereon, to fight the Spaniard, and discover, like Columbus, some fairy-land of gold and gems.

For before this boy's mind, as before all intense English minds of that day, rise, from the first, three fixed ideas, which yet are but one—the Pope, the Spaniard, and America.

The two first are the sworn and internecine enemies (whether they pretend a formal peace or not) of Law and Freedom, Bible and Queen, and all that makes an Englishman's life dear to him.

Are they not the incarnations of Antichrist? Their Moloch sacrifices flame through all lands. The earth groans because of

them, and refuses to cover the blood of her slain. And America is the new world of boundless wonder and beauty, wealth and fertility, to which these two evil powers arrogate an exclusive and divine right; and God has delivered it into their hands; and they have done evil therein with all their might, till the story of their greed and cruelty rings through all earth and heaven. Is this the will of God? Will he not avenge for these things, as surely as he is the Lord who executeth justice and judgment in the earth?

These are the young boy's thoughts. These were his thoughts for sixty-six eventful years. In whatsoever else he wavered, he never wavered in that creed. He learnt it in his boyhood, while he read 'Fox's Martyrs' beside his mother's knee. He learnt it as a lad, when he saw his neighbours Hawkins and Drake changed by Spanish tyranny and treachery from peaceful merchantmen into fierce scourges of God. He learnt it scholastically, from fathers and divines, as an Oxford scholar, in days when Oxford was a Protestant indeed, in whom there was no guile. He learnt it when he went over, at seventeen years old, with his gallant kinsman Henry Champernown, and his band of a hundred gentlemen volunteers, to flesh his maiden sword in behalf of the persecuted French Protestants. He learnt it as he listened to the shrieks of the San Bartholomew; he learnt it as he watched the dragonnades, the tortures, the massacres of the Netherlands, and fought manfully under Norris in behalf of those victims of 'the Pope and Spain.' He preached it in far stronger and wiser words than I can express it for him, in that noble tract of 1591, on Sir

Richard Grenville's death at the Azores—a Tyrtæan trumpet-blast such as has seldom rung in human ears; he discussed it like a cool statesman in his pamphlet of 1596, on 'A War with Spain.'

He sacrificed for it the last hopes of his old age, the wreck of his fortunes, his just recovered liberty; and he died with the old God's battle-cry upon his lips, when it awoke no response from the hearts of a coward, profligate, and unbelieving generation.

This is the background, the keynote of the man's whole life. If we lose the recollection of it, and content ourselves by slurring it over in the last pages of his biography with some half-sneer about his putting, like the rest of Elizabeth's old admirals, 'the Spaniard, the Pope, and the Devil' in the same category, then we shall understand very little about Raleigh; though, of course, we shall save ourselves the trouble of pronouncing as to whether the Spaniard and the Pope were really in the same category as the devil; or, indeed, which might be equally puzzling to a good many historians of the last century and a half, whether there be any devil at all.

The books which I have chosen to head this review are all of them more or less good, with one exception, and that is Bishop Goodman's Memoirs, on which much stress has been lately laid, as throwing light on various passages of Raleigh, Essex, Cecil, and James's lives. Having read it carefully, I must say plainly, that I think the book an altogether foolish, pedantic, and untrustworthy book, without any power of insight or gleam of reason; without even the care to be self-consistent; having but

one object, the whitewashing of James, and of every noble lord whom the bishop has ever known: but in whitewashing each, the poor old flunkey so bespatters all the rest of his pets, that when the work is done, the whole party look, if possible, rather dirtier than before. And so I leave Bishop Goodman.

Mr. Fraser Tytler's book is well known; and it is on the whole a good one; because he really loves and admires the man of whom he writes: but he is sometimes careless as to authorities, and too often makes the wish father to the thought. Moreover, he has the usual sentiment about Mary Queen of Scots, and the usual scandal about Elizabeth, which is simply anathema; and which prevents his really seeing the time in which Raleigh lived, and the element in which he moved. This sort of talk is happily dying out just now; but no one can approach the history of the Elizabethan age (perhaps of any age) without finding that truth is all but buried under mountains of dirt and chaff—an Augæan stable, which, perhaps, will never be swept clean. Yet I have seen, with great delight, several attempts toward removal of the said superstratum of dirt and chaff from the Elizabethan histories, in several articles, all evidently from the same pen (and that one, more perfectly master of English prose than any man living), in the 'Westminster Review' and 'Fraser's Magazine.'¹

Sir Robert Schomburgk's edition of the *Guiana Voyage*

¹ I especially entreat readers' attention to two articles in vindication of the morals of Queen Elizabeth, in 'Fraser's Magazine' of 1854; to one in the 'Westminster' of 1854, on Mary Stuart; and one in the same of 1852, on England's Forgotten Worthies, by a pen now happily well known in English literature, Mr. Anthony Froude's.

contains an excellent Life of Raleigh, perhaps the best yet written; of which I only complain, when it gives in to the stock-charges against Raleigh, as it were at second-hand, and just because they are stock-charges, and when, too, the illustrious editor (unable to conceal his admiration of a discoverer in many points so like himself) takes all through an apologetic tone of 'Please don't laugh at me. I daresay it is very foolish; but I can't help loving the man.'

Mr. Napier's little book is a reprint of two 'Edinburgh Review' articles on Bacon and Raleigh. The first, a learned statement of facts in answer to some unwisdom of a 'Quarterly' reviewer (possibly an Oxford Aristotelian; for 'we think we do know that sweet Roman hand'). It is clear, accurate, convincing, complete. There is no more to be said about the matter, save that facts are stubborn things.

The article on Raleigh is very valuable; first, because Mr. Napier has had access to many documents unknown to former biographers; and next, because he clears Raleigh completely from the old imputation of deceit about the Guiana mine, as well as of other minor charges. With his general opinion of Raleigh's last and fatal Guiana voyage, I have the misfortune to differ from him *toto coelo*, on the strength of the very documents which he quotes. But Mr. Napier is always careful, always temperate, and always just, except where he, as I think, does not enter into the feelings of the man whom he is analysing. Let readers buy the book (it will tell them a hundred things they do not know) and

be judge between Mr. Napier and me.

In the meanwhile, one cannot help watching with a smile how good old Time's scrubbing-brush, which clears away paint and whitewash from church pillars, does the same by such characters as Raleigh's. After each fresh examination, some fresh count in the hundred-headed indictment breaks down. The truth is, that as people begin to believe more in nobleness, and to gird up their loins to the doing of noble deeds, they discover more nobleness in others. Raleigh's character was in its lowest nadir in the days of Voltaire and Hume. What shame to him? For so were more sacred characters than his. Shall the disciple be above his master? especially when that disciple was but too inconsistent, and gave occasion to the uncircumcised to blaspheme? But Cayley, after a few years, refutes triumphantly Hume's silly slanders. He is a stupid writer: but he has sense enough, being patient, honest, and loving, to do that.

Mr. Fraser Tytler shovels away a little more of the dirt-heap; Mr. Napier clears him (for which we owe him many thanks), by simple statement of facts, from the charge of having deserted and neglected his Virginia colonists; Humboldt and Schomburgk clear him from the charge of having lied about Guiana; and so on; each successive writer giving in generally on merest hearsay to the general complaint against him, either from fear of running counter to big names, or from mere laziness, and yet absolving him from that particular charge of which his own knowledge enables him to judge. In the trust that I may be able to clear him

from a few more charges, I write these pages, premising that I do not profess to have access to any new and recondite documents.

I merely take the broad facts of the story from documents open to all; and comment on them as every man should wish his own life to be commented on.

But I do so on a method which I cannot give up; and that is the Bible method. I say boldly that historians have hitherto failed in understanding not only Raleigh and Elizabeth, but nine-tenths of the persons and facts in his day, because they will not judge them by the canons which the Bible lays down—by which I mean not only the New Testament but the Old, which, as English Churchmen say, and Scotch Presbyterians have ere now testified with sacred blood, is ‘not contrary to the New.’

Mr. Napier has a passage about Raleigh for which I am sorry, coming as it does from a countryman of John Knox. ‘Society, it would seem, was yet in a state in which such a man could seriously plead, that the madness he feigned was justified’ (his last word is unfair, for Raleigh only hopes that it is no sin) ‘by the example of David, King of Israel.’ What a shocking state of society when men actually believed their Bibles, not too little, but too much. For my part, I think that if poor dear Raleigh had considered the example of David a little more closely, he need never have feigned madness at all; and that his error lay quite in an opposite direction from looking on the Bible heroes, David especially, as too sure models. At all events, let us try Raleigh by the very scriptural standard which he himself lays down, not

merely in this case unwisely, but in his 'History of the World' more wisely than any historian whom I have ever read; and say, 'Judged as the Bible taught our Puritan forefathers to judge every man, the character is intelligible enough; tragic, but noble and triumphant: judged as men have been judged in history for the last hundred years, by hardly any canon save those of the private judgment, which philosophic cant, maudlin sentimentality, or fear of public opinion, may happen to have forged, the man is a phenomenon, only less confused, abnormal, suspicious than his biographers' notions about him.' Again I say, I have not solved the problem: but it will be enough if I make some think it both soluble and worth solving. Let us look round, then, and see into what sort of a country, into what sort of a world, the young adventurer is going forth, at seventeen years of age, to seek his fortune.

Born in 1552, his young life has sprung up and grown with the young life of England. The earliest fact, perhaps, which he can recollect is the flash of joy on every face which proclaims that Mary Tudor is dead, and Elizabeth reigns at last. As he grows, the young man sees all the hope and adoration of the English people centre in that wondrous maid, and his own centre in her likewise. He had been base had he been otherwise. She comes to the throne with such a prestige as never sovereign came since the days when Isaiah sang his pæan over young Hezekiah's accession. Young, learned, witty, beautiful (as with such a father and mother she could not help being), with an expression of

countenance remarkable (I speak of those early days) rather for its tenderness and intellectual depth than its strength, she comes forward as the champion of the Reformed Faith, the interpreter of the will and conscience of the people of England—herself persecuted all but to the death, and purified by affliction, like gold tried in the fire. She gathers round her, one by one, young men of promise, and trains them herself to their work. And they fulfil it, and serve her, and grow gray-headed in her service, working as faithfully, as righteously, as patriotically, as men ever worked on earth. They are her ‘favourites’; because they are men who deserve favour; men who count not their own lives dear to themselves for the sake of the queen and of that commonwealth which their hearts and reasons tell them is one with her. They are still men, though; and some of them have their grudgings and envyings against each other: she keeps the balance even between them, on the whole, skilfully, gently, justly, in spite of weaknesses and prejudices, without which she had been more than human. Some have their conceited hopes of marrying her, becoming her masters. She rebukes and pardons. ‘Out of the dust I took you, sir! go and do your duty, humbly and rationally, henceforth, or into the dust I trample you again!’ And they reconsider themselves, and obey. But many, or most of them, are new men, country gentlemen, and younger sons. She will follow her father’s plan, of keeping down the overgrown feudal princes, who, though brought low by the wars of the Roses, are still strong enough to throw everything into confusion by resisting at once

the Crown and Commons. Proud nobles reply by rebellion, come down southwards with ignorant Popish henchmen at their backs; will restore Popery, marry the Queen of Scots, make the middle class and the majority submit to the feudal lords and the minority.

Elizabeth, with her 'aristocracy of genius,' is too strong for them: the people's heart is with her, and not with dukes. Each mine only blows up its diggers; and there are many dry eyes at their ruin. Her people ask her to marry. She answers gently, proudly, eloquently: 'She is married—the people of England is her husband. She has vowed it.' And yet there is a tone of sadness in that great speech. Her woman's heart yearns after love, after children; after a strong bosom on which to repose that weary head. More than once she is ready to give way. But she knows that it must not be. She has her reward. 'Whosoever gives up husband or child for my sake and the gospel's, shall receive them back a hundredfold in this present life,' as Elizabeth does. Her reward is an adoration from high and low, which is to us now inexplicable, impossible, overstrained, which was not so then.

For the whole nation is in a mood of exaltation; England is fairyland; the times are the last days—strange, terrible, and glorious. At home are Jesuits plotting; dark, crooked-pathed, going up and down in all manner of disguises, doing the devil's work if men ever did it; trying to sow discord between man and man, class and class; putting out books full of filthy calumnies, declaring the queen illegitimate, excommunicate, a usurper; English law null, and all state appointments void, by virtue of

a certain 'Bull'; and calling on the subjects to rebellion and assassination, even on the bedchamber—woman to do to her 'as Judith did to Holofernes.' She answers by calm contempt. Now and then Burleigh and Walsingham catch some of the rogues, and they meet their deserts; but she for the most part lets them have their way. God is on her side, and she will not fear what man can do to her.

Abroad, the sky is dark and wild, and yet full of fantastic splendour. Spain stands strong and awful, a rising world-tyranny, with its dark-souled Cortezes and Pizarros, Alvas, Don Johns, and Parmas, men whose path is like the lava stream; who go forth slaying and to slay, in the name of their gods, like those old Assyrian conquerors on the walls of Nineveh, with tutelary genii flying above their heads, mingled with the eagles who trail the entrails of the slain. By conquest, intermarriage, or intrigue, she has made all the southern nations her vassals or her tools; close to our own shores, the Netherlands are struggling vainly for their liberties; abroad, the Western Islands, and the whole trade of Africa and India, will in a few years be hers. And already the Pope, whose 'most Catholic' and faithful servant she is, has repaid her services in the cause of darkness by the gift of the whole New World—a gift which she has claimed by cruelties and massacres unexampled since the days of Timour and Zinghis Khan. There she spreads and spreads, as Drake found her picture in the Government House at St. Domingo, the horse leaping through the globe, and underneath, *Non sufficit orbis*. Who shall

withstand her, armed as she is with the three-edged sword of Antichrist—superstition, strength, and gold?

English merchantmen, longing for some share in the riches of the New World, go out to trade in Guinea, in the Azores, in New Spain: and are answered by shot and steel. ‘Both policy and religion,’ as Fray Simon says, fifty years afterwards, ‘forbid Christians to trade with heretics!’ ‘Lutheran devils, and enemies of God,’ are the answer they get in words: in deeds, whenever they have a superior force they may be allowed to land, and to water their ships, even to trade, under exorbitant restrictions: but generally this is merely a trap for them. Forces are hurried up; and the English are attacked treacherously, in spite of solemn compacts; for ‘No faith need be kept with heretics.’ And woe to them if any be taken prisoners, even wrecked. The galleys, and the rack, and the stake are their certain doom; for the Inquisition claims the bodies and souls of heretics all over the world, and thinks it sin to lose its own. A few years of such wrong raise questions in the sturdy English heart. What right have these Spaniards to the New World? The Pope’s gift? Why, he gave it by the same authority by which he claims the whole world.

The formula used when an Indian village is sacked is, that God gave the whole world to St. Peter, and that he has given it to his successors, and they the Indies to the King of Spain. To acknowledge that lie would be to acknowledge the very power by which the Pope claims a right to depose Queen Elizabeth, and give her dominions to whomsoever he will. A fico for bulls!

By possession, then? That may hold for Mexico, Peru, New Grenada, Paraguay, which have been colonised; though they were gained by means which make every one concerned in conquering them worthy of the gallows; and the right is only that of the thief to the purse, whose owner he has murdered. But as for the rest—Why the Spaniard has not colonised, even explored, one-fifth of the New World, not even one-fifth of the coast. Is the existence of a few petty factories, often hundreds of miles apart, at a few river-mouths to give them a claim to the whole intermediate coast, much less to the vast unknown tracts inside?

We will try that. If they appeal to the sword, so be it. The men are treacherous robbers; we will indemnify ourselves for our losses, and God defend the right.

So argued the English; and so sprung up that strange war of reprisals, in which, for eighteen years, it was held that there was no peace between England and Spain beyond the line, *i.e.*, beyond the parallel of longitude where the Pope's gift of the western world was said to begin; and, as the quarrel thickened and neared, extended to the Azores, Canaries, and coasts of Africa, where English and Spaniards flew at each other as soon as seen, mutually and by common consent, as natural enemies, each invoking God in the battle with Antichrist.

Into such a world as this goes forth young Raleigh, his heart full of chivalrous worship for England's tutelary genius, his brain aflame with the true miracles of the new-found Hesperides, full of vague hopes, vast imaginations, and consciousness of

enormous power. And yet he is no wayward dreamer, unfit for this work-day world. With a vein of song 'most lofty, insolent, and passionate,' indeed unable to see aught without a poetic glow over the whole, he is eminently practical, contented to begin at the beginning that he may end at the end; one who could 'toil terribly,' 'who always laboured at the matter in hand as if he were born only for that.' Accordingly, he sets to work faithfully and stoutly, to learn his trade of soldiering, and learns it in silence and obscurity. He shares (it seems) in the retreat at Moncontour, and is by at the death of Condé, and toils on for five years, marching and skirmishing, smoking the enemy out of mountain-caves in Languedoc, and all the wild work of war. During the San Bartholomew massacre we hear nothing of him; perhaps he took refuge with Sidney and others in Walsingham's house. No records of these years remain, save a few scattered reminiscences in his works, which mark the shrewd, observant eye of the future statesman.

When he returned we know not. We trace him, in 1576, by some verses prefixed to Gascoigne's satire, the 'Steele Glass,' solid, stately, epigrammatic, 'by Walter Rawley of the Middle Temple.' The style is his; spelling of names matters nought in days in which a man would spell his own name three different ways in one document.

Gascoigne, like Raleigh, knew Lord Grey of Wilton, and most men about town too; and had been a soldier abroad, like Raleigh, probably with him. It seems to have been the fashion for young

idlers to lodge among the Templars; indeed, toward the end of the century, they had to be cleared out, as crowding the wigs and gowns too much; and perhaps proving noisy neighbours, as Raleigh may have done. To this period may be referred, probably, his Justice done on Mr. Charles Chester (Ben Jonson's Carlo Buffone), 'a perpetual talker, and made a noise like a drum in a room; so one time, at a tavern, Raleigh beats him and seals up his mouth, his upper and nether beard, with hard wax.' For there is a great laugh in Raleigh's heart, a genial contempt of asses; and one that will make him enemies hereafter: perhaps shorten his days.

One hears of him next, but only by report, in the Netherlands under Norris, where the nucleus of the English line (especially of its musquetry) was training. For Don John of Austria intends not only to crush the liberties and creeds of the Flemings, but afterwards to marry the Queen of Scots, and conquer England: and Elizabeth, unwillingly and slowly, for she cannot stomach rebels, has sent men and money to the States to stop Don John in time; which the valiant English and Scotch do on Lammas day, 1578, and that in a fashion till then unseen in war. For coming up late and panting, and 'being more sensible of a little heat of the sun than of any cold fear of death,' they throw off their armour and clothes, and, in their shirts (not over-clean, one fears), give Don John's rashness such a rebuff, that two months more see that wild meteor, with lost hopes and tarnished fame, lie down and vanish below the stormy horizon. In these days, probably, it is

that he knew Colonel Bingham, a soldier of fortune, of a ‘fancy high and wild, too desultory and over-voluble,’ who had, among his hundred and one schemes, one for the plantation of America as poor Sir Thomas Stukely (whom Raleigh must have known well), uncle of the traitor Lewis, had for the peopling of Florida.

Raleigh returns. Ten years has he been learning his soldier’s trade in silence. He will take a lesson in seamanship next. The court may come in time: for by now the poor squire’s younger son must have discovered—perhaps even too fully—that he is not as other men are; that he can speak, and watch, and dare, and endure, as none around him can do. However, there are ‘good adventures toward,’ as the ‘Morte d’Arthur’ would say; and he will off with his half-brother Humphrey Gilbert to carry out his patent for planting *Meta Incognita*—‘The Unknown Goal,’ as Queen Elizabeth has named it—which will prove to be too truly and fatally unknown. In a latitude south of England, and with an Italian summer, who can guess that the winter will outfreeze Russia itself? The merchant-seaman, like the statesman, had yet many a thing to learn. Instead of smiling at our forefathers’ ignorance, let us honour the men who bought knowledge for us their children at the price of lives nobler than our own.

So Raleigh goes on his voyage with Humphrey Gilbert, to carry out the patent for discovering and planting in *Meta Incognita*; but the voyage prospers not. A ‘smart brush with the Spaniards’ sends them home again, with the loss of Morgan, their best captain, and ‘a tall ship’; and *Meta Incognita* is forgotten

for a while; but not the Spaniards. Who are these who forbid all English, by virtue of the Pope's bull, to cross the Atlantic?

That must be settled hereafter; and Raleigh, ever busy, is off to Ireland to command a company in that 'common weal, or rather common woe', as he calls it in a letter to Leicester. Two years and more pass here; and all the records of him which remain are of a man valiant, daring, and yet prudent beyond his fellows.

He hates his work, and is not on too good terms with stern and sour, but brave and faithful Lord Grey; but Lord Grey is Leicester's friend, and Raleigh works patiently under him, like a sensible man, just because he is Leicester's friend. Some modern gentleman of note—I forget who, and do not care to recollect—says that Raleigh's 'prudence never bore any proportion to his genius.' The next biographer we open accuses him of being too calculating, cunning, timeserving; and so forth. Perhaps both are true. The man's was a character very likely to fall alternately into either sin—doubtless did so a hundred times. Perhaps both are false. The man's character was, on occasion, certain to rise above both faults. We have evidence that he did so his whole life long.

He is tired of Ireland at last: nothing goes right there:—When has it? Nothing is to be done there. That which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.

He comes to London and to court. But how? By spreading his cloak over a muddy place for Queen Elizabeth to step on? It is very likely to be a true story; but biographers have slurred over a few facts in their hurry to carry out their theory of 'favourites,'

and to prove that Elizabeth took up Raleigh on the same grounds that a boarding-school miss might have done. Not that I deny the cloak story to be a very pretty story; perhaps it justifies, taken alone, Elizabeth's fondness for him. There may have been self-interest in it; we are bound, as 'men of the world,' to impute the dirtiest motive that we can find; but how many self-interested men do we know who would have had quickness and daring to do such a thing? Men who are thinking about themselves are not generally either so quick-witted, or so inclined to throw away a good cloak, when by much scraping and saving they have got one. I never met a cunning, selfish, ambitious man who would have done such a thing. The reader may; but even if he has, we must ask him, for Queen Elizabeth's sake, to consider that this young Quixote is the close relation of three of the finest public men then living, Champernoun, Gilbert, and Carew. That he is a friend of Sidney, a pet of Leicester; that he has left behind him at Oxford, and brought with him from Ireland, the reputation of being a *rara avis*, a new star in the firmament; that he had been a soldier in her Majesty's service (and in one in which she has a peculiar private interest) for twelve years; that he has held her commission as one of the triumvirate for governing Munster, and has been the commander of the garrison at Cork; and that it is possible that she may have heard something of him before he threw his cloak under her feet, especially as there has been some controversy (which we have in vain tried to fathom) between him and Lord Grey about that terrible Smerwick slaughter; of the

results of which we know little, but that Raleigh, being called in question about it in London, made such good play with his tongue, that his reputation as an orator and a man of talent was fixed once and for ever.

Within the twelve months he is sent on some secret diplomatic mission about the Anjou marriage; he is in fact now installed in his place as 'a favourite.' And why not? If a man is found to be wise and witty, ready and useful, able to do whatsoever he is put to, why is a sovereign, who has eyes to see the man's worth and courage to use it, to be accused of I know not what, because the said man happens to be good-looking?

Now comes the turning-point of Raleigh's life. What does he intend to be? Soldier, statesman, scholar, or sea-adventurer? He takes the most natural, yet not the wisest course. He will try and be all four at once. He has intellect for it; by worldly wisdom he may have money for it also. Even now he has contrived (no one can tell whence) to build a good bark of two hundred tons, and send her out with Humphrey Gilbert on his second and fatal voyage. Luckily for Raleigh she deserts and comes home, while not yet out of the Channel, or she surely had gone the way of the rest of Gilbert's squadron. Raleigh, of course, loses money by the failure, as well as the hopes which he had grounded on his brother's Transatlantic viceroyalty. And a bitter pang it must have been to him to find himself bereft of that pure and heroic counsellor just at his entering into life. But with the same elasticity which sent him to the grave, he is busy within

six months in a fresh expedition. If *Meta Incognita* be not worth planting, there must be, so Raleigh thinks, a vast extent of coast between it and Florida, which is more genial in climate, perhaps more rich in produce; and he sends Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlow to look for the same, and not in vain.

On these Virginian discoveries I shall say but little. Those who wish to enjoy them should read them in all their naive freshness in the originals; and they will subscribe to S. T. Coleridge's dictum, that no one nowadays can write travels as well as the old worthies who figure in Hakluyt and Purchas.

But to return to the question—What does this man intend to be? A discoverer and colonist; a vindicator of some part at least of America from Spanish claims? Perhaps not altogether: else he would have gone himself to Virginia, at least the second voyage, instead of sending others. But here, it seems, is the fatal, and yet pardonable mistake, which haunts the man throughout. He tries to be too many men at once. Fatal: because, though he leaves his trace on more things than one man is wont to do, he, strictly speaking, conquers nothing, brings nothing to a consummation.

Virginia, Guiana, the 'History of the World,' his own career as a statesman—as dictator (for he might have been dictator had he chosen)—all are left unfinished. And yet most pardonable; for if a man feels that he can do many different things, how hard to teach himself that he must not do them all! How hard to say to himself, 'I must cut off the right hand, and pluck out the right eye. I must be less than myself, in order really to be anything.

I must concentrate my powers on one subject, and that perhaps by no means the most seemingly noble or useful, still less the most pleasant, and forego so many branches of activity in which I might be so distinguished, so useful.' This is a hard lesson.

Raleigh took just sixty-six years learning it; and had to carry the result of his experience to the other side of the dark river, for there was no time left to use it on this side. Some readers may have learnt the lesson already. If so, happy and blessed are they. But let them not therefore exalt themselves above Walter Raleigh; for that lesson is, of course, soonest learnt by the man who can excel in few things, later by him who can excel in many, and latest of all by him who, like Raleigh, can excel in all.

Few details remain concerning the earlier court days of Raleigh. He rises rapidly, as we have seen. He has an estate given him in Ireland, near his friend Spenser, where he tries to do well and wisely, colonising, tilling, and planting it: but like his Virginia expeditions, principally at second hand. For he has swallowed (there is no denying it) the painted bait. He will discover, he will colonise, he will do all manner of beautiful things, at second hand: but he himself will be a courtier. It is very tempting. Who would not, at the age of thirty, have wished to have been one of that chosen band of geniuses and heroes whom Elizabeth had gathered round her? Who would not, at the age of thirty, have given his pound of flesh to be captain of her guard, and to go with her whithersoever she went? It is not merely the intense gratification to carnal vanity—which if any man denies

or scoffs at, always mark him down as especially guilty—which is to be considered; but the real, actual honour, in the mind of one who looked on Elizabeth as the most precious and glorious being which the earth had seen for centuries. To be appreciated by her; to be loved by her; to serve her; to guard her; what could man desire more on earth?

Beside, he becomes a member of Parliament now; Lord Warden of the Stannaries; business which of course keeps him in England, business which he performs, as he does all things, wisely and well. Such a generation as this ought really to respect Raleigh a little more, if it be only for his excellence in their own especial sphere—that of business. Raleigh is a thorough man of business. He can ‘toil terribly,’ and what is more, toil to the purpose. In all the everyday affairs of life, he remains without a blot; a diligent, methodical, prudent man, who, though he plays for great stakes, ventures and loses his whole fortune again and again, yet never seems to omit the ‘doing the duty which lies nearest him’; never gets into mean money scrapes; never neglects tenants or duty; never gives way for one instant to ‘the eccentricities of genius.’

If he had done so, be sure that we should have heard of it. For no man can become what he has become without making many an enemy; and he has his enemies already. On which statement naturally occurs the question—why? An important question too; because several of his later biographers seem to have running in their minds some such train of thought as this

—Raleigh must have been a bad fellow, or he would not have had so many enemies; and because he was a bad fellow, there is an *à priori* reason that charges against him are true. Whether this be arguing in a circle or not, it is worth searching out the beginning of this enmity, and the reputed causes of it. In after years it will be because he is ‘damnable proud,’ because he hated Essex, and so forth: of which in their places. But what is the earliest count against him? Naunton, who hated Raleigh, and was moreover a rogue, has no reason to give, but that ‘the Queen took him for a kind of oracle, which much nettled them all; yea, those he relied on began to take this his sudden favour for an alarm; to be sensible of their own supplantation, and to project his; which shortly made him to sing, “Fortune my foe.”’

Now, be this true or not, and we do not put much faith in it, it gives no reason for the early dislike of Raleigh, save the somewhat unsatisfactory one which Cain would have given for his dislike of Abel. Moreover, there exists a letter of Essex’s, written as thoroughly in the Cain spirit as any we ever read; and we wonder that, after reading that letter, men can find courage to repeat the old sentimentalism about the ‘noble and unfortunate’ Earl. His hatred of Raleigh—which, as we shall see hereafter, Raleigh not only bears patiently, but requites with good deeds as long as he can—springs, by his own confession, simply from envy and disappointed vanity. The spoilt boy insults Queen Elizabeth about her liking for the ‘knave Raleigh.’ She, ‘taking hold of one word disdain,’ tells Essex that ‘there was no such cause why

I should thus disdain him.' On which, says Essex, 'as near as I could I did describe unto her what he had been, and what he was; and then I did let her see, whether I had come to disdain his competition of love, or whether I could have comfort to give myself over to the service of a mistress that was in awe of such a man. I spake for grief and choler as much against him as I could: and I think he standing at the door might very well hear the worst that I spoke of him. In the end, I saw she was resolved to defend him, and to cross me.' Whereupon follows a 'scene,' the naughty boy raging and stamping, till he insults the Queen, and calls Raleigh 'a wretch'; whereon poor Elizabeth, who loved the coxcomb for his father's sake, 'turned her away to my Lady Warwick,' and Essex goes grumbling forth.

Raleigh's next few years are brilliant and busy ones; and gladly, did space permit, would I give details of those brilliant adventures which make this part of his life that of a true knight-errant. But they are mere episodes in the history; and we must pass them quickly by, only saying that they corroborate in all things our original notion of the man—just, humane, wise, greatly daring and enduring greatly; and filled with the one fixed idea, which has grown with his growth and strengthened with his strength, the destruction of the Spanish power, and colonisation of America by English. His brother Humphrey makes a second attempt to colonise Newfoundland, and perishes as heroically as he had lived. Raleigh, undaunted by his own loss in the adventure and his brother's failure, sends out a fleet of his own to discover

to the southward, and finds Virginia. One might spend pages on this beautiful episode; on the simple descriptions of the fair new land which the sea-kings bring home; on the profound (for those times at least) knowledge which prompted Raleigh to make the attempt in that particular direction which had as yet escaped the notice of the Spaniards; on the quiet patience with which, undaunted by the ill-success of the first colonists, he sends out fleet after fleet, to keep the hold which he had once gained; till, unable any longer to support the huge expense, he makes over his patent for discovery to a company of merchants, who fare for many years as ill as Raleigh himself did: but one thing one has a right to say, that to this one man, under the providence of Almighty God, do the whole of the United States of America owe their existence. The work was double. The colony, however small, had to be kept in possession at all hazards; and he did it. But that was not enough. Spain must be prevented from extending her operations northward from Florida; she must be crippled along the whole east coast of America. And Raleigh did that too. We find him for years to come a part-adventurer in almost every attack on the Spaniards: we find him preaching war against them on these very grounds, and setting others to preach it also. Good old Hariot (Raleigh's mathematical tutor, whom he sent to Virginia) re-echoes his pupil's trumpet-blast. Hooker, in his epistle dedicatory of his Irish History, strikes the same note, and a right noble one it is. 'These Spaniards are trying to build up a world-tyranny by rapine and cruelty. You, sir, call on us to

deliver the earth from them, by doing justly and loving mercy; and we will obey you!’ is the answer which Raleigh receives, as far as I can find, from every nobler-natured Englishman.

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