

Baring Maurice

Lost Diaries



Maurice Baring

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Baring Maurice

Lost Diaries

I

FROM THE DIARY OF SMITH MINOR

*ST JAMES'S SCHOOL,
September, 1884.*

Sunday. – Yesterday afternoon was a half-holiday we were playing prisoners base except four boys who were gardening with Mrs Wickham. Peel hit Bell by mistake with all his force with the pic-axe on Bell's wrist.

Sunday. – Last night there was a total eclipse of the moon. We all stayed up to see it, it looked very funny. There was a shadow right over the moon. We began football yesterday. At tea the Head asked if any one had eaten chesnuts in the garden. Simes major said yes at once. Then the Head said he was sure others had too. Then Wilson stood up and after a time 7 chaps stood up. Then the Head said it would be the worse for those who didn't stand up as he knew who the culprets were. I hadn't eaten any but Anderson had given me a piece off his knife so I stood up too. The Head said we should all have two hours extra work. He was very waxy he said we were unreliael.

Sunday. – Yesterday we were all photografted. Simes laughed and was sent to bed for misbehavieer. Pork's people came down yesterday. We call Pork Hogg because he's dirty. He showed them over the school, and turned on the electrik light. The Head was looking through the curtain in the library and saw this. When his people went away Hogg was sent for and he is to be swished tomorrow. We told him he would get it hot and he blubbed.

Sunday. – We went for the choir expedition last Thursday. It was *great fun*. We went to London by the 8.35 train. We missed the train!! So we went by the 8.53. We got to London at 10.15. We then went to the mint we first saw the silver melted and made into thick tablets, then we saw it rolled out into thin bits then cut stamped and weighed then we had a very good luncheon and went to the Tower. We first saw the Bloody Tower were the little Princes were murdered then we saw the jewels the warder said the Queen's crown was worth over £1,000,000 then we saw the armory and the torture's, then we went to Madame Tussaus it is quite a large building now with a large stairkes then we had tea and went home.

Sunday. – I said to Anderson that we might start an aquarium but he said Ferguson had one last term and that it would be copying, he said he hates copying. So we'll have a menagery instead with lizards.

Sunday. – The lizard is very well indeed and has eat a lot of worms. White cheeked Jones ma and Mac said they must fight it out in the play-room in the hour. They fought with gloves. White gave him a bloody nose. We had a very good game of football yesterday. Williams and Pierce which left last term came from Eton to play. Pierce changed in my room. He says you don't say squit at Eton and you say Metutors not My tutors. The fireworks are in a week.

Saturday. – There was no work this morning as it was "All Saints day." There was a football matsh against another scool – Reynolds'. We won by three goals and three tries.

There was an awful row on Wednesday. Anderson cut off a piece of his hair. Mac nabbed it, and he said he hadn't as he was afraid of the consequenses. Then a search was made and they fond a piece of hair in his drawer. Mac told him he would find himself in Queer Street and Colly said when he was writing home on Sunday that he had better add that he was a liar. Nothing hapened till Monday and Anderson thought it was forgotten but at reading over when the 3nd Div came up the

Head said: "Anderson I am astounded at you; you are a shufler and worse." He lost 50 marks and was swished. He would get 20 the head said if he did it again and he would be turned out of the choir.

Sunday. – When Colly was out of the room in Set 3 this morning Mason said he wouldn't sneak about me talking if I didn't sneak about him so I talked. When Colly came back Mason sneaked, Please sir will you ask Smith not to talk. I had to stand on the stool of penitence. We are going to put Mason in Coventry because he always sneaks just after he has sworn he won't. Last night we all had to play our pieces in the Drawing Room. I played a duet with Wilson mi. Astley played best. When everybody had played their pieces we had ginger beer and biscuits and went to bed. Fish played worst (on the violin).

Sunday. – We had fireworks on the 5th romman candles rockets crackers squibs and a set piece with God Save the Queen on it. They came from Broks who makes the fireworks at the Crystal palace we burnt a man in effigee a man with collars and an axe. The Head said he wouldn't say who it was meant to be but that all true Englishmen who were not traiters could guess. Rowley said it was meant to be Mister Gladstone but he only said this to get a rise out of Pork whose paters a liberal. It was reelly Guy Fawks then Pork said Anderson's father was a liberal too and Anderson hit him in the eye. The Head hates liberals.

There was another row this week; Christy said something to Broadwood at breakfast that the poridge was mighty good. That was copying Anderson who learnt it from his mater who is a Yankee. Mac asked him what he'd said. He said he'd said the porridge was good. Mac asked Is that all you've said. Christy got very red and looked as if he was going to blub and said that was all. Very well said Mac Come afterwards. Mac reported him for telling bungs. He wasn't swished as its his first term: but Mac told him he was making himself very unpopular.

On Tuesday Fatty the butler came into the 3rd Div scoolroom with a message. Some one said in a wisper Hullo Fatty. Mac nabbed it and said who said that nobody answered then Mac said he knew it was Middleton mi as he had recognised his voice Middleton swore he hadn't said a word but he was reported and swished he still swears he didn't say Fatty and I believe it was Pork. The other day at French Campbell went up to Colly and asked him what was wrong with les tables it had a pencil cross on it. Colly said that when he'd corrected it there was no S there. Campbell swore their was. Colly held the paper to the window and said he saw the ink of the S was fresh, then Christy began to blub and said he had done it and Colly said it was a for jerry and wrote forjer in white chalk on his back and said he would tell the chaps in the first Div but he didn't report him to the Head which was awfully decent of him becaus Christy is a new chap.

Sunday. – Trials are nearly over. We had Latin G and Greek G paper yesterday (set by the Head). There are only two more papers geography and Latin verse. The Consert is on Saturday. Pork's sister is called Jane!! Campbell saw it on the seel of a letter he got. His people were coming for the Consert but he's written to tell them not to as we told him the Head thought liberals worse than thieves.

II

FROM THE DIARY OF ISEULT OF BRITTANY

May 1. – Mamma sent me up a message early this morning to say that I was to put on my best white gown with my coral necklace, as guests were expected. She didn't say who. Nurse was in a fuss and pulled my hair when she did it, and made my face very sore by scrubbing it with pumice-stone. I can't think why, as there was no hurry. I came down punctually at noon. Mamma and papa were sitting in the hall, waiting. Fresh rushes were strewn on the floor. I was told to get out my harp, and to sit with my back to the light. I hadn't practised for weeks, and I can only play one song properly, "The Mallard," a Cornish song. When I told mamma that was the only song I knew, she said I was on no account to mention it, if I was asked to play; but I was only to play *Breton* songs. I said I didn't know any. She said that didn't matter; but that I could sing anything I knew and call it a Breton song. I said nothing, but I thought, and I still think, this was dishonest. Besides the only songs that I know are quite new. The stable people whistle them, and they come from Rome.

We waited a long time. Papa and mamma were both very fidgety and mamma kept on pulling me about, and telling me that my hair was badly done and that she could see daylight between the pleats of my frock. I nearly cried and papa said: "Leave the dear child alone; she's very good." After we'd been waiting about twenty minutes, the trumpets sounded and Morgan, the seneschal, walked in very slowly, and announced: "Sir Tristram of Lyoness."

Rather an oldish man walked in, with a reddish beard, and many wrinkles. One of his front teeth was broken and the other was black. He was dressed in a coat of mail which was too tight for him. He had nice eyes and seemed rather embarrassed. Mamma and papa made a great fuss about him and brought me forward and said: "This is our daughter Iseult," and mamma whispered to me: "Show your hands." I didn't want to do this, as nurse had scrubbed them so hard that they were red.

Sir Tristram bowed deeply, and seemed more and more embarrassed. After a long pause he said: "It's a very fine day, isn't it?"

Before I had time to answer, mamma broke in by saying: "Iseult has been up since six with the falconers." This wasn't true and I was surprised that mamma should be so forgetful. I hadn't been out with the hawkers for weeks.

Then dinner was served. It lasted for hours I thought, and the conversation flagged terribly. Kurneval, Sir Tristram's Squire, had *twice* of everything and drank much more cider than was good for him. After dinner, mamma told me to fetch my harp and to sing a Breton song. I was just going to say I didn't know one, when she frowned at me so severely that I didn't dare. So I sang the Provençal orchard song about waking up too early that Kerodac the groom taught me. Sir Tristram said: "Charming, charming, that's German, isn't it; how well taught she is. I do like good singing." Then he yawned, although he tried not to, and papa said he was sure Sir Tristram was tired, and that he would take him to see the stables. Sir Tristram then became quite lively and said he would be delighted.

When they'd gone, mamma scolded me, and said that I had behaved like a ninny and that she didn't know what our guests would think of me. It seemed to me we only had one guest; but I didn't say so. Then she told me to go and rest so as to be ready for dinner.

I forgot to say that just as Sir Tristram was going out of the room he said to papa: "Your daughter's name is – er?" and papa said, "Yes, Iseult, after her aunt." And Sir Tristram said: "Oh! what a pretty name!"

May 6. – They've been here a week now and I haven't seen much of them; because Sir Tristram has been riding with papa nearly all day, and every day. But every day after dinner mamma makes me sing the Provençal song, and every time I sing it, Sir Tristram says: "Charming, charming, that's

German, isn't it?" although I've already told him twice now that it isn't. I like Sir Tristram, only he's very silent, and after dinner he becomes sleepy directly, just like papa.

May 7. – I've had a most exciting day. Papa and mamma sent for me and when I came into the room they were both very solemn and said they had something particular to say to me. Then mamma cried and papa tried to soothe her and said: "It's all right, it's all right," and then he blurted out that I was to marry Sir Tristram next Wednesday. I cried, and papa cried, and mamma cried, and then they said I was a lucky girl, and mamma said that I must see about my clothes at once.

May 8. – Nurse is in a fearful temper. She says we shall never be ready by Wednesday and that it's more than flesh and blood can stand to worrit folks like this. But mamma is in the best of tempers. Sir Tristram has gone away – to stay with some friends – he is coming back on Tuesday night. My wedding gown is to be made of silver with daisies worked on it. The weavers are working day and night, *but most of the stuff is old*. It belonged to mamma. I do think they might have given me a new gown. Blanche had a new one when she was married.

May 12. – The wedding went off very well. I had four maidens and four pages. After Mass, we had a long feast. Papa made a speech and broke down, and Tristram made a speech and got into a muddle about my name, and everybody was silent. Then he said I had beautiful hands and everybody cheered. After supper we were looking out on the sea, and just as Tristram was becoming talkative I noticed that he wore another ring besides his wedding ring, a green one, made of jasper. I said, "What a pretty ring! Who gave it you?" He said, "Oh, a friend," and changed the subject. Then he said he was very tired and went away.

May 13. – It's the 13th and that's an unlucky number. Nurse said that no child of hers should marry in May, so I suppose that's what brought it about. In any case Tristram, who has been very gloomy ever since he's been here, has got to go and fight in a tournament. He says he won't be away long and that there's no danger; not any more than crossing the sea in an open boat, which I *do* think *is* dangerous. He starts to-morrow at dawn.

May 14. – Nothing particular.

May 15. – No news.

May 16. – Kurneval arrived this evening. He says that Tristram was slightly wounded; but would be all right in a day or two. I am very anxious.

May 17. – Tristram was brought back on a litter in the middle of the night. He has been wounded in the arm. The doctors here say he was bandaged wrong by the local doctor. They say he is suffering from slight local pain. Kurneval says the horrid henchman hit his arm as hard as he could with a broad sword. Papa and mamma arrive to-morrow with the doctor. Tristram insists on sleeping out of doors on the beach. The doctor says this is a patient's whim and must be humoured. I'm sure it's bad for him, as the nights are very cold.

July 1. – I've been too busy to write my diary for weeks. Tristram is still just the same. The doctors say there is no fear of immediate change.

August 10. – Mamma says the Queen of Cornwall (whose name is Iseult the same as mine) is coming for a few days, with her husband and some friends. I do think it's very inconsiderate, considering how full the house is already; and what with Tristram being so ill – and insisting on sleeping on the beach – it makes it very difficult for every one.

September 1. – Papa went out to shoot birds with his new cross-bow; but he came back in a bad temper as he'd only shot one, and a hen. Tristram is no better. He keeps on talking about a ship with a black sail.

September 19. – To-day I was on the beach with Tristram and he asked me if I saw a ship. I said I did. He asked me if the sail was black, and as the doctor had told me to humour him, I said it was. Upon which he got much worse, and I had to call the doctors. They said he was suffering from hypertrophy of the sensory nerves.

September 20. – Tristram unconscious. The Queen of Cornwall just arrived. Too busy to write.

III

FROM THE DIARY OF KING COPHETUA

Cophetua Castle, May 3. – We had to be married in May, after all. It was a choice between that and being married on a Friday, and Jane would not hear of that, so I gave in. Poor dear Mamma relented at the end and came to the wedding. On the whole she behaved with great restraint. She could not help saying just a word about rash promises. Jane looked exceedingly beautiful. I felt very proud of her. I regret nothing. We start for Italy to-morrow. We are to visit Milan, Florence-and Rome. Jane is looking forward to the change.

Dijon, May 6. – We decided to break the journey here: but we shall probably start again to-morrow, as Jane is extremely dissatisfied with the Inn, the *Lion d'Or*. I, of course, chose the best. But she says she found a spider in her bedroom; she complained that the silver plates on which dinner was served were not properly cleaned; that the veal was tough, and that we had been given *Graves* under the guise of *Barsac*. All these things seem to me exceedingly trivial; but Jane is particular. In a way it is a good thing, but considering her early upbringing and her former circumstances, I confess I am astonished.

Lyons, May 12. – I shall be glad when we get to Italy. Jane becomes more and more fastidious about Inns. She walked out of four running, here. I was imprudent enough to say that Mamma had a vassal who was a distant connection of the *Sieur Jehan de Blois* and Jane insisted on my paying him a visit and asking him to lodge us, telling him who we are, as we are travelling incognito as the Baron and Baroness of Wessex. This put me in a very awkward position, as I don't know him. I did it, however, and Jane came with me. I have seldom felt so awkward, but really he could not have made things easier. He was tact itself, and while respecting our incognito, he treated us with the utmost consideration. He was most kind. Jane made me a little uncomfortable by praising a fine crystal goblet encrusted with emeralds. *Sieur Jehan* was of course obliged to offer it her, and, to my vexation, she accepted it.

Avignon, May 20. – Jane finds our incognito more and more irksome. I was looking forward to a real quiet holiday, where we could get away from all fuss and worry, and all the impediments of rank and riches. I wanted to pretend we were poor for a while. To send on the litters with the oxen, the horses, and the baggage, and to ride on mules – as soon as we had reached the South – but Jane would not hear of this. She said she had had enough of poverty without playing at it now. This is of course quite true, but I wish she wouldn't say such things before people. It makes one so uncomfortable. Here she has insisted on our staying with the Pope, which may put me in a very awkward position with regard to several of our allies in Italy. He has been, however, most gracious. Jane is very impulsive at times. She insisted on our making an expedition to the Bridge here, by moonlight, and dancing on it. She kicked off her shoes and danced barefooted; I asked her not to do this, whereupon she said: "If the courtiers hadn't praised my ankles you would never have married me and what's the use of having pretty ankles, if nobody can see them!" I shall be glad when we get to Italy. I am determined to preserve a strict incognito, once we are across the frontier.

Turin, June 10. – It has poured with rain every day since we crossed the frontier, and Jane won't believe that it is ever fine in Italy. It is very cold for the time of year, and the people here say that there has not been such a summer for thirty years. Every time I mention the blue sky of Italy Jane loses her temper. She spends all her time at the goldsmiths' shops and at the weavers' – I am afraid she is extravagant: and her taste in dress is not quite as restrained as I could wish. Of course it doesn't matter here, but at home it would shock people. For instance, last night she came down to supper dressed as a Turkish Sultana in pink trousers and a scimitar, and without even a veil over her face. When I remonstrated she said men did not understand these things.

Milan, June 15. – It is still raining. Jane refused to look at the Cathedral and spends her whole time at the merchants' booths as usual. To-day I broached the incognito question. I suggested our walking on foot, or perhaps riding on mules, to Florence. Jane, to my great surprise, said she would be delighted to do this, and asked when we were to start. I said we had better start the day after tomorrow. I am greatly relieved. She is really very sensible, if a little impulsive at times; but considering her early life, it might be much worse. I have much to be thankful for. She is greatly admired, only I wish she would not wear such bright colours.

Florence, June 20. – It has been a great disappointment. Just as we were making preparations to start entirely incognito – Jane had even begged that we should walk on foot the whole way and take no clothes with us – a messenger arrived from the Florentine Embassy here, saying that the Duke of Florence had heard of our intended visit and had put a cavalcade of six carriages, fifty mules, seven litters, and a hundred men-at-arms at our disposal. How he could have heard of our intention I don't know! Jane was bitterly disappointed. She cried, and said she had been looking forward to this walking tour more than to anything else. But I managed to soothe her, and she eventually consented to accept the escort of the Duke. It would have been impossible to refuse. As it was, we were very comfortable. We stopped at Bologna on the way, and Jane insisted on going to the market and buying a sausage. She tried to make me taste it, but I cannot endure the taste of garlic.

At Florence we were magnificently received, and taken at once to the Palace – where the rooms are very spacious. Jane complains of the draughts and the cold. It is still pouring with rain. There is a very fine collection of Greek statues to be seen here, but Jane takes no interest in these things. The first thing she did was to go to the New bridge, which is lined with goldsmiths' shops on both sides and to spend a great deal of money on perfectly useless trinkets. She says she must have some things to bring back to my sisters. This was thoughtful of her. The Duke is going to give a great banquet in our honour on Tuesday next.

June 23. – The feast is to-night. The gardens have been hung with lanterns: a banquet has been prepared on a gigantic scale. Five hundred guests have been bidden. Jane was greatly looking forward to it and lo and behold! by the most evil mischance a terrible vexation has befallen us. A courier arrived this morning, bearing letters for me, and among them was one announcing the death of the Duke of Burgundy, who is my uncle by marriage. I told Jane that of course we could not possibly be present at the banquet. Jane said that I knew best, but that the Duke would be mortally offended by our absence, since he had arranged the banquet entirely for us and spent a sum of 10,000 ducats on it. It would be, she pointed out – and I am obliged to admit she is right – most impolitic to annoy the Duke. After an hour's reflection I hit on what seemed to me an excellent solution – that we should be present, but dressed in mourning. Jane said this was impossible as she had no black clothes. Then she suggested that I should keep back the news until to-morrow, and if the news were received in other quarters, deny its authenticity, and say we had a later bulletin. This on the whole seemed to be the wisest course. As the etiquette here is very strict and the Dowager Duchess is most particular, I pray that Jane may be careful and guarded in her expressions.

June 25. – My poor dear mother was right after all. I should have listened, and now it is too late. The dinner went off very well. We sat at a small table on a raised dais. Jane sat between the Duke and the Prime Minister and opposite the Dowager Duchess. There was no one at the table, except myself, under sixty years of age, and only the greatest magnates were present. Jane was silent and demure and becomingly dressed. I congratulated myself on everything. After the banquet came the dance, and Jane took part with exquisite grace in the saraband: she observed all the rules of etiquette. The Dowager Duchess seemed charmed with her. Then later came supper, which was served in a tent, and which was perhaps more solemn than everything. When the time came to lead Jane to supper she was nowhere to be found. Outside in the garden the minor nobles were dancing in masks, and some mimes were singing. We waited, and then a message came that the Queen had had a touch of ague and had retired. The supper went off gloomily. At the close an enormous pie was brought in,

the sight of which caused a ripple of well-bred applause. "Viva Il Re Cophetua" was written on it in letters of pink sugar. It was truly a triumph of culinary art. The mime announced that the moment had come for it to be cut, and as the Grand Duke rose to do this the thin crust burst of itself, and out stepped Jane, with no garments beside her glorious dark hair! She tripped on to the table, and then with a peal of laughter leapt from it and ran into the garden, since when she has not been heard of! My anguish and shame are too great for words.

But the Duke and the Dowager have been most sympathetic.

June 26. – Jane has fled, and my jewels as well as hers are missing.

It is suspected that the attaché at the Florentine Embassy at Milan is at the bottom of the conspiracy, for Jane herself had a good heart.

IV

FROM THE DIARY OF FROISSART, WAR CORRESPONDENT

Parys, The Feast of the Epiphanie. – The astrologers say there will be plenty-full trouble in Normandy, in the spring.

June 10. – To dyner with the Cardinall of Piergourt to meet the gentyll King of Behayne and the Lorde Charles, his son. The Cardinall sayd neither the Kynge of Englande nor the Frenche Kynge desire warre, but the honour of them and of their people saved, they wolde gladly fall to any reasonable way. But the King of Behayne shook his heade and sayd: "I am feare I am a pesymyste," which is Almayne for a man who beholds the future with no gladde chere.

June 20. – The great merchaunt of Araby, Montefior, says there will be no warre. He has received worde from the cytie of London, and his friends, great merchaunts all, and notably, Salmone and Glukstyn, sayd likewise that there will be no warre.

June 30. – The currours have brought worde home, the Kynge of Englande was on the see with a great army, and is now a lande in Normandy. Have received faire offers for chronycles of the warre from London, Parys, and Rome; they offer three thousand crounes monthly, payeing curtesly for all my expenses. Have sayd I will gladly fall to their wish.

July 1. – Trussed bagge and baggage in great hast and departed towarde Normandy, the seat of warre.

July 2. – Ryde but small journeys, and do purpose, being no great horseman, every time I have to ryde a horse, to add three crounes to the expenses which my patrons curtesly pay.

Take lodgynges every day bytwene noone and thre of the clocke. Finde the contrey frutefull and reasonably suffycent of wyne.

July 3, Cane. – A great and ryche town with many burgesses, crafty men. They solde wyne so deare that there were no byers save myself who bought suffycent and added to the lyste which my patrons curtesly pay.

July 4, Amyense. – Left Cane and the englysshmen have taken the toune and clene robbed it. Right pensyve as to putting my lyfe in adventure.

Sir Godmar de Fay is to kepe note of the chronyclers and he has ordayned them to bring him their chronycles. He has curtesly made these rules for the chronyclers. Chronyclers may only chronycle the truth. Chronyclers may not chronycle the names of places, bridges, rivers, castels where batayles happen – nor the names of any lordes, knyghtes, marshals, erles, or others who take part in the batayle: nor the names of any weapons or artillery used, nor the names or numbers of any prisoners taken in batayle.

Thanks to Sir Godmar de Fay the chronycler's task has been made lyghter.

July 6, Calys. – The chronyclers have been ordayned by Sir Godmar de Fay to go to Calys. There are nine chronyclers. One is an Alleymayne, who is learned in the art of warre, one is a Genowayes, and one an Englysshman, the rest are Frenche. The cytie of Calys is full of drapery and other merchaunt dyse, noble ladyes and damosels. The chronyclers have good wyl to stay in the cytie.

July 7. – Sir Godmar de Fay has ordayned all the chronyclers to leave the cytie of Calys and to ride to a lytell town called Nully, where there are no merchaunt dyse, and no damosels, nor suffycent of wyne. The chronyclers are not so merrie as in the cytie of Calys.

July 9. – Played chesse with the Genowayse and was checkmate with a bishop.

August 6. – The chronyclers are all pensyve. They are lodged in the felde. There has fallen a great rayne that pours downe on our tents. There is no wyne nor pasties, nor suffycent of flesshe, no bookes for to rede, nor any company.

Last nyghte I wrote a ballade on Warre, which ends, "But Johnnie Froissart wisheth he were dead." It is too indiscrete to publysh. I wyssh I were at Calys. I wyssh I were at Parys. I wyssh I were anywhere but at Nully.

August 23. – At the Kynge's commandment the chronyclers are to go to the fronte.

August 25, Friday. – The Kynge of Englande and the French Kynge have ordayned all the business of a batayle. I shall watch it and chronycle it from a hill, which shall not be too farre away to see and not too neare to adventure my lyfe.

August 26. – I rode to a windmill but mistooke the way, as a great rayne fell, then the eyre waxed clere and I saw a great many Englyssh erls and Frenche knyghtes, riding in contrarie directions, in hast. Then many Genowayse went by, and the Englysshmen began to shote feersly with their crossbowes and their arowes fell so hotly that I rode to a lytell hut, and finding shelter there I wayted till the snowe of arowes should have passed. Then I clymbed to the top of the hill but I could see lytell but dyverse men riding here and there. When I went out again, aboute evensong, I could see no one aboute, dyverse knyghtes and squyers rode by looking for their maisters, and then it was sayd the Kynge had fought a batayle, and had rode to the castell of Broye, and thence to Amyense.

August 30. – The chronyclers have been ordayned to go to Calys, whereth they are well pleased save for a feare of a siege. The chronyclers have writ the chronycle of the Day of Saturday, August 26. It was a great batayle, ryght cruell, and it is named the batayle of Cressey.

Some of the chronyclers say the Englysshmen discomfyted the French; others that the King discomfyted the Englysshe; but the Englysshmen repute themselves to have the victorie; but all this shall be told in my chronycle, which I shall write when I am once more in the fayre cytie of Parys. It was a great batayle and the Frenche and the Englysshe Lordes are both well pleased at the feats of arms, and the Frenche Kynge, though the day was not as he wolde have had it, has wonne hygh renowne and is ryght pleased – likewise the Englysshe Kynge, and his son; but both Kynge have ordayned the chronyclers to make no boast of their good adventure.

August 30. – The Kynge of Englande has layd siege to Calys and has sayd he will take the towne by famysshing. When worde of this was brought to the chronyclers they were displeased. It is well that I have hyd in a safe place some wyne and other thynges necessarie.

Later. – All thynges to eat are solde at a great pryce. A mouse costs a croune.

August 31. – All the poore and mean people were constrained by the capture of Calys to yssue out of the town, men, women, and children, and to pass through the Englysshe host, and with them the poore chronyclers. And the Kynge of Englande gave them and the chronyclers mete and drinke to dyner, and every person ii d. sterlyng in alms.

And the chronyclers have added to the lyst of their costs which their patrons curtesly pay: To loss of honour at receyving alms from an Englysshe Kynge, a thousand crounes.

V

FROM THE DIARY OF GEORGE WASHINGTON WRITTEN WHEN A SCHOOLBOY

Bridges Creek, 1744, September 20. – My mother has at last consented to let me go to school. I had repeatedly made it quite plain to her that the private tuition hitherto accorded to me was inadequate; that I would be in danger of being outstripped in the race owing to insufficient groundwork. My mother, although very shrewd in some matters, was curiously obstinate on this point. She positively declined to let me attend the day-school, saying that she thought I knew quite enough for a boy of my age, and that it would be time enough for me to go to school when I was older. I quoted to her Tacitus' powerful phrase about the insidious danger of indolence; how there is a charm in indolence – but let me taste the full pleasure of transcribing the noble original: "Subit quippe etiam ipsius inertiae dulcedo: et invisā primo desidia postremo amatur"; but she only said that she did not understand Latin. This was scarcely an argument, as I translated it for her.

I cannot help thinking that there was sometimes an element of pose in Tacitus' much-vaunted terseness.

September 29. – I went to school for the first time to-day. I confess I was disappointed. We are reading, in the Fourth Division, in which I was placed at my mother's express request, Eutropius and Ovid; both very insipid writers. The boys are lamentably backward and show a deplorable lack of interest in the classics. The French master has an accent that leaves much to be desired, and he seems rather shaky about his past participles. However, all these things are but trifles. What I really resent is the gross injustice which seems to be the leading principle at this school – if school it can be called.

For instance, when the master asks a question, those boys who know the answer are told to hold up their hands. During the history lesson Henry VIII. was mentioned in connection with the religious quarrels of the sixteenth century, a question which, I confess, can but have small interest for any educated person at the present day. The master asked what British poet had written a play on the subject of Henry VIII. I, of course, held up my hand, and so did a boy called Jonas Pike. I was told to answer first, and I said that the play was in the main by Fletcher, with possible later interpolations. The usher, it is scarcely credible, said, "Go to the bottom of the form," and when Jonas Pike was asked he replied, "Shakespeare," and was told to go up one. This was, I consider, a monstrous piece of injustice.

During one of the intervals, which are only too frequent, between the lessons, the boys play a foolish game called "It," in which even those who have no aptitude and still less inclination for this tedious form of horse-play, are compelled to take part. The game consists in one boy being named "it" (though why the neuter is used in this case instead of the obviously necessary masculine it is hard to see). He has to endeavour to touch one of the other boys, who in their turn do their best to evade him by running, and should he succeed in touching one of them, the boy who is touched becomes "it" *ipso facto*. It is all very tedious and silly. I was touched almost immediately, and when I said that I would willingly transfer the privilege of being touched to one of the other boys who were obviously eager to obtain it, one of the bigger boys (again Jonas Pike) gave me a sharp kick on the shin. I confess I was ruffled. I was perhaps to blame in what followed. I am, perhaps, inclined to forget at times that Providence has made me physically strong. I retaliated with more insistence than I intended, and in the undignified scuffle which ensued Jonas Pike twisted his ankle. He had to be supported home. When questioned as to the cause of the accident I regret to say he told a deliberate falsehood. He said he had slipped on the ladder in the gymnasium. I felt it my duty to inform the head-master of the indirect and unwilling part I had played in the matter.

The head master, who is positively unable to perceive the importance of plain-speaking, said, "I suppose you mean you did it." I answered, "No, sir; I was the resisting but not the passive agent in an unwarrantable assault." The result was I was told to stay in during the afternoon and copy out the First Eclogue of Virgil. It is characteristic of the head master to choose a feeble Eclogue of Virgil instead of one of the admirable Georgics. Jonas Pike is to be flogged, as soon as his foot is well, for his untruthfulness.

This, my first experience of school life, is not very hopeful.

October 10. – The routine of the life here seems to me more and more meaningless. The work is to me child's play; and indeed chiefly consists in checking the inaccuracies of the ushers. They show no gratitude to me – indeed, sometimes the reverse of gratitude.

One day, in the English class, one of the ushers grossly misquoted Pope. He said, "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing." I held up my hand and asked if the line was not rather "A little learning is a dangerous thing," adding that Pope would scarcely have thought a little *knowledge* to be dangerous, since all *knowledge* is valuable. The usher tried to evade the point by a joke, which betrayed gross theological ignorance. He said: "All Popes are not infallible."

One of the boys brought into school a foolish toy – a gutta-percha snake that contracts under pressure and expands when released, with a whistling screech.

Jonas Pike, who is the most ignorant as well as the most ill-mannered of all the boys, suggested that the snake should be put into the French master's locker, in which he keeps the exercises for the week. The key of the locker is left in charge of the top boy of the class, who, I say it in all modesty, is myself. Presently another boy, Hudson by name, asked me for the key. I gave it to him, and he handed it to Pike, who inserted the snake in the locker. When the French master opened the locker the snake flew in his face. He asked me if I had had any hand in the matter. I answered that I had not touched the snake. He asked me if I had opened the locker; I, of course, said "No." Questioned further as to how the snake could have got there, I admitted having lent the key to Hudson, ignorant of any ulterior purpose. In spite of this I was obliged, in company with Pike and Hudson, to copy out some entirely old-fashioned and meaningless exercises in syntax.

October 13. – A pretty little episode happened at home to-day. The gardener's boy asked me if he might try his new axe on the old cherry-tree, which I have often vainly urged mother to cut down. I said, "By all means." It appears that he misunderstood me and cut down the tree. My mother was about to send him away, but I went straight to her and said I would take the entire responsibility for the loss of the tree on myself, as I had always openly advocated its removal and that the gardener's boy was well aware of my views on the subject. My mother was so much touched at my straightforwardness that she gave me some candy, a refreshment to which I am still partial. Would that the ushers at school could share her fine discrimination, her sound judgment, and her appreciation of character.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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