

The man, and especially the schoolmaster, who does his duty with the expectation of receiving praise for his work is more than likely to be disappointed. The man, if he be a millionaire or on the way of being one, may purchase it. Or if he be a dispenser of patronage or charity, he may entice it. But the poor schoolmaster is all but sure to be disappointed. Therefore, my experience as a schoolmaster—not to say that I have never had my moments of professional triumph—fills me with no empty ambitions as an author. In writing my experiences, I am merely doing what I consider to be my duty. I have known what it is to teach young folks for the mere pleasure of teaching, enhanced, as, of course, it could not but be, by the little bit of bread and butter it brought me. The true reward, however, was of my own making, and when it was not felt, there was nobody to blame but myself. And so, if the praise I receive for my present venture be neither more nor less than the reward which I have received as an instructor of youth, there will be in reality nobody to blame, as I am determined that in this instance no blame shall be laid at my own door. “Do your duty and shame the idle,” however the last word may be otherwise spelled by the re-arranging of the letters round an ellipsis, has always been a watchword of mine: and with it still as my motto, my friends may expect to find in me as an author what they have found in me as a schoolmaster, what they have found in me as a man,—a determination to digest what I read, to think before I speak, and to utter nothing but the truth when I commit my thoughts to writing.

No, gentle reader, my social position in life was not a high one when I first saw the light of day. My father was not a wealthy man. Far from it, he was a very poor man, as poor perhaps as it is possible for an industrious man ever to be. There is a philosophy which says that everything is for the best, and perhaps my father's poverty was really for the good of himself and his family; though I am afraid I have often been less thankful for the blessing of adversity, as it has been called, than I ought to have been. You will bear with an old man, when I say that even now I have some hesitation in lifting the veil from the past, from the earliest of my days. The so-called pride of ancestry is to be found in all of us—that pride which prompts us in our endeavours to trace our origin back to the beginnings and up-