

...ing at will, and finds instead a stub-  
born self-sufficient spirit that has been called  
forth by harsh treatment and intercourse  
with the mimic world of boys, more selfish  
and more conventional, because less charac-  
teristic than that of men. He is impatient  
of her tenderness now, nay, half ashamed to  
return it. Already he aspires to be a man,  
in his own eyes, and thinks it manly to make  
light of those affections and endearments by  
which he once set such store. The mother  
is no longer all in all in his heart, her empire  
is divided and weakened, soon it will be  
swept away, and she sighs for the white-  
-trunk days when her child was fondly and  
entirely her own. Now, I cannot help  
thinking the longer these days last the bet-  
ter. Anxious parent, what do you wish your  
son to become? A successful man in after  
life? Then rear him tenderly and carefully  
at first. You would not hit a colt at two  
years old; be not less patient with your own  
flesh and blood. Nature is the best guide,  
son may depend. Leave him to the woman  
until his strength is established and his courage  
high, and when the metal has assumed  
shape and consistency, to the forge with it  
as soon as you will. Hardship, buffetings,  
adversity, all these are good for the youth,  
but, for Heaven's sake, spare the child.

Party boys are droning away at their  
books on a bright sunshiny morning in June,  
and I am sitting at an old oak desk, begrimed  
and splashed with the inkshed of many gen-  
erations, and backed by the knives of idler  
after idler for the last fifty years. I have yet  
to learn by heart some two score lines from  
the *Æneid*. How I hate Virgil whilst I bend  
over those dog's eared leaves and that un-  
comfortable desk. How I envy the white  
butterfly of which I have just got a glimpse  
as he soars away into the blue sky—for no  
terrestrial objects are visible from our school-  
room window to distract our attention and  
interfere with our labors. I have already  
accompanied him in fancy over the lawn,  
and the garden, and the high whitethorn  
fence into the meadow beyond—how well I  
know the deep glades of that copse for which  
he is making; how I wish I was on my back  
in its shadow now. Never mind, to-day is  
a half holiday, and this afternoon I will  
spond somehow in a dear delicious ramble  
through the fairy-land of 'out of bounds.'  
The rap of our master's cane against his  
desk—a gentlemanlike method of awakening  
attention and asserting authority—startles  
me from my day-dream. 'March,' for we  
drop the Mr. prefixed, in speaking of our ped-  
agogue, 'March is a bit of a Tartar, and I  
tremble for the result.'

'Egerton to come up.'

Egerton goes up accordingly, with many  
missings, and embarks, like a desperate  
man, on the loaded *infandum Regina jubes*.  
The result may be gathered from March's  
observations as he returns me the book.

'Not a line correct, sir; stand down, sir;  
the finest passage of the poet shamefully  
mangled and defaced, it is a perfect disgrace  
to Everdon. Remain in till five, sir; and  
repeat the whole lesson to Mr. Manners.'

'Please, sir, I tried to learn it, sir; indeed  
I did, sir.'

'Don't tell me, sir; tried to learn it, in-  
deed. If it had been French or German, or  
any of those useless branches of learn-  
ing, you would have had it by heart fast  
enough; but Latin, sir, Latin is the founda-  
tion of a gentleman's education; Latin you  
were sent here to acquire, and Latin, sir,  
with an astounding rap on the desk), you  
shall learn, or I'll know the reason why.'

I may remark that March, though an ex-  
cellent scholar, professed utter contempt for  
all but the dead languages.

I determined to make one more effort to  
save my half holiday.

'Plesso, sir, if I might look over it once  
more, I could say it when the second class  
is down, please, sir, won't you give me  
another chance?'

March was not, in schoolboy parlance,  
'half a bad fellow,' and he did give me  
another chance, and I came up to him once  
more at the conclusion of school, having re-

that I cared for, or that cared for me, even  
nurse Nettich having remained in Hungary  
—my father was all-in all. I used to wait  
at his door of a morning to hear him wake  
and go away quite satisfied without letting  
him know. I used to watch him for miles  
when he rode out, and walked any distance to  
meet him on his way home. To please him  
I would even mount a quiet pony that he  
had bought on purpose for me, and dissemble  
my terrors because I saw they annoyed my  
kind father. I was a very shy, timid, and  
awkward boy, shrinking from strangers with  
a fear that was positively painful, and liking  
nothing so well as a huge arm-chair in the  
gloomy oak-wainscoted library, where I would  
sit by the hour reading old poetry, old plays,  
old novels, and wandering about till I lost  
myself in a world of my own creating, full of  
beauty and romance, and all that ideal life  
which we must perforce call nonsense, but  
which, were it reality, would make this earth  
a heaven. Such was a bad course of training  
for a boy whose disposition was naturally too  
dreamy and imaginative, too deficient in en-  
ergy and practical good sense. Had it gone  
on I must have become a madman; what is  
it but madness to live in a world of our own?  
I shall never forget the break-up of my  
dreams, the beginning, to me, of hard prac-  
tical life.

I was coiled up in my favorite attitude,  
buried in the depths of a huge arm-chair in  
the library, and devouring with all my senses  
and all my soul the pages of the *Morte d'  
Arthur*, that most voluminous and least in-  
structive of romances, but one for which, to  
my shame be it said, I confess to this day a  
sneaking kindness. I was gazing on Queen  
Guenever, as I pictured her to myself, in  
scarlet and ermine and pearls, with raven  
hair plaited over her queenly brow, and soft  
violet eyes, looking kindly down on mailed  
Sir Lancelot at her feet. I was holding  
Arthur's helmet in the forest, as the frank,  
handsome, stalwart monarch bent over a  
sparkling rill and cooled his sunburnt cheek,  
and laved his chestnut beard, whilst the sun-  
beams flickered through the green leaves and  
played upon his gleaming corslet and his  
armour of proof. I was feasting at Camelot  
with the Knights of the Round Table, jesting  
with Sir Diandam, discussing grave subjects  
of high import with Sir Gawain, or breaking  
a lance in knightly courtesy with Sir Tris-  
tram and Sir Bore. In short, I was a child  
at a spectacle, but the spectacle came and  
went, and grew more and more gorgeous at  
will. In the midst of my dreams I walked  
my father, and sat down opposite the old  
arm-chair.

'Vere,' said he, 'you must go to school.'

The announcement took away my breath.  
I had never, in my wildest moments, con-  
templated such a calamity.

'To school, papa; and when?' I mustered  
up courage to ask, clinging like a convict to  
the hope of a reprieve.

'The first of the month, my boy,' answered  
my father, rather bullying himself into firm-  
ness, for I fancy he hated the separation as  
much as I did. 'Mr. March writes me that  
his scholars will reunite on the first of the  
month, and he has a vacancy for you. We  
must make a man of you, Vere; and young  
De Rohan, your Hungarian friend, is going  
there, too. You will have lots of play-fellows,  
and get on very well, I have no doubt. And  
Everdon, is not so far from here, and—and  
you will be very comfortable, I trust; but I  
am loth to part with you, my dear, and that's  
the truth.'

I felt as if I could have endured martyr-  
dom when my father made this acknowl-  
edgment. I could do anything if I was only  
coaxed and pitied a little; and when I saw  
he was so unhappy at the idea of our separa-  
tion, I resolved that no word or look of mine  
should add to his discomfort, although I felt  
my heart breaking at the thoughts of bidding  
him good-bye and leaving the Grange, with  
its quiet regularity and peaceful associations,  
for the noise, bustle and discipline of a large  
school. Queen Guenever and Sir Lancelot  
faded hopelessly from my mental vision, and  
in their places rose up stern forms of harsh

A kind hand grimed with ink was laid on  
my shoulder, a pair of soft blue eyes looked  
into my face, and Victor De Rohan, my  
former playfellow, my present fast friend  
and declared 'chum,' sat down on the form  
beside me, and endeavored to console me in  
distress.

'I'll help you, Egerton,' said the warm-  
hearted lad; 'say it to me; March is a boast,  
but Manners is a good fellow; Manners will  
hear you now, and we shall have our half-  
holiday after all.'

'I can't, I can't,' was my desponding re-  
ply. 'Manners won't hear me, I know, till  
I am perfect, and I never can learn this stupid  
sing-song story. How I hate Queen Dido—  
how I hate Virgil. You should read about  
Guenever, Victor, and King Arthur. I'll tell  
you about them this afternoon,' and the  
tears came again into my eyes as I remem-  
bered there was no afternoon for me.

'Try once more,' said Victor; 'I'll get  
Manners to hear you; leave it to me; I know  
how to do it. I'll ask Ropsley.' And Victor  
was off into the playground ere I was aware,  
in search of this valuable auxiliary.

Now, Ropsley was the mainpring round  
which turned the whole of our little world at  
Everdon. If an excuse for a holiday could  
be found, Ropsley was entreated to ask the  
desired favor of March. It a quarrel had to  
be adjusted, either in the usual course of  
order by battle, or the less decisive method  
of arbitration, Ropsley was invited to see fair  
play. He was the king of our little com-  
munity. It was whispered that he could  
spar better than Manners, and construe bet-  
ter than March. He was certainly a more  
perfect linguist—as indeed I could vouch for  
from my own knowledge—than Schwartz,  
who came twice a week to teach us a rich  
German-French. We saw his boots were  
made by Hohy, and we felt his coats could  
only be the work of Stultz, for in those days  
Poole was not, and we were perfectly willing  
to believe that he wore a scarlet hunting coat  
in the Christmas holidays, and had visiting  
cards of his own. In person he was tall and  
slim, with a pale complexion, and wiving,  
soft brown hair; without being handsome,  
he was distinguished looking; and even as a  
boy, I have seen strangers turn round and  
ask who he was; but the peculiar feature of  
his countenance was his light grey eye,  
veiled with long black eyelashes. It never  
seemed to kindle or to waver or to wink; it  
was always the same, hard, penetrating, and  
unmoved; it never smiled, though the rest  
of his features would laugh heartily enough,  
and it certainly never wept. Even in boy-  
hood it was the eye of a cool, calculating,  
wary man. He knew the secrets of every  
boy in the school, but no one ever dreamt of  
cross questioning Ropsley. We believed he  
only stayed at Everdon as a favor to March,  
who was immensely proud of his pupil's  
gentlemanlike manners and appearance, as  
well as of his schoolday proficiency, although  
no one ever saw him study, and we always  
expected Ropsley was 'going to leave this  
half.' We should not have been the least  
surprised to hear he had been sent for by the  
Sovereign, and created a peer of the realm  
on the spot; with all our various opinions,  
we were unanimous in one creed—that cloth-  
ing was impossible for Ropsley, and he need  
only try, to succeed. For myself, I was  
dreadfully afraid of this luminary, and looked  
up to him with feelings of veneration which  
amounted to positive awe.

Not so Victor; the young Hungarian  
feared, I believe, nothing on earth, and re-  
spected but little. He was the only boy in  
the school who, despite the difference of age,  
would talk with Ropsley upon equal terms;  
and if anything could have added to the ad-  
miration with which we regarded the latter,  
it would have been the accurate knowledge  
he displayed of De Rohan's family, their  
history, their place in Hungary, all their  
belongings, as if he himself had been familiar  
with Edeldorf from boyhood. But so  
it was with everything; Ropsley knew all  
about people in general better than they did  
themselves.

Victor rushed back triumphantly into the

only required the addition of heavy clanking  
spurs to complete the illusion that Mr.  
Manners ought to be a cavalry officer. Of  
his riding he spoke largely; but his profi-  
ciency in this exercise we had no means of  
ascertaining. There were two things, how-  
ever, on which Manners prided himself, and  
which were a source of amusement to the  
urchins by whom he was surrounded:—  
those were, his personal strength, and his  
whiskers; the former quality was encouraged  
to develop itself by earnest application to  
all manly sports and exercises; the latter  
ornaments were cultivated and enriched  
with every description of 'nutrifier,' 're-  
generator,' and 'unguent,' known to the  
hair-dresser or the advertiser. Alas! with-  
out effect proportioned to the perseverance  
displayed; two small patches of fluff under  
the jaw bones, that showed to greatest ad-  
vantage by candle light, being the only evi-  
dence of so much pains-taking and cultiva-  
tion thrown away.

Of his muscular powers, however, it hovered  
us to speak with reverence. Was it not  
on record in the annals of the school that  
when the 'King of Naples,' our dissipated  
pieman, endeavored to justify by force an  
act of dishonesty by which he had done Tim-  
mins minor out of half-a-crown, Manners  
stripped at once to his shirt-sleeves, and  
'went in' at the Monarch with all the vigor  
and activity of some three-and-twenty sum-  
mers against threescore. The Monarch, a  
truculent old ruffian, with a red neckcloth,  
half-boots, and one eye, fought gallantly for  
a few rounds, and was rather getting the  
best of it, when, somewhat unaccountably,  
he gave in, leaving the usher master of the  
field. Ropsley, who gave his friend a knee,  
*secundum artem*, and urged him with fre-  
quent injunctions, to 'fight high,' attributed  
this easy victory to the forbearance of their  
antagonist, who had an eye to future trade  
and mercantile profits; but Manners, whose  
account of the battle I have heard more than  
once, always scouted this view of the tran-  
saction.

'He went down, sir, as if he was shot,' he  
would say, doubling his arm, and showing  
the muscles standing out in bold relief. 'Few  
men have the biceps so well developed as  
mine, and he went down as if he was shot.  
If I had hit him as hard as I could, sir, I  
must have killed him!'

Our usher was a good-natured fellow, not-  
withstanding.

'I'll hear you in ten minutes, Egerton,'  
said he, 'when I have had my innings;' and  
forthwith he stretched himself into atti-  
tude, and prepared to strike.

'Better give me your bat,' remarked Rop-  
sley, who was too lazy to play cricket in a  
regular manner. Of course, Manners con-  
sented; nobody ever refused Ropsley any-  
thing; and in ten minutes' time I had re-  
peated the *infandum Regina*, and Ropsley  
had added some dozen masterly hits to the  
usher's score. Ropsley always liked another  
man's 'innings' better than his own.

Now the regulations at Everdon, as they  
were excessively strict, and based upon the  
principle that Apollo should always keep the  
bow at the utmost degree of tension, so were  
they eluded upon every available oppor-  
tunity, and set at naught and laughed at by  
the youngest urchins in the school. We had  
an ample playground for our minor sports,  
and a meadow beyond, in which we were  
permitted to follow the exhilarating pastime  
of cricket, the share of the of the younger  
boys in that exciting amusement being limit-  
ed to a pursuit of the ball round the field,  
and the prompt return of the same to their  
seniors, doubtless a necessary ingredient in  
this noble game, but one which is not cal-  
culated to excite enthusiastic pleasure in the  
youthful mind. From the playground and  
its adjacent meadow it was a capital offence to  
absent oneself. All the rest of Somerset-  
shire was 'out of bounds,' and to be caught  
'out of bounds' was a crime for which cor-  
poral punishment was the invariable reward.  
At the same time, the offence was, so to  
speak, 'winked at.' No inquiries were made

at me so pitiously, that I forthwith  
asked his price, and after a deal of haggling,  
and a consultation between De Rohan and  
myself, I determined to become his purchas-  
er, at the munificent sum of one sovereign,  
of which ten shillings (my all) were to be  
paid on the spot, and the other ten, to remain,  
so to speak, on mortgage upon the animal,  
with the further understanding that he should  
be kept at the residence of the 'King of Nap-  
les,' who in consideration of the regular  
payment of one shilling per week, bound  
himself to feed the same and complete his  
education in all the canine branches of plun-  
ging, diving, fetching and carrying, on a sys-  
tem of his own, which he briefly described as  
'fast-rate.'

With a deal of prompting from Manners,  
I got through my forty lines; and he shut  
the book with a good natured smile as Ropsley  
threw down the bat he had been wielding so  
skilfully, and put on his coat.

'Come and lunch with me at 'The Club,'  
said he to Manners, whom he led completely  
by the nose; 'I'll give you Dutch cheese,  
and sherry and soda-water, and a cigar.  
Hie, Vere, you ungrateful little ruffian, where  
are you off to? I want you.'

I was making my escape as rapidly as  
possible at the mention of 'The Club,' a word  
which we younger boys held in utter fear and  
detestation, as being associated in our minds  
with much perilous enterprise and gratuitous  
suffering. The Club consisted of an old bent  
tree in a retired corner of the playground, on  
the trunk of which Ropsley had caused a  
comfortable seat to be fashioned for his own  
delectation, and here, in company with Man-  
ners and two or three senior boys, it was his  
custom to sit smoking and drinking curious  
compositions, of which the ingredients, being  
contraband, had to be fetched by us, at the  
risk of corporal punishment, from the village  
of Everdon, an honest half-mile journey at  
the least.

Ropsley tendered a large cigar to Manners,  
lit one himself, settled his long limbs com-  
fortably on the seat, and gave me his orders.

'One Dutch cheese, three bottles of straw-  
berries—now attend, confound you!—two  
bottles of old sherry from 'The Greyhound,'  
—mind, the old sherry; half-a-dozen of soda  
water, and a couple of pork pies. Put the  
whole in a basket; they'll give you one at  
the bar, if you say its for me, and tell them  
to put it down to my account. Put a clean  
napkin over the basket, and if you dirty the  
napkin or break the bottles, I'll break your  
head. Now be off. Manners, I'll take your  
two to one he does it without a mistake, and  
is back here under the five and twenty  
minutes.'

I did not dare disobey, but I was horribly  
disgusted at having to employ any portion of  
my half-holiday in so uncongenial a manner.  
I rushed back into the schoolroom for my  
cap, and held a hurried consultation with  
Victor as to our future proceedings.

'He only got you off because he wanted  
you to 'shirk out' for him,' exclaimed my  
indignant chum. 'It's a shame, that it is.  
Don't go for him, Vere. Let's go out quiet-  
ly and be off to Beverly. It's the last chance  
so old 'Nap' says' (this was an abbreviation  
for the 'King of Naples,' who was in truth  
great authority with both Victor and myself)  
'and it's such a beautiful afternoon.'

'But what a licking I shall get from  
Ropsley,' I interposed, with considerable mis-  
givings; he's sure to say I'm an ungrateful  
little beast. I don't like to be called ungrate-  
ful, Victor, and I don't like to be called  
a little beast.'

'Oh, never mind the names, and a licking  
is soon over,' replied Victor, who learned  
little from his Horace save the *corpe die*  
philosophy, and who looked upon the licking  
with considerably more resignation than did  
the probable recipient. We shall just have  
time to do it, if we start now. Come on,  
old fellow; be plucky for once, and con-

To be continued.