

• Peeps at My Life.



A squealing but healthy baby, embryo of the present writer, blinked its sore eyes for the first time in the north-east upper bedroom of the Dunsink Astronomical Observatory of Trinity College, Dublin, on the 10th of May, 1834.

My father, the late Sir William Rowan Hamilton, was Professor of Astronomy in the University of Dublin, to which office, involving the title of Royal Astronomer of Ireland, he was appointed while yet in his student's gown. His father, Archibald, hid Hamilton Rowan in the cellar of his house in Dominick street while the soldiers were searching for him, and till the rebel could escape by a fishing smack to the Continent, with a head still joined to his shoulders.

My father's mother's family, the Huttons, were from Yorkshire. The Baylys, my mother's people, came over with the Marquis of Ormonde, and were granted a large and rich tract of land in the south of Ireland. My grandfather by that branch, Rev. Henry Bayly, was Rector of Nenagh, and father of 23 children, of whom two, Henry and Peter, were in the battle of Trafalgar, and died Captains in the Royal Navy.

As speedily as might be, I was christened "William Edwin," my father and Lord Dunraven, (father of the present Earl), being godfathers.

Having had the usual doses of mumps, measles, Algebra, Chicken Pock, Latin and Greek, I went to Clapham Grammar School, William Edgeworth, nephew of the great authoress, being my chief chum. We were allowed a half-holiday on Saturday, and having plenty of pocket money, used to slip into a confectioner's on the common to eat brandy balls, made of sugar, with a few drops of pure French brandy in each. Liking these so well, the confectioner went one better, giving us the straight brandy in a private room, together with cigars, and being caught, we had for a penance to smoke dried cow-dung and drink ink and water, sitting at a barrel, in the playground before the whole school. Another schoolmate was William, eldest son of Sir John Herschel, at whose country seat, Collingwood in Kent, I used to spend the short holidays. Some of us made up a sentence including all the names of the principal masters under Rev. Chas. Pritchard, the Principal. It ran thus, "How (Howe) Wood Clarke use (Hughes) Body," the last being a Church of England minister, whose son was Provost of Trinity College, Toronto. Howe was the writing master. I got a prize for a continuous recitation of the fourth book of Virgil, some 4,200 words, and Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," with only three mistakes allowed. But writing was my weak spot, and almost-invariably, after