

with encouragement, I so far advanced that he presently began to consider the promoting me to the place of usher, with a cane *in commendam*; and, doubtless, he would have done it but for a fit that took him at the first news of the Rye House Plot, and the danger his Sacred Majesty had run thereby—which a friend imprudently brought to him when he was merry after dinner—and which caused an illness that at one and the same time carried him off, and deprived me of the best of pedagogues.

After that, and learning that his successor had a son whom he proposed to promote to the place I desired, I returned to the school no more, but began to live at home; at first with pleasure, but after no long interval with growing chagrin and tedium. Our house possessed none of the comforts that are necessary to idleness, and therefore when the east wind drove me indoors from swinging on the gate, or sulking in the stack-yard, I found it neither welcome nor occupation. My younger brother had seized on the place of assistant to my father, and having got thews and experience *ambulando*, found fresh ground every day for making mock of my uselessness. Did I milk, the cows kicked over the bucket, while I thought of other things; did I plough, my furrows ran crooked; when I thrashed, the flail soon wearied my arms. In the result, therefore, the respect with which my father had at first regarded my learning, wore off, and he grew to hate the sight of me whether I hung over the fire or loafed in the doorway, my sleeves too short for my chapped arms, and my breeches barely to my knees. Though my mother still believed in me, and occasionally, when she was in an ill-humour with my father, made me read to her, her support scarcely balanced the neighbours' sneers. Nor when I chanced to displease her—which, to do her justice, was not often, for I was her favourite—was she above joining in the general cry, and asking me, while she cuffed me, whether I thought the cherries fell into