

attested the stability of their early leanings. Thackeray was not among the number of painful students who vex themselves with tasks of repulsive dryness. He followed his inclinations, and wisdom could not have chosen a better method for training his mind in the direction suited to his genius. That his reading was not less earnest because it was pleasant and discursive, is plain from its effect on him. At school, at college, and in the interval between the two, his English education had gone on unceasingly. His published pieces were trivial. The essays he read at his little clubs displayed no precocious talent. But the masterpieces he admired with all his mind without attempting to emulate them, for the effort was beyond him, remained lesson-books to him from choice, if not upon system, till he had learnt to rival or surpass them.

At the date of the Cambridge Easter vacation of 1830, Fitzgerald, who had taken his degree in the previous January, was staying with an aunt in Paris. Thackeray was in possession of twenty pounds, and determined to join him there. It was a clandestine jaunt, to be kept secret from his parents, and when he went for his *exeat* to his tutor, Whewell, and was asked where he was going to spend his vacation, he answered, "With a friend in Huntingdonshire." The pleasure he anticipated from his stolen expedition was realised. On his future journeys to Paris, he constantly grew insensible to the sights and sounds around him, and reverted in imagination to the superior charms of his first experience, with its animating novelties, and those "delights of the jolly road," which rendered grateful to the effervescent spirits of youth the forty hours by diligence from Calais to Paris.¹ After two or three weeks of pleasuring, he left Paris suddenly.² His twenty pounds were nearly exhausted, and he had barely sufficient money to take him to London. His sensations were reversed on the homeward journey. The fun was over; the deception and risk of detection remained. "What a long, dreary, *guilty* forty

¹ "Roundabout Papers"—"Notes of a Week's Holiday."

² "Letters of Fitzgerald," vol. i. p. 3.