

EDITH WALSHINGHAM.

I.

I was always very romantic. At fourteen, I wrote verses of a dark and dreary character, and was melancholy and misanthropical; at seventeen, I proposed to a young lady twice my age, who very wisely refused me; and I was so profoundly miserable, or thought myself so, that I meditated for days about suicide, but could not determine upon the exact form of violent death that might be advisable. Even Oxford, with all the boating, and beer-drinking, and cricketing, wine-parties, whist, billiards, and various boisterous diversions, did not quite cure me of my sentimental tendencies. I was all but plucked for my little go; because during the vacation before this dreadful ordeal, I had been flirting with a blue-eyed cousin named Ada, instead of devoting myself to Euripides, Horace, and Euclid.

In my twelfth term—that is, after about two years and a half residence at college—it seemed almost time to make some preparation for my final examination or 'great go'; and I was informed by a candid tutor at the close of the summer term, a few days before the glorious saturnalia of Commemoration, that nothing would save me but very steady reading during the whole of the long vacation. Whereupon I packed my portmanteau full of clothes, and an enormous deal-box full of books, and shunning my blue-eyed cousin, I got into the train, and giving myself only a two days' holiday in London, I went forthwith to Sandhaven.

Everybody knows Sandhaven and its dull High street, and its sands and its assembly-rooms, and its bazaars and bathing-machines, and flies and young ladies on horses, and old ladies in vehicles, and infants in perambulators drawn by chubby-faced nursery-maids; its billiard-rooms, eating-houses, suburban tea-gardens; its steamers arriving daily and departing daily; its circulating libraries, not a novel less than ten years old; its three churches and eight chapels; its wind, its dust, its heat, its glare; the terrific greed of its lodging-keepers; and, during the season, its generally unquiet, unstudious character. What could have induced me to select Sandhaven, I know not; but the stubborn fact is—I did select it.

I established myself in very expensive, and not very comfortable apartments. They had these recommendations: there was a fine view of the sea; the landlady, a widow of about forty, was plain; her daughter, a girl of seventeen, still plainer; and the servant positively hideous. I shall at least, thought I, be safe here. Arriving on Friday I thought it as well to see something of the place during that and the following day. If I set to work on the Monday, and made a fair start, it would be better than to begin before I knew anything of the institutions of the town or its inhabitants. So on Friday and Saturday I bathed and boated, and had a donkey-ride, and dropped into various billiard-rooms—rather astonishing provincial pool-players by the experience attained at Oxford—and I also haunted the various bazaars, and danced, though with much decorum, ay, even solemnity, at the assembly-rooms. On Sunday I went to church.

Full of good resolutions, on the evening of that day I retired to bed early; but before doing so, arranged an elaborate machinery to enable me to rise early the next morning. I am a very heavy sleeper, and had no alarm with me, so I tied a string round my finger, passed it under the door, and gave orders to the servant girl to pull the string until I got out of bed. She obeyed me scrupulously; and at seven, despite various remonstrances, which I growled forth in tones not by any means gentle, I was pulled out of bed by my finger, and half an hour afterwards was unpacking the colossal deal-box, and arranging my library for the ensuing literary campaign. I was to read only eight hours a day; this I thought moderate; in prospect it looked so; if necessary, this was to be increased to ten or twelve. More steam might be put on—that was the exact expression—as the danger grew more imminent; but at present eight hours would do. I drew out my programme, which ran thus:

Before breakfast 7:30 to 8:30—1 hour.
After 10 to 2 —4 "
In the evening 8 to 11 —3 "

I was not a candidate for honours, but only for the simple pass; in the old days of 'passes.' My subjects were divinity, logic, Latin composition, four plays of Sophocles, the *Odes*, *Epodes*, and *As Postica* of Horace, the four books of Herodotus, and the *Euclydes* and *Georgics* of Virgil. These were to be mastered in the following method:

7:30 to 8:30 Divinity.
10 to 11 Logic.
11 to 12 Latin Writing.
12 to 2 Sophocles.

The three hours in the evening were to be devoted respectively to Herodotus, Horace, and Virgil, all which I had read before, and was therefore only compelled to refresh my memory by re-perusing them, with the assistance of an English translation and a Manilla cheroot.

During the early part of Monday my progress was marvellous. The hour intended for theology was spent in unpacking; but at ten I assailed the logic with vigour; moved on to the Latin writing at eleven; and soon after twelve was absorbed in the woes of Antigone. At one, or thereabouts, I heard the tramp of horses, and what more natural than for one moment to leave the twin sisters and that truculent tyrant Creon, and rush to the window to see who might be the passer-by? Would that I had never done so!

II.

Can I ever forget the witchery of that smile, the heaven of that calm pale brow, the latent music in those eyes, the poetry of that tiny foot, the glitter of those pearly teeth, the majesty of that arm, the temptations of that waist, the rapture of those wavy ringlets? O, Edith?—no, not Edith either.

What a perfect command she had of her horse! (To be sure he was daily overworked and underfed; was that her fault?) With what grace she sat in her saddle, and how fascinating was the tremulous vibration of that feather in her wide-awake hat! Can it be matter for wonder that, after gazing on such charms from my window, Ismene appeared an insipid and pusillanimous time-server; Antigone, a strong-minded woman with a grievance, sadly addicted to vapouring and sentiment; Creon, an utter ruffian, and the Chorus a bore?

Before two my books were closed, and I was wildly searching through the streets and shores of Sandhaven for the lovely object of my strong though sudden passion—in vain. That day at least I found her not—nor the next—nor even the day after. Not one line could I read; it was utterly useless to attempt it.

Friday is usually accounted an unlucky day. *Quintam fuge*. It is a classical superstition which the moderns have indorsed. I found it in my case the fortunate one; for after three days' vain and restless roving to and fro, in quest of the faultless creature whose beauties had lured me from my Sophocles, and destroyed my equanimity on Friday, I caught a glimpse of her on the sands. She was with two other young ladies, whom I took to be her sisters. They were amusing themselves in gathering shells and pieces of sea-weed. They were unaccompanied by any gentleman. Each wore a wide-brimmed brown straw-hat—it was the year those abominations came into fashion. She—Edith I was going to say—I had imagined her name must be Edith—looked beautiful even under that grotesque and dreadful covering. I passed and repassed them. In looking at her, I threw an energy and fervour into my admiring gaze, which I thought in no way displeased her. I sat down on a rock some two hundred yards off, and taking a volume from my pocket—not Sophocles this time, but Keats—I affected to read, but watched their movements narrowly.

I saw her writing with her parasol on the sand. How my heart palpitated! Is it, I thought, some tender sentiment, some gentle encouragement?—does she inscribe her name, possibly add her address? I was in a fever of expectation. I sat absorbed, as they may have thought, in my book until they moved away some distance, when I followed to the spot where she had written in large clear characters, Edith Walsingham. It was then Edith. This, then, was her name. How true my presentiment! Had it been revealed to me in a dream? I looked round to see that no one watched me, and wrote in large letters under it my own name, Henry. I then, hurried after them, that I might, if possible, see what the earthly abode of this goddess was. Everything favoured my design; they never looked round once, but went directly up a hill from the sands, and entered the door of 17 Promenade Villas, Prospect Place.

I returned immediately to the sand. How happy was I now! That morning, when I left my lodgings, all was doubt and uncertainty; now, did I not know everything?—her very name and address? I felt so calm and contented that I could have almost returned to the society of Antigone and Ismene for an hour or two, but I determined first to re-visit the seashore. I wandered back to the spot where I had written my Christian name under hers, and was hurt and disgusted to find that some mischievous and ill-meaning person had scrawled under them in large coarse-looking letters, A Pair of Idiots. This was the treatment which sentiment met with at the hands of the vulgar. I had always been a friend to education, except in my own particular case; I now bitterly regretted that the masses, or any of them could write. I looked around, but to no purpose, for the miscreant who had committed this sacrilege. Not a bone in his body should have remained unbroken.

I quickly obliterated the ribaldry that had been added, and left the two names as they stood originally, until it occurred to me that I would destroy her surname, place my own opposite, and bracket the two Christian names together. I then sat myself down on the shingles, and watched the tide come in, ripple after ripple washing up nearer and nearer to the writing until at last the two names still united were submerged under the waters of the Atlantic; and as the tide now reached me, I woke from my reverie with my shoes and stockings wet.

That evening I dined with some appetite; it had entirely forsaken me during the three preceding days. With my cheroot, I attempted Herodotus, but soon laid the venerable Father of History aside; took up Virgil, but with the same result. Even my favourite Horatius Flaccus could not on this occasion be tolerated, but was exchanged for my pen, with which I wrote an acrostic on Edith Walsingham. I went to bed reciting my lines, which at the time seemed a very happy effort of my muse, repeating the euphonious name which had inspired them, and meditating on the beauty of its enchanting owner.

Next morning I was up betimes, long before the hideous servant had plied the string fastened to my finger. I had now some object in life—that object was Edith Walsingham. I would read, ay, read even before breakfast, and divinity too; so for one hour I applied myself unremittingly, and afterwards took my first meal with cheerfulness and appetite.

Before I should commence my logic at ten, there was ample time for a short walk, and what could better settle my mind for the day's study than one glance at 17 Promenade Villas, Prospect Place? When I approached it, there was an unusual stir and bustle in the front of the house. Servants were running about; the dining-room table, so far as I could see from the opposite side of the way, was covered with a cold collation. Presently up dashes a carriage and pair to the door, and out floated one of the young ladies whom I had seen with Edith on the sands, robed in soft Indian white muslin.

A horrible suspicion seized me; I felt dizzy, and staggered, as the thought passed through my mind that there was to be a wedding, and that Edith was to be the bride of another. Suspense was torture I could not endure, so I walked boldly over to the driver of the carriage and pair. "Is there a wedding here this morning?" I asked.

"Yes, sir," answered the coachman.

"One of the Miss Walsinghams?" I suggested.

"No, sir: Miss Jones."

I breathed freely. It was not my Edith; but she would probably be a bridesmaid, and I should see her in all the virgin purity and whiteness of muslin, light as gossamer. I was again happy, and full of expectation. What would I have given to be invited to the breakfast, and been called on to propose the bridesmaids' healths.

In another moment another carriage arrived, and this time two India muslin bridesmaids descended—one I recognized as of the trio on the sands, but not my Edith. When would she come? I crossed the road again to Jehu the second, and remarked in a very unconcerned way, that I believed Mr. Walsingham lived here.

"No, sir," he replied, firmly: "Mr. Jones."

"Then, Miss Walsingham is on a visit to Mr. Jones's?" I, by way of conjecture, observed.

"Dureasy she may be," said the chriooteer; "there's a deal of company in the house."

Carriage after carriage drove up. I had now counted six bridesmaids, and Edith was not among them. But, heavens! what is this? Edith leaning on the arm of an elderly gentleman—Edith arrayed as a bride, rustling in glauc silk, covered from head to foot with Brussels lace, and veiled. Oh, Edith—Edith Walsingham!

I gazed for one moment at the carriage as it rolled away; I would have followed to the church, but had not strength to do so. I reeled home, and threw myself on my sofa. The plain landlady called her plainer daughter; they held a consultation in the passage, and were sending off the very plain servant for a doctor, when I rose and rebuked them, and then lay down again. I slept I scarcely know how long—I hardly remember anything more of that awful day.

Next morning, though I ate no breakfast, I tried to read the *Times*, and got as far as the supplement and the marriages, among which I saw—"On Saturday, 17th, at St. Paul's Church, Sandhaven, by the Rev. Peter Jones, uncle of the bride, Mary, eldest daughter of Alexander Jones, Esq., to Percy Batkin, Esq., of the Middle Temple, barrister-at-law."

"Mary Jones, now Mary Batkin," I soliloquised—"what could have induced her to inscribe on the sand that other name?"

Two hours after I purchased a copy of the *Sandhaven Herald*, in which was the following paragraph:—"We rejoice to state that Percy Batkin, Esq., the celebrated author of many works of fiction, led to the hymeneal altar, on Saturday last, the eldest daughter of our respected fellow-townsmen, Alexander Jones, Esq. Mr. Batkin is, we understand, upon the point of giving to the world of letters another three-volume novel, under the attractive title of 'Edith Walsingham.'"

And it was this, then, of which she was thinking when I saw her write! Need I add that I at once left Sandhaven a blighted being, but found that in addition to being blighted, I should be, if I did not read, also plucked—that I, therefore, read—passed "great go"—and am now romantic no more.

THE CANADIAN FISHERIES.

INFLUENCES AND INCIDENTS OF A RESTRICTIVE POLICY.

OTTAWA, Canada, March 28.

To the Editor of The World:

SIR,—The *World's* observations on the practical effect of restricted trade between the United States and Canada, founded on the Canadian returns of trade and navigation for 1870, remind me that as regards the supply of dutiable fish, your protective tariff (intended to be prohibitory) has indirectly promoted an increase of our fish exports to the American market, and at average prices considerably in advance of those realized during the existence of the Reciprocity Treaty. Thus, for example, while our entire exportation of the produce of the fisheries to foreign countries from 1866 to 1870, both inclusive, exhibits an increase of only eleven per cent., our exports of cured fish to the United States during the same period have increased 33½ per cent. Whether the producer or consumer pays the heavy imposts placed on British catch, in order that competition with American catch may be so crippled as to secure your own fishermen the full control of the United States market, is a question which, in this instance at least, is clearly answered by the facts. Take the case of mackerel, by way of illustration. The averaged prices at the commencement of reciprocity ruled, in Halifax, from \$10 to \$12 per barrel, and in Boston from \$14 to \$16. Last year the prices ranged from \$18 to \$20 in Halifax, and from \$23 to \$27 in Boston. There was no scarcity of mackerel in Halifax, because Nova Scotia fishermen actually took 38,679 barrels more in 1870 than in the previous year, in consequence of foreigners having been kept off our inshore fishing places. The Canadian article being mostly class No. 1, a maximum rate might be taken, but I state general averages as between gross and net values of various brands. Canadian producers very nearly doubled their former receipts, besides sending you last year an unusual quantity of mackerel. Judge for yourself who really paid the duties to your government, producer or consumer. The difference between Nova Scotia and Massachusetts prices cannot be altogether owing to the relations of demand and supply, but seems chiefly due to its enhanced cost to the original purchaser and his profits, with duties added thereon, all of which somebody pays. Is it not the fish-eater?

It is quite true that the fact of a majority of United States fishing vessels having returned home with scant fares, and many others being deterred altogether from making voyages to our shores because of the vigilance of cruisers and the known impossibility of catching fish except in our inshore waters, lessened the returns of what are pretty freely reckoned in your trade statistics as "the produce of American fisheries," but which ought rather to be distinguished as American catch in British waters, and made it necessary therefore for your dealers to buy provincial catch for home consumption and foreign exportation. Hence directly our increased export. But this circumstance simply makes our selling prices higher both at home and in your market, even while we have more of the commodity to sell. The indirect effect of augmenting our exports and enhancing the value of the commodity proceeds from your tariff. But your duties never touch the cost to us of either the production or the disposal. If these duties were repealed to-morrow, the ensuing freedom of commercial intercourse would undoubtedly be a great convenience to us, and might cheapen fish to your population. It would not, however, be any substantive gain to Canadians. Doubtless you would trade more readily, and, perhaps, buy more; but if your own fishermen were prosperous at the same time, our prices and yours would correspondingly decline. It is mere mockery, therefore, to discuss the removal of duties from our fish as an equivalent for admission to our exclusive and lucrative privileges. We command the sources of supply. If your fishermen could participate in them freely, the catch of Canadian fishermen might be neither as certain, as abundant, nor as saleable. The advantage to the producers would be mostly yours. Yet consumers in both countries would obtain fish all the cheaper for the busy competition of domestic industry and foreign enterprise. In your country they would be spared the extra cost of fictitious aid to American fishermen, although deprived of the luxury of discriminating against Canadians.

High duties on provincial-caught fish of any kind are of very slight consequence to us. The only fish we send to your market in appreciable quantities are just those kinds and qualities which your people must have at any price, and that our waters alone can furnish. The best markets for the bulk of Canadian cured fish are in Southern Europe, Great Britain,