**Augustus**

W. Somerset Maugham

I

I THINK I must be one of the few persons still alive who knew Augustus Hare. I had published a first novel which had had some success and he asked a common friend, a minor canon of St. Paul’s, to invite me to dinner so that we might meet. I was young, twenty- four, and shy; but he took a fancy to me, because, tongue-tied though I was, I was content to listen while he discoursed, and shortly afterwards he wrote to me from Holmhurst, his house in the country, and asked me to come down for the week-end. I became a frequent guest.

Since the kind of life he lived there is lived no longer, I think it may be not without interest to describe the daily round. Sharp at eight in the morning a maid in a rustling print dress and a cap with streamers came into your room with a cup of tea and two slices of thin bread and butter, which she placed on the night table; if it was winter a tweeny followed her, in a print dress too, but not so shiny nor so rustling, who raked out the ashes of the fire which had been lit the night before, and laid and lit another. At half-past eight the maid came in again with a small can of hot water. She emptied the basin in which you had made a pretence of washing before going to bed, put the can in the basin and covered it with a towel. While she was thus occupied the tweeny brought in a sitz-bath, laid a white mat so that water should not splash the carpet, and on it, in front of the blazing fire, placed the sitz- bath. On each side of this she set a large can of hot water and a large can of cold, the soap-dish from the washing-stand and a bath-towel. The maids retired. The sitz-bath must be unknown to the present genera­tion. It was a round tub perhaps three feet in diameter, about eighteen inches deep, with a back that rose to your shoulder-blades when you were sitting in it. Out­side it was japanned a bilious yellow and inside painted white. As there was no room for your legs, they dangled outside, and you had to be something of a contortionist to wash your feet. You could do nothing about your back but trickle water down it from your sponge. The advantage of the contraption was that as your legs and back were out of the water you had no occasion to dawdle as you do in a bath in which you can lie full length, so that though you lost the happy thoughts and fruitful reflections which you might otherwise have had, you were ready to go downstairs at nine o’clock when the breakfast bell rang.

Augustus was already in his chair at the head of the table, laid for the hearty meal he was soon to partake of. In front of him was the great family Bible and a large Prayer Book bound in black leather. Seated, he looked solemn and even imposing. Standing, however, because he had a long body and short legs, he lost something of his impressiveness and indeed looked a trifle ridiculous. The guests took their seats and the servants trooped in. A row of chairs had been placed for them in front of the sideboard, on which, besides a noble ham and a brace of cold pheasants, various good things to eat were kept hot in silver entrée dishes by the thin blue flames of methylated spirit. Augustus read a prayer. He had a strident, somewhat metallic voice and he read in a tone that seemed to suggest that he was not one to stand any nonsense from the deity. Some­times it happened that a guest was a minute or two late; he opened the door very cautiously and slunk in on tiptoe, with the air of one who seeks to make himself invisible. Augustus did not look up; he paused in the middle of a sentence and remained silent till the late­comer had seated himself, and then proceeded from where he had left off. The air was heavy with reproof. But that was all: Augustus made no reference after­wards to the sluggard’s tardiness. When he had read a certain number of prayers Augustus closed the book and opened the Bible. He read the passages marked for the day, and having finished, uttered the words: ‘Let us pray.’ This was the signal for us all to kneel, the guests on hassocks and the servants on the Turkey carpet, and we recited in chorus the Lord’s Prayer. Then we scrambled to our feet, the cook and the maids scuttled out of the room; in a moment the parlour­maid brought in tea and coffee, removed Bible and Prayer Book, and put the tea-kettle and coffee-pot in their place.

I was accustomed to family prayers and I noticed that some of the prayers Augustus read sounded strangely in my ears. Then I discovered that he had neatly inked out many lines in the Prayer Book he read from. I asked him why.

‘I’ve crossed out all the passages in glorification of God,’ he said. ‘God is certainly a gentleman, and no gentleman cares to be praised to his face. It is tactless, impertinent and vulgar. I think all that fulsome adula­tion must be highly offensive to him.’

At the time this notion seemed odd to me and even comic, but since then I have come to think that there was some sense in it.

After breakfast Augustus retired to his study to write the autobiography on which he was then engaged. He neither smoked himself, nor allowed smoking in the house, so that such of his guests as hankered for the first pipe of the day had to go out of doors, which was pleasant enough in summer when you could sit down with a book in the garden, but not so pleasant in winter when you had to seek shelter in the stables.

Luncheon, a substantial meal of eggs or macaroni, joint, if there were no left-overs from the night before, with vegetables and a sweet, was at one; and after a decent interval Augustus, in a dark town suit, black boots, a stiff collar and a bowler hat, took his guests for a walk in the grounds. The property was small, rather less than forty acres, but by planning and planting he had given it something of the air of a park in a great country house. As you walked along he pointed out the improvements he had made, the resemblance he had achieved here to the garden of a Tuscan villa, the spacious view he had contrived there, and the wooded walks he had designed. I could not but observe that notwithstanding his objection to treating God with fulsome adulation, he accepted the compliments of his guests with a good deal of complacency. The prome­nade ended with a visit to the Hospice. This was a cottage he had arranged for the entertainment of gentle­women in reduced circumstances. He invited them for a month at a time, supplied them with their travelling expenses, farm and garden produce and groceries. He enquired if they were comfortable and had everything they wanted. No duchess, bringing calves-foot jelly and half a pound of tea to a cottager on the estate, could have combined condescension with beneficence with a more delicate sense of the difference that exists between the conferring of favours and the accepting of them.

After that it was time to go back to tea. This was a copious repast of scones, muffins or crumpets, bread and butter, jam, plain cake and currant cake. The better part of an hour was spent over this, and Augustus talked of his early life, his travels and his many friends. At six he went to his study to write letters and we met again when the second bell called us down to dinner. We were waited on by maids in black uniforms, white caps and aprons, and were given soup, fish, poultry or game, sweet and savoury; sherry with the soup and fish, claret with the game, and port with the nuts and fruit. After dinner we returned to the drawing-room. Some­times Augustus read aloud to us, sometimes we played an intolerably tedious game called Halma, or, if he thought the company worthy, he told us his famous stories. The clock struck ten and Augustus rose from his chair by the fire. We marched out into the hall, where candles in silver candle-sticks were waiting for us, lit them and walked upstairs to our respective bed­rooms. There was a can of hot water in the basin and a fire blazed in the hearth. It was difficult to read by the light of a single candle, but it was enchanting to lie in a four-poster and watch the glow of the fire till the sleep of youth descended upon you.

Such was a day in one of the smaller country houses at the end of the nineteenth century, and such, more or less, throughout the land was the day in hundreds upon hundreds of houses belonging to persons who, without being rich, were well enough off to live in the great comfort which they looked upon as the way in which gentlefolk should live. Augustus was house­proud, and nothing pleased him more than to show guests the relics of a ‘wealthy past’, with which Holm- hurst was filled. It was a rambling house of no archi­tectural merit, with wide corridors and low ceilings, but by adding another room or two, building archways in the garden, decorating it here and there with urns and statues, among which was one of Queen Anne and her four satellites which had once stood in front of St. Paul’s, Augustus had managed to give the place an air. It might have been the dower-house on the estate of a great nobleman, which, if there was no dowager to inhabit it, might be appropriately lent to an aunt who was the relict of a former ambassador to the Ottoman court.

II

Augustus was profoundly conscious of the fact that he was the representative of an ancient county family, the Hares of Hurstmonceux, connected, though distantly, with members of the aristocracy; and though its fortunes were fallen, his sense of the consequence this gave him remained unabated. He was like an exiled king, surrounded with such objects of departed grandeur as he has saved from the wreck, who is hail- fellow-well-met with the rag-tag and bobtail his altered circumstances force him to frequent, but who is alert to watch for the bobs and bows that his graciousness might induce ill-conditioned persons to omit.

Though Augustus was apt to mention with a depre­cating smile that he was descended from a younger son of King Edward I, the family fortunes were founded by Francis Hare, a clever parson who had the good luck to be Sir Robert Walpole’s tutor at King’s College, Cambridge. Walpole’s advancement, as we know, was furthered by Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, and it may be surmised that it was by her influence that Francis Hare was appointed Chaplain-General to the forces in the Low Countries. He rode by the side of the great general at the battles of Blenheim and Ramillies. With such powerfill friends it is not sur­prising that his merits did not go unrewarded. He was made Dean of Worcester and then of St. Paul’s; and the second of these lucrative offices he continued to hold when he was created first Bishop of St. Asaph’s and then Bishop of Chichester. He made two very profitable marriages. By his first wife, Bethaia Naylor, he had a son, Francis, who inherited the vast and romantic castle of Hurstmonceux and a handsome estate, and then added the name of Naylor to that of Hare. By his second wife, a great heiress, he had a son Robert, whose godfather, Sir Robert Walpole, as a christening present bestowed on him the sinecure office of sweeper­ship of Gravesend, worth £400 a year. This he held to the day of his death. Sir Robert took sufficient interest in his old tutor’s son to advise that he should adopt the Church as his profession, since he could thus best provide for his future. Robert took orders and was given first a living and then a canonry at Winchester. The bishop was a prudent man and while Robert was still very young arranged a marriage for him with the heiress of a property close to that of his own wife. By her he had two sons, Francis and Robert, and soon after her death he married another heiress. His elder brother died childless and the Canon of Winchester inherited Hurstmonceux Castle. The bishop must have been well satisfied with his son’s station in life.

The bishop’s descendants, however, seem to have inherited little of his worldly wisdom, for from that time the fortunes of the family began to decline. The first step was taken by the canon’s second wife. She dismantled the castle and from it took the floors, doors and chimney-pieces for a large new house called Hurst­monceux Place which she built in another part of the park. The canon’s eldest son, Francis Hare-Naylor, the grandfather of our Augustus, was a good-looking ne’er-do-well, bold, witty and extravagant; he seems to have got himself periodically arrested for debt and in order to extricate himself from his difficulties was obliged to raise money on his prospects from the Hurst­monceux estates. He had taken the fancy of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, who introduced him to her cousin Georgiana, daughter of Jonathan Shipley, Bishop of St. Asaph. The pair eloped, whereupon their respective families ‘renounced them with fury’ and neither the Bishop of St. Asaph nor the Canon of Winchester ever saw them again. They went abroad and lived on the two hundred pounds a year which the Duchess allowed them. They had four sons, Francis, Augustus, Julius and Marcus. When Francis Hare- Naylor, the husband of Georgiana Shipley, eventually succeeded his father he sold the remnants of his ancestral estates for sixty thousand pounds. On his death, in 1815, his eldest son Francis Hare, for since he no longer owned Hurstmonceux he abandoned the additional name of Naylor, came into possession of what remained of the family fortunes, and proceeded to live a life of pleasure till his circumstances obliged him, like many another spendthrift at that time, to take up his residence on the Continent. But he was apparently still well enough off to give large dinner parties twice a week. He kept good company and counted Count D’Orsay and Lady Blessington, Lord Desart, Lord Bristol, Lord Dudley among his more intimate friends. In 1828 he married Anne, a daughter of Sir John Paul, the banker, and by her had a daughter and three sons. The youngest of these, bom in 1834, was the Augustus who is the subject of this essay.

Though the Hurstmonceux estates had been sold the family had retained the advowson of the rich living. The incumbent was the Reverend Robert Hare, the younger son of Francis Hare-Naylor, and it was under­stood that he should be succeeded by the Reverend Augustus Hare, one of Francis Hare’s three brothers. Of Marcus, the youngest of the three, I have been able to discover nothing except that he married a daughter of Lord Stanley of Aldeiley, had a ‘place’ at Torquay, complained when he was staying at Hurstmonceux Rectory that the water with which the tea was made was never on the boil, and died in 1845. Julius was a Fellow of Trinity and a very learned man. With his brother Augustus he was the author of a book called *Guesses at Truth,* which in its day was popular with the devout. When the Reverend Robert Hare died his nephew the Reverend Augustus Hare did not wish to leave the parish of Alton Barnes, to which he had been appointed, and persuaded his brother Julius to accept the living of Hurstmonceux in his place. It was a wrench to Julius to leave Cambridge, but he had too great a sense of duty to allow a valuable piece of property to go out of the family and so consented to the sacrifice. He eventually became Archdeacon of Lewes.

The Reverend Augustus Hare married Maria, daughter of the Reverend Oswald Leicester, Rector of Stoke-upon-Terne. He died in Rome, whither he had gone for his health, in 1834, the year in which our Augustus was born. It was after him that my hero was named and the widow, Mrs. Augustus Hare, was his godmother. Francis and Anne Hare, the child’s parents, found it none too easy to live in the style suit­able to their position and at the same time support a family, and they were very much annoyed when their last son was bom. Maria Hare was childless, and on her return to England after burying her husband it occurred to her that they might be willing to let her adopt her godson. She wrote to her sister-in-law and shortly afterwards received from her the following letter:

‘My dear Maria, how very kind of you. Yes, certainly the baby shall be sent as soon as it is weaned; if anyone else would like one, would you kindly remember that we have others?

The child in due course was ‘sent over to England with a little green carpet-bag containing two little white night-shirts and a red coral necklace?

Maria Hare’s father, the Reverend Oswald Leicester, belonged to a family of great antiquity, which claimed direct descent from Gunnora, Duchess of Normandy, grandmother of William the Conqueror. He belonged thus to the same class as the Bertrams of Mansfield Park and Mr. Darcy of Pemberley. The Reverend Oswald Leicester was a sincere Christian, but he had a very proper notion of what befitted an English gentle­man. He would have agreed with Lady Catherine de Bourgh that Elizabeth Bennet was not the sort of person Mr. Darcy should marry. Reginald Heber, the hymn-writer, afterwards Bishop of Calcutta, was Rector of Hodnet, which was only two miles from Maria Leicester’s home, and she spent long periods with him and his wife. Reginald Heber had a curate called Martin Stow and since we are told nothing about his antecedents we must conclude that he was not ‘a gentleman bom’. Maria Leicester and Martin Stow fell in love with one another, but her father would not hear of his daughter’s union with ‘a mere country curate’, and she was too dutiful a daughter to marry without his consent. When Reginald Heber was appointed to the bishopric of Calcutta he offered his Indian chaplaincy to Martin Stow, who accepted it in the hope that this preferment would induce the

Reverend Oswald Leicester to look upon his suit with favour. His hope was frustrated, Maria and Martin met and parted, and a few months later the sad news was brought her that Mr. Stow had died of fever. Now, the Reverend Augustus Hare was a cousin of Mrs. Heber’s and a friend of Martin Stow. He was the confidant of the lovers. His was a willing ear when they needed to pour out their troubles. On hearing of Martin Stow’s death Maria Leicester wrote to Augustus Hare as follows:

T must write a few lines, although I feel it almost needless to do so, for Augustus Hare knows all my feelings too well to doubt what they must be now . . . it is to you *I* turn as the sharer, the fellow sufferer in my grief . . . I know that if you can you will come here. When we have once met it will be a comfort to mourn together.’

They met, they corresponded, and, as Maria wrote in her Journal, ‘unconsciously and imperceptibly the feelings of esteem and friendship,’ with which she had regarded Augustus, ‘assumed a new character, and something of the tenderness and beauty attending a warmer interest’ took their place. Two years after the death of Martin Stow Augustus asked her to marry him and she agreed. ‘Secure in the affection of Augustus,’ she wrote again in her Journal, ‘I feel no longer a blank in life, and everything takes a new and bright colouring.’ But it was not till a year later that she received her father’s consent to the engagement. It may be surmised that he gave it because he thought it would be for the happiness of his daughter, thirty- one years old by this time, an age then at which a maiden, as Mr. Wordsworth somewhat ungallantly put it, was withering on the stalk; but also because he thought an alliance between the Hares of Hurst­monceux, descended from a younger son of King Edward I, and the Leicesters of Toft, descended from Gunnora, Duchess of Normandy, could not but be regarded as suitable. Moreover, with the rich living of Hurstmonceux to fall to Augustus on the death of his Uncle Robert, Maria would be able to live in the style appropriate to a gentleman’s daughter. Though both families were sincerely imbued with the conviction that this life was merely a post-inn, as it were, in which they sojourned for a brief space on their way to their heavenly home, they saw no reason why they should not make their temporary abode as comfortable as possible.

After the death of her husband Maria Hare spent some months with Julius, her brother-in-law, at Hurst­monceux and then took a house near-by, called Lime, which remained her home for twenty-five years. When she adopted the little Augustus, her godson, it was with the idea that he should be brought up to take Holy Orders and in due course succeed his Uncle Julius as Rector of Hurstmonceux. She started to train him in virtue from the beginning. When he was only eighteen months old she wrote in her Journal: ‘Augustus has grown much more obedient, and is ready to give his food and playthings to others.’ His religious educa­tion was her constant care and when he was three, by which time he could read and was learning German, she took pains to explain to him the mystery of the Trinity. When he was four his playthings were taken away from him and banished to the loft, so that he should learn that there were more serious things in life than toys. He had no companions of his own age. There was a poor woman who lived close to the gate of Lime whom Maria Hare often visited to relieve her necessities and by her pious exhortations persuade her to accept her lot as a special blessing of Providence. This woman had a little boy, whom Augustus longed to play with, and once did in a hayfield, but he was so severely punished for it that he never did again. To Mrs. Hare (Miss Leicester of Toft as was) it was not only a duty, it was a labour of love to visit the poor, but it was out of the question to allow a, gentleman’sson to play with a working-man’s.

On March 13, 1839, she wrote in her Journal: ‘My little Augustus is now five years old. Strong personal identity, reference of everything to himself, greediness of pleasure and possession, are I fear prominent features in his disposition. May I be taught how best to correct his sinful propensities with judgment, and to draw him out of self to live for others.’

Notwithstanding everything, however, Augustus was sometimes naughty. Then he was sent upstairs ‘to prepare’, which, I take it, means to take down his knicker-bockers and bare his little bottom, and Uncle Julius was bidden to come from his rectory to beat him. This he did with a riding-whip. Mrs. Hare was afraid of over-indulging the child and he only had to express a wish to have it refused. On one occasion she took him to visit the curate’s wife and someone gave him a lollypop, which he ate, but when they got home the smell of peppermint betrayed him and he was given a large dose of rhubarb and soda with a forcing spoon to teach him in future to avoid carnal indulgence.

Meanwhile Maria Hare had made the acquaintance of the Misses Maurice, Priscilla and Esther, sisters of Frederick Maurice, the evangelist. They kept a school at Reading, but every year came to stay at Lime for a period. They were intensely, even aggressively, religious and they acquired a great influence over Mrs. Hare. One of its results was that she adopted more stringent measures so to form the character of Augustus that he might become a worthy minister of Christ. Till then he had had roast mutton and rice pudding every day for dinner. An occasion came when he was told that a delicious pudding was to be served. It was talked of till his mouth watered. It was placed on the table and he was just about to eat the helping he had been given when it was snatched away from him and he was told to get up and take it to some poor person in the village. Mrs. Hare wrote in her Journal: ‘Augustus would, I believe, always do a thing if *reasoned* with about it, but the necessity of obedience without reasoning is especially necessary in such a disposition as his. The will is the thing that needs being brought in subjection.’ And again: ‘Now it seems to be an excellent discipline whereby daily some self-denial and command may be acquired in overcoming the repugnance to doing from duty that which has in itself no attraction.’

Mrs. Hare in this sentence did not express herself with her usual clarity. I think she must have meant that if Augustus, aged then five, was forced to do every day something he didn’t want to do, he would eventually want to do it.

Once a year Maria took Augustus to stay with her parents at Stoke. They went in their own chariot, spending the night at post-inns, and even after the rail­way was built they continued to go in their chariot placed on a truck. When at last they came to use ordinary railway carriages they still had post-horses to meet them at a station near London, because Mrs. Hare would not have it known that she did anything so excessively improper as to enter London in a railway carriage.

Mrs. Leicester, Maria’s step-mother, was severe but kind to Augustus. If he made a noise at home he was at once punished, but at Stoke Mrs. Leicester would say: ‘Never mind the child, Maria, it is only innocent play.’ She knew her duty as a clergyman’s wife. She taught in the village school and when she thought it necessary to chastise her pupils, would take a book from the table and on using it say to the offender: ‘You don’t suppose I’m going to hurt my fingers in boxing your ears,’ and then: ‘Now we mustn’t let the other ear be jealous,’ upon which she soundly smacked it. The curates came to luncheon at the Rectory on Sundays, but they were not expected to talk, and if they ventured on a remark were snubbed. After they had eaten their cold veal they were called upon to give Mrs. Leicester an account of what they had been doing during the week, and if they had not done what she wished they were harshly chidden. They were obliged to come in by the back door, except Mr. Egerton, who was allowed to come in by the front door because he was a gentleman bom. When Augustus told me this story, I, being young, was shocked.

‘Don’t be so silly,’ he said when I expressed my indignation, ‘it was perfectly natural. Mr. Egerton was a nephew of Lord Bridgewater. The others were nobodies. It would have been very impertinent of them to ring the front-door bell.’

‘D’you mean to say that if they happened to come to the Rectory together, one would have gone to the front door and the other to the back?’

‘Of course.’

‘I don’t think it speaks very well for Mr. Egerton.’

‘I dare say you don’t,’ Augustus answered tartly. ‘A gentleman knows his place and he takes it without giving it a second thought.’

Mrs. Leicester ruled the maids as strictly as she ruled the curates. When annoyed with them she had no hesitation in boxing their ears, which, such were the manners of the time, they never drought of resenting. The washing was done every three weeks and it was a rule of the house that it must begin at one in the morn­ing. The ladies’-maids, who were expected to do the fine muslins, had to be at the wash-tubs at three. If one was late the housekeeper reported it to Mrs. Leicester, who gave her a good scolding. But Mrs. Leicester had a lighter side. Maria Hare thought it sinful to read fiction and in the evenings read Miss Strickland’s *Queens of England* to her parents. *Pickwick* was coming out then in monthly numbers and Mrs. Leicester took them in. She read them in her dressing­room, behind closed doors, with her maid on the watch against intruders, and when she had finished a number she tore it up into little pieces which she threw in the waste-paper basket.

When Augustus was nine Mrs. Hare, on the insistence of the Misses Maurice, sent him to a preparatory school, and in the summer holidays, after the usual visit to Stoke, she took him for a tour of the English lakes. Uncle Julius accompanied them, and Maria, wishing to give Esther Maurice a rest after her arduous work at Reading, invited her to join the party. It was a dangerous kindness. Julius Hare proposed to Esther Maurice and was accepted. Maria Hare shed bitter tears when they told her of their engagement. Esther shed bitter tears and Julius ‘sobbed and cried for days’. Ever since her husband’s death Julius had been Maria’s constant companion. He came to dinner at Lime every evening at six, leaving at eight, and Maria constantly drove up to the Rectory in the afternoon. Julius ‘con­sulted her on every subject, and he thought every day a blank when they had no meeting.’ Doubtless, since the Prayer Book and the laws of England forbade her to feel any wanner emotion for him, her affection remained strictly that of a sister-in-law for her brother- in-law, but she would have been more than human if she had welcomed the notion of another woman, a protegee of her own, becoming the mistress of Hurst­monceux Rectory. But however distasteful such a prospect was, she had a more serious objection to the marriage. Mr. Maurice was a scholar and a clergyman, but he was not a gentleman bom, and the manners of the Misses Maurice, high-minded and worthy as they were, were not the sort of manners she was accustomed to. They were not ladies. Martin Stow perhaps was not a gentleman bom, but her dear dead Augustus had been the first to admit his excellence and nobility of character. She loved him, but she had accepted her father’s decision that he was not the sort of person it was proper for her to marry.

The marriage took place. Mrs. Julius Hare, now Aunt Esther to Augustus, was a deeply religious woman, but of a harsh and domineering character. ‘She looked upon pleasure as a sin and if she felt that the affection for somebody drew her from the thorny path of self­sacrifice she tore that affection from her heart.’ To such of the poor as accepted her absolute authority she was kind, generous and considerate; and to ‘her husband, to whom her severe creed taught her to show the same inflexible obedience she exacted from others, she was utterly devoted.’ For his soul’s good she set herself to subdue the little Augustus. Since she was determined that her marriage should make no differ­ence in the habits of the two families, and Julius had dined every night at Lime, she insisted that Maria Hare and Augustus should dine every night at the Rectory. In winter it was often impossible for them to go home after dinner and they passed the night at the Rectory. Augustus was a delicate boy and suffered badly from chilblains so that there were often large open sores on his hands and feet. Aunt Esther put him to bed in an unfurnished damp room with a deal trestle to sleep on, a straw palliasse and a single blanket. The servants were not allowed to bring him hot water and in the morning he had to break the ice in the pitcher with a brass candlestick or, if that had been taken away, with his wounded hands. Still for the good of his soul, because the smell of sauerkraut made him sick he was made to eat it, Sunday was a day of respite. Owing to her religious duties Maria Hare did not go to the Rectory, but Aunt Esther, fearing that Maria would indulge him, persuaded her to let Augustus be locked up in the vestry between services with a sandwich for his dinner. He had a cat to which he was devoted, and when Aunt Esther discovered this she insisted that it should be given up to her. Augustus wept, but Maria Hare said he must be taught to give up his own way and pleasures to others. With tears he took it to the Rectory and Aunt Esther had it hanged.

It is almost inconceivable that a pious, God-fearing woman could have treated a child of twelve with such inhumanity. I have wondered whether her behaviour to him, besides her determination to train him in the way of virtue and self-sacrifice, was not occasioned also by a desire, of which she may well have been uncon­scious, to give the adopted mother who adored him a needful lesson. Maria Hare had been very good to Esther Maurice, but had there not been something in her manner which never let the humble friend forget that Mrs. Hare was her benefactress and that there was a great gulf fixed between a young woman, of the highest principles certainly, but of humble origins, and Maria Leicester of Toft, the widow of a Hare of Hurstmonceux? Is it not possible that Esther Maurice, like Charlotte Brontë in her situation as a governess, saw slights when only kindness was intended, and in a dozen little ways felt that the subservience of her position was never entirely absent from Maria’s mind? When she became Mrs. Julius Hare did it never cross her mind that it could only do dear Maria good to suffer? And she did suffer. But she accepted her distress at the miseries inflicted on the boy as a fiery trial that must be patiently endured.

I shall pass over the next few years of Augustus’s life. On leaving his preparatory school, he went to Harrow, but owing to illness only stayed there for a year and until he was old enough to go to Oxford lived with tutors. He took his degree in 1857 and then started on the main business of his life. This was to paint in water-colours, see sights and mix in high society. He made his first sketch from nature when he was seven. Maria Hare drew well, and as she could not but look upon this accomplishment as harmless, she fostered Augustus’s inclinations and gave him useful lessons. She would look at a drawing carefully and then say: ‘And what does this line mean?’ ‘Oh, I thought it looked well.’ ‘Then, if you don’t know exactly what it means, take it out at once.’ This was sound advice. As Maria Hare deprecated colour, he was allowed to use only pencil and sepia, and it was not till he was grown up that she permitted him to paint in water­colour. He made endless sketches. The walls of Holm­hurst were papered with the best of them in handsome frames and he had albums full of them. At this distance of time I cannot judge of their quality. Years later Maria Hare showed some of them to Ruskin, who examined them very carefully and at last pointed out one as the least bad of a very poor collection. Augustus had an eye for the picturesque and as I look back I have a suspicion that the critic was unduly severe. They were painted in the style of the mid-nineteenth century, and if they arc still in existence might be found now to have a certain period charm.

III

When Augustus was only fourteen, at a tutor’s at Lyncombe, he was already an indefatigable sight-seer. To visit an ancient house or a fine church he would often walk twenty-five miles a day. So that he should not be led astray Mrs. Hare sent him back to his tutor’s with only five shillings in his pocket and he went on these excursions without a penny to buy himself a piece of bread. Many a time lv sank down by the wayside, faint with hunger, and was glad to accept food from the ‘common working people’ he met on the road. But neither his delight in painting the picturesque nor his passion for sights was as important to him as to get into society. In this endeavour he started with certain advantages. Through his parents he was connected with a number of noble and county families, and through his adopted mother with several more. How­ever distant the relationship he counted all their members as his cousins.

Maria Hare had been in poor health for some years and the doctors advised her to try living in a climate milder than that of Hurstmonceux. She had before this taken Augustus for short trips on the Continent, but soon after he left Oxford it was decided that they should make a prolonged sojourn abroad. So that they should be properly waited on they took Mrs. Hare’s maid and manservant with them. Julius Hare, to the sorrow of his relations and the relief of his parishioners, had died two years before and Maria, while she was away, lent Lime to his widow. They travelled slowly, of course by carriage, through Switzerland and Italy, visiting places of interest and making abundant sketches; they had a goodly supply of books in their roomy chariot and during the journey read the ‘whole of Arnold, Gibbon, Ranke and Milman’. It looks like a formidable undertaking. On reaching Rome they took an apartment in the Piazza del Popolo. Augustus’s father had died some years before and his widow, whom Augustus called Italima, a contraction of Italian mamma, was living in Rome with her daughter Esmeralda. Of her two othe sons, Francis and Robert, Augustus’s elder brothers, one was in the Guards and the other in the Blues. Since he knew them but slightly and did not care for them I need only say that they lived as extravagantly as their father had done, with even smaller resources, and died destitute. Francis had further outraged his family by marrying ‘a person with whom he had long been acquainted’, which, I presume, was Augustus’s delicate way of saying that she was his mistress. In his autobiography he dismissed her in a footnote: ‘The person whom Francis Hare had married during the last months of his life vanished, immediately after his death, into the chaos from which she had come.’

Augustus had seen little of his real mother and she had never taken any interest in him. But now he became better acquainted with her. She moved with her daughter in the best Roman society, and when Maria Hare could spare him she took Augustus with her. The list of princes and princesses, dukes and duchesses, he thus frequented is impressive. Italima liked to see Augustus more often than his adopted mother quite approved of, and sometimes when he had a particular engagement with her, Maria Hare would demand his presence. It looks as though the saintly woman was not entirely devoid of the unpleasant failing of jealousy.

Maria Hare and Augustus remained abroad for eighteen months and would have remained longer but that Mrs. Hare began to suspect that her adopted son had leanings to Roman Catholicism, and though he was ill and the doctors told her he could not survive the rigour of an English winter she insisted on taking him back to a staunchly Protestant country. She felt that the hazard to his soul was of more consequence than the hazard to his body. She was well aware how much pleasure he took in the religious processions that so often passed through the streets of Rome, the sight of cardinals in their red robes driving in their coaches, the splendid ceremonies of the Church and the pomp of the Eternal City when the Pope was still a temporal sovereign. She knew Augustus well and she dreaded his levity. One day she told him that she had never known anyone who enjoyed things as much as he did; she said it not by way of blaming him, but perhaps with the feeling at the back of her mind that there was danger in such an attitude towards life.

During this period there was a wave of conversions to Catholicism. There had been the notorious instances of Newman and Manning; their example had been followed by others of lesser note, though by some of greater social importance, and it had caused dissension in many families. Italima and Esmeralda had become Catholics, though to Italima’s credit it had to be admitted that she had sought to dissuade her daughter from taking the step, because she had expectations from her grandmother, Lady Anne Simpson, and the old lady would certainly disinherit her if she changed her religion. Sir John Paul, Augustus’s grandfather, had turned his daughter out of the house and refused ever to see her again when she was received into the Church of Rome, and when Mary Stanley, Maria’s niece and the daughter of the Bishop of Norwich, forsook the faith of her Protestant fathers, Maria could not but fear for her dear Augustus.

The reader will remember that from his earliest years he had been destined for the Church. It was on this account that Maria Hare had brought him up so strictly. It was on this account that he had been taught to sacrifice himself for others. It was on this account that his toys were taken away from him. It was on this account that Aunt Esther, when she came on the scene, had insisted that he should be inured to hardship and privation, and that be should learn that pleasure, a snare of the devil, was something he must eschew. Though the Hares had lost their land and most of their money, there still remained the rich living of Hurst­monceux, and as the youngest son of Francis Hare it was his right in due course to have it. Unfortunately Augustus’s eldest brother had been driven by his financial necessities to sell the advowson, so that Maria Hare could never hope to see her adopted son occupy the Rectory with which she had so many pleasant and edifying associations, but that did not make it less desirable that Augustus should adopt the profession for which he had been so well prepared. His ancestry and his family connections marked him out to pursue the useful and profitable life of a clergyman who was a gentleman bom. The founder of the family fortunes had held two bishoprics besides the Deanery of St. Paul’s, one of Augustus’s grandfathers had been Bishop of St. Asaph, another Canon of Winchester, his two uncles had taken Holy Orders; Maria’s brother- in-law, Edward Stanley, had been Bishop of Norwich, and his son Arthur Stanley was already a Canon of Canterbury and would in due course no doubt occupy a position of even greater dignity. He did in fact become Dean of Westminster, marry Lady Augusta Bruce and grow to be a close friend of Queen Victoria. Then there were the Strathmores, the Ravensworths, the Stanleys of Alderley. With such connections Augustus could surely look forward to preferment. The good old days of pluralism were past, but there was no reason why with his ability and so many influential relations he should not achieve distinction in the Church.

It was a shock to Maria Hare when Augustus, while they were still in Italy, informed her, we can imagine how nervously, that he did not wish to be ordained. From every point of view, from the earthly as well as from the heavenly, this seemed as foolish as it was ungrateful. She shed bitter tears. But she was a sincerely Christian woman and what could she do when he told her that he felt himself unfitted to take Holy Orders? She loved him devotedly, and though it almost broke her heart, at last acquiesced in his deter­mination. But when they got back to England and the family were informed, there was hell to pay. They asked him his reasons for refusing to be ordained. He could give none that was adequate. He merely said that it was uncongenial. Aunt Esther thought that made it all the more desirable that Maria should insist on it. Had he religious doubts? No. He had come back from Italy as true a Protestant as when he left. It was obvious then that if he persisted in his obstinacy it could only be that he wanted to lead an idle, useless life of self-indulgence.

The truth was simply that Augustus was bored with religion. He had been bored by the two services he had been forced to attend every Sunday and bored by the long, incomprehensible sermons of his Uncle Julius, bored by the elevating conversations on the power of faith which Maria Hare held with her friends and relations, exasperated by the evangelical fanaticism of the Maurice women and made miserable by the severities to which for his spiritual welfare he had been so long subjected. When I knew him Augustus had ceased going to church on Sundays, and if he continued to have family prayers it was as a social gesture becoming to a gentleman of ancient lineage.

Then came the question as to what he should do. He tried to get a clerkship at the Library of the British Museum, but did not succeed, and finally through the good offices of Arthur Stanley he was commissioned by John Murray to write the *Handbook of Berks, Bucks and Oxfordshire.* It was a job that just suited him, for it enabled him to do a great deal of sight-seeing and at the same time must bring him in contact with the sort of people he liked to know. He did in fact make a number of desirable acquaintances, discovered anumber of new cousins and stayed at a number of grand houses. At about this time Lime was sold over Maria’s head and she moved to Holmhurst, which then became Augustus’s home for the rest of his life. The handbook was so well received that Murray asked him to choose any counties he liked for another work of the same kind. He chose Northumberland and Durham. So began the long series of guide-books which made the name of Augustus Hare well-known to at least two generations of travellers in Europe. They were written on a plan, that had novelty, for inter­spersed with useful information were long quotations from the New Testament, Fathers of the Church, historians, art critics and poets. The earnest sight­seer must have been flattered to find in his guide-book quotations from Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Martial, Suetonius, and even from a work which few can have read, Prudentius *contra Symmachum.* Augustus paid his readers the compliment of leaving these passages untranslated and the compliment was doubtless appre­ciated.

But his habit of extensively quoting from other authors sometimes got him into trouble. In his *Cities of Northern and Central Italy* he quoted largely from some articles by Freeman, the historian, without receiving permission, whereupon Freeman charged him with bare-faced and wholesale robbery. Augustus was very much hurt. He felt that the real interest of Freeman’s articles had been overlooked owing to the ‘dogmatic and verbose style in which they were written’, and he had introduced extracts from them in order to attract notice to them and so do the historian a good turn. ‘I need hardly say,’ he adds in a footnote to his account of the incident, ‘that as soon as possible thereafter I eliminated all reference to Mr. Freeman, and all quotations from his works from my books.’ He was satisfied that he had thus swept the historian back into the obscurity from which he had delivered him. What Augustus describes as a most virulent and abusive article appeared upon this work in the *Athenæum,* in which he was accused of having copied from Murray’s *Handbooks* without acknowledgement and as proof quoting passages in which the same curious mistake occurred. And in fact that is exactly what he had done. But the books were very popular. By the end of the nineteenth century there, had been fifteen editions of *Walks in Rome,* five of *Florence and Venice,* and six of *Walks in London* and *Wanderings in Spain.* Spain, Holland and Scandinavia, all of which he wrote books about, he knew very superficially, but he knew Italy and France as few people did then or are likely to do now.

During the next ten years Maria and Augustus Hare spent a great deal of time in France and Italy. She was often ill and, when she was, Augustus nursed her devotedly. In the intervals he moved in high circles, took parties of well-born ladies to paint in water­colour with him, and in Rome conducted them on sight-seeing tours during which, the centre of a little crowd of admiring females, he discoursed on the artistic merit and the historical associations of the objects he showed them.

Italima had been greatly reduced in circumstances by the failure of her father’s bank and lost what she had left by the defalcation of the attorney who attended to her affairs. She died in 1864. Her daughter Esmeralda died four years later and Maria Hare in 1870. For a while after this event Augustus was in acute financial anxiety, for the relation between his adopted mother and himself had been so close that she could not bring herself to believe that he would long survive her. She failed in consequence to make what he calls the usual arrangements for his future provision, and it looked as though he would be left with nothing but Holmhurst and sixty pounds a year» He does not explain how things were arranged, but the upshot seems to have been that he succeeded to her fortune. He complained bitterly that, since he was no legal relation, he had to pay ten per cent duty on everything he inherited. He was always reticent about his income and I have no notion what it was; it was sufficient to enable him to keep up Holmhurst in some style, entertain constantly, and travel whenever he had a mind to. He had at least enough to lose a few hundred pounds now and then on a wild-cat speculation. He did not look upon himself as a professional author, but as a gentleman who from purely altruistic motives wrote books which would help travellers profitably to enjoy the beauties of nature and art. He published them at his own expense and they must have brought him in consider­able sums.

From the time of Maria Hare’s death Augustus’s life followed a course of some regularity. He went abroad a good deal, generally for his work on the guide-books; and when in England he spent some time at Holmhurst, receiving a succession of guests, and made a round of country house visits. When in London he had a bed­room in Jermyn Street and went to the Athenaeum for breakfast, where he always occupied the same table; he spent the morning at work in the library and went but to lunch; in the afternoon there were calls to pay, a tea-party or a reception at which he had to make *acte de présence,* and at night he dined out. There is a note in his Journal which strikes a sinister note: ‘May 15. Drawing-party in dirty, picturesque St. Bartholomew’s. For the first time this year no one asked me to dinner, and I was most profoundly bored.’ Augustus never married. There is a cryptic remark in his autobiography which suggests that on one occasion he had an inclination to do so. ‘This year (1864) I greatly wished something that was not compatible with the entire devotion of my time and life to my mother. Therefore I smothered the wish, and the hope that had grown up with it.’ If this means what I think it does I should say it was safe to surmise that the object of his affections was a well-connected young woman of some fortune; but of course he was financially dependent on Maria Hare, and though there is no reason to believe that his reasons for smothering the wish were not such as he said, he cannot but have been aware that if he married without her consent she was capable of cutting him off without a shilling. It was a tradition in the family. I do not think he was of a passionate nature. He told me once that he had never had sexual intercourse till he was thirty-five. He marked the occasions on which this happened, about once every three months, with a black cross in his Journal. But this is a matter on which most men are apt to boast, and I dare say that to impress me he exaggerated the frequency of his incontinence.

During the last months of Mrs. Hare’s life Augustus had discussed with her his desire to write a book about her which should be called *Memorials of a Quiet Life.* She laughed at the notion when first he put it before her, but after reflecting for a day or two said that she could not oppose his wish if he thought that the simple experiences of her life, and God’s guidance in her case, might be made useful to others; she gave him many journals and letters which he might use, and directed the arrangement of others. He set to work at once and was able to read to her the earlier chapters before she died. He spent the winter after her death in seclusion until he had finished the book. His cousins, especially the Stanleys, were very angry when they found out what he was up to, and even threatened to bring an action against him if he published any of the letters of Mrs. Stanley, Maria’s sister. Arthur Stanley, by this time Dean of Westminster, went so far as to persuade John Murray to go to Augustus’s pub­lishers to try to stop the publication. The book was issued and three days after its appearance a second edition was called for. It was in fact a great success both in England and in the United States, and pilgrims came from America to visit the various places Augustus had written about. Carlyle, whom he met at luncheon, told him: T do not often cry and am not much given to weeping, but your book is most profoundly touching, and when the dear Augustus (Maria’s husband) was making the hay I felt a lesson deep down in my heart.’

The world that read these two stout volumes with emotion has long ceased to exist. To me they have seemed tedious. There is, of course, a great deal about the Hares and the Leicesters; the members of the two families wrote immensely long letters to one another, and one can only marvel at the patience they must have had to read them. The pious consolations, the pious exhortations which these people wrote to one another on the death of à relation or a friend were so unctuous that one can hardly believe in their sincerity. But one must not judge of the sentiments of one generation by those of another. God was constantly in their thoughts and their conversation turned frequently on the life to come, but Augustus somewhat maliciously noticed that though in youth they talked of longing, pining for ‘the coming of the Kingdom’, as they grew older they seemed less eager for it. ‘By and by would do.’

The success of *Memorials of a Quiet Life* brought Augustus other work of the same kind, and in course of time he published *Life and Letters of Frances, Baroness Bunsen, The Story of Two Noble Lives, The Gurneys of Earlham,* and others. The subjects of *The Story of Two Noble Lives* were Louisa, Lady Waterford and Charlotte, Lady Canning. It is still readable; indeed the chapters that deal with the period during which their father, Lord Stuart de Rothesay, was ambassador in Paris, from 1815 to 1830, are very interesting. Augustus had made the acquaintance of Lady Waterford when he was getting together his material for Murray’s *Hand­book on Durham and Northumberland;* and after this he paid her a yearly visit first at Ford and then at High*­*cliffe. This was not an isolated case. He was apparently a welcome guest at a vast number of great houses, and there seem to have been few to which he could not count on an invitation year after year. He went from castle to castle, from park to park and from hall to hall. He was not what people call a man’s man. He could play no games. He had never touched a card in his life. He neither shot, fished nor hunted. Though he had a few male friends of his own age, men he had known at Oxford, and a few others whose religious proclivities he could sympathise with, the men with whom he got on best were older. They liked the enthusiastic interest he took in their noble mansions and their contents. Sometimes, however, his enthusiasm was put to a more severe test than he appreciated. When he went to stay at Port Eliot his host met him at the station and almost walked him off his feet while he showed him every picture in the house, every plant in the garden and every walk in the woods. ‘There is a limit to what ought to be shown,’ Augustus wrote acidly in his diary, ‘and Lord Eliot has never found it out.’

It was with the ladies that Augustus found himself most at ease. They liked to go sketching with him, they were flattered by his eagerness to see the local sights and took him daily for drives to visit a neigh­bouring great house, a fine church or a romantic ruin. In those days, days long before the gramophone and the radio, when the gentlemen came home from their day’s sport, after tea the ladies retired to rest till it was time to dress for dinner and Augustus went to his room to write his Journal. The interval between dinner and bedtime was devoted to conversation and music. Augustus showed the party his sketches and those who sketched showed him theirs. Anyone who played the piano was invited to play and anyone who had a voice was pressed to sing. It was then that Augustus came into his own. He was a famous teller of stories. He had discovered his gift when he was a boy at Harrow and early in life had begun assiduously to collect them. He wrote them all down in his Journal. A great many were ghost stories, for there were few of the houses he visited that did not harbour a ghost who appeared either to frighten a guest who had been put in the haunted room or to announce the death of a member of the family. There appears to be a lack of initiative in the conduct of ghosts and there is a certain tedious­ness in their behaviour; Augustus, however, told his stories very well and when people asked him whether he believed in them he answered that he had no doubt at all of their existence. A little shudder of appre­hension would pass through his listeners. But ghost stories by no means exhausted his repertoire. He could tell stories of telepathy, of clairvoyance and of precog­nition. He could tell blood-curdling tales about the Italian and Spanish aristocracy. It was a ‘turn’ that he did, and he took pains to perfect himself. In fact it was the greatest of his social assets. He relates that when he was staying at Raby, if ever he escaped to his room after tea a servant would tap on the door and say: ‘Their Graces want you to come down again.’ ‘Always,’ he adds, ‘from their insatiable love of stories.’ His renown grew to such a height that on one occasion a party was arranged at Holland House so that he might tell Princess Louise some of his stories, ‘which she had graciously wished to hear’.

The houses he visited were mostly those of high- minded people and the conversation often turned on religious subjects. On these Augustus, who had heard them discussed at home from his earliest youth, was quite at home. Sometimes, however, his hosts went to lengths that he thought unnecessary. When, for instance, he was staying with the George Liddells he found Sunday ‘a severe day’. It was spent in going to church, reading prayers and listening to long sermons at home. Even on week-days, after morning prayers, the Psalms and Lessons *for* the day, versé by verse, were read before anyone was allowed to go out.

Augustus did not consort much with men of letters and I think his interest in them was only in so far as they gave occasion for an anecdote which he could tell at the luncheon or the dinner table. On one of her journeys Maria Hare took him to see Wordsworth, who read to him, ‘admirably’, some of his verses. Augustus said that the poet talked a good deal about himself and his own poems, ‘and I have a sense of his being not vain, but conceited.’ The distinction is delicate and I think Augustus must have meant that Wordsworth had an overweening opinion of himself without caring much what other people thought of him. We are all more tolerant of vanity than of conceit, for the vain man is sensitive to our opinion of him and thereby flatters our self-esteem; the conceited man is not and thereby wounds it.

Mrs. Greville took Augustus to see Tennyson: ‘Tennyson is older looking than I expected so that his *unkempt* appearance signifies less. He has an abrupt, bearish manner, and seems thoroughly hard and *un­*poetical: one would think of him as a man in whom the direct prose of life was absolutely ingrained.’ Tennyson insisted that Augustus should tell him some stories, but he ‘was atrociously bad audience and con­stantly interrupted with questions.’ ‘On the whole,’ Augustus adds, ‘the wayward poet leaves a favourable impression. He could scarcely be less egotistic with all the flattery he has. . . ‘Mr. Browning’, whom he met at Lady Castletoun’s, failed to make an impression on him, though he quotes, I suspect with approval, Lockhart’s remark: ‘I like Robert so much because he is not a damned literary person.’ Carlyle had been to stay at Hurstmonceux Rectory, where ‘they had not liked him very much’, when Augustus was a child, and during the period with which I am now concerned he met him from time to time in London. Once Lady Ashburton took him to see the sage of Chelsea in Cheyne Row. ‘He complained much of his health, fretting and fidgeting about himself, and said that he could form no worse wish for the devil than that he might be able to give him his stomach to digest with through all eternity.’ On another occasion, at Lady Ashburton’s, Carlyle ‘talked in volumes, with fathom­less depths of adjectives, into which it was quite impossible to follow him, and in which he himself often got out of his depth.’ Augustus met Oscar Wilde at Madame du Quaine’s. ‘He talked in a way intended to be very startling, but she startled him by saying quietly, “You poor dear foolish boy, how can you talk such nonsense?” Another friend had met him at a country house and one day he came down looking very pale. “I am afraid you are ill, Mr. Wilde,” said one of the party. “No, not ill, only tired,” he answered. “The fact is, I picked a primrose in the wood yesterday, and it was so ill, I have been sitting up with it all night.” ’

So much for Augustus’s association with men of letters. When he was still quite a young man he had been impressed by the Speaker of the House of Commons, Denison, with whom he was a fellow-guest at Winton Castle, because he had ‘a wonderful fund of agreeable small talk.’ Augustus realised how useful an accomplishment this was. I don’t know whether he deliberately sought to acquire it, but from my own recollection I can vouch for his having done so. If he could dine out every night he was in London it was because he gave his hosts good value for their money. He could listen as well as talk. I think one can get some idea of the sort of conversation which was then in favour by an incident Augustus relates. Rogers, the banker-poet, was a great talker and there was a brash young man by the name of Monckton Milnes, whom people called The Cool of the Evening, and who was a great talker too. ‘If Milnes began to talk, Rogers would look at him sourly, and say, “Oh, you want to hold forth, do you?” and then, turning to the rest of the party, “I am looking for my hat, Mr. Milnes is going to entertain the company.” ’ But by the time Augustus came to know the brash young man he had become Lord Houghton, and ‘in spite of his excessive vanity’ he grew sincerely attached to him. He could not but deplore that Lord Houghton sometimes entertained

‘a quaint collection of anybodies and nobodies’; on one occasion indeed he asked Augustus to a party where he met ‘scarcely anyone but authors, and a very odd collection—Black, Yates, and James the novelists; Sir Francis Doyle and Swinburne the poets; Mrs. Singleton, the exotic poetess (Violet Fane), brilliant with diamonds; Mallock, who had suddenly become a lion from having written a clever squib called “The New Republic”, and Mrs. Julia Ward Howe with her daughter’. This was not the sort of company Augustus was used to keep.

Lord Houghton could tell as many stories as he could and had a fund of small talk as agreeable. Augustus was wise enough not to compete with him. But it was different when he came in contact with persons of no social consequence who sought to make themselves heard at the dinner tables of the great. Abraham Hayward, whom he often to his disapproval met in society, he dismisses in two footnotes: ‘Constantly invited by a world which feared him, he was always determined to be listened to, and generally said some­thing worth hearing’; but nothing that Augustus thought fit to record. In another footnote Augustus says that Hayward, ‘who had been articled in early life to an obscure country attorney, always seemed to consider it the *summum bonum* of life to dwell among the aristocracy as a man of letters; and in this he succeeded admirably, and was always witty and well-informed, usually satirical, and often very coarse.’

IV

Augustus’s social career was crowned by an event that came about through his writing of the memoirs of the Baroness Bunsen. When this work was approaching completion he went to Germany to see her two unmarried daughters and on the way paid a long visit to the Dowager Princess of Wied, who had been a close friend of hers. Here he met her sister, the Queen of Sweden, who told him that she must consider him a friend, since in a life of trouble his M*emorials of a Quiet Life* had been a great comfort to her and that she never went anywhere without them. She was sending the Prince Royal to Rome that winter ‘to learn his world’ and expressed a wish that Augustus should go there too. She invited him to visit her in Sweden and shortly afterwards he did so. He made a good impres­sion on the King and it was agreed that Augustus should act as guide and mentor to the Prince during his sojourn in the Eternal City. The Queen begged him to sow some little seeds of good in her son’s young heart and the King talked to him of the places and people he should see. Augustus accordingly went to Rome for the winter. He saw the Prince twice a day and showed him the necessary sights. He took care that he should make acquaintance with the right people. He read English with him and delivered lectures at places of interest not only attended by the Prince and Baron Holtermann, Marshal of the Palace, but by a choice selection of distinguished persons. At the end of the winter Augustus was able to write: ‘On looking back, I have unmixed satisfaction that I came. He leaves Rome quite a different person from the Prince I found here—much strengthened, and I am sure much improved in character as well as speaking English and French (which he did not know before), and being able to take a lively animated part in a society in which he was previously a cypher.’

In May the Prince arrived with his suite at Claridge’s. Augustus took him to see the Royal Academy, the National Gallery, the Tower of London and accom­panied him to Oxford, where he was given an honorary degree. Throughout the season he went to a great many parties, where royalties, English and German, were present in numbers, dukes and duchesses past counting, and in fact everyone who was anyone. At a ball at Lady Salisbury’s Augustus presented so many of his relations to the Prince that he said what astonished him more than anything in England was the multitude of Mr. Hare’s cousins.

The years wore on. Augustus continued to travel, to go to house parties, and when in London to dine out. The period when visits to country houses often lasted weeks, and even months, was long since a thing of the past. It was become usual to have guests for the week­end. Augustus rarely accepted such invitations; he preferred to spend his Sundays in London. He went to church to hear the preacher who was the fashion of the day, and then, perhaps after a stroll in the Park, went out to lunch. Luncheon parties on Sunday, not yet quite killed by the week-end habit of going into the country, were popular. The most famous of these were given by Lady Dorothy Neville and to them Augustus often went. In the afternoon there was generally a tea- party to go to, and someone was sure to ask him to dinner or supper.

But even dukes and duchesses are mortal. The day comes when the chatelaines of great castles are dis­placed by their daughters-in-law and either retire to a dower house or establish themselves in Bath or Bourne­mouth. Augustus began to spend more time at Holm­hurst, and was apt to come up to London only when a brilliant marriage or an important funeral made it necessary. The company he kept was not so choice as it had been. He had never much frequented that of Americans or Jews. In his early years he found the Americans he met on his travels vulgar, but he grew more tolerant with age, and when Mr. Astor bought Cliveden and asked him to stay he thought him genial and unassuming. Money was becoming a power. Aforetime, when a person of title married the daughter of a wealthy manufacturer, Augustus, on mentioning the fact, passed it over lightly and it was almost with surprise that he noted in his Journal that the new countess was unaffected and ladylike. Now not only younger sons but heirs to great titles were marrying into Jewish families.

The nineties came. Augustus did not like them. He was getting on for sixty and many of his old friends had died. The pace of life had increased. A different generation amused itself in a different way. There were no longer ladies of artistic inclinations to go on a drawing-party with him to ‘dirty, picturesque St. Bartholomew’s’; there were no longer ladies of high rank with whom he could have edifying conversation on religious subjects; no longer could he spend pleasant evenings with his portfolio showing his sketches to an appreciative circle, and no longer was he pressed to tell his famous stories. There was no more conversation. The size and lateness of dinners had killed society. The time had passed when a brilliant talker could ‘hold forth’ and the company was prepared to listen. Now everybody wanted to talk and nobody wanted to listen. Perhaps Augustus was beginning to seem a bit of a bore; and as the decade wore on there was more than one evening in the year when no one asked him to dinner. He had an affectionate disposition, and by the time I came to know him he still had a number of friends who were attached to him, but when they spoke of him it was with as it were a shrug of the shoulders, with a smile kindly enough, but with a suspicion of apology. He had become faintly ridiculous.

The reader can hardly have read so far without its having crossed his mind that Augustus was something of a snob. He was. But before I deal with this I should like to point out that the word has in the course of years somewhat changed its significance. When Augustus was young, gentlemen ‘wore straps to their trousers, not only when riding, but always: it was considered the *ne plus ultra* of snobbism to appear without them’ (so in the days of my own youth it was considered to wear brown boots in London). I take it that when Augustus wrote this, snobbish was equivalent to vulgar or common. I have a notion that the sense it now has was given it by Thackeray. Of course Augustus was a snob. But here, like Thomas Diafoirus in *Le Malade Imaginaire,* I am inclined to say: ‘*Distinguo, Mademoiselle.’* The Oxford Dictionary defines the snob as ‘one who meanly or vulgarly admires and seeks to imitate, or associate with, those of superior rank or wealth; one who wishes to be regarded as a person of social impor­tance.’ Well, Augustus didn’t *wish* to be regarded as a person of social importance; it had never occurred to him that he was anything else. Not to have regarded him as such would have seemed to him merely a proof of your crass ignorance. He did not meanly or vulgarly seek to associate with those of superior rank. His grand­father was Mr. Hare-Naylor of Hurstmonceux, and he counted at least three Earls as his cousins, several times removed certainly, but cousins none the less. He had always moved in the highest circles of society, indeed it was for them that he had written one of his most successful books, *The Story of Two Noble Lives,* and he regarded no one as his superior. He had not, like Abraham Hayward, wormed his way into those circles by intelligence, or wit, but taken his place in them by right of birth. Yet most people looked upon Augustus as an outrageous snob.

On one occasion, after I had known him for some years, I happened to be at a party when the conversa­tion turned upon this trait of his, not with malice, but with an amused indulgence. At that time when you had dined out it was polite to call within a week, and though you hoped to find your hostess not at home it was only decent to ask whether she was. Sometimes, in my nervousness, when the butler opened the door to me I could not for the life of me remember the name of the lady on whom I was paying this visit of courtesy.

I spoke of this and added that when I told Augustus how great my embarrassment was when this occurred, he answered: ‘Oh, but that often happens to me, but I just say, “Is her ladyship at home?” and it’s always right.’ Everyone laughed and said: ‘How exactly like Augustus!’ I was somewhat taken aback when twenty years later I read this little quip of mine in a book of memoirs, for there was not a word of truth in it; I had invented it on the spur of the moment merely to amuse the company. But it was sufficiently characteristic of Augustus to be remembered. I have written this essay partly to make reparation to his memory.

It was inexcusable of me thus to make fun of Augustus, because his kindness to me was great. He took an interest in my career as a novelist. ‘The only people worth writing about,’ he told me, ‘are the lower classes and the upper. No one wants to read about the middle classes.’ He could not have foreseen that a time would come when, so low has the stock of the upper classes fallen, no self-respecting novelist would introduce a person of rank into his fiction except as a figure of fun. Augustus felt that as a medical student at St. Thomas’s Hospital I must have learnt as much as was needful about the lower orders, but he thought I should acquire more than a superficial knowledge of the manners and customs of the nobility and gentry. With this object in view he took me to call on various of his old friends, and finding I had not made too bad an impression, asked them to invite me to their parties. I was glad enough to have the opportunity to enter a world new to me. It was not the great world, for by then Augustus had lost touch with it; it was a world of elderly gentle­folk who lived in discreet, rather dull splendour. I was no credit to Augustus and if they continued to invite me it was for his sake rather than for mine. Like most young men, then and now, I thought my youth a sufficient contribution to the entertainment of the company. I had not learnt that when you go to a party it is your business to do your best to add to its success. I was silent and even if I had had anything to say would have been too shy to say it. But I kept my eyes and my ears open, and I learnt one or two things that I have since found worth knowing. I was once at a great dinner of twenty-four people in Port­land Place. Of course all the men were in tails and white ties and the women, in satins and velvets, with long trains, were richly jewelled. We walked down the stairs to the dining-room in a long procession, giving our arm to the lady whom we had been instructed to ‘take down’. The table blazed with old silver, cut glass and flowers out of season. The dinner was long and elaborate. At the end of it the ladies, on catching the hostess’s eye, rose and trooped up to the drawing­room, leaving the men to drink coffee and liqueurs, smoke and discuss the affairs of the nation. I found myself sitting then next to an old gentleman whom I knew to be the Duke of Abercorn. He asked me my name and, when I gave it, said: ‘I’m told you’re a very clever young man.’ I made an appropriately modest reply, and he took out of his tail pocket a large cigar- case.

‘Do you like cigars?’ he asked me, as he opened it and displayed to my view a number of handsome Havanas.

‘Very much,’ I said.

I didn’t see fit to tell him that I couldn’t afford to buy them and smoked one only when it was offered me.

‘So do I,’ he said, ‘and when I come to dinner with a widow lady I always bring my own. I advise you to do the same.’

He looked carefully over those in his case, picked one out, put it up to his ear and slightly pressed it to sec that it was in perfect condition, and then snapped the case shut and put it back in his pocket. It was good advice he gave me, and since I have been in a position to do so I have taken it.

Augustus, though indulgent, did not spare reproof when he thought it was good for me. One Tuesday morning, when I had been spending the week-end with him, the post brought me a letter which he must have written soon after my departure. ‘My dear Willie,’ it ran. ‘Yesterday when we came in from our walk you said you were thirsty and asked for a *drink.* I have never heard you vulgar before. A gentleman does *not* ask for a *drink,* he asks for *something to drink.* Yours affectionately. Augustus.’

Dear Augustus! I’m afraid that if he were alive now he would find the whole English-speaking world as vulgar as he found me then.

On another occasion when I told him I had been somewhere by bus, he said stiffly: ‘I prefer to call the conveyance to which you refer an omnibus’; and when I protested that if he wanted a cab he didn’t ask for a cabriolet, ‘Only because people are so uneducated today they wouldn’t understand,’ he retorted. Augustus was of opinion that manners had sadly deteriorated since his youth. Few young men knew how to behave in polite society, and how could you wonder when there was no longer anyone to teach them? In this con­nection he was fond of telling a story about Caroline, Duchess of Cleveland. She had rented Osterley and had a number of people staying with her. She was lame and walked with an ebony stick. One day when they were all sitting in the drawing-room the duchess got up, and a young man, thinking she wanted to ring the bell, sprang to his feet and rang it for her; where­upon she hit him angrily over the head with her stick and said: ‘Sir, officiousness is not politeness.’ ‘And quite right too,’ said Augustus, and then in an awe­struck tone: ‘For all he knew she might have wanted to go to the water-closet.’ Even duchesses are subject, his lowered voice indicated, to natural necessities. ‘She was a very great lady,’ he added. ‘She’s the last woman who ever smacked her footman’s face in Bond Street.’ He thought with nostalgia of his own grand­mother, the wife of the Reverend Oswald Leicester, who habitually boxed the ears of her maids. Those were the brave days of old, when servants were prepared to suffer corporal punishment at the hands of their mistresses.

Augustus published the first three volumes of *The Story of My Life* in 1896 and the next three in 1900. Seldom can a work have been received with such a unanimity of hostile criticism, and it is true that one might cavil at an autobiography even of a very great man in six volumes of nearly five hundred pages each. The *Saturday Review* described it as a monument of self- sufficiency and found it wholly without delicacy. The *Pall Mall Gazette* was filled with genuine pity for a man who could attach importance to a life so trivial. The *National Observer* had not for long met with an author so garrulous and so self-complacent. *Blackwood* asked: ‘What is Mr. Augustus Hare?’ Mr. Augustus Hare remained superbly indifferent. He had written the book for himself and his relations, as he had written *The Story of Two Noble Lives* for ‘the upper circles of society’, and not for tire general public, and I suppose it never occurred to him that in that case it might have been better to print it privately. Even after the publication of the second three volumes, undeterred he went on with the story, writing every morning, to the very end of his life. There was no one, however, with sufficient piety to publish what was doubtless a bulky manuscript.

To refresh my memory I have recently re-read *The Story of My Life.* What the reviewers said was true enough, but it was not the whole truth. It was apparently the custom of the day when you went abroad to write long descriptions to your friends of the sights you saw, and these letters of his Augustus printed in full. They are tedious. Yet they describe a way of travel, by carriage or *vetturino,* which no longer obtains, and the look of old towns and historic cities the aspect and character of which the advance of civilisation has entirely changed. If a novelist wanted to write a story situated in Rome during the last years of the temporal power he would find in Augustus’s pages not a little picturesque material that he could turn to good use. Of course the lists of important persons he met on his visits to great houses are intolerably dull. He had no gift for bringing people to life and they exist merely as names; though not himself a sayer of good things, he had a quick appreciation of those said by others, and a diligent reader is often rewarded by coming upon a nice repartee. I should have liked to be present when the lady on being reproached for burning the candle at both ends, said: ‘Why, I thought that was the very way to make both ends meet.’ Augustus inserted in the six volumes of this work all the stories, ghost stories and others, which he used to relate to a group of spell­bound ladies of high rank. Some of them are very good. It is unfortunate that they should be buried in a mass of twaddle. Augustus suffered from the persuasion that he was a gentleman, and an author, though a voluminous one, only by the way. If he had been a man of letters first and a gentleman next, he might, instead of writing the six volumes of his autobiography, with the material at his disposal have produced two or three books which would have been, not a lively, but at least an interesting, picture of the times.

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Augustus had suffered from an affection of the heart for some years, and one morning, in 1903, when the maid went into his room to bring him his cup of tea and his two slices of thin bread and butter, she found him lying on the floor in his night-shirt, dead.