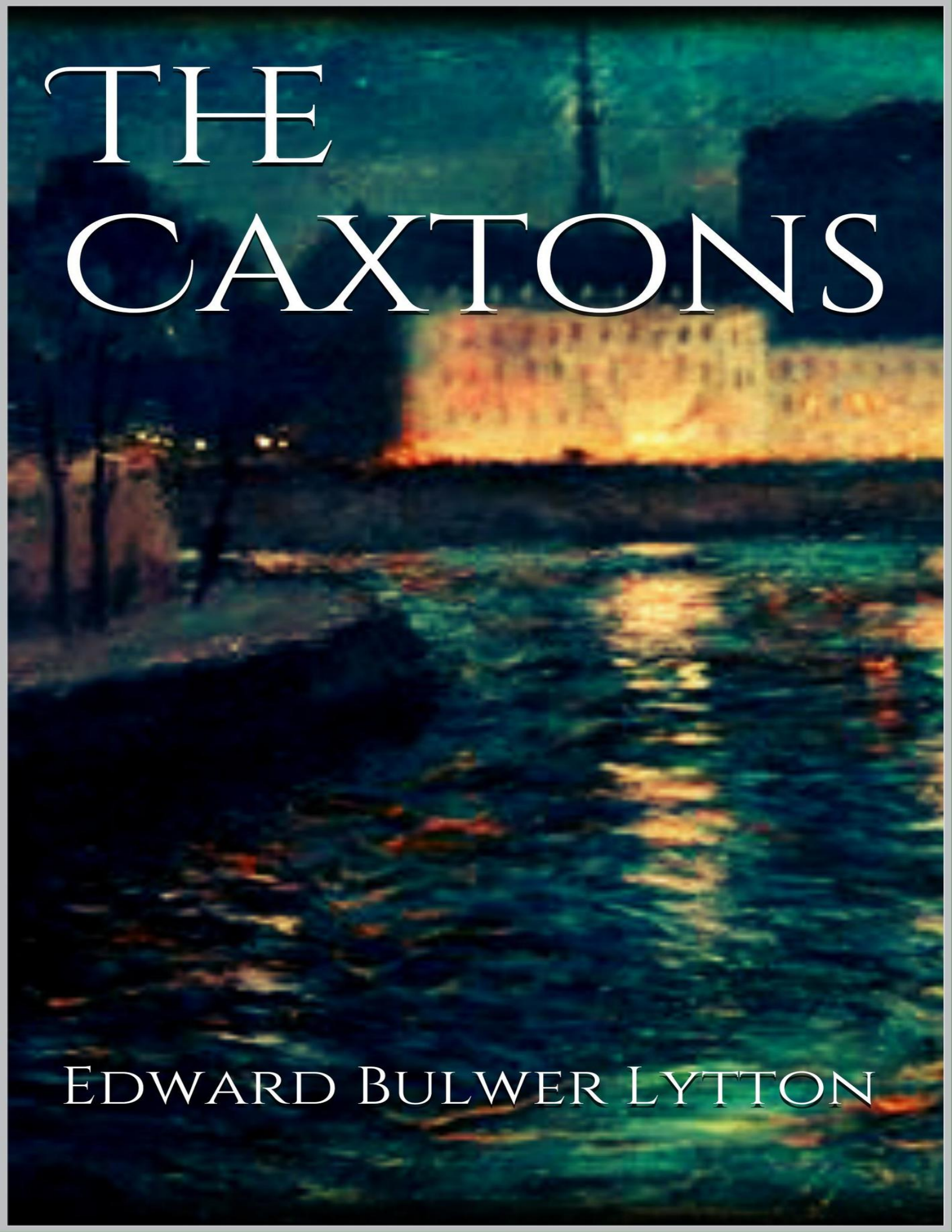
THE
CAXTONS
EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

The Caxtons

The Caxtons

Edward Bulwer-Lytton

Preface

If it be the good fortune of this work to possess any interest for the Novel reader, that interest, perhaps, will be but little derived from the customary elements of fiction. The plot is extremely slight, the incidents are few, and with the exception of those which involve the fate of Vivian, such as may be found in the records of ordinary life.

Regarded as a Novel, this attempt is an experiment somewhat apart from the previous works of the author. It is the first of his writings in which Humor has been employed, less for the purpose of satire than in illustration of amiable characters; it is the first, too, in which man has been viewed, less in his active relations with the world, than in his repose at his own hearth,—in a word, the greater part of the canvas has been devoted to the completion of a simple Family Picture. And thus, in any appeal to the sympathies of the human heart, the common household affections occupy the place of those livelier or larger passions which usually (and not unjustly) arrogate the foreground in Romantic composition.

In the Hero whose autobiography connects the different characters and events of the work, it has been the Author's intention to imply the influences of Home upon the conduct and career of youth; and in the ambition which estranges Pisistratus for a time from the sedentary occupations in which the man of civilized life must usually serve his apprenticeship to Fortune or to Fame, it is not designed to describe the fever of Genius conscious of superior powers

and aspiring to high destinies, but the natural tendencies of a fresh and buoyant mind, rather vigorous than contemplative, and in which the desire of action is but the symptom of health.

Pisistratus in this respect (as he himself feels and implies) becomes the specimen or type of a class the numbers of which are daily increasing in the inevitable progress of modern civilization. He is one too many in the midst of the crowd; he is the representative of the exuberant energies of youth, turning, as with the instinct of nature for space and development, from the Old World to the New. That which may be called the interior meaning of the whole is sought to be completed by the inference that, whatever our wanderings, our happiness will always be found within a narrow compass, and amidst the objects more immediately within our reach, but that we are seldom sensible of this truth (hackneyed though it be in the Schools of all Philosophies) till our researches have spread over a wider area. To insure the blessing of repose, we require a brisker excitement than a few turns up and down our room. Content is like that humor in the crystal, on which Claudian has lavished the wonder of a child and the fancies of a Poet, —

"Vivis gemma tumescit aquis."

E. B. L.

October, 1849.

Part I

Chapter I

"Sir—sir, it is a boy!"
"A boy," said my father, looking up from his book, and evidently much puzzled: "what is a boy?"
Now my father did not mean by that interrogatory to challenge philosophical inquiry, nor to demand of the honest but unenlightened woman who had just rushed into his study, a solution of that mystery, physiological and psychological, which has puzzled so many curious sages, and lies still involved in the question, "What is man?" For as we need not look further than Dr. Johnson's Dictionary to know that a boy is "a male child,"—i.e., the male young of man,—so he who would go to the depth of things, and know scientifically what is a boy, must be able to ascertain "what is a man." But for aught I know, my father may have been satisfied with Buffon on that score, or he may have sided with Monboddo. He may have agreed with Bishop Berkeley; he may have contented himself with Professor Combe; he may have regarded the genus spiritually, like Zeno, or materially, like Epicurus. Grant that boy is the male young of man, and he would have had plenty of definitions to choose from. He might have said, "Man is a stomach,—ergo, boy a male young stomach. Man is a brain,—boy a male young brain. Man is a bundle of habits,—boy a male young bundle of habits. Man is a machine,—boy a male young machine. Man is a tail–less monkey,—boy a male young tail–less monkey. Man is a combination of gases,—boy a male young combination of gases. Man is an

appearance,—boy a male young appearance," etc., etc., and etcetera, ad infinitum! And if none of these definitions had entirely satisfied my father, I am perfectly persuaded that he would never have come to Mrs. Primmins for a new one. But it so happened that my father was at that moment engaged in the important consideration whether the Iliad was written by one Homer, or was rather a collection of sundry ballads, done into Greek by divers hands, and finally selected, compiled, and reduced into a whole by a Committee of Taste, under that elegant old tyrant Pisistratus; and the sudden affirmation, "It is a boy," did not seem to him pertinent to the thread of the discussion. Therefore he asked, "What is a boy?" vaguely, and, as it were, taken by surprise.

"Lord, sir!" said Mrs. Primmins, "what is a boy? Why, the baby!"

"The baby!" repeated my father, rising. "What, you don't mean to say that Mrs. Caxton is—eh?"

"Yes, I do," said Mrs. Primmins, dropping a courtesy; "and as fine a little rogue as ever I set eyes upon."

"Poor dear woman," said my father, with great compassion. "So soon, too—so rapidly," he resumed, in a tone of musing surprise. "Why, it is but the other day we were married!"

"Bless my heart, sir," said Mrs. Primmins, much scandalized, "it is ten months and more."

"Ten months!" said my father with a sigh. "Ten months! and I have not finished fifty pages of my refutation of Wolfe's monstrous theory! In ten months a child! and I'll be bound complete,—hands, feet, eyes, ears, and nose!—and not like this poor Infant of Mind," and my father pathetically placed his hand on the treatise, "of which nothing is formed and shaped, not even the first joint of the little finger! Why, my wife is a precious woman! Well, keep her quiet. Heaven preserve her, and send me strength—to support this blessing!"

"But your honor will look at the baby? Come, sir!" and Mrs.

Primmins laid hold of my father's sleeve coaxingly.
"Look at it,—to be sure," said my father, kindly; "look at it, certainly: it is but fair to poor Mrs. Caxton, after taking so much trouble, dear soul!"
Therewith my father, drawing his dressing–robe round him in more stately folds, followed Mrs. Primmins upstairs into a room very carefully darkened.
"How are you, my dear?" said my father, with compassionate tenderness, as he groped his way to the bed.
A faint voice muttered: "Better now, and so happy!" And at the same moment Mrs. Primmins pulled my father away, lifted a coverlid from a small cradle, and holding a candle within an inch of an undeveloped nose, cried emphatically, "There—bless it!"
"Of course, ma'am, I bless it," said my father, rather peevishly. "It is my duty to bless it—Bless It! And this, then, is the way we come into the world!—red, very red,—blushing for all the follies we are destined to commit."
My father sat down on the nurse's chair, the women grouped round him. He continued to gaze on the contents of the cradle, and at length said, musingly, "And Homer was once like this!"
At this moment—and no wonder, considering the propinquity of the candle to his visual organs—Homer's infant likeness commenced the first untutored melodies of nature.
"Homer improved greatly in singing as he grew older," observed Mr. Squills, the accoucheur, who was engaged in some mysteries in a corner of the room.
My father stopped his ears. "Little things can make a great noise," said he, philosophically; "and the smaller the thing; the greater noise it can make."
So saying, he crept on tiptoe to the bed, and clasping the pale hand held out to him, whispered some words that no doubt charmed and soothed the ear that heard them, for

that pale hand was suddenly drawn from his own and thrown tenderly round his neck. The sound of a gentle kiss was heard through the stillness.
"Mr. Caxton, sir," cried Mr. Squills, in rebuke, "you agitate my patient; you must retire."
My father raised his mild face, looked round apologetically, brushed his eyes with the back of his hand, stole to the door, and vanished.
"I think," said a kind gossip seated at the other side of my mother's bed, "I think, my dear, that Mr. Caxton might have shown more joy,—more natural feeling, I may say,—at the sight of the baby: and Such a baby! But all men are just the same, my dear,—brutes,—all brutes, depend upon it!"
"Poor Austin!" sighed my mother, feebly; "how little you understand him!"
"And now I shall clear the room," said Mr. Squills. "Go to sleep, Mrs. Caxton."
"Mr. Squills," exclaimed my mother, and the bed–curtains trembled, "pray see that Mr. Caxton does not set himself on fire. And, Mr. Squills, tell him not to be vexed and miss me, —I shall be down very soon,—sha' n't I?"
"If you keep yourself easy, you will, ma'am."
"Pray, say so. And, Primmins—"
"Yes, ma'am."
"Every one, I fear, is neglecting your master. Be sure," and my mother's lips approached close to Mrs. Primmins' ear, "be sure that you—air his nightcap yourself."
"Tender creatures those women," soliloquized Mr. Squills as, after clearing the room of all present save Mrs. Primmins and the nurse, he took his way towards my father's study. Encountering the footman in the passage, "John," said he, "take supper into your master's room, and make us some punch, will you,—stiffish!"

Chapter II

"Mr. Caxton, how on earth did you ever come to marry?" asked Mr. Squills, abruptly, with his feet on the hob, while stirring up his punch.

That was a home question, which many men might reasonably resent; but my father scarcely knew what resentment was.

"Squills," said he, turning round from his books, and laying one finger on the surgeon's arm confidentially,—"Squills," said he, "I myself should be glad to know how I came to be married."

Mr. Squills was a jovial, good–hearted man,—stout, fat, and with fine teeth, that made his laugh pleasant to look at as well as to hear. Mr. Squills, moreover, was a bit of a philosopher in his way,—studied human nature in curing its diseases; and was accustomed to say that Mr. Caxton was a better book in himself than all he had in his library. Mr. Squills laughed, and rubbed his hands.

My father resumed thoughtfully, and in the tone of one who moralizes:—

"There are three great events in life, sir,—birth, marriage, and death. None know how they are born, few know how they die; but I suspect that many can account for the intermediate phenomenon—I cannot."

"It was not for money, it must have been for love," observed Mr. Squills; "and your young wife is as pretty as she is good."

"Ha!" said my father, "I remember."

"Do you, sir?" exclaimed Squills, highly amused. "How was it?"
My father, as was often the case with him, protracted his reply, and then seemed rather to commune with himself than to answer Mr. Squills.
"The kindest, the best of men," he murmured,—"Abyssus Eruditionis. And to think that he bestowed on me the only fortune he had to leave, instead of to his own flesh and blood, Jack and Kitty,—all, at least, that I could grasp, deficiente manu, of his Latin, his Greek, his Orientals. What do I not owe to him?"
"To whom?" asked Squills. "Good Lord! what's the man talking about?"
"Yes, sir," said my father, rousing himself, "such was Giles Tibbets, M. A., Sol Scientiarum, tutor to the humble scholar you address, and father to poor Kitty. He left me his Elzevirs; he left me also his orphan daughter."
"Oh! as a wife—"
"No, as a ward. So she came to live in my house. I am sure there was no harm in it. But my neighbors said there was, and the widow Weltraum told me the girl's character would suffer. What could I do?—Oh, yes, I recollect all now! I married her, that my old friend's child might have a roof to her head, and come to no harm. You see I was forced to do her that injury; for, after all, poor young creature, it was a sad lot for her. A dull bookworm like me,—cochlea vitam agens, Mr. Squills,—leading the life of a snail! But my shell was all I could offer to my poor friend's orphan."
"Mr. Caxton, I honor you," said Squills, emphatically, jumping up, and spilling half a tumblerful of scalding punch over my father's legs. "You have a heart, sir; and I understand why your wife loves you. You seem a cold man, but you have tears in your eyes at this moment."
"I dare say I have," said my father, rubbing his shins; "it was boiling!"

"And your son will be a comfort to you both," said Mr. Squills, reseating himself, and, in his friendly emotion, wholly abstracted from all consciousness of the suffering he had inflicted; "he will be a dove of peace to your ark."
"I don't doubt it," said my father, ruefully; "only those doves, when they are small, are a very noisy sort of birds—non talium avium cantos somnum reducent. However, it might have been worse. Leda had twins."
"So had Mrs. Barnabas last week," rejoined the accoucheur. "Who knows what may be in store for you yet? Here's a health to Master Caxton, and lots of brothers and sisters to him."
"Brothers and sisters! I am sure Mrs. Caxton will never think of such a thing, sir," said my father, almost indignantly; "she's much too good a wife to behave so. Once in a way it is all very well; but twice—and as it is, not a paper in its place, nor a pen mended the last three days: I, too, who can only write cuspide duriuscula,—and the baker coming twice to me for his bill, too! The Ilithyiae, are troublesome deities, Mr. Squills."
"Who are the Ilithyiae?" asked the accoucheur.
"You ought to know," answered my father, smiling,—"the female daemons who presided over the Neogilos, or New–born. They take the name from Juno. See Homer, Book XI. By the by, will my Neogilos be brought up like Hector, or Astyanax—videlicet, nourished by its mother, or by a nurse?"
"Which do you prefer, Mr. Caxton?" asked Mr. Squills, breaking the sugar in his tumbler. "In this I always deem it my duty to consult the wishes of the gentleman."
"A nurse by all means, then," said my father. "And let her carry him upo kolpo, next to her bosom. I know all that has been said about mothers nursing their own infants, Mr. Squills; but poor Kitty is so sensitive that I think a stout, healthy peasant woman will be the best for the boy's future nerves, and his mother's nerves, present and future too.

Heigh–ho! I shall miss the dear woman very much. When will she be up, Mr. Squills?"
"Oh, in less than a fortnight!"
"And then the Neogilos shall go to school,—upo kolpo,—the nurse with him, and all will be right again," said my father, with a look of sly, mysterious humor which was peculiar to him.
"School! when he's just born?"
"Can't begin too soon," said my father, positively; "that's Helvetius' opinion, and it is mine too!"

Chapter III

That I was a very wonderful child, I take for granted; but nevertheless it was not of my own knowledge that I came into possession of the circumstances set down in my former chapters. But my father's conduct on the occasion of my birth made a notable impression upon all who witnessed it; and Mr. Squills and Mrs. Primmins have related the facts to me sufficiently often to make me as well acquainted with them as those worthy witnesses themselves. I fancy I see my father before me, in his dark–gray dressing–gown, and with his odd, half–sly, half–innocent twitch of the mouth, and peculiar puzzling look, from two quiet, abstracted, indolently handsome eyes, at the moment he agreed with Helvetius on the propriety of sending me to school as soon as I was born. Nobody knew exactly what to make of my father,—his wife excepted. The people of Abdera sent for Hippocrates to cure the supposed insanity of Democritus, "who at that time," saith Hippocrates, dryly, "was seriously engaged in philosophy." That same people of Abdera would certainly have found very alarming symptoms of madness in my poor father; for, like Democritus, "he esteemed as nothing the things, great or small, in which the rest of the world were employed." Accordingly, some set him down as a sage, some as a fool. The neighboring clergy respected him as a scholar, "breathing libraries;" the ladies despised him as an absent pedant who had no more gallantry than a stock or a stone. The poor loved him for his charities, but laughed at him as a weak sort of man, easily taken in. Yet

the squires and farmers found that, in their own matters of rural business, he had always a fund of curious information to impart; and whoever, young or old, gentle or simple, learned or ignorant, asked his advice, it was given with not more humility than wisdom. In the common affairs of life he seemed incapable of acting for himself; he left all to my mother; or, if taken unawares, was pretty sure to be the dupe. But in those very affairs, if another consulted him, his eye brightened, his brow cleared, the desire of serving made him a new being,—cautious, profound, practical. Too lazy or too languid where only his own interests were at stake, touch his benevolence, and all the wheels of the clock–work felt the impetus of the master–spring. No wonder that, to others, the nut of such a character was hard to crack! But in the eyes of my poor mother, Augustine (familiarly Austin) Caxton was the best and the greatest of human beings; and she ought to have known him well, for she studied him with her whole heart, knew every trick of his face, and, nine times out of ten, divined what he was going to say before he opened his lips. Yet certainly there were deeps in his nature which the plummet of her tender woman's wit had never sounded; and certainly it sometimes happened that, even in his most domestic colloquialisms, my mother was in doubt whether he was the simple, straightforward person he was mostly taken for. There was, indeed, a kind of suppressed, subtle irony about him, too unsubstantial to be popularly called humor, but dimly implying some sort of jest, which he kept all to himself; and this was only noticeable when he said something that sounded very grave, or appeared to the grave very silly and irrational.

That I did not go to school—at least to what Mr. Squills understood by the word "school"—quite so soon as intended, I need scarcely observe. In fact, my mother managed so well—my nursery, by means of double doors, was so placed out of hearing—that my father, for the most

part, was privileged, if he pleased, to forget my existence. He was once vaguely recalled to it on the occasion of my christening. Now, my father was a shy man, and he particularly hated all ceremonies and public spectacles. He became uneasily aware that a great ceremony, in which he might be called upon to play a prominent part, was at hand. Abstracted as he was, and conveniently deaf at times, he had heard such significant whispers about "taking advantage of the bishop's being in the neighborhood," and "twelve new jelly–glasses being absolutely wanted," as to assure him that some deadly festivity was in the wind. And when the question of godmother and godfather was fairly put to hire, coupled with the remark that this was a fine opportunity to return the civilities of the neighborhood, he felt that a strong effort at escape was the only thing left. Accordingly, having, seemingly without listening, heard the clay fixed and seen, as they thought, without observing, the chintz chairs in the best drawing–room uncovered (my dear mother was the tidiest woman in the world), my father suddenly discovered that there was to be a great book–sale, twenty miles off, which would last four days, and attend it he must. My mother sighed; but she never contradicted my father, even when he was wrong, as he certainly was in this case. She only dropped a timid intimation that she feared "it would look odd, and the world might misconstrue my father's absence,—had not she better put off the christening?"

"My dear," answered my father, "it will be my duty, by and by, to christen the boy,—a duty not done in a day. At present, I have no doubt that the bishop will do very well without me. Let the day stand, or if you put it off, upon my word and honor I believe that the wicked auctioneer will put off the book–sale also. Of one thing I am quite sure, that the sale and the christening will take place at the same time." There was no getting over this; but I am certain my dear mother had much less heart than before in uncovering

the chintz chairs in the best drawing–room. Five years later this would not have happened. My mother would have kissed my father and said, "Stay," and he would have stayed. But she was then very young and timid; and he, wild man, not of the woods, but the cloisters, not yet civilized into the tractabilities of home. In short, the post–chaise was ordered and the carpetbag packed.

"My love," said my mother, the night before this Hegira, looking up from her work, "my love, there is one thing you have quite forgot to settle,—I beg pardon for disturbing you, but it is important!—baby's name: sha' n't we call him Augustine?"

"Augustine," said my father, dreamily,—"why that name's mine."

"And you would like your boy's to be the same?"

"No," said my father, rousing himself. "Nobody would know which was which. I should catch myself learning the Latin accidence, or playing at marbles. I should never know my own identity, and Mrs. Primmins would be giving me pap."

My mother smiled; and putting her hand, which was a very pretty one, on my father's shoulder, and looking at him tenderly, she said: "There's no fear of mistaking you for any other, even your son, dearest. Still, if you prefer another name, what shall it be?"

"Samuel," said my father. "Dr. Parr's name is Samuel."

"La, my love! Samuel is the ugliest name—"

My father did not hear the exclamation; he was again deep in his books. Presently he started up: "Barnes says Homer is Solomon. Read Omeros backward, in the Hebrew manner —"

"Yes, my love," interrupted my mother. "But baby's Christian name?"

"Omeros—Soreino—Solemo—Solomo!"

"Solomo,—shocking!" said my mother.

"Shocking indeed," echoed my father; "an outrage to common–sense." Then, after glancing again over his books,

he broke out musingly: "But, after all, it is nonsense to suppose that Homer was not settled till his time."
"Whose?" asked my mother, mechanically. My father lifted up his finger.
My mother continued, after a short pause., "Arthur is a pretty name. Then there 's William—Henry—Charles Robert. What shall it be, love?"
"Pisistratus!" said my father (who had hung fire till then), in a tone of contempt,—"Pisistratus, indeed!"
"Pisistratus! a very fine name," said my mother, joyfully, —"Pisistratus Caxton. Thank you, my love: Pisistratus it shall be."
"Do you contradict me? Do you side with Wolfe and Heyne and that pragmatical fellow Vico? Do you mean to say that the Rhapsodists—"
"No, indeed," interrupted my mother. "My dear, you frighten me."
My father sighed, and threw himself back in his chair. My mother took courage and resumed.
"Pisistratus is a long name too! Still, one could call him Sisty."
"Siste, Viator," muttered my father; "that's trite!"
"No, Sisty by itself—short. Thank you, my dear."
Four days afterwards, on his return from the book–sale, to my father's inexpressible bewilderment, he was informed that Pisistratus was "growing the very image of him."
When at length the good man was made thoroughly aware of the fact that his son and heir boasted a name so memorable in history as that borne by the enslaver of Athens and the disputed arranger of Homer,—and it was asserted to be a name that he himself had suggested,—he was as angry as so mild a man could be. "But it is infamous!" he exclaimed. "Pisistratus christened! Pisistratus, who lived six hundred years before Christ was born! Good heavens, madam! you have made me the father of an Anachronism."

My mother burst into tears. But the evil was irremediable. An anachronism I was, and an anachronism I must continue to the end of the chapter.

Chapter IV

"Of course, sir, you will begin soon to educate your son yourself?" said Mr. Squills.
"Of course, sir," said my father, "you have read Martinus Scriblerus?"
"I don't understand you, Mr. Caxton."
"Then you have not read Aiartinus Scriblerus, Mr. Squills!"
"Consider that I have read it; and what then?"
"Why, then, Squills," said my father, familiarly, "you son would know that though a scholar is often a fool, he is never a fool so supreme, so superlative, as when he is defacing the first unsullied page of the human history by entering into it the commonplaces of his own pedantry. A scholar, sir,—at least one like me,—is of all persons the most unfit to teach young children. A mother, sir,—a simple, natural, loving mother,—is the infant's true guide to knowledge."
"Egad! Mr. Caxton,—in spite of Helvetius, whom you quoted the night the boy was born,—egad! I believe you are right."
"I am sure of it," said my father,—"at least as sure as a poor mortal can be of anything. I agree with Helvetius, the child should be educated from its birth; but how? There is the rub: send him to school forthwith! Certainly, he is at school already with the two great teachers,—Nature and Love. Observe, that childhood and genius have the same master–organ in common,—inquisitiveness. Let childhood have its way, and as it began where genius begins, it may find what genius finds. A certain Greek writer tells us of some man

who, in order to save his bees a troublesome flight to Hymettus, cut their wings, and placed before them the finest flowers he could select. The poor bees made no honey. Now, sir, if I were to teach my boy, I should be cutting his wings and giving him the flowers he should find himself. Let us leave Nature alone for the present, and Nature's loving proxy, the watchful mother."

Therewith my father pointed to his heir sprawling on the grass and plucking daisies on the lawn, while the young mother's voice rose merrily, laughing at the child's glee.

"I shall make but a poor bill out of your nursery, I see," said Mr. Squills.

Agreeably to these doctrines, strange in so learned a father, I thrived and flourished, and learned to spell, and make pot–hooks, under the joint care of my mother and Dame Primmins. This last was one of an old race fast dying away, —the race of old, faithful servants; the race of old, tale–telling nurses. She had reared my mother before me; but her affection put out new flowers for the new generation. She was a Devonshire woman; and Devonshire women, especially those who have passed their youth near the sea–coast, are generally superstitious. She had a wonderful budget of fables. Before I was six years old, I was erudite in that primitive literature in which the legends of all nations are traced to a common fountain,—Puss in Boots, Tom Thumb, Fortunio, Fortunatus, Jack the Giant–Killer; tales, like proverbs, equally familiar, under different versions, to the infant worshippers of Budh and the hardier children of Thor. I may say, without vanity, that in an examination in those venerable classics I could have taken honors!

My dear mother had some little misgivings as to the solid benefit to be derived from such fantastic erudition, and timidly consulted my father thereon.

"My love," answered my father, in that tone of voice which always puzzled even my mother to be sure whether he was in jest or earnest, "in all these fables certain philosophers

could easily discover symbolic significations of the highest morality. I have myself written a treatise to prove that Puss in Boots is an allegory upon the progress of the human understanding, having its origin in the mystical schools of the Egyptian priests, and evidently an illustration of the worship rendered at Thebes and Memphis to those feline quadrupeds of which they make both religious symbols and elaborate mummies."

"My dear Austin," said my mother, opening her blue eyes, "you don't think that Sisty will discover all those fine things in Puss in Boots!"

"My dear Kitty," answered my father, "you don't think, when you were good enough to take up with me, that you found in me all the fine things I have learned from books. You knew me only as a harmless creature who was happy enough to please your fancy. By and by you discovered that I was no worse for all the quartos that have transmigrated into ideas within me,—ideas that are mysteries even to myself. If Sisty, as you call the child (plague on that unlucky anachronism! which you do well to abbreviate into a dissyllable),—if Sisty can't discover all the wisdom of Egypt in Puss in Boots, what then? Puss in Boots is harmless, and it pleases his fancy. All that wakes curiosity is wisdom, if innocent; all that pleases the fancy now, turns hereafter to love or to knowledge. And so, my dear, go back to the nursery."

But I should wrong thee, O best of fathers! if I suffered the reader to suppose that because thou didst seem so indifferent to my birth, and so careless as to my early teaching, therefore thou wert, at heart, indifferent to thy troublesome Neogilos. As I grew older, I became more sensibly aware that a father's eye was upon me. I distinctly remember one incident, that seems to me, in looking back, a crisis in my infant life, as the first tangible link between my own heart and that calm great soul.

My father was seated on the lawn before the house, his straw hat over his eyes (it was summer), and his book on his lap. Suddenly a beautiful delf blue–and–white flower–pot, which had been set on the window–sill of an upper story, fell to the ground with a crash, and the fragments spluttered up round my father's legs. Sublime in his studies as Archimedes in the siege, he continued to read,—Impavidum ferient ruince!

"Dear, dear!" cried my mother, who was at work in the porch, "my poor flower–pot that I prized so much! Who could have done this? Primmins, Primmins!"

Mrs. Primmins popped her head out of the fatal window, nodded to the summons, and came down in a trice, pale and breathless.

"Oh!" said my mother, Mournfully, "I would rather have lost all the plants in the greenhouse in the great blight last May,—I would rather the best tea–set were broken! The poor geranium I reared myself, and the dear, dear flower–pot which Mr. Caxton bought for me my last birthday! That naughty child must have done this!"

Mrs. Primmins was dreadfully afraid of my father,—why, I know not, except that very talkative social persons are usually afraid of very silent shy ones. She cast a hasty glance at her master, who was beginning to evince signs of attention, and cried promptly, "No, ma'am, it was not the dear boy, bless his flesh, it was I!"

"You? How could you be so careless? and you knew how I prized them both. Oh, Primmins!" Primmins began to sob.

"Don't tell fibs, nursey," said a small, shrill voice; and Master Sisty, coming out of the house as bold as brass, continued rapidly—"don't scold Primmins, mamma: it was I who pushed out the flower–pot."

"Hush!" said nurse, more frightened than ever, and looking aghast towards my father, who had very deliberately taken off his hat, and was regarding the scene with serious eyes wide awake. "Hush! And if he did break it, ma'am, it was

quite an accident; he was standing so, and he never meant it. Did you, Master Sisty? Speak!" this in a whisper, "or Pa will be so angry."
"Well," said my mother, "I suppose it was an accident; take care in future, my child. You are sorry, I see, to have grieved me. There's a kiss; don't fret."
"No, mamma, you must not kiss me; I don't deserve it. I pushed out the flower–pot on purpose."
"Ha! and why?" said my father, walking up.
Mrs. Primmins trembled like a leaf.
"For fun!" said I, hanging my head,—"just to see how you'd look, papa; and that's the truth of it. Now beat me, do beat me!"
My father threw his book fifty yards off, stooped down, and caught me to his breast. "Boy," he said, "you have done wrong: you shall repair it by remembering all your life that your father blessed God for giving him a son who spoke truth in spite of fear! Oh! Mrs. Primmins, the next fable of this kind you try to teach him, and we part forever!"
From that time I first date the hour when I felt that I loved my father, and knew that he loved me; from that time, too, he began to converse with me. He would no longer, if he met me in the garden, pass by with a smile and nod; he would stop, put his book in his pocket, and though his talk was often above my comprehension, still somehow I felt happier and better, and less of an infant, when I thought over it, and tried to puzzle out the meaning; for he had away of suggesting, not teaching, putting things into my head, and then leaving them to work out their own problems. I remember a special instance with respect to that same flower–pot and geranium. Mr. Squills, who was a bachelor, and well–to–do in the world, often made me little presents. Not long after the event I have narrated, he gave me one far exceeding in value those usually bestowed on children,—it was a beautiful large domino–box in cut ivory, painted and gilt. This domino–box was my delight. I was

never weary of playing, at dominos with Mrs. Primmins, and I slept with the box under my pillow.
"Ah!" said my father one day, when he found me ranging the ivory parallelograms in the parlor, "ah! you like that better than all your playthings, eh?"
"Oh, yes, papa!"
"You would be very sorry if your mamma were to throw that box out of the window and break it for fun." I looked beseechingly at my father, and made no answer.
"But perhaps you would be very glad," he resumed, "if suddenly one of those good fairies you read of could change the domino–box into a beautiful geranium in a beautiful blue–and–white flower–pot, and you could have the pleasure of putting it on your mamma's window–sill."
"Indeed I would!" said I, half–crying.
"My dear boy, I believe you; but good wishes don't mend bad actions: good actions mend bad actions."
So saying, he shut the door and went out. I cannot tell you how puzzled I was to make out what my father meant by his aphorism. But I know that I played at dominos no more that day. The next morning my father found me seated by myself under a tree in the garden; he paused, and looked at me with his grave bright eyes very steadily.
"My boy," said he, "I am going to walk to —," a town about two miles off: "will you come? And, by the by, fetch your domino–box. I should like to show it to a person there." I ran in for the box, and, not a little proud of walking with my father upon the high–road, we set out.
"Papa," said I by the way, "there are no fairies now."
"What then, my child?"
"Why, how then can my domino–box be changed into a geranium and a blue–and–white flower–pot?"
"My dear," said my father, leaning his hand on my shoulder, "everybody who is in earnest to be good, carries two fairies about with him,—one here," and he touched my heart, "and one here," and he touched my forehead.