JOHN BUCHAN

LORD MINTO, A MEMOIR

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Lord Minto, A Memoir

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PREFACE

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In writing this Memoir I have had access to the journal and the private papers of Lord Minto, as well as to the official records of his administration in India and Canada, and I have had the further advantage of talks and consultations with many of his friends. To these I would offer my sincere thanks, and I would gratefully acknowledge the kindness of Lady Hutton, who lent me some of the papers of her husband, the late Lieutenant-General Sir Edward Hutton, and the generosity of the executors of the late Lord Morley and Messrs. Macmillan and Co., who have permitted me to quote extracts from Lord Morley's letters, both published and unpublished.

The book owes a special debt to two collaborators. It was undertaken at the request of Lady Minto, who has given me such constant and invaluable help that in a real sense the book is her own. She not only arranged and analysed for me a formidable mass of documents, but from her intimate association with her husband's work she was able to cast light on many obscure matters, and to reproduce for me the atmosphere of events, which cannot be recovered from the written or printed page. I have had, too, the use of her delightful Indian diary, which I wish could be given intact to the world, for in light and colour those words of an eye-witness are far superior to any Chronicle at second hand.

The other is the late Arthur Elliot. He was my friend for many years, and only those who had the privilege of knowing that wise and gracious character can realize how

much better this book would have been if he had lived to give it his kindly criticism. Throughout their lives the two brothers shared each other's full confidence. Minto's letters to him are the most revealing in the correspondence, and from him I received most of the material for the early chapters. My hope is that the Memoir in its final form may be such as he would have approved.

J. B.

ELSFIELD MANOR, OXON.

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INTRODUCTORY

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THE BORDER ELLIOTS

Scottish Borderland in its widest sense embraces the country from the Ken to Berwick, and from the Solway and the Cheviots to the backbone of mountain which runs from Merrick to the Lammermoors and cradles all the streams of the Lowlands. In that broad region the Britons of Strathclyde, the Northmen from the sea, and the later immigrants have so mixed their blood as to produce a certain uniformity of type, akin to and yet something different from other Lowland stocks. The history of each valley has been the same tale of poor soil, inclement seasons, stunted cattle and niggardly crops, a hard life varied by constant bickering among neighbours and raids into England; these valleys lay, too, in the track of the marching armies, whenever there was war between Stuart and Plantagenet and Tudor, and, save for the religious houses and the stone castles of the nobles, there could be few enduring marks of human occupation. It was a gipsy land, where life could not settle on its lees, since any night the thatch might be flaring to heaven, and the plenishing of a farm moving southward under the prick of the raiders' spears. There the hand must keep the head, and a tough, watchful race was the consequence, hardy as the black cattle of their hills, tenacious of a certain rude honour, loyal to their leaders, staunch friends, and most patient and pestilent foes. Rough as the life was, it had its codes and graces. The Borderer was quarrelsome, but he was also

merciful, and was curiously averse to the shedding of blood. He was hospitable to a fault, scrupulously faithful to his word, and in giving and taking hard knocks preserved a certain humour and mirthfulness. "The men are lyght of harte," wrote Bartholemew the Englishman in the thirteenth century, "fiers and couragious on theyre enemies." And Bishop Lesley, writing in the sixteenth century, noted that they were skilful musicians and "lovers of eloquence and poetry." Mr. Andrew Boorde, an English physician, who visited them about that date, bore witness to the same qualities, and had little fault to find except with "their develysh dysposicion not to love nor favour an Englyshman," their extreme clannishness, and their boastful pride of race. "Many," he wrote, "wyll make strong lyes." Among their green glens harpers and violers wove some of the loveliest of Scottish airs, and the gift of imagination had other issue than mere vaunting, since it gave birth to the noblest ballads that ever graced a literature.

Of the Borderland in the wider sense the Marches were the heart and citadel, and no part was in more constant unsettlement than that western area from the upper waters of Liddel to the Solway. There dwelt the Armstrongs and the Elliots, and lesser septs like the Nixons and the Croziers. It is hard to take the view of the old pedigree-makers that the Elliots as a clan were transplanted bodily from the village of Alyth, in Forfarshire, by the first Earl of Angus, when the Douglas interest became powerful on the Border. For this view historical and philological proofs are alike wanting, and it is more probable that the Ellwalds, Elwoods, or Ellets were of the same race as the other septs of Liddesdale,

autochthonous in a true sense, deriving their descent from some ancient admixture of the blood of Norse rovers with that of the British of Strathclyde. The earliest records show them holding the upper glens of Liddel, as the Armstrongs held its middle course.

The piety of lettered descendants-for few Scottish family histories have been so carefully written as that of the Elliots--has preserved what is known of the rude March life before the Union of the Crowns took the heart out of Border war. The Elliots of Liddesdale lived for three centuries the life of the camp. Their little massy stone towers could not be altogether destroyed, but rooftree and thatch and wooden outbuildings were perpetually blazing to heaven. They had occasional quarrels with Scots neighbours, and standing feuds with Musgraves and Fenwicks and Grahams across the English line. Sometimes they were bridled by the Scottish Warden of the Marches and their warlike ardour made to serve the national cause, but more often it was a war of kites and crows, wild rides on moonlit nights, desperate affrays in moorland hollows, the "hot-trod" down Tyne or Tees when men died for a half-dozen lean cattle. The name of Liddesdale was feared as far as Yorkshire; it is recorded that in the year 1541 the English Warden tried to induce reprisals, but Tynedale and Redesdale "refused to commit slaughter of any of the notable surnames of Liddesdale for fear of deadly feud," and preferred to harry their less dangerous neighbours of Teviotside. Sometimes the Church took a hand, and the Archbishop of Glasgow was prompted by Cardinal Wolsey to lay on the Borderers a most terrible curse, concluding with "I condemn them perpetually to the

deep pit of hell to remain with Lucifer and all his fellows, and their bodies to the gallows on the Burrow Mure, first to be hangit, syne revin and ruggit with dogs, swine, and other wild beasts abominable to all the world." But to hang an Elliot you had first to catch him--no easy matter, and for the empty thunder of the Church he and his kind cared not a straw. As for the Douglas lords of Liddesdale, they could threaten, and occasionally hang, but they could not restrain. "Dark Elliot's Border spear" might be kept at home for a little by burdensome bonds and hostages, but presently would come a harvest moon and it would be taken down again from the thatch. Hangings and homings availed little, and it was to do justice on the Elliots that Bothwell marched into Liddesdale in 1556, whereby he nearly lost his life and brought Queen Mary galloping through the mosses from Jedburgh to Hermitage. Let it be said to their credit that they were stubbornly national, and rarely paltered with the English enemy. Hence their long friendship with the "rough clan" of Buccleuch, who were of the same way of thinking.

This wild life of the Marches ended early in the seventeenth century, when the governments of Scotland and England combined to crush the lawless clans. The process which James V. had begun with the hanging of Johnnie Armstrong was carried to an effective conclusion. In Stevenson's words "the rusty blunderbuss of Scots criminal justice, which usually hurt nobody but jurymen, became a weapon of precision for the Nicksons, the Ellwalds, and the Croziers." The lairds were compelled to give security for good behaviour, the old merry days of hunting in the Cheviots and raiding Northumberland were over, and, since

their occupation was gone, poverty closed in on them. Men drifted to other parts of Scotland or went abroad to the wars; in the sixteenth century the Elliots had been able to muster 450 mounted men, which meant a clan numbering at least 1500; by the middle of the eighteenth century the latter figure represented the total population of Liddesdale. Soon, as Nicol Burne the Violer sang, "many a place stood in hard case where blithe folk kent nae sorrow," and Scot of Satchels in the seventeenth century thus deplored in his rough doggerel the Elliot fortunes:--

"For the Elliots, brave and worthy men,
Have been as much oppressed as any name I ken,
For in my own time I have known so much odds,
No Elliot enjoyed any heritage but Dunlibyre, Fanash, and Stobs."

It is with the last-named remaining heritage that we are now concerned. As Mangerton had the headship of the Armstrongs, so the chief of the Elliots was the laird of Redheugh, which stood near the foot of the Hermitage Water. But as time went on the Redheugh family became more identified with the peel of Lariston, higher up the Liddel valley. Stobs, across the hills on the Slitrig Water, a tributary of Teviot, became an Elliot property in 1580,* and in the second decade of the seventeenth century passed into the hands of one Gilbert Elliot, a cadet of Lariston, whose mother was a Scott of Buccleuch. This Gilbert, known as "Gibbie wi' the Gowden Garters," married another Scott, the "Flower of Yarrow," a daughter of "Auld Wat of Harden," and, judging from his place in ballad literature, must have been of a character to impress the imagination of the

countryside. Of the Stobs family several represented the county of Roxburgh in Parliament, both before and after the Union, and from it sprung the famous soldier, Lord Heathfield, the defender of Gibraltar; but we must turn aside from its main line and follow that of Gilbert's fourth son, Gavin of Midlem Mill, who by his marriage with Margaret Hay of the ancient Tweeddale house of Haystoun was the father of two sons, Robert and Gilbert. This latter was the first Elliot of Minto.

* Weir of Hermiston.

Born the younger son of a younger son, Gilbert had to carve out his own career. Though barely three generations removed from the moss-troopers, he possessed that compound of worldly sagacity and religion, that ability both to watch and to pray, which is characteristic of one Scottish type. He began as a writer (Anglice solicitor) in Edinburgh, and in the strife of Covenant and Crown took the side of the former. A mission to London to save the life of the well-known minister, William Veitch, brought him under the notice of the leaders of the Opposition, and presently he was mixed up in the affairs of Argyll, and joined the group which included Baillie of Jerviswood, Hume of Polwarth, and William Carstares. In January 1685 he was compelled to fly the land, and returned from Holland in May with Argyll and his friends to start the futile rising which brought its leader's head to the block. There was some of the old riding blood left in the Whig lawyer, for Gilbert Elliot was with Sir John Cochran in the skirmish at Muirdykes, and gave a good account of himself. Thereafter he led a hunted life, though by some accident his name was omitted from the

Government proclamation. Presently he left the country, and in his absence was sentenced to death and forfeiture, which sentence was remitted in 1687 in consideration of the earlier services of his father to the Royalist cause. He returned to Edinburgh, was admitted as an advocate to the higher branch of his profession, and when the Revolution brought his friends into power advanced swiftly at the Bar. Knighted in 1692, a baronet in 1700, member of Parliament for the county of Roxburgh in 1703, he was now of a fortune to entitle him to purchase an estate, and in this last year he bought the lands of Minto. Two years later he went to the bench under the title of Lord Minto, becoming a judge of the very court which twenty years before had condemned him to death. He died in 1718 at the age of sixty-seven, having won out of the disorders of the Revolution a modest fortune and estate. His portrait shows a long, heavy-jowled, mellow face, with humorous and sagacious eyes. He was the essential moderate, who managed to steer a middle course even in the stormy waters of the Union controversy, but who, when occasion required, could show himself a devoted friend and imperil his career in a doomed cause. Wodrow describes him as a man of "unshaken probity, integrity, and boldness against all unrighteousness and vice"--a tribute which showed how far the race had advanced in decorum since the ancient days of Lariston.

His eldest son, Gilbert, the second baronet, sat like his father for Roxburgh, like him and under the same title became a Lord of Session, and for forty years adorned the Scots bench, becoming eventually Lord Justice Clerk in succession to Erskine of Tinewald. There is scarcely an

incident which stands out in his placid life except that he was visited by Prince Charlie's army on its march to Derby, and had to take refuge in Minto Craigs. But he created the bones of the house as we know it to-day, laid the foundations of the fine library, planted the avenues, made the pond, and turned the glen from a wilderness into a pleasaunce. With his son, the third Sir Gilbert, the family embarked on the tides of British politics. Brought up at the colleges of Edinburgh and Leyden, he married the heiress of the Melgund lands in Forfar and the Kynnynmond property in Fife, and, partly owing to his friendship with Charles Townshend (who had married Lady Dalkeith), abandoned a promising career at the Scots Bar for London and Parliament. In him the astuteness of his grandfather and his power of steering a middle course were abnormally developed. He held various Government posts--Lordships of the Admiralty and Treasury and such-like--and would have undoubtedly gone farther but for his nationality, for he was a good man of business and a brilliant debater. But he managed to remain in office, like a permanent civil servant, when Ministers fell, for he conciliated antagonisms and united oppositions; a close friend of Bute, he was also a follower of the elder Pitt; professing himself a consistent Whig, he became one of the most noted of the "King's Friends," and was a vigorous opponent of the Americans. A temper so supple and accommodating is not the soil in which to look for a sturdy growth of principles; but his friends, who were numerous and devoted, believed that he was always prepared "to take a stand on the supreme authority of Parliament."

His eldest son, Gilbert the fourth, was destined during the sixty-three years of his life to convert the title of the old "paper-lords" of Minto into a lordship of Parliament and an earldom. In his generation of Elliots there was not only a high level of talent, but a strain of something fantastic and adventurous. The third son, Alexander, was the friend and agent in India of Warren Hastings, who erected a monument to him on his early death. The second, Hugh, was one of the most brilliant of British diplomatists in a brilliant age; a creature of strange moods and impulses, who as a boy fought with the Russians against the Turks, called out his man in a duel, held his own with Frederick the Great, and was the author of bons mots at which all Europe laughed. It was he who, when the King of Prussia commented tartly on the expression of gratitude to God which accompanied the official account of Sir Eyre Coote's victory over Hyder Ali, "Je ne savais pas que la Providence fut de vos allies," replied "Le seul, Sire, que nous ne payons pas." Gilbert, the eldest son, began life with a resounding success at the English Bar, but presently entered Parliament, and, as the friend of Burke and Fox and Windham, rose high in the favour of the Whigs. He was one of the managers of the Warren Hastings trial, and took his part in that debauch of frigid rhetoric. When the Revolution broke out in France he inclined to the views of Burke, and presently was sent on various continental missions, in returning from one of which he had the good fortune to be an eye-witness of the battle of Cape St. Vincent. At fortysix he was made a peer on his return from the viceroyalty of Corsica; then followed the embassy at Vienna; and then in 1806, after having been President of the

Board of Control in the "Ministry of all the Talents," the Governorship of India. There he had the difficult task seeing and providing against Napoleon's Asiatic ambitions, and his chief problems were those of external policy, the relations with Persia and Afghanistan and the great Sikh Power at Lahore. In the space of his viceroyalty he saw the menace of France disappear, and largely by his own exertions Java and the Moluccas added to the possessions of Britain. An attractive figure he seems to us, who could win and retain the affection of men so different as Burke and Nelson, and who in all the whirl of public duties found his chief refreshment in the letters of his family, in the recollection of "home-felt pleasures and gentle scenes," and in plans for beautifying his Border home. He was not fated to see Minto again, for when he returned after seven years' rule in India with an earldom and a great name, he died on the first stage of that happy northward journey of which for seven years he had dreamed.

With the second Earl and fifth Baronet the house of Minto had become established in that character which attaches as clearly to families as to individuals, though it is slower to develop. The descendants of the riding Elliots were now decorous and public-spirited citizens, Whigs who cherished a belief in the People combined with a strong conviction that only a few families were fit to govern. The old devil-may-care spirit of Lariston had revived for a moment in Hugh the ambassador, but in the first half of the nineteenth century it slumbered. The second Earl was successively ambassador to Berlin, First Lord of the Admiralty and Lord Privy Seal, and by the marriage of his daughter, Frances, to Lord John

Russell, was connected with the inner counsels of his party. In the days of the Lords of Session Minto had been a plain Scots country house, and the company that visited it an occasional judge on circuit, or a vacation party of Edinburgh lawyers, with a stray historian or philosopher from the university. But the last Sir Gilbert and first Earl had widened the bounds, great men like Burke journeyed thither, and soon the house, enlarged and adorned, was one of the chain of lodgings by means of which the leaders of politics and society made their northern tours--a stage between Dalkeith and Alnwick. As in duty bound its dwellers kept touch with the latest books, music, gossip, and learned speculation; but, having that union of far-wandering impulses with the love of home which characterizes their countrymen, they were never mere Londoners taking the rural air, but country folk, thirled to the soil, and loving every rood of it. He who would seek an account of the full and vigorous life of Border gentlefolk a hundred years ago will find it portrayed for all time in the pages of Lockhart.

The third Earl--a William and not a Gilbert--chose the fallentis semita vita. He sat for many years in Parliament, but never held office, and much of his time was given to the management of his estate, county business, country sports, and long periods of foreign travel. His wife's father was Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Hislop, and her mother a daughter of Hugh Elliot, so she was a distant cousin of her husband's. Never strong in body, she had the spirit of a soldier, and wherever she went radiated an atmosphere of gentleness and mirth and courage. Like many who are not robust in health, she had an insatiable zest for life, and had,

perhaps from her sufferings, keener perceptions than other people, and a quicker sense of joy. Each new experience and interest was adopted with gusto, and few quiet lives have been more fully lived. The list of the books she was reading at the age of twenty-three might shame many professed scholars; but she had nothing of the blue-stocking in her, and her learning was a small thing compared to her wit, her sense of fun, her startling acumen, and her broad tolerant wisdom. She is a figure that may be commended to the acquaintance of those who, in Lady Louisa Stuart's phrase, have "an old-fashioned partiality for a gentlewoman," and one could wish that Mr. Arthur Elliot's privately printed volume of extracts from her letters and journals could be made accessible to the world. For as a letter writer she ranks with Lady Louisa. She was also an accomplished historian and biographer, as her memoir of Hugh Elliot and her four volumes on the first lord minto prove, and her Border Sketches show how deep she had drunk of the traditions of her ancestral countryside. But it is in her diaries and letters that she most reveals herself, and whether she is trying to probe the secret of some rare landscape, or discoursing gravely on politics and metaphysics--till she breaks off with a laugh, or gossiping about manners and people, or formulating from a rich experience a mellow philosophy of life, she leaves on the reader an impression of a soul rich in the best endowments of humanity, a spirit at once sane and adventurous, securely anchored and yet reaching out delightedly to the cyclic changes of the world. If there were two strains in the Elliot blood--the venturesomeness and speed of Liddesdale, and the

sagacious centrality of the Whig lairds--in her they were mixed in right proportion, and she bequeathed something of this just equipoise to her sons.

BOOK ONE

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CHAPTER 1

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BOYHOOD: ETON AND CAMBRIDGE

The subject of this Memoir was born in London on July 9, 1845, at 36 Wilton Crescent, the house of his grandmother, Lady Hislop. He was given the family name of Gilbert, and the second name of John after his uncle and godfather, Lord John Russell. Two months later his father. Lord Melgund, who was then out of Parliament, carried off his wife and child on one of those protracted continental visits which were the fashion in that generation. The Melgunds took with them their carriage--in which a shelf had been fitted to serve as the baby's crib--a courier, a nurse, and a lady's maid, and made a leisurely progress up the Rhine to Switzerland, and then over the St. Gothard into Italy. The winter was spent chiefly in Rome and Turin with the British Minister, Sir Ralph Abercromby,* who had married Lady Mary Elliot. Country house visits filled the rest of that year, and at Cambridge Gilbert John took his first wavering steps on the lawn in front of the lodge at Trinity. It was not until the early spring of 1847 that the Melgunds returned to Scotland and the child saw the home of his ancestors.

*Afterwards Lord Dunfermline.

Most of Gilbert John's boyhood was spent at Minto, and it would be hard to find a happier environment for a child than the roomy old Border house set among its lawns and glens and woodlands. All accounts agree on the sunniness of his temper, the vigour of his body, and his uncommon good looks. He had his mother's deep blue eyes, which Mrs.

Norton praised in the style of the period.* Presently brothers came to keep him company: Arthur, born in 1846; Hugh in 1848; Fitzwilliam in 1849; and the four little boys formed a stalwart clan, sufficiently near in age to be true playmates.

* The following verses were written as a postscript to a letter from "Miss Letitia Bellamy" in London to Miss Fanny Law of Clare, Northumberland, describing Lady Melgund's children among others at a children's party given by the Duchess of Argyll. They were published in Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book, edited by Mrs. Norton:--

"The prizes have been given--but no time can be lost, I must hurry lightly through them if I wish to save the post: For the loveliest sleeping infant, to the Duchess of Argyll (It was like a little rosebud, if a rosebud could but smile), The prettiest two-year-old who walked the distance from the door Being carried in his nurse's arms and set down on the floor, And the loveliest little three-year-old that ever yet was seen, In a glittering ducal palace or a daisied village green, With eyelashes like shadows and eyes like summer stars, A little stately, graceful thing no imperfection mars: Both were won by Lady Melgund, I don't know who had gained The ones before I entered, these were all that then remained"

Gilbert John Elliot, at the age of thirteen (From a miniature at Minto House)

The love of horses was Gilbert's absorbing passion, and during his continental visits at the age of one he was reported by his father to have shown a precocious knowledge of horseflesh at the various posting-houses. Before he was four he rode a bay Shetland pony, "Mazeppa," under the tuition of the old groom, Robert Donald, and barely a year later commenced his hunting career with the Duke of Buccleuch's hounds, of which hunt he was one day to become a noted figure. It was a recognized practice on the days he was going to hunt not to send up his porridge, as he was far too excited to eat any breakfast.

Few children can have had more engaging ways. The love of his home was deep in him, and before he was five, when driving with his mother to inspect the havoc caused among the Minto trees by a gale, he revealed his anxious affection. She writes: "Berty invariably shuts his eyes not to see the injured silver. 'No, I can't bear to look at it, it makes my heart too sad,' and occasionally he sighs out a most mournful 'Alas' when we pass any grievous wrecks. His sentiment about everything surpasses anything I ever heard, and in some things he certainly shows considerateness beyond his years; he always offers to go out with me, and often insists on doing so, though I know he would rather have his pony. Once he said to the nurse, 'Well, I would rather ride, but I promised Papa to take care of Mama, and so I had better go with her;' and it is perfectly true that William did tell him so, but I was not at all aware how seriously he was impressed with the charge. However, he certainly keeps his promises, for he watches me as a cat does a mouse."

Lady Minto often breaks off her letters to chronicle the return of the boys and dogs, far too dirty to be allowed to come beyond the door. There were many sports in that happy place: rabbit-hunting in the Lamblairs, fishing in the Teviot and the hill burns, house-building with fir branches on the side of the Big Glen below the Green Walk, tree-climbing in the great beeches and sycamores whence the upper windows of the house could be spied on, walking--in emulation of certain feats of a previous generation--along the stone ledge which runs round the top of the house, skating and glissading in the bitter winters which now seem

to be unknown in the land. They were even allowed to keep a lamb under the turret stairs, which their long-suffering mother did not evict until it became a sheep.

Usually Minto was filled with a big family party, but there came times when Lord Melgund was attending the House of Commons, and mother and children were left in comparative solitude. Such seasons were devoted by her to the beginning of their education. The family did not believe in private schools, and certainly with such a mother no seminary for youth could compare with home. Her strong good sense on these matters is witnessed by a hundred passages in her letters: "Minds, like bodies, should have good solid meals, and leisure for digestion, and time to stretch! Beef makes bone, and les études fortes nourish the mind; but it will not do to let it gnaw every merry-thought, nor refine itself into spun sugar" In her room the boys read poetry and history and fairy tales, and we hear of Gilbert declaiming with passion Pope's version of Diomede's speech in the 9th Iliad. But the chief formative influence was the atmosphere of good talk in which they lived, talk about books and politics and the events of a larger world, which stimulates a child's interest. Gilbert was, in his mother's view, a little slower to quicken than the others, for he had a certain placidity and contentment which lived happily in the day and might foretell a lack of mental enterprise.

On his seventh birthday she writes in her journal:--

"He is not as advanced in learning as many of his contemporaries, but he learns easily and bids fair to possess more than average intelligence. He has a good memory, is very observing, and extremely obedient and docile. He has

a natural turn for poetry, and certainly admires the beauty of numbers even when he can scarce understand the words. He is very fond of fairy tales, and indeed of any description of story I will read to him, unless it is very dry or he suspects me of an intention to instruct him. . . . I don't think he has as much curiosity to learn about the things round him as his brothers have." (Those earnest inquirers, be it remembered, were of ages varying from two to five.) "He has a most amiable disposition, and not a spark of malice, sulkiness, or envy in his character. He is very sweet-tempered and yielding, always gay, never put out. . . . I don't think him a child gifted with deep sensibilities or enthusiastic feelings of any kind, neither has he the perseverance or love of overcoming obstacles of some children, but he is sensitive to blame, and has little sentimentalities about localities and past days, is very open to impressions of fine weather, scenery, and pleasant ideas of all kinds. He is very courageous and high-spirited."

And the candid mother concludes that "energy and perseverance" are the qualities at present most to seek, qualities which were assuredly not absent in his subsequent career.

In 1853 the children joined their grandparents at Nervi, on the Riviera, returning by the Lake of Geneva, where Gilbert had his first sight of the snow mountains which later were to throw their glamour over his fancy. His military instincts were early apparent, and the Crimean War gave him something to talk about; he used to present himself daily at the luncheon table after the newspapers had arrived with the breathless question, "Does Silistria still hold out?"

It is a delightful group of boys that is portrayed in Lady Minto's letters, portrayed by one who understood all the subtleties of childhood. "The people who really enjoy life in this house are the boys," she writes; "nevertheless, I suppose they have their grievances, for Fitz told me one day he could never remember the time when he had been happy! Hughie, on being asked what he thought of things in general, answered, 'Oh, weary! weary! no change, the same thing every day; I think we must go to Africa.' And the next day he repeated his African intentions to me, adding, 'And if we did go I suppose they would put taxes on everything directly--tax the date trees.' I made out afterwards that his horror of taxation arose from a difficulty about keeping another dog which he had been wanting to have."*

* There is a story of one of the little boys who bore with difficulty the visit of several girl cousins. On their departure he was heard condoling with his dog: "Poor old man, poor old fellow, did those horrid little girls give you fleas?"

II

Gilbert went to Eton in the summer half of 1859, to Mr. Balstone's house, which next year became Mr. Warre's. In July his grandfather died, and by his father's accession to the earldom he became Lord Melgund. He was no classical scholar, though, like Kinglake, he had "learned the Iliad through Pope in his mother's dressing-room," and the Eton of his day did not offer much in the way of a general education. His mother writes:--

"Berty has already taken his first flight from home. He left us for Eton last May, and has now returned to spend his second holiday with us. Gentle, gentlemanlike and loving,

manly, intelligent and sincere, his character promises well for future goodness. His learning will never be deep nor his energy great, nor is he remarkable either for originality or quickness, but he is sensible, easily interested, likes history, poetry, and drawing, and will, I think, as I have always thought, learn more when his learning is of a kind more to his mind. . . . He is impressible, and not without a desire of doing well. His chief characteristic has ever been his strong moral sense."

Melgund speedily found his feet at Eton: he was supremely happy, and flung the full vigour of his strong young body into every form of sport. His mother records his cheery letters: during the first summer half he wrote that he had started in the school tub race and had come in seventy-second, which, he adds, was not so bad for a first attempt. His optimism was fully justified, as before leaving Eton he had pulled up seventy-one places, finishing second in the School Sculling. He also made a name for himself in the running field, was just beaten in the mile race, and ran the "Long Walk" (three miles) in fifteen and a half minutes.

The journal which he began to keep in 1861 is as scrappy as other schoolboy chronicles. It records famous days with the beagles, steeplechases, and games of football in which he was a demon at shinning, but the river was his chief joy. He rowed in the Defiance and the Victory, and in his last summer half was first choice out of the Eight, winning the Silver Sculls. Corkran (Captain of the Boats) and he were both hoisted after the race. The determination to keep fit prevented any indulgence at the sock shop. The Elliots were a hardy race, and Melgund remembered his indignation at

being given a greatcoat when he first went to Eton, driving from Hawick to Carlisle, a distance of nearly fifty miles, on the top of the stage coach.

A few characteristic entries may be quoted from the journal. He writes on February 1863:--

"The Prince of Wales came through here to-day: he had been out with the harriers. I thought he looked a very decent sort of chap, but I didn't see what sort of a horse he had."

The marriage of the Prince and Princess of Wales in March gave the Eton boys a holiday.

"At 10:30 the whole school assembled in the School Yard and walked up arm-in-arm to the Castle. We had a very good place inside the upper gates of the Castle. There was an awful crowd, which I got jolly well into once and had roaring fun. We went, down to the College for dinner, and went up to the Castle again afterwards to see the Prince and Princess of Wales depart for Osborne. Directly their carriage had passed all the Eton fellows rushed through the crowd and regularly forced their way down to the corner of the street near Layton's, where a body of police were drawn up, but they were quickly dispersed, and we rushed down to the station, broke through the barrier, and got on to the platform and squealed like mad. I had a better view of the Princess than I ever had before, as she stood bolt upright in the railway carriage as it went slowly out of the station. It was about the greatest lark I ever had, bowling over the crowd, which was a thundering tight one, and smashing through the police!"

In the summer half of 1863 Melgund was elected to "Pop," and made his maiden speech in favour of "instantaneously going to war with America." Under 2nd June the journal has this entry:--

"Jersey,* Hope major,** Phipps, and I made up a nice little party to go to Ascot. We all of us wore whiskers except Jersey, who wore a loose overcoat and a blue veil. I wore a flexible moabite sort of hat and my great-coat. Hope looked about the handsomest fellow I ever saw: he had on a light-coloured overcoat and black whiskers. We all had light ties We went to Bachelor's Acre, where we got into an open fly which we had ordered beforehand and drove in it. We got to Ascot about twenty minutes past four. When we got to the course we all took off our false whiskers except Phipps, but he got so bothered by the Gypsies, who asked him whose hair he had got on, etc., that he finally had to follow our example. Hope and I somehow or other got separated from Jersey and Phipps; we caught sight of Parker and a lot of fellows who had a drag; they gave us some champagne and let us stand on the top of the drag. Phipps and Jersey walked right up to 'Parva Dies'* and were nailed. We saw one race--the Prince of Wales' Stakes: 'Avenger' won. I thought the race itself an awfully pretty sight and very exciting. We started from Ascot about five, and got back in loads of time. We got out of our fly at the footbarracks, where 'Sambo' (the raft man) met us and took our clothes. Day* complained of Jersey and Phipps, and they were both swished. There was great excitement about it, and the space round the swishing-room door was crowded."