

as we came up the river. I can see that great pool now, quite plainly, and watch the fish feeding; and I recollect that queer story the keeper told us about the two big trout fighting,—charging each other like a couple of rams—to settle which should be king of the run.”

“And how is it,” said I, “that you can recollect all these things so clearly and exactly if you have no memory?”

“Oh,” replies Frank, “but trout-fishing is a very different thing from Roman history. Of course, a fellow can recollect all about trout, and the chalk-stream, flies, and beetles, and the river, because he likes them so much.”

“Just so: he likes them all, and puts his heart into the work of storing them up in his mind. The facts all fit into their right places, and he keeps them there safe and sound for many a long day. And the very same machine he uses to learn the history of the trout, the names of the flies, beetles, and birds,—only wants careful use, and plenty of oil and a little heart in the business, to serve equally well for Roman history. Some day, Frank, you and I will have a talk about this long story of names and dates again.”

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A few weeks after this we got back from the country to our own home at the Blind School in St. George's Fields, where about one hundred and sixty poor blind children are taught to read and write and cipher, and work at a trade; all of which things they learn to do as nimbly and correctly as boys with the sharpest eyes.

“Now, Frank,” said I, “come along with me, and let us hunt up a few fellows who once had no memory,—like a boy I once met in the holidays,—but somehow or other have managed to learn by heart scores and hundreds of words and lines which would puzzle you as much as the Roman history, at first.

“These blind children come to us at all ages, between ten and eighteen, and generally knowing nothing more than the names of a few letters; often unable to say even the Lord's Prayer correctly, and without even a notion of what arithmetic means. As to writing and reading they look upon the whole thing as an impossibility. And yet more than ninety out of a hundred learn to read fairly with their fingers, and to emboss a letter on thick paper which they can make out for themselves, or a friend in the country can read in the usual way; and all of them, some early and some late, wake up to the fact that they have got strong, clear, sharp memories.

“Go into the chapel on Sunday morning: you will hear a hundred voices repeating not only all the responses, but the alternate

verses of the Psalms for the day; and, when the time comes for singing, joining heartily in the verses out of ‘Hymns Ancient and Modern,’ which are some hundreds in number.

“Ask that little girl, there, busy weaving a sash-line, how long she took to learn the whole of the one hundred and fifty Psalms. She will tell you about eighteen months;—all done, too, not in the school-room, or while at work,—but after school-hours, while strolling about with a friend, who teaches them to her a verse at a time, line by line, and makes her repeat it, verse by verse, until she has mastered the whole Psalm, and so on through the one hundred and fifty. And, once learned, she never forgets them. If you doubt my word, try her, by giving her a verse out of any one Psalm *you* know, and she will at once go on with that which follows, to the end of the Psalm.—There, I told you so. Once she had no memory. *Now*, you see what she has. There are fifty other girls in this long work-room who can do what she does so easily and so correctly.

“Gossiping old Bishop Burnet¹ tells us of a blind lady, a Miss Walkier, who had mastered five different languages, and knew by heart all the Psalms, and the whole of the New Testament; and Mr. Wilson, in his Biography, of a blind sailor, who had learned the ‘Navy List’ straight through from beginning to end.

“You smile, Frank, at this, I see,—but come now over to the other side of the school, where the blind boys and men are at work, and you shall see and hear for yourself a man who can beat the sailor, if not Miss Walkier.

“Here we are in the mat shop, full of boys and men, all busily at work on cocoa-nut matting: coarse mats for doorways, or coloured rugs of the daintiest kind. There, at the loom, is D. Butler.”—

“Well, Butler, how are you? Busy as ever?”

“Yes, sir; and quite well, thank you.”

“How does Milton get on?”

“Pretty well, sir; but the ‘Paradise Regained’ is a deal harder than ‘Paradise Lost.’”

“‘Paradise Regained!’ have you been learning that?”

“Just finished two books, sir, in the holidays; and the ‘Life of Milton,’ which you lent me, as well,—and most of the Notes.”

“And can you really say the whole of this by heart?”

“Yes, sir, I think so. Will you try me? I shall be glad if you will, because I am going to repeat a book or two of the ‘Para-

¹ Travels, vol. i. p. 218.