

THE EVENING NEWS.

Friday, May 3, 1912.

HOW I WAS RUSTICATED FROM CAMBRIDGE

I always thought it a very hard case, but I could never bring my father and my weeping mother to view the matter in that light. I appeal to an impartial public. This was how it happened:

My name was put on the boards at St. Blasius in October, 1897, and, after a most tender parting from my household gods in Warwickshire, I commenced residence in all the glory of a promising freshman. I do not know that I ever had very sanguine hopes of the full blessing of expecting nothing, inasmuch as, in this respect, I met no disappointment. I had a hard battle with my mother, father, and afterwards with the tutor of the college, to be allowed to rent an extra room in which I might carry on my favorite relaxation. This was the unusual pursuit of a student, and my father said that the idea was preposterous and expensive. The tutor affirmed that such things suited a young man's prospects, and made him idle. But, nevertheless, I carried the day through the intercession of my mother, and my carpenter's bench, with the appliances thereof, were accommodated in a small room opening out of my gym-room, on staircase letter C. It was not long in maturing my plans for erecting a small mechanical organ of two manuals, with all kinds of ingenious mechanical appliances in the way of stops and couplers. I was naturally both a mechanical and musical turn of mind, so, by my favorite pursuit, I gratified both sides of my disposition. I often tried to convince my father that it was a most economical step thus to kill two birds with one stone, but he would not see it. I explained how I might develop my mechanical talent by building an expensive steam-engine, and indulging my musical propensities by insisting on running up to London every week to enjoy the Opera or Philharmonic concert. I proved on paper that this method would consume more time and more money than a little quiet organ-building could ever absorb. But it was all no use. My father had a logical mind, and he drove away conviction in a manner most irritating to a sound reasoner like myself. However, I had my own way at Cambridge, but under protest.

Now, the organ in the chapel of St. Blasius was an old organ, which had been renovated and added to by several builders, till the inside of the instrument was crowded beyond all reason. For the most ordinary processes of tuning and regulating, the unfortunate operator had to perform the feat of an acrobat before he could get at either pipes or key-action. The bellows had to be squeezed and the swell closed before he could get in at all. And after he was in, it was only by getting over sundry massive beams, under cross-beams not more than two feet from the ground, and through apertures scarcely big enough for a rabbit, that any of the important working-parts of the instrument could be reached. To the organist, to a knot, as tumbler do, was nothing to this. Unless a man could double himself up into the space of a cubic foot or so, unless he could wriggle along yards upon his back, and stand for many miserable minutes in the most apologetic posture, he could not hope to do anything to the interior of the St. Blasius organ. I was in this untoward instrument that I obtained all my patterns and measurements for my own chamber-organ. I formed the acquaintance of the organist, and after a vast amount of strategy, won his consent to my venturing into the hidden depths of his hideous old machine. Week after week I did attempt new feats with the view of getting him for my own amateur work. I lived in a chronic state of broken head and contused shins. Every now and then I would come out with one or more black eyes; and on two occasions I was most suspiciously cross-examined by the dean as to presumed pugilistic propensities.

But in the midst of all these difficulties I progressed most satisfactorily with my work, and was proud to think that all my evolutions in the St. Blasius organ, however detrimental to my own bodily comfort and personal appearance, brought after all no damage whatever to the venerable and sacred instrument itself. So long as the organ continued to play, perfect amity prevailed between the organist and myself. He did not object to my amounting to the organ with where-with I punished my own cranium or limbs, but he swore a deep oath that the moment I injured a hair in his precious organ, that moment I should be to him as a headless man and a publican.

Four terms passed by without any accident. My studies were in a most backward state, but, oh joy! my chamber-organ was on the high-road to completion. The tutor complained of my idleness. My father upbraided me for neglecting my reading, but I hugged myself with the thought that once the organ was finished, I would buckle to and make my running with the college subjects. In the midst of my good resolutions, a most lamentable accident took place. I was, one day, standing inside the chapel organ, resting on my left knee, with one foot wedged in between two pipes, the other suspended delicately in the air, my head tucked out of the way under my right arm, while I held a long screw-driver in my left hand. In this pleasant position I had stood for nearly ten minutes, examining a portion of the wind-chest work, when by an over-powering impulse I was compelled to sneeze, and in the act I dropped the screw-driver. Down it fell heavily on the swell-tracker, and forthwith snap went the trackers, and my implement travelled on to further mischief below. At this juncture I heard a familiar voice:

"Hallo!—what's that?"
"Oh, nothing," I replied.
"You get out of that, sir, and let me see what you have been at."
Like a guilty bound, I extracted myself from the organ. The organist pulled out a few of the swell-stops, and was lightly on the keys. In two seconds my fatal delinquency came to light. I knew it was all over. I sat down the key of the organ on the stool, and, without a word, silently and mournfully left the chapel. The organist, on asking for the services of an organ-builder, had to give an account of the accident, and consequently got soundly wigged by the Dean for "dreaming or allowing a wild young undergraduate to meddle with and injure so noble and valuable an instrument."

To be continued.

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