
The Sot-Weed Factor
(Second Edition)
by John Barth
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Foreword to the Second Edition

I'VE TAKEN THE OPPORTUNITY to reread *The Sot-Weed Factor* with an eye to emending and revising the text of the original edition before its reissue, quite as Ebenezer Cooke himself did in 1731 with the poem from which this novel takes its title. The cases differ in that Cooke's objective was to blunt the barbs of his original satire, he having dwelt by then many years among its targets, but mine is merely, where possible, to make this long narrative a quantum swifter and more graceful.

Buffalo, New York 1966

John Barth

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PART I: THE MOMENTOUS WAGER

1

The Poet Is Introduced, and Differentiated from His Fellows

IN THE LAST YEARS of the Seventeenth Century there was to be found among the fops and fools of the London coffeehouses one rangy, gangling flitch called Ebenezer Cooke, more ambitious than talented, and yet more talented than prudent, who, like his friends-in-folly, all of whom were supposed to be educating at Oxford or Cambridge, had found the sound of Mother English more fun to game with than her sense to labor over, and so rather than applying himself to the pains of scholarship, had learned the knack of versifying, and ground out quires of couplets after the fashion of the day, afroth with *Joves* and *Jupiters*, aclang with jarring rhymes, and string-taut with similes stretched to the snapping-point.

As poet, this Ebenezer was not better nor worse than his fellows, none of whom left behind him anything nobler than his own posterity; but four things marked him off from them. The first was his appearance: pale-haired and pale-eyed, raw-boned and gaunt-cheeked, he stood -- nay, *angled* -- nineteen hands high. His clothes were good stuff well tailored, but they hung on his frame like luffed sails on long spars. Heron of a man, lean-limbed and long-billed, he walked and sat with loose-jointed poise; his every stance was angular surprise, his each gesture half flail. Moreover there was a discomposure about his face, as though his features got on ill together: heron's beak, wolf-hound's forehead, pointed chin, lantern jaw, wash-blue eyes, and bony blond brows had minds of their own, went their own ways, and took up odd postures, which often as not had no relation to what one took as his mood of the moment. And these configurations were short-lived, for like restless mallards the features of his face no sooner were settled than *ha!* they'd be flushed, and *hi!* how they'd flutter, and no man could say what lay behind them.

The second was his age: whereas most of his accomplices were scarce turned twenty, Ebenezer at the time of this chapter was more nearly thirty, yet not a whit more wise than they, and with six or seven years' less excuse.

The third was his origin: Ebenezer was born American, though he'd not seen his birthplace since earliest childhood. His father, Andrew Cooke 2nd, of the Parish of St. Giles in the Fields, County of Middlesex -- a red-faced, white-chopped, stout-winded old

lecher with flinty eye and withered arm -- had spent his youth in Maryland as agent for an English manufacturer, as had his father before him, and having a sharp eye for goods and a sharper for men, had added to the Cooke estate by the time he was thirty some one thousand acres of good wood and arable land on the Choptank River. The point on which this land lay he called Cooke's Point, and the small manor-house he built there, Malden. He married late in life and conceived twin children, Ebenezer and his sister Anna, whose mother (as if such an inordinate casting had cracked the mold) died bearing them. When the twins were but four Andrew returned to England, leaving Malden in the hands of an overseer, and thenceforth employed himself as a merchant, sending his own factors to the plantations. His affairs prospered, and the children were well provided for.

The fourth thing that distinguished Ebenezer from his coffee-house associates was his manner: though not one of them was blessed with more talent than he needed, all of Ebenezer's friends put on great airs when together, declaiming their verses, denigrating all the well-known poets of their time (and any members of their own circle who happened to be not on hand), boasting of their amorous conquests and their prospects for imminent success, and otherwise behaving in a manner such that, had not every other table in the coffee-house sported a like ring of coxcombs, they'd have made great nuisances of themselves. But Ebenezer himself, though his appearance rendered inconspicuousness out of the question, was bent to taciturnity. He was even chilly. Except for infrequent bursts of garrulity he rarely joined in the talk, but seemed content for the most part simply to watch the other birds preen their feathers. Some took this withdrawal as a sign of his contempt, and so were either intimidated or angered by it, according to the degree of their own self-confidence. Others took it for modesty; others for shyness; others for artistic or philosophical detachment. Had it been in fact symptom of any one of these, there would be no tale to tell; in truth, however, this manner of our poet's grew out of something much more complicated, which warrants recounting his childhood, his adventures, and his ultimate demise.

2

The Remarkable Manner in Which Ebenezer Was Educated, and the No Less Remarkable Results of That Education

EBENEZER AND ANNA had been raised together. There happening to be no other children on the estate in St. Giles, they grew up with no playmates except each other, and hence became unusually close. They played the same games together and were educated in the same subjects, since Andrew was wealthy enough to provide them with a tutor, but not with separate tutoring. Until the age of ten they even shared the same bedroom -- not that space was lacking either in Andrew's London house, on Plumtree Street, or in the later establishment at St. Giles, but because Andrew's old housekeeper, Mrs. Twigg, who was for some years their governess, had in the beginning been so taken with the fact of their twinship that she'd made a point of keeping them together, and then later, when their increased size and presumed awareness began to embarrass her, they had come so to enjoy each other's company that she was for a time unable to resist their combined

protests at any mention of separate chambers. When the separation was finally effected, at Andrew's orders, it was merely to adjoining rooms, between which the door was normally left open to allow for conversation.

In the light of all this it is not surprising that even after puberty there was little difference, aside from the physical manifestations of their sex, between the two children. Both were lively, intelligent, and well-behaved. Anna was the less timid of the two, and even when Ebenezer naturally grew to be the taller and physically stronger, Anna was still the quicker and better coordinated, and therefore usually the winner in the games they played: shuttlecock, fives, or *paille maille*; squalls, Meg Merrilies, jackstraws, or shove ha'penny. Both were great readers, and loved the same books: among the classics, the *Odyssey* and the *Metamorphoses*, the *Book of Martyrs* and the *Lives of the Saints*; the romances of Valentine and Orson, Bevis of Hampton, and Guy of Warwick; the tales of Robin Good-Fellow, Patient Grisel, and the Foundlings in the Wood; and among the newer books, Janeway's *Token for Children*, Batchiler's *Virgins Pattern*, and Fisher's *Wise Virgin*, as well as *Cacoethes Leaden Legacy*, *The Young Mans Warning-Peece*, *The Booke of Mery Riddles*, and, shortly after their publication, *Pilgrim's Progress* and Keach's *War with the Devil*. Perhaps had Andrew been less preoccupied with his merchant-trading, or Mrs. Twigg with her religion, her gout, and her authority over the other servants, Anna would have been kept to her dolls and embroidery-hoops, and Ebenezer set to mastering the arts of hunting and fencing. But they were seldom subjected to direction at all, and hence drew small distinction between activities proper for little girls and those proper for little boys.

Their favorite recreation was play-acting. Indoors or out, hour after hour, they played at pirates, soldiers, clerics, Indians, royalty, giants, martyrs, lords and ladies, or any other creatures that took their fancy, inventing action and dialogue as they played. Sometimes they would maintain the same role for days, sometimes only for minutes. Ebenezer, especially, became ingenious at disguising his assumed identity in the presence of adults, while still revealing it clearly enough to Anna, to her great delight, by some apparently innocent gesture or remark. They might spend an autumn morning playing at Adam and Eve out in the orchard, for example, and when at dinner their father forbade them to return there, on account of the mud, Ebenezer would reply with a knowing nod, "Mud's not the worst of't: I saw a snake as well." And little Anna, when she had got her breath back, would declare, "It didn't frighten *me*, but Eben's forehead hath been sweating ever since," and pass her brother the bread. At night, both before and after their separation into two rooms, they would either continue to make-believe (necessarily confining themselves to dialogue, which they found it easy to carry on in the dark) or else play word-games; of these they had a great variety, ranging from the simple "How many words do you know beginning with *S*?" or "How many words rhyme with *faster*?" to the elaborate codes, reverse pronunciations, and homemade languages of their later childhood.

In 1676, when they were ten, Andrew employed for them a new tutor named Henry Burlingame III -- a wiry, brown-eyed, swarthy youth in his early twenties, energetic, intense, and not unhandsome. This Burlingame had for reasons unexplained not completed his baccalaureate; yet for the range and depth of his abilities he was little short of an Aristotle. Andrew had found him in London unemployed and undernourished, and, always a good businessman, was thus for a miserly fee able to provide his children

with a tutor who could sing the tenor in a Gesualdo madrigal as easily as he dissected a field-mouse or conjugated *e/μl*. The twins took an immediate liking to him, and he in turn, after only a few weeks, grew so attached to them that he was overjoyed when Andrew permitted him, at no increase in salary, to convert the little summer-pavilion on the grounds of the St. Giles estate into a combination laboratory and living-quarters, and devote his entire attention to his charges.

He found both to be rapid learners, especially apt in natural philosophy, literature, composition, and music; less so in languages, mathematics, and history. He even taught them how to dance, though Ebenezer by age twelve was already too ungainly to do it well. First he would teach Ebenezer to play the melody on the harpsichord; then he would drill Anna in the steps, to Ebenezer's accompaniment, until she mastered them; next he would take Ebenezer's place at the instrument so that Anna could teach her brother the steps; and finally, when the dance was learned, Ebenezer would help Anna master the tune on the harpsichord. Aside from its obvious efficiency, this system was in keeping with the second of Master Burlingame's three principles of pedagogy; to wit, that one learns a thing best by teaching it. The first was that of the three usual motives for learning things -- necessity, ambition, and curiosity -- simple curiosity was the worthiest of development, it being the "purest" (in that the value of what it drives us to learn is terminal rather than instrumental), the most conducive to exhaustive and continuing rather than cursory or limited study, and the likeliest to render pleasant the labor of learning. The third principle, closely related to the others, was that this sport of teaching and learning should never become associated with certain hours or particular places, lest student and teacher alike (and in Burlingame's system they were much alike) fall into the vulgar habit of turning off their alertness, except at those times and in those places, and thus make by implication a pernicious distinction between learning and other sorts of natural behavior.

The twins' education, then, went on from morning till night. Burlingame joined readily in their play-acting, and had he dared ask leave would have slept with them as well, to guide their word-games. If his system lacked the discipline of Locke's, who would have all students soak their feet in cold water, it was a good deal more fun: Ebenezer and Anna loved their teacher, and the three were great companions. To teach them history he directed their play-acting to historical events; to sustain their interest in geography he produced volumes of exotic pictures and tales of adventure; to sharpen their logical equipment he ran them through Zeno's paradoxes as one would ask riddles, and rehearsed them in Descartes' skepticism as gaily as though the search for truth and value in the universe were a game of Who's Got the Button. He taught them to wonder at a leaf of thyme, a line of Palestrina, the configuration of Cassiopeia, the scales of a pilchard, the sound of *indefatigable*, the elegance of a sorites.

The result of this education was that the twins grew quite enamored of the world -- especially Ebenezer, for Anna, from about her thirteenth birthday, began to grow more demure and less demonstrative. But Ebenezer could be moved to shivers by the swoop of a barn-swallow, to cries of laughter at the lace of a cobweb or the roar of an organ's pedal-notes, and to sudden tears by the wit of *Volpone*, the tension of a violin-box, or the truth of the Pythagorean Theorem. By age eighteen he had reached his full height and ungainliness; he was a nervous, clumsy youth who, though by this time he far excelled his sister in imaginativeness, was much her inferior in physical beauty, for though as

twins they shared nearly identical features, Nature saw fit, by subtle alterations, to turn Anna into a lovely young woman and Ebenezer into a goggling scarecrow, just as a clever author may, by delicate adjustments, parody a beautiful style.

It is a pity that Burlingame could not accompany Ebenezer when, at eighteen, the boy made ready to matriculate at Cambridge, for though a good teacher will teach well regardless of the theory he suffers from, and though Burlingame's might seem to have been an unusually attractive one, yet there is no perfect educational method, and it must be admitted that at least partly because of his tutoring Ebenezer took quite the same sort of pleasure in history as in Greek mythology and epic poetry, and made little or no distinction between, say, the geography of the atlases and that of fairy-stories. In short, because learning had been for him such a pleasant game, he could not regard the facts of zoology or the Norman Conquest, for example, with genuine seriousness, nor could he discipline himself to long labor at tedious tasks. Even his great imagination and enthusiasm for the world were not unalloyed virtues when combined with his gay irresolution, for though they led him to a great sense of the arbitrariness of the particular real world, they did not endow him with a corresponding realization of its finality. He very well knew, for instance, that "France is shaped like a teapot," but he could scarcely accept the fact that there was actually in existence *at that instant* such a place as France, where people were speaking French and eating snails whether he thought about them or not, and that despite the virtual infinitude of imaginable shapes, this France would have to go on resembling a teapot forever. And again, though the whole business of Greece and Rome was unquestionably delightful, he found the notion preposterous, almost unthinkable, that this was the *only* way it happened: that made him nervous and irritable, when he thought of it at all.

Perhaps with continued guidance from his tutor he could in time have overcome these failings, but one morning in July of 1684 Andrew simply announced at breakfast, "No need to go to the summer-house today, Ebenezer. Thy lessons are done."

Both children looked up in surprise.

"Do you mean, sir, that Henry will be leaving us?" Ebenezer asked.

"I do indeed," Andrew replied. "In fact, if I be not greatly in error he hath already departed."

"But how is that? With never a fare-thee-well? He spoke not a word of leaving us!"

"Gently, now," said Andrew. "Will ye weep for a mere schoolmaster? 'Twas this week or the next, was't not? Thou'rt done with him."

"Did you know aught of't?" Ebenezer demanded of Anna. She shook her head and fled from the room. "You ordered him off, Father?" he asked incredulously. "Why such suddenness?"

"'Dslife!" cried Andrew. "At your age I'd sooner have drunk him good riddance than raised such a bother! The fellow's work was done and I sacked him, and there's an end on't! If he saw fit to leave at once 'tis his affair. I must say 'twas a more manly thing than all this hue and cry!"

Ebenezer went at once to the summer-pavilion. Almost everything was there exactly as it had been before: a half-dissected frog lay pinned out upon its beech-board on the work-table; books and papers were spread open on the writing-desk; even the teapot stood half-full on the grate. But Burlingame was indeed gone. While Ebenezer was

looking about in disbelief Anna joined him, wiping her eyes.

"Dear Henry!" Ebenezer lamented, his own eyes brimming. " 'Tis like a bolt from Heaven! Whatever shall we do without him?"

Anna made no reply, but ran to her brother and embraced him.

For this reason or another, then, when not long afterwards Ebenezer bade good-bye to his father and Anna and established himself in Magdalene College, at Cambridge, he proved a poor student. He would go to fetch Newton's lectures *De Motu Corporum* from the library, and would spend four hours reading Esquemeling's *History of the Buccaneers* instead, or some Latin bestiary. He took part in few pranks or sports, made few friends, and went virtually unnoticed by his professors.

It was during his second year of study that, though he did not realize it at the time, he was sore bit by the muse's gadfly. Certainly he did not at the time think of himself as a poet, but it got so that after hearing his teachers argue subtly and at length against, say, philosophical materialism, he would leave the lecture-hall with no more in his notebook than:

*Old Plato saw both Mind and Matter;
Thomas Hobbes, naught but the latter.
Now poor Tom's Soul doth fry in Hell:
Shrugs GOD, " 'Tis immaterial."*

or:

*Source of Virtue, Truth, and All is
Each Man's Lumen Naturalis.*

As might be expected, the more this affliction got hold of him, the more his studies suffered. The sum of history became in his head no more than the stuff of metaphors. Of the philosophers of his era -- Bacon, Hobbes, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Locke -- he learned little; of its scientists -- Kepler, Galileo, Newton -- less; of its theologians -- Lord Herbert, Cudworth, More, Smith, Glanvill -- nothing. But *Paradise Lost* he knew inside out; *Hudibras* upside down. At the end of the third year, to his great distress, he failed a number of examinations and had to face the prospect of leaving the University. Yet what to do? He could not bear the thought of returning to St. Giles and telling his formidable father; he would have to absent himself quietly, disappear from sight, and seek his fortune in the world at large. But in what manner?

Here, in his difficulty with this question, the profoundest effects of Burlingame's amiable pedagogy become discernible: Ebenezer's imagination was excited by every person he met either in or out of books who could do with skill and understanding anything whatever; he was moved to ready admiration by expert falconers, scholars, masons, chimneysweeps, prostitutes, admirals, cutpurses, sailmakers, barmaids, apothecaries, and cannoneers alike.

Ah, God, he wrote in a letter to Anna about this time, it were an easy Matter to choose a Calling, had one all Time to live in! I should be fifty Years a Barrister, fifty a Physician, fifty a Clergyman, fifty a Soldier! Aye, and fifty a Thief, and fifty a Judge! All Roads are fine Roads, beloved Sister, none more than another, so that with one Life to

spend I am a Man bare-bumm'd at Taylors with Cash for but one pair of Breeches, or a Scholar at Bookstalls with Money for a single Book: to choose ten were no Trouble; to choose one, impossible! All Trades, all Crafts, all Professions are wondrous, but none is finer than the rest together. I cannot choose, sweet Anna: twixt Stools my Breech falleth to the Ground!

He was, that is to say, temperamentally disinclined to no career, and, what is worse (as were this not predicament enough), he seemed consistently no special sort of person: the variety of temperaments and characters that he observed at Cambridge and in literature was as enchanting to him as the variety of life-works, and as hard to choose from among. He admired equally the sanguine, the phlegmatic, the choleric, the melancholic, the splenetic, and the balanced man, the fool and the sage, the enthusiast and the stick-in-the-mud, the talkative and the taciturn, and, most dilemmal of all, the consistent and the inconsistent. Similarly, it seemed to him as fine a thing to be fat as to be lean, to be short as tall, homely as handsome. To complete his quandary -- what is probably an effect of the foregoing -- Ebenezer could be persuaded, at least notionally, by any philosophy of the world, even by any strongly held opinion, which was either poetically conceived or attractively stated, since he appeared to be emotionally predisposed in favor of none. It was as pretty a notion to him that the world was made of water, as Thales declared, as that it was air, *à la* Anaximenes, or fire, *à la* Heraclitus, or all three and dirt to boot, as swore Empedocles; that all was matter, as Hobbes maintained, or that all was mind, as some of Locke's followers were avowing, seemed equally likely to our poet, and as for ethics, could he have been all three and not just one he'd have enjoyed dying once a saint, once a frightful sinner, and once lukewarm between the two.

The man (in short), thanks both to Burlingame and to his natural proclivities, was dizzy with the beauty of the possible; dazzled, he threw up his hands at choice, and like ungainly flotsam rode half-content the tide of chance. Though the term was done he stayed on at Cambridge. For a week he simply languished in his rooms, reading distractedly and smoking pipe after pipe of tobacco, to which he'd become addicted. At length reading became impossible; smoking too great a bother: he prowled restlessly about the room. His head always felt about to ache, but never began to.

Finally one day he did not deign even to dress himself or eat, but sat immobile in the window seat in his nightshirt and stared at the activity in the street below, unable to choose a motion at all even when, some hours later, his untutored bladder suggested one.

3

Ebenezer Is Rescued, and Hears a Diverting Tale Involving Isaac Newton and Other Notables

LUCKILY FOR HIM (else he might have mossed over where he sat), Ebenezer was roused from his remarkable trance shortly after dinner-time by a sudden great commotion at his door.

"Eben! Eben! Prithee admit me quickly!"

"Who is it?" called Ebenezer, and jumped up in alarm: he had no friends at the College who might be calling on him.

"Open and see," the visitor laughed. "Only hurry, I beg of thee!"

"Do but wait a minute. I must dress."

"What? Not dressed? 'Swounds, what an idle fellow! No matter, boy; let me in at once!"

Ebenezer recognized the voice, which he'd not heard for three years. "Henry!" he cried, and threw open the door.

" 'Tis no other," laughed Burlingame, giving him a squeeze. "Marry, what a lout thou'rt grown to! A good six feet! And abed at this hour!" He felt the young man's forehead. "Yet you've no fever. What ails thee, lad? Ah well, no matter. One moment --" He ran to the window and peered cautiously below. "Ah, there's the rascal! Hither, Eben!"

Ebenezer hurried to the window. "Whatever is't?"

"Yonder, yonder!" Burlingame pointed up the street. "Coming by the little dram-shop! Know you that gentleman with the hickory-stick?"

Ebenezer saw a long-faced man of middle age, gowned as a don, making his way down the street.

"Nay, 'tis no Magdalene Fellow. The face is strange."

"Shame on thee, then, and mark it well. 'Tis Isaac himself, from Trinity."

"Newton!" Ebenezer looked with sharper interest. "I've not seen him before, but word hath it the Royal Society is bringing out a book of his within the month that will explain the workings of the entire universe! I'faith, I thank you for your haste! But did I hear you call him *rascal*?"

Burlingame laughed again. "You mistake the reason for my haste, Eben. I pray God my face hath altered these fifteen years, for I'm certain Brother Isaac caught sight of me ere I reached your entryway."

"Is't possible you *know* him?" asked Ebenezer, much impressed.

"Know him? I was once near raped by him. Stay!" He drew back from the window. "Keep an eye on him, and tell me how I might escape should he turn in at your door."

"No difficulty: the door of this chamber lets onto an open stairway in the rear. What in Heav'n's afoot, Henry?"

"Don't be alarmed," Burlingame said. " 'Tis a pretty story, and I'll tell it all presently. Is he coming?"

"One moment -- he's just across from us. There. Nay, wait now -- he is saluting another don. Old Bagley, the Latinist. There, now, he's moving on."

Burlingame came to the window, and the two of them watched the great man continue up the street.

"Not another moment, Henry," Ebenezer declared. "Tell me at once what mystery is behind this hide-and-seek, and behind thy cruel haste to leave us three years past, or watch me perish of curiosity!"

"Aye and I shall," Burlingame replied, "directly you dress yourself, lead us to food and drink, and give full account of yourself. 'Tis not I alone who have excuses to find."

"How! Then you know of my failure?"

"Aye, and came to see what's what, and perchance to birch some sense into you."

"But how can that be? I told none but Anna."

"Stay, you'll hear all, I swear't. But not a word till I've a spread of sack and mutton. Let not excitement twist thy values, lad -- come on with you!"

"Ah, bless you, thou'rt an Iliad Greek, Henry," Ebenezer said, and commenced dressing.

They went to an inn nearby, where over small beer after dinner Ebenezer explained, as best he could, his failure at the College and subsequent indecisions. "The heart of't seems to be," he concluded, "that in no matter of import can I make up my mind. Marry, Henry, how I've needed thy counsel! What agonies you might have saved me!"

"Nay," Burlingame protested. "You well know I love you, Eben, and feel your afflictions as my own. But advice, I swear't, is the wrong medicine for your malady, for two reasons: first, the logic of the problem is such that at some remove or other you'd have still to choose, inasmuch as should I counsel you to come with me to London, you yet must choose whether to follow my counsel; and should I farther counsel you to follow my first counsel, you must yet choose to follow my second -- the regress is infinite and goes nowhere. Second, e'en could you choose to follow my counsel, 'tis no cure at all, but a mere crutch to lean upon. The object is to put you on your feet, not to take you off them. 'Tis a serious affair, Eben; it troubles me. What are your own sentiments about your failure?"

"I must own I have none," Ebenezer said, "though I can fancy many."

"And this indecision: how do you feel about yourself?"

"Marry, I know not! I suppose I'm merely curious."

Burlingame frowned and called for a pipe of tobacco from a winedrawer working near at hand. "You were indeed the picture of apathy when I found you. Doth it not gall or grieve you to lose the baccalaureate, when you'd approached so near it?"

"In a manner, I suppose," Ebenezer smiled. "And yet the man I most respect hath got on without it, hath he not?"

Burlingame laughed. "My dear fellow, I see 'tis time I told you many things. Will it comfort you to learn that I, too, suffer from your disease, and have since childhood?"

"Nay, that cannot be," Ebenezer said. "Ne'er have I seen thee falter, Henry: thou'rt the very antithesis of indecision! 'Tis to you I look in envy, and despair of e'er attaining such assurance."

"Let me be your hope, not your despair, for just as a mild siege of smallpox, though it scar a man's face, leaves him safe forever from dying of that ailment, so inconstancy, fickleness, a periodic shifting of enthusiasms, though a vice, may preserve a man from crippling indecision."

"*Fickleness*, Henry?" Ebenezer asked in wonderment. "Is't fickleness explains your leaving us?"

"Not in the sense you take it," Burlingame said. He fetched out a shilling and called for two more tankards of beer. "I say, did you know I was an orphan child?"

"Why, yes," Ebenezer said, surprised. "Now you mention it, I believe I did, though I can't recall your ever telling us. Haply we just assumed it. I'faith, Henry, all the years we've known you, and yet in sooth we know naught of you, do we? I've no idea when you were born, or where reared, or by whom."

"Or why I left you so discourteously, or how I learned of your failure, or why I fled the great Mister Newton," Burlingame added. "Very well then, take a draught with me, and I shall uncloak the mystery. There's a good fellow!"

They drank deeply, and Burlingame began his story.

"I've not the faintest notion where I was born, or even when -- though it must have been about 1654. Much less do I know what woman bore me, or what man got me on her. I was raised by a Bristol sea-captain and his wife, who were childless, and 'tis my suspicion I was born in either America or the West Indies, for my earliest memories are of an ocean passage when I was no more than three years old. Their name was Salmon -- Avery and Melissa Salmon."

"I am astonished!" Ebenezer declared. "I ne'er dreamed aught so extraordinary of your beginnings! How came you to be called Burlingame, then?"

Burlingame sighed. "Ah, Eben, just as till now you've been incurious about my origin, so till too late was I. Burlingame I've been since earliest memory, and, as is the way of children, it ne'er occurred to me to wonder at it, albeit to this day I've met no other of that surname."

"It must be that whomever Captain Salmon received you from was your parent!" Ebenezer said. "Or haply 'twas some kin of yours, that knew your name."

"Dear Eben, think you I've not racked myself upon that chance? Think you I'd not forfeit a hand for five minutes' converse with my poor Captain, or gentle Melissa? But I must put by my curiosity till Judgment Day, for they both are in their graves."

"Unlucky fellow!"

"All through my childhood," Burlingame went on, "'twas my single aim to go to sea, like Captain Salmon. Boats were my only toys; sailors my only playmates. On my thirteenth birthday I shipped as messboy on the Captain's vessel, a West Indiaman, and so taken was I by the mariner's life that I threw my heart and soul into my apprenticeship. Ere we raised Barbados I was scrambling aloft with the best of 'em, to take in a stuns'l or tar the standing rigging, and was as handy with a fid as any Jack aboard. Eben, Eben, what a life for a lad -- e'en now it shivers me to think on't! Brown as a coffeebean I was, and agile as a monkey, and ere my voice had left off changing, ere my parts were fully haired -- at an age when most boys have still the smell of the womb on 'em, and dream of traveling to the neighboring shire -- I had dived for sheepswool sponges on the Great Bahaman Banks and fought with pirates in the Gulf of Paria. What's more, after guarding my innocence in the fo'c'sle with a fishknife from a lecherous old Manxman who'd offered two pounds for't, I swam a mile through shark-water from our mooring off Curasao to squander it one August night with a mulatto girl upon the beach. She was scarce thirteen, Eben -- half Dutch, half Indian, lissome and trembly as an eight-month colt -- but on receipt of a little brass spyglass of mine, which she'd taken a great fancy to in the village that morning, she fetched up her skirts with a laugh, and I deflowered her under the sour-orange trees. I was not yet fifteen."

"Gramercy!"

"No man e'er loved his trade more than I," Burlingame continued, "nor slaved at it more diligently; I was the apple of the Captain's eye, and would, I think, have risen fast through the ranks."

"Then out on't, Henry, how is't you claim my failing? For I see naught in thy tale here but a staggering industry and singlemindedness, the half of which I'd lose an ear to

equal."

Burlingame smiled and drank off the last of his beer. "*Inconstancy*, dear fellow, inconstancy. That same singlemindedness that raised me o'er the other lads on the ship was the ruin of my nautical career."

"How can that be?"

"I made five voyages in all," Burlingame said. "On the fifth -- the same voyage on which I lost my virginity -- we lay becalmed one day in the horse latitudes off the Canary Islands, and quite by chance, looking about for something wherewith to occupy myself, I happened on a copy of Motteux's *Don Quixote* among a shipmate's effects: I spent the remainder of the day with it, for though Mother Salmon had taught me to read and write, 'twas the first real storybook I'd read. I grew so entranced by the great Manchegan and his faithful squire as to lose all track of time and was rebuked by Captain Salmon for reporting late to the cook.

"From that day on I was no longer a seaman, but a student. I read every book I could find aboard ship and in port -- bartered my clothes, mortgaged my pay for books, on any subject whatever, and reread them over and over when no new ones could be found. All else went by the board; what work I could be made to do I did distractedly, and in careless haste. I took to hiding, in the rope-locker or the lazarette, where I could read for an hour undisturbed ere I was found. Finally Captain Salmon could tolerate it no more: he ordered the mate to confiscate every volume aboard, save only the charts, the ship's log, and the navigational tables, and pitched 'em to the sharks off Port-au-Prince; then he gave me such a hiding for my sins that my poor bum tingled a fortnight after, and forbade me e'er to read a printed page aboard his vessel. This so thwarted and aggrieved me, that at the next port (which happened to be Liverpool) I jumped ship and left career and benefactor forever, with not a thank-ye nor a fare-thee-well for the people who'd fed and clothed me since babyhood.

"I had no money at all, and for food only a great piece of hard cheese I'd stolen from the ship's cook: therefore I very soon commenced to starve. I took to standing on street-corners and singing for my supper: I was a pretty lad and knew many a song, and when I would sing *What Thing Is Love?* to the ladies, or *A Pretty Duck There Was* to the gentlemen, 'twas not often they'd pass me by without a smile and tuppence. At length a band of wandering gypsies, traveling down from Scotland to London, heard me sing and invited me to join them, and so for the next year I worked and lived with those curious people. They were tinkers, horse-traders, fortune-tellers, basket-makers, dancers, troubadours, and thieves. I dressed in their fashion, ate, drank, and slept with them, and they taught me all their songs and tricks. Dear Eben! Had you seen me then, you'd ne'er have doubted for an instant I was one of them!"

"I am speechless," Ebenezer declared. " 'Tis the grandest adventure I have heard!"

"We worked our way slowly, with many digressions, from Liverpool through Manchester, Sheffield, Nottingham, Leicester, and Bedford, sleeping in the wagons when it rained or out under the stars on fine nights. In the troupe of thirty souls I was the only one who read and wrote, and so was of great assistance to them in many ways. Once to their great delight I read them tales out of Boccaccio -- they all love to tell and hear stories -- and they were so surprised to learn that books contain such marvelous pleasantries, a thing which erst they'd not suspected, that they began to steal every book they could find for me: I seldom lacked reading that year! It happened one day they

turned up a primer, and I taught the lot of 'em their letters, for which services they were unimaginably grateful. Despite my being a 'gorgio' (by which name they call non-gypsies) they initiated me into their most privy matters and expressed the greatest desire for me to marry into their group and travel with them forever.

"But late in 1670 we arrived here in Cambridge, having wandered down from Bedford. The students and several of the dons took a great fancy to us, and though they made too free with sundry of our women, they treated us most cordially, even bringing us to their rooms to sing and play for them. Thus were my eyes first opened to the world of learning and scholarship, and I knew on the instant that my interlude with the gypsies was done. I resolved to go no farther: I bid adieu to my companions and remained in Cambridge, determined to starve upon the street-corners rather than leave this magnificent place."

"Marry, Henry!" Ebenezer said. "Thy courage brings me nigh to weeping! What did you then?"

"Why, so soon as my belly commenced to rumble I stopped short where I was (which happened to be over by Christ's College) and broke into *Flow My Tears*, it being of all the songs I knew the most plaintive. And when I had done with the last verse of it --

*Hark! yon Shadows that in Darkness dwell,
Learn to contemn Light.
Happy, happy they that in Hell
Feel not the World's Despite.*

-- when I had done, I say, there appeared at a nearby window a lean frowning don, who enquired of me, What manner of Cainite was I, that I counted them happy who must fry forever in the fires of Hell? And another, who came to the window beside him, a fat wight, asked me. Did I not know where I was? To which I answered, 'I know no more, good masters, than that I am in Cambridge Town and like to perish of my belly!' Then the first don, who all unbeknownst to me was having a merry time at my expense, told me I was in Christ's College, and that he and all his fellows were powerful divines, and that for lesser blasphemies than mine they had caused men to be broke upon the wheel. I was a mere sixteen then, and not a little alarmed, for though I'd read enough scarce to credit their story, yet I knew not but what they could work me some injury or other, e'en were't something short of the wheel. Therefore I humbly craved their pardon, and pled 'twas but an idle song, the words of which I scarce attended; so that were there aught of blasphemy in't, 'twas not the singer should be racked for't but the author Dowland, who being long since dead, must needs already have had the sin rendered out of him in Satan's try-works, and there's an end on't! At this methinks the merry dons had like to laugh aloud, but they put on sterner faces yet and ordered me into their chamber. There they farther chastised me, maintaining that while my first offense had been grievous enough, in its diminution of the torments of Hell, this last remark of mine had on't the very smell of the stake. 'How is that?' I asked them. 'Why,' the lean one cried, 'to hold as you do that they who perpetuate another's sin, albeit witlessly, are themselves blameless, is to deny the doctrine of Original Sin itself, for who are Eve and Adam but the John Dowlands of us all, whose sinful song all humankind must sing willy-nilly and die for't?' 'What is more,' the fat don declared, 'in denying the mystery of Original Sin you scorn as well the mystery of

Vicarious Atonement -- for where's the sense of Salvation for them that are not lost?'

" 'Nay, nay!' said I, and commenced to sniffing. 'Marry, masters, 'twas but an idle observation! Prithee take no notice of't!'

" 'An idle observation!' the first replied, and laid hold of my arms. ' 'Swounds, boy! You scoff at the two cardinal mysteries of the Church, which like twin pillars bear the entire edifice of Christendom; you as much as call the Crucifixion a vulgar Mayfair show; and to top all you regard such unspeakable blasphemies as idle observations! 'Tis a more horrendous sin yet! Whence came thee here, anyhow?'

" 'From Bedford,' I replied, frightened near out of my wits, 'with a band of gypsies.' On hearing this the dons feigned consternation, and declared that every year at this time the gypsies passed through Cambridge for the sole purpose, since they are heathen to a man, of working some hurt on the divines. Only the year before, they said, one of my cohorts had sneaked privily into the Trinity brew-house and poisoned a vat of beer, with the result that three Senior Fellows, four Scholars, and a brace of idle Sizars were done to death ere sundown. Then they asked me, What was my design? And when I told them I had hoped to attach myself to one of their number as a serving-boy, the better to improve my mind, they made out I was come to poison the lot of 'em. So saying, they stripped me naked on the spot, despite my protestations of innocence, and on pretext of seeking hidden phials of vitriol they poked and probed every inch of my person, and pinched and tweaked me in alarming places. Nay, I must own they laid lecherous hands upon me, and had soon done me a violence but that their sport was interrupted by another don -- an aging, saintlike gentleman, clearly their superior -- who bade them stand off and rebuked them for molesting me. I flung myself at his feet, and, raising me up and looking at me from top to toe, he enquired, What was the occasion of my being disrobed? I replied, I had but sung a song to please these gentlemen, the which they had called a blasphemy, and had then so diligently searched me for phials of vitriol, that I looked to be costive the week through.

"The old don then commanded me to sing the song at once, that he might judge of its blasphemy, and so I fetched up my guitar, which the gypsies had taught me the use of, and as best I could (for I was weeping and shivering with fright) I once again sang *Flow My Tears*. Throughout the piece my savior smiled on me sweetly as an angel, and when I was done he spoke not a word about blasphemy, but kissed me upon the forehead, bade me dress, and after reproving again my tormentors, who were mightily ashamed at being thus surprised in their evil prank, he commanded me to go with him to his quarters. What's more, after interrogating me at length concerning my origin and my plight, and expressing surprise and pleasure at the extent of my reading, he then and there made me a member of his household staff, to serve him personally, and allowed me free use of his admirable library."

"I must know who this saintly fellow was," Ebenezer interrupted. "My curiosity leaps its banks!"

Burlingame smiled and raised a finger. "I shall tell thee, Eben; but not a word of't must you repeat, for reasons you'll see presently. Whate'er his failings, 'twas a noble turn he did me, and I'd not see his name besmirched by any man."

"Never fear," Ebenezer assured him. " 'Twill be like whispering it to thyself."

"Very well, then. I shall tell thee only that he was Platonist to the ears, and hated Tom Hobbes as he hated the Devil, and was withal so fixed on things of the spirit -- on

essential spissitude and indiscerptibility and metaphysical extension and the like, which were as real to him as rocks and cow-patties -- that he scarce lived in this world at all. And should these be still not sufficient clues, know finally that he was at that time much engrossed in a grand treatise against the materialist philosophy, which treatise he printed the following year under the title *Enchiridion Metaphysicum*."

"'Sheart!" Ebenezer whispered. "My dear friend, was't Henry More himself you sang for? I should think 'twould be thy boast, not an embarrassment!"

"Stay, till I end my tale. Twas in sooth great More himself I lived with! None knows more than I his noble character, and none is more a debtor to his generosity. I was then per- ; haps seventeen: I tried in every way I knew to be a model of intelligence, good manners, and industry, and ere long the old fellow would allow no other servant near him. He took great ' pleasure in conversing with me, at first about my adventures at sea and with the gypsies, but later on matters of philosophy and theology, with which subjects I made special effort to acquaint myself. 'Twas plain he'd conceived a great liking for me."

"Thou'rt a lucky wight, i'faith!" Ebenezer sighed.

"Nay; only hear me out. As time went on he no longer addressed me as 'Dear Henry,' or 'My boy,' but rather 'My son,' and 'My dear'; and after that 'Dearest thing,' and finally 'Thingums,' 'Precious laddikins,' and 'Gypsy mine' in turn. In short, as I soon guessed, his affection for me was Athenian as his philosophy -- dare I tell you he more than once caressed I me, and called me his little Alcibiades?"

"I am amazed!" said Ebenezer. "The scoundrel rescued you from the other blackguards, merely to have you for his own unnatural lusts!"

"Oh la, 'twas not at all the same thing, Eben. The others were men in their thirties, full to bursting (as my master himself put it) with *the filth and unclean tinctures of corporeity*. More, on the other hand, was near sixty, the gentlest of souls, and scarce realized himself, I daresay, the character of his passion: I had no fear of him at all. And here I must confess, Eben, I did a shameful thing: so intent was I on entering the University, that instead of leaving More's service as soon as tact would permit, I lost no opportunity to encourage his shameful doting. I would perch on the arm of his chair like an impudent lass and read over his shoulder, or cover his eyes for a tease, or spring about the room like a monkey, knowing he admired my energy and grace. Most of all I sang and played on my guitar for him: many's the night -- I blush to tell it! -- when I would let him come upon me, as though by accident; I would laugh and blush, and then as if to make a lark of't, take my guitar and sing *Flow My Tears*.

"Need I say the poor philosopher was simply ravished? His passion so took governance o'er his other faculties, he grew so entirely enamored of me, that upon my granting him certain trifling favors, which I knew he'd long coveted but scarce hoped for, he spent nearly all his meager savings to outfit me like the son of an earl, and enrolled me in Trinity College."

Here Burlingame lit another pipe, and sighed in remembrance.

"I was, I believe, uncommonly well-read for a boy my age. In the two years with More I'd mastered Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, read all of Plato, Tully, Plotin, and divers other of the ancients, and at least perused most of the standard works of natural philosophy. My benefactor made no secret that he looked for me to become as notable a philosopher as Herbert of Cherbury, John Smith, or himself -- and who knows but what I

might have been, had things turned out happily? But alas, Eben, that same shamelessness by virtue of which I reached my goal proved my undoing. 'Twas quite poetic."

"What happened, pray?"

"I was not strong in mathematics," Burlingame said, "and for that reason I devoted much of my study to that subject, and spent as much time as I could with mathematicians -- especially with the brilliant young man who but two years before, in 1669, had taken Barrow's place as Lucasian Professor of Mathematics, and holds the office yet. . ."

"Newton!"

"Aye, the wondrous Isaac! He was twenty-nine or thirty then, as I am now, with a face like a pure-bred stallion's. He was thin and strong and marvelous energetic, much given to moods; he had the arrogance that of't goes with great gifts, but was in other ways quite shy, and seldom overbearing. He could be merciless with others' theories, yet was himself inordinately sensitive to criticism. He was so diffident about his talents 'twas with great reluctance he allowed aught of his discoveries to be printed; yet so vain, the slightest suggestion that someone had antedated him would drive him near mad with rage and jealousy. Impossible, splendid fellow!"

"Marry, he frightens me!" Ebenezer said.

"Now you must know that at that time More and Newton had no love whatever for each other, and the cause of their enmity was the French philosopher Renatus Descartes."

"Descartes? How can that be?"

"I know not how well you've heeded your tutors," Burlingame said; "you might know that all these Platonical gentlemen of Christ's and Emmanuel Colleges are wont to sing the praises of Descartes, inasmuch as he makes a great show of pottering about in mathematics and the motions of heavenly bodies, like any Galileo, and yet unlike Tom Hobbes he affirms the real existence of God and the soul, which pleases them no end. The more for that the lot of 'em are Protestants: this much-vaunted rejection of the learning of his time, that Renatus brags of in his *Discourse on Method*: this searching of his innards for his axioms -- is't not the first principle of Protestantism? Thus it is that Descartes' system is taught all over Cambridge, and More, like the rest, praised and swore by him as by a latter-day saint. Tell me, Eben: how is't, d'you think, that the planets are moved in their courses?"

"Why," said Ebenezer, " 'tis that the cosmos is filled with little particles moving in vortices, each of which centers on a star; and 'tis the subtle push and pull of these particles in our solar vortex that slides the planets along their orbs -- is't not?"

"So saith Descartes," Burlingame smiled. "And d'you haply recall what is the nature of light?"

"If I have't right," replied Ebenezer, " 'tis an aspect of the vortices -- of the press of inward and outward forces in 'em. The celestial fire is sent through space from the vortices by this pressure, which imparts a transitional motion to little light globules --"

"Which Renatus kindly hatched for that occasion," Burlingame interrupted. "And what's more he allows his globules both a rectilinear and a rotatory motion. If only the first occurs when the globules smite our retinae, we see white light; if both, we see color. And as if this were not magical enough -- *mirabile dictu!* -- when the rotatory motion surpasseth the rectilinear, we see blue; when the reverse, we see red; and when the twain

are equal, we see yellow. What fantastical drivel!"

"You mean 'tis not the truth? I must say, Henry, it sounds reasonable to me. In sooth, there is a seed of poetry in it; it hath an elegance."

"Aye, it hath every virtue and but one small defect, which is, that the universe doth not operate in that wise. Marry, 'tis no crime, methinks, to teach the man's skeptical philosophy or his analytical geometry -- both have much of merit in 'em. But his cosmology is purely fanciful, his optics right bizarre; and the first man to prove it is Isaac Newton."

"Hence their enmity?" asked Ebenezer.

Burlingame nodded. "By the time Newton became Lucasian Professor he had already spoilt Cartesian optics with his prism experiments -- and well do I recall them from his lectures! -- and he was refuting the theory of vortices by mathematics, though he hadn't as yet published his own cosmical hypotheses. But his loathing for Descartes goes deeper yet: it hath its origin in a difference betwixt their temperaments. Descartes, you know, is a clever writer, and hath a sort of genius for illustration that lends force to the wildest hypotheses. He is a great hand for twisting the cosmos to fit his theory. Newton, on the other hand, is a patient and brilliant experimenter, with a sacred regard for the facts of nature. Then again, since the lectures *De Motu Corporum* and his papers on the nature of light have been available, the man always held up to him by his critics is Descartes.

"So, then, no love was lost 'twixt Newton and More; they had in fact been quietly hostile for some years. And when I became the focus of't, their antagonism boiled over."

"You? But you were a simple student, were you not? Surely two such giants ne'er would stoop to fight their battles with their students."

"Must I draw a picture, Eben?" Burlingame said. "I was out to learn the nature of the universe from Newton, but knowing I was More's protégé, he was cold and incommunicative with me. I employed every strategy I knew to remove this barrier, and, alas, won more than I'd fought for -- in plain English, Eben, Newton grew as enamored of me as had More, with this difference only, that there was naught Platonical in his passion."

"I know not what to think!" cried Ebenezer.

"Nor did I," said Burlingame, "albeit one thing I knew well, which was that save for the impersonal respect I bare the twain of 'em, I cared not a fart for either. 'Tis a wise thing, Eben, not to confuse one affection with another. Well, sir, as the months passed, each of my swains came to realize the passions of the other, and both grew as jealous as Cervantes' *Celoso Extremeño*. They carried on shamefully, and each threatened my ruination in the University should I not give o'er the other. As for me, I paid no more heed than necessary to either, but wallowed in the libraries of the colleges like a dolphin in the surf. 'Twas job enough for me to remember to eat and sleep, much less fulfill the million little obligations they thought I owed 'em. I'faith, a handsome pair!"

"Prithee, what was the end of it?"

Burlingame sighed. "I played the one against the other for above two years, till at last Newton could endure it no longer. The Royal Society had by this time published his experiments with prisms and reflecting telescopes, and he was under fire from Robert Hooke, who had light theories of his own; from the Dutchman Christian Huygens, who was committed to the lens telescope; from the French monk Pardies; and from the

Belgian Linus. So disturbed was he by the conjunction of this criticism and his jealousy, that in one and the same day he swore ne'er to publish another of his discoveries, and confronted More in the latter's chambers with the intent of challenging him to settle their rivalry for good and all by means of a duel to the death!"

"Ah, what a loss to the world, whate'er the issue of't," observed Ebenezer.

"As't happened, no blood was let," Burlingame said: "the tale ends happily for them both, if not for the teller. After much discourse Newton discovered that his rival's position was uncertain as his own, and that I seemed equally indifferent to both -- which conclusion, insofar as't touches the particular matters they had in mind, is as sound as any in the *Principia*. In addition More showed to Newton his *Enchiridion Metaphysicum*, wherein he plainly expressed a growing disaffection for Descartes; and Newton assured More that albeit 'twas universal gravitation, and not angels or vortices, that steered the planets in their orbits, there yet remained employment enough for the Deity as a first cause to set the cosmic wheels a-spin, e'en as old Renatus had declared. In fine, so far from dueling to the death, they so convinced each other that at the end of some hours of colloquy -- all which I missed, being then engrossed in the library -- they fell to tearful embraces, and decided to cut me off without a penny, arrange my dismissal from the College, and move into the same lodgings, where, so they declared, they would couple the splendors of the physical world to the glories of the ideal, and listen ravished to the music of the spheres! This last they never did in fact, but their connection endures to this day, and from all I hear, More hath washed his hands entirely of old Descartes, while Newton hath caught a foolish infatuation with theology, and seeks to explain the Apocalypse by application of his laws of series and fluxions. As for the first two of their resolves, they fulfilled 'em to the letter -- turned me out to starve, and so influenced all and sundry against me that not a shilling could I beg, nor eat one meal on credit. 'Twas off to London I went, with not a year 'twixt me and the baccalaureate. Thus was it, in 1676, your father found me; and playing fickle to the scholar's muse, I turned to you and your dear sister all the zeal I'd erst reserved for my researches. Your instruction became my First Good, my Primary Cause, which lent all else its form and order. And my fickleness is thorough and entire: not for an instant have I regretted the way of my life, or thought wistfully of Cambridge."

"Dear, dear Henry!" Ebenezer cried. "How thy tale moves me, and shames me, that I let slip through idleness what you strove so hard in vain to reach! Would God I had another chance!"

"Nay, Eben, thou'rt no scholar, I fear. You have perchance the schoolman's love of lore, but not the patience, not the address, not I fear that certain nose for relevance, that grasp of the world, which sets apart the thinker from the crank. There is a thing in you, a set of the grain as 'twere, that would keep you ingenuous even if all the books in all the libraries of Europe were distilled in your brain. Nay, let the baccalaureate go; I came here not to exhort you to try again, or to chide you for failing, but to take you with me to London for a time, until you see your way clearly. 'Twas Anna's idea, who loves you more than herself, and I think it wise."

"Precious Anna! How came she to know thy whereabouts?"

"There, now," laughed Burlingame, "that is another tale entirely, and 'twill do for another time. Come with me to London, and I'll tell it thee in the carriage."

Ebenezer hesitated. " 'Tis a great step."

" 'Tis a great world," replied Burlingame.

"I fear me what Father would say, did he hear of't."

"My dear fellow," Burlingame said, "we sit here on a blind rock careening through space; we are all of us rushing headlong to the grave. Think you the worms will care, when anon they make a meal of you, whether you spent your moment sighing wigless in your chamber, or sacked the golden towns of Montezuma? Lookee, the day's nigh spent; 'tis gone careering into time forever. Not a tale's length past we lined our bowels with dinner, and already they growl for more. We are dying men, Ebenezer: i'faith, there's time for naught but bold resolves!"

"You lend me courage, Henry," Ebenezer said, rising from the table. "Let us begone."

4

Ebenezer's First Sojourn in London, and the Issue of It

BURLINGAME SLEPT THAT NIGHT in Ebenezer's room, and the next day they left Cambridge for London by carriage.

"I think you've not yet told me," the young man said en route, "how it is you left St. Giles so suddenly, and how Anna came to know your whereabouts."

Burlingame sighed. "'Tis a simple mystery, if a sad one. The fact is, Eben, your father fancies I have designs upon your sister."

"Nay! Incredible!"

"Ah, now, as for that, 'tis not so incredible; Anna is a sweet and clever girl, and uncommon lovely."

"Yet think of your ages!" Ebenezer said. "'Tis absurd of Father!"

"Think you 'tis absurd?" Burlingame asked. "Thou'rt a candid fellow."

"Ah, forgive me," Ebenezer laughed; "'twas a rude remark. Nay, 'tis not absurd at all: thou'rt but thirty-odd, and Anna twenty-one. I daresay 'tis that you were our teacher made me think of you as older."

"'Twere no absurd suspicion, methinks, that *any* man might look with love on Anna," Burlingame declared, "and I did indeed love the both of you for years, and love you yet; nor did I ever try to hide the fact. 'Tis not that which distresses me; 'tis Andrew's notion that I had vicious designs on the girl. 'Sheart, if anything be improbable, 'tis that so marvelous a creature as Anna could look with favor on a penniless pedagogue!"

"Nay, Henry, I have oft heard her protest, that by comparison to you, none of her acquaintances was worth the labor of being civil to."

"Anna said that?"

"Aye, in a letter not two months past."

"Ah well, whate'er the case, Andrew took my regard for her as lewd intent, and threatened me one afternoon that should I not begone ere morning he'd shoot me like a dog and horsewhip dear Anna into the bargain. I had no fear for myself, but not to risk bringing injury to her I left at once, albeit it tore my heart to go."

Ebenezer sat amazed at this revelation. "How she wept that morning! and yet

neither she nor Father told me aught of't!"

"Nor must you speak of it to either," Burlingame warned, "for 'twould but embarrass Anna, would it not? And anger Andrew afresh, for there's no statute of limitations within a family. Think not you'll reason him out of his notion: he is convinced of it."

"I suppose so," Ebenezer said doubtfully. "Then Anna has been in correspondence with you since?"

"Not so regularly as I could wish. Egad, how I've yearned for news of you! I took lodgings on Thames Street, between Billingsgate and the Customs-House -- far cry from the summer-pavilion at St. Giles, you'll see! -- and hired myself as tutor whenever I could. For two years and more I was unable to communicate with Anna, for fear your father would hear of't, but some months ago I chanced to be engaged as a tutor in French to a Miss Bromly from Plumtree Street, that remembered you and Anna as playmates ere you removed to St. Giles. Through her I was able to tell Anna where I live, and though I dare not write to her, she hath contrived on two or three occasions to send me letters. 'Twas thus I learned the state of your affairs, and I was but too pleased to act on her suggestion that I fetch you out of Cambridge. She is a dear girl, Eben!"

"I long to see her again!" Ebenezer said.

"And I," said Burlingame, "for I esteem her as highly as thee, and 'tis three years since I've seen her."

"Think you she might visit us in London?"

"Nay, I fear 'tis out of the question. Andrew would have none of it."

"Yet surely I cannot resign myself to never seeing her again! Can you, Henry?"

" 'Tis not my wont to look that far ahead," Burlingame said. "Let us consider rather how you'll occupy yourself in London. You must not sit idle, lest you slip again into languishment and stupor."

"Alas," said Ebenezer, "I have no long-term goals toward which to labor."

"Then follow my example," advised Burlingame, "and set as your long-term goal the successful completion of all your short-term goals."

"Yet neither have I any short-term goal."

"Ah, but you will ere long, when your belly growls for dinner and your money's gone."

"Unhappy day!" laughed Ebenezer. "I've no skill in any craft or trade whatever. I cannot even play *Flow My Tears* on the guitar."

"Then 'tis plain you'll be a teacher, like myself."

" 'Sheart! 'Twould be the blind leading the blind!"

"Aye," smiled Burlingame. "Who better grasps the trials of sightlessness than he whose eyes are gone?"

"But what teach? I know something of many things, and enough of naught."

"I'faith, then the field is open, and you may graze where you list."

"Teach a thing I know naught of?" exclaimed Ebenezer.

"And raise thy fee for't," replied Burlingame, "inasmuch as 'tis no chore to teach what you know, but to teach what you know naught of requires a certain application. Choose a thing you'd greatly like to learn, and straightway proclaim yourself professor of't."

Ebenezer shook his head. " 'Tis still impossible; I am curious about the world in

general, and ne'er could choose."

"Very well, then: I dub thee Professor of the Nature of the World, and as such shall we advertise you. Whate'er your students wish to learn of't, that will you teach them."

"Thou'rt jesting, Henry!"

"If't be a jest," replied Burlingame, "'tis a happy one, I swear, for just so have I lined my belly these three years. B'm'faith, the things I've taught! The great thing is always to be teaching something to someone -- a fig for *what* or *to whom*. 'Tis no trick at all."

No matter what Ebenezer thought of this proposal, he had not the wherewithal to reject it: immediately on arriving in London he moved into Burlingame's chambers by the river and was established as a full partner. A few days after that, Burlingame brought him his first customer -- a lout of a tailor from Crutched Friars who happily desired to be taught nothing more intricate than his A B Cs -- and for the next few months Ebenezer earned his living as a pedagogue. He worked six or seven hours a day, both in his rooms and at the homes of his students, and spent most of his free time studying desperately for the following day's lessons. What leisure he had he spent in the taverns and coffeehouses with a small circle of Burlingame's acquaintances, mostly idle poets. Impressed by their apparent confidence in their talent, he too endeavored on several occasions to write poems, but abandoned the effort each time for want of anything to write about.

At his insistence a devious correspondence was established with his sister through Miss Bromly, Burlingame's pupil, and after two months Anna contrived to visit them in London, using as excuse the illness of a spinster aunt who lived near Leadenhall. The twins were, as may be imagined, overjoyed to see each other again, for although conversation did not come so readily since Ebenezer's departure from St. Giles three years before, each still bore, abstractly at least, the greatest affection and regard for the other. Burlingame, too, Anna expressed considerable but properly decorous pleasure in seeing again. She had changed somewhat since Ebenezer had seen her last: her brown hair had lost something of its shine, and her face, while still fair, was leaner and less girlish than he remembered it.

"My dear Anna!" he said for the fourth or fifth time. "How good it is to hear your voice! Tell me, how did you leave Father? Is he well?"

Anna shook her head. "Well on the way to Bedlam, I fear, or to driving me there. 'Tis your disappearance, Eben; it angers and frightens him at once. He knows not the cause of't, or whether to comb the realm for you or disown you. A dozen times daily he demands of me whether I know aught of your whereabouts, or else rails at me for keeping things from him. He is grown hugely suspicious of me, and yet sometimes asks of you so plaintively as to move my tears. He has aged much these past weeks, and though he blows and blusters no less than before, his heart is not in it, and it saps his strength."

"Ah, God, it pains me to hear that!"

"And me," said Burlingame, "for though old Andrew hath small love for me, I wish him no ill."

"I do think," Anna said to Ebenezer, "that you should strive to establish yourself in some calling, and communicate with him directly you find a place; for despite the abuse he'll surely heap on you, 'twill ease his soul to learn thou'rt well, and well established."

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