

Literature, &c.

THE STUDENT AND APPRENTICE.

BY T. S. ARTHUR.

'How far is it from here to the sun, Jim?' asked Harman Lee of his father's apprentice, James Wallace, in a tone of light raillery, intending by the question to elicit some reply that would exhibit the boy's ignorance.

James Wallace, a boy of fourteen, turning his bright and intelligent eyes upon the son of his master, and after regarding him for a moment, he replied,

'I don't know, Harman: how far is it?' There was something so honest and earnest in the tone of the boy, that, much as Harman had felt at first disposed to sport with his ignorance, he could not refrain from giving the true answer. Still, his contempt for the ignorant apprentice was not to be concealed, and he replied,

'Ninety five millions of miles you ignoramus.'

James did not retort, but repeating over in his mind the distance named, fixed it indelibly on his memory.

On the same evening, after he had finished his work, he obtained a small text book on astronomy, which belonged to Harman Lee, and went up into his garret with a candle, and there alone, attempted to dive into the mysteries of that sublime science. As he read, the earnestness of his attention fixed nearly every fact upon his mind. So intent was he, that he perceived not the passage of time, and was only called back to a consciousness of where he was, by the sudden sinking of the wick of his candle, into the melted mass of tallow that had filled the cup of his candlestick. In another moment he was in total darkness. The cry of the watchman told him that the hours had flown until it was past ten o'clock.

Slowly undressing himself in his dark chamber, his mind recurring with a strong interest to what he had been reading, he laid down upon his hard bed, and gave full play to his thoughts. Hour after hour passed away, and he could not sleep, so absorbed was he in receiving the new and wonderful things that he had read. At last, wearied nature gave way, and he fell into a slumber filled with planets, moons, comets and fixed stars. On the next morning the apprentice boy resumed his place at the work bench with new feeling. And with this feeling was mingled one of regret, that he could not go to school as did his master's son.

'But I can study at night while he is asleep,' he said to himself.

Just then Harman Lee came into the shop, and approaching James, said for the purpose of teasing him,

'How big round is the earth, Jim?'

'Twenty five thousand miles, was the prompt answer.'

Harman looked surprised for a moment, and then responded with a sneer,—for he was not a kind hearted boy, but on the contrary, very selfish and disposed to injure rather than do good to others—

'O dear! How wonderful wise you are! and no doubt you can tell how many moons Jupiter has? Come, let's hear.'

'Jupiter has four moons,' James answered, with something of exultation in his tones.

'And no doubt you can tell how many rings it has?'

'Jupiter has no rings. Saturn has rings and Jupiter belts,' James replied in a decisive tone.

For a moment or two, Harman was silent with surprise and mortification, to think that his father's apprentice, whom he had esteemed so far below himself, should be possessed of knowledge equal to his, on the points in reference to which he had chosen to question him; and that he should be able to convict him of an error into which he had purposely fallen.

'I should like to know how long it is since you became so wonderful wise?' Harman at length said with a sneer.

'Not very long,' James replied calmly, 'I have been reading one of your books on Astronomy.'

'Well, you're not going to have my books,—mister, I can tell you. Anyhow, I should like to know what business you had to touch one of them? Let me catch you at it again, and see if I don't cuff you soundly! You'd better a great deal, be minding your work.'

'But I didn't neglect my work, Harman. I read at night after I was done my work. And I didn't hurt your book.'

'I don't care if you didn't hurt it. You are not going to have my books, I can tell you. So you just let them alone.'

Poor James' heart sank in his bosom, at this unexpected obstacle thrown so suddenly in his way. He had no money of his own to buy, and knew of no one of whom he could borrow the book that had all at once become necessary to his happiness.

'Do Harman,' he said appealingly—'lend me the book. I will take care of it.'

'No, I won't. And don't you dare to touch it!' was the angry reply.

James Wallace knew well enough the selfish disposition of his master's son, older than he by two or three years, to be convinced that there was now but little hope of his having the use of his books, except by stealth. And from that his natural open and honest principle revolted. All day he thought earnestly over the means whereby he should be able to obtain a book on Astronomy, to quench the ardent thirst that had been created in his mind. And night came without any satisfactory answer being obtained to his earnest inquiries of his own thought.

He was learning the trade of a blind-maker.—Having been already an apprentice for two years, and being industrious and intelligent, he had acquired a readiness with tools and much skill in some parts of his trade. While sitting alone, after he had finished his work for the day, his mind searching about for some means whereby he could get books, it occurred to him that he might, by working in the evening, earn some money, and with it buy such as he wanted. But in what manner to turn his work into money, he knew not. It finally occurred to him that in passing a house near the shop, he frequently observed a pair of window blinds with faded hangings, and soiled colors.

'Perhaps,' he said to himself, 'if I would do it cheap, they would let me paint, and put new hangings on their blinds.'

The thought was scarcely suggested, when he was on his feet, moving towards the street. In a few minutes he stood knocking at the door of the house, which was soon opened.

'Well, my little man, what do you want?' was the kind salutation of the individual who answered the knock.

James now felt confused, and stammered out, 'The hangings on your blinds are a good deal faded.'

'That's a very true remark, my little man,' was the reply, made in an encouraging tone.

'And they want painting badly?'

'Also very true,' said the man with a good humoured smile, for he felt amused with the boy's earnest manner, and novelty of speech.

'Wouldn't you like to have them painted, and new hangings put to them?' pursued James.

'I don't know. It would certainly improve them very much.'

'O, yes sir. They would look just like new.' And if you will let me do them, I will fix them all up nice for you cheap.'

'Will you, indeed? But what is your name, and where do you live?'

'My name is James Wallace, and I live with Mr Lee, the blind maker.'

'Do you indeed! Well, how much will you charge for painting them and putting on new hangings?'

'I will do it for two dollars, sir. The hangings and tassels will cost me three quarters of a dollar, and the paints and varnish a quarter more. And it will take me two or three evenings, besides getting up very early in the morning to work for Mr Lee, so that I can have time to paint them when the sun shines.'

'But will Mr. Lee let you do this?'

'I don't know, sir. But I will go and ask him.'

'Very well, my little man, if Mr Lee does not object, I am willing.'

James ran back to the house, and found Mr Lee standing in the door. Much to his delight, his request was granted. Four days from that time he possessed a book of his own, and had half a dollar with which to buy some other volume, when he should have thoroughly mastered the contents of that. Every night found him pouring over his book, and so soon as it was light enough in the morning to see, he was up, and reading.

Of course, there was much in it that he could not understand, and many terms that defied all his efforts and comparisons of the contexts, to understand. To help him in this difficulty, he purchased with his remaining half dollar, at a second hand book stall, a dictionary. By the aid of this he acquired the information he sought much more rapidly. But the more he read, the broader the unexplored expanse of knowledge appeared to open before him. He did not, however, give way to feelings of

discouragement, but steadily devoted every evening, and an hour every morning, to study; while all through the day, his mind was pondering over the things he had read, as his hands were diligently employed in the labor assigned to him.

It occurred, just at this time, that a number of benevolent individuals established in the town where James lived, one of those excellent institutions, Apprentices' Library. To this he at once applied, and obtained the books he needed. Instead, however, of resorting to the library for mere books of amusement, he borrowed only those from which he could obtain the rudiments of learning, such as texts of books of science.

He early felt the necessity, from having read a book on Astronomy, with a strong desire to master its contents, for mathematical knowledge, and the effort to acquire this, he first commenced studying—for he had no preceptor to guide him—a work on Geometry. In working out problems, he used a pair of shop compasses with a pointed quill upon one of the prongs. And thus, alone in his garret, frequently until midnight, none dreaming of his devotion to the acquirement of knowledge—did the poor apprentice boy lay the foundation of future eminence and usefulness. We cannot trace his course, step by step, through a long series of seven years, though it would afford many lessons of perseverance and triumph over almost insurmountable difficulties. But at twenty one, he was master of his trade; and what was more, had laid up a vast amount of general and scientific information. He was well read in history. He had studied thoroughly the science of Astronomy, for which he ever retained a lively affection. He was familiar with mathematical principles, and could readily solve the most difficult Geometrical and Algebraic problems. His Geographical knowledge was minute; and to this he added tolerably correct information in regard to the manners and customs of different nations. To natural history he had also given much attention. But with all his varied attainments, James Wallace felt, on attaining the age of manhood, that he knew, comparatively, but little.

Let us turn now, for a few moments, to mark the progress which the young student, in one of the best seminaries in his native city, and afterwards at college, had made. Like too many tradesmen, whose honest industry and steady perseverance has gained them a competence, Mr Lee felt indisposed to give his son a trade, or to subject him to the same restraints and discipline in youth to which he had been subjected. He felt ambitious for him, and determined to educate him for one of the learned professions. To this end he sent him to school early, and provided for him the very best of instruction.

Like too many others, he had no love of learning, nor any right appreciation of its legitimate uses. To be a lawyer he thought it would be much more honourable, than to be a mere mechanic, and for this reason alone, as far as he had any thoughts on the subject, did he desire to be a lawyer. As for James Wallace, he, as the poor illiterate apprentice of his father, was most heartily despised, and never treated by Harman with the smallest degree of kind consideration.

At the age of eighteen, he was sent away to one of the eastern Universities and there remained—except during the semi-annual vacations—until he was twenty years of age; when he graduated, and came home with the honorary title of A. B. At this time, James Wallace was between seventeen and eighteen years of age, somewhat rough in his appearance but with a sound mind in a sound body. Although, each day, he regularly toiled at the work bench, and as regularly turned to his books when evening released him from labor, and was up at the peep of dawn, to lay the first offering at the shrine of learning. But all this devotion to the acquirement of knowledge, won for him no sympathy, no honourable estimation from his master's son. He despised his condition as an apprentice to a trade. But it was not many years before others began to perceive the contrast between them, although on the very day that James completed his term of apprenticeship, Harman was admitted to the bar.

The one completed his education,—so far as general knowledge, and a rigid discipline of the mind was concerned,—when he left college.—The other became more really the student, when the broader and brighter light of rationally shone clearly on his pathway, as he passed the threshold of man-

hood. James still continued to work at his trade, but not for so many hours each day, as while he was an apprentice. He was a good and fast workman, and could readily earn all that he required for his support, in six or eight hours of every twenty four. Eight hours were regularly devoted to study. From some cause, he determined that he would make law his profession. To the acquirement of a knowledge of legal matters, therefore, he bent all the energies of a well disciplined, and active, and comprehensive mind. Two years passed away in an untiring devotion to the studies assigned himself, and then he made application for admission to the bar.

'Who were admitted yesterday?' asked Harman Lee, the day after Wallace had passed his examination, addressing a fellow member of the bar.

'Some half dozen, and among them a sturdy young fellow that nobody ever heard of before.'

'Indeed! Well, what kind of an examination did he make?'

'An excellent one. The Judges tried their best with him, but he seemed furnished at every point. He is said to be a young mechanic who has thus qualified himself in the time that he could thus spare from the labours of his handicraft, by which he has supported himself.'

'A mechanic! Poh! The whole Court room will smell of leather or linseed oil, I suppose, after this. Did you learn his name?'

'James Wallace, I believe he is called.'

'James Wallace! Are you sure?'

'Yes, that was it. Do you know him? You look all-sufficiently surprised to know him twice over.'

'My father had an apprentice by that name, who affected to be very fond of books. But surely it can't be him.'

'I am sure that I don't know. But here comes a client for you I suppose.'

As the latter spoke a man entered the office, and asked for Mr Lee.

'That is my name, sir,' said Lee, bowing.—'Take a chair.'

The stranger seated himself, and after a moment's pause, said—

'I wish you to attend to a case for me. I have been sued this morning, as executor of an estate, and the claim set up is a very important one.'

The whole case was then stated, with the exhibition of various documents. After Lee had come to understand fully its merits, he asked who was the lawyer of the claimants.

'A young fellow only admitted yesterday: by the name of Wallace. I am told he has it in charge. He was however consulted some months ago, and his services retained, to become active at this time.'

Lee turned to his friend with a smile and remarked—

'So it seems that I am doomed first to come in contact with this young mechanic. He is certainly quick on the trigger. Only admitted yesterday, and to day pushing on a most important suit. But I'll cool him off, I am thinking.'

'You must do your best, for there is much at stake,' said the client.

'Rely upon that. But don't give yourself a moment's uneasiness. A few years experience at the bar, is always enough to set aside your new beginners.'

'I wonder if it can be my father's old apprentice?' the young lawyer remarked after his client had gone.

'It's as likely as not,' his friend said. 'But wouldn't it be a good joke, if he gained the suit over you?'

'Never fear that!'

'Well, we shall see!' laughingly, replied his friend.

On the next day, James Wallace took his seat among the members of the bar, and remarked with a keen interest and an air of intelligence, all that passed. One or two of the lawyers noticed him kindly, but the majority, Lee among them, regarded him with coldness and distance. But nothing of this affected him, if indeed he noticed it all.

The cause on which he had been retained, and which proved to be the first in which he took an active and prominent position in the court room, came up within a week, for all parties interested in the result were anxious for it to come to trial, and therefore no legal obstacles were thrown in the way.

There was profound silence, and a marked attention and interest, when the young stranger arose in the court room, to open the case. A smile of contempt, as he did so, curled the lip of Harman Lee, but Wallace saw it not. The prominent points of the case were presented in plain, but concise language to the court, and a few remarks bearing upon the merits of the case being made,