

**SELF-FORMATION: OR, THE  
HISTORY OF AN INDIVIDUAL  
MIND; INTENDED AS A GUIDE FOR  
THE INTELLECT THROUGH  
DIFFICULTIES TO SUCCESS. VOL. II**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649701513

Self-Formation: Or, the History of an Individual Mind; Intended as a Guide for the Intellect Through Difficulties to Success. Vol. II by Capel Lofft

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**CAPEL LOFFT**

**SELF-FORMATION: OR, THE  
HISTORY OF AN INDIVIDUAL  
MIND; INTENDED AS A GUIDE FOR  
THE INTELLECT THROUGH  
DIFFICULTIES TO SUCCESS. VOL. II**



**SELF-FORMATION.**

# SELF-FORMATION;

OR, THE

## HISTORY OF AN INDIVIDUAL MIND:

INTENDED AS A GUIDE FOR THE INTELLECT THROUGH  
DIFFICULTIES TO SUCCESS.

BY A FELLOW OF A COLLEGE.

*Opel Lofft*

*Omnis boni principium intellectus cogitandum.*—*VIRUS AVICEN.*

*Necessario enim requiritur ut melior ac perfectior intellectus humani usus aique adoperatio introductor.*—*LORD BACON.*

*So build we up the being that we are;  
Thus deeply drinking in the soul of things,  
We shall be wise performers.*—*WORDSWORTH.*

---

VOL. II.

LONDON:  
CHARLES KNIGHT AND CO., LUDGATE STREET.

---

1837.



# SELF-FORMATION.

---

## CHAPTER VIII.

A soul without reflection, like a pile  
Without inhabitant, to ruin falls.—YOUNG.

THIS was another epoch of my life—a resting place, to translate the word epoch from learned into plain language; and so, that I may do justice to etymology, I will stop a brief while and look around me, carrying myself back in imagination, as well as I may, to the scenes and sentiments of that period. I had passed from the childhood of my intellect to its boyhood. Instead of taking everything upon trust, and reproducing it upon order in the same form that it was given me, I had got by this time into the habit of looking out for myself, and combining and recombining as I pleased my store of imagery. I was becoming every day less mechanical and more rational. I was impatient of mere school drudgery. I regarded all its methods and elements as nothing more than the scaffolding whereby my intellectual structure had been raised; and now that its end, as I fancied, somewhat foolishly, was achieved, I was uneasy till it should be cleared away from before me, and the glories of existence



revealed fully to my sight. Again I fell in love with solitude. I became contemplative and musing—an airy castle-builder—a framer of figures out of the rich texture of the clouds. I rested from my labours; it was enough for me that my heart was filled with the mere prospect of the works of the Almighty. My thoughts, or, as I should rather call them, my imaginations, floated onward like a mist; receiving and reflecting many bright and lovely colours, but incapable of any regular character or definite conformation. Their path was as inexplicable as that of the arrow through the air to the sage in scripture; but my general tone of sentiment I well remember; it was much like what my sensations have often been in a lovely spring morning, when the heart is glad within the bosom, when we feel, as it were, Platonized in our existence, penetrated with the soul of Nature, and every nerve and fibre in full unison with her tone.

Where only to feel that we breathe, that we live,  
Is worth the best joy that life elsewhere can give.

There must be something against nature in solitude, something foreign to the moral sense. The proof is, that, however delicious it may be to us, we do not like to be seen or known as votaries of it. This was my own feeling. The garish eye of observation was too frequently upon me in my wanderings; and so, in order to avoid it, and at the same time to luxuriate in my darling sin of musingness, I betook myself to the game of cricket; if indeed it can be called a game, when in fact it is no game at all to eighteen out of the

two-and-twenty engaged in it: as for the rest, they do not play in good earnest, they merely play at playing. But be that as it may, as my humour then was, I was mightily beholden to it; a better pretext for idleness was never framed. There I used to stand hour by hour, basking, the outward boy of me in the sun, and my inward heart and soul in the deliciousness of my day-dreams, the warm radiance of my imagination. Six hours and upwards in the day, that is, the whole available time of it, I have often exhausted in this fashion; for the ceremony and circumstance of a double wicket game can be despatched in no shorter period. This I must needs say requires revisal. No one thinks better of recreation than I do; no one abhors more heartily any overstrain of labour; but rest is no rest except as a relaxation from work; and for a boy to play all day long, "from morn to moon, from noon to dewy eve," and plead that he is recreating himself, is as absurd as it would be in a dramdrinker to dose himself every quarter of an hour, and pretend that he is only taking a cordial. Apropos of this,—it was said of a great monarch of old, that he was never drunk more than once in his whole life. This it seems was true; but the panegyric implied in the truth was something qualified, when it appeared that his virtue was one of necessity; that he could not possibly in fact have been drunk more than once, inasmuch as his single fit lasted him his whole life through; and so of our Eton cricketers. They play but once in a day; ergo, they are studious to a marvel, or, as they ask in Chancery, How otherwise? Not altogether so. Their game is

the natal genius of their day, the *comes qui temperat*, the soul of the body. They are bound up in the same band; they rise, grow up, and vanish together.

This was the complexion of my life for some three or four weeks' space. But the pleasure of indolence, like all other illicit pleasures, is but of fleeting quality. The still water may reflect heaven upon its face for a time, but it is sure at last to be encrusted with all kinds of foulness and feculence. I began to find that irksomeness weighed heavily upon me.

*In otio nescit quid velit;  
Incertè errat animus; præter propter vitam vivitur.*

I felt myself continually prompted to my relief by the instinct of activity. I wanted to bestow myself somewhere; the only difficulty was to determine the object. But my suspense was not long. Just about that time one of the many Eton periodicals, extant for a brief moment and then extinct for ever, happened to spring up: a wretched paper-boat, swamped in the current of Time almost as soon as it was committed to its surface. However, our vanity would take no warning from foreign experience—it would never rest till it had wrecked itself. These little things were great to such very little intellects as our own. At the first mention of the project our public interest was kindled and spread like wildfire; not a stripling, in short, who had any reputation for cleverness, or fancied that he deserved it, but was ambitious to give his tribute. Of the many I was one, by force of restlessness, impatience, and wounded vanity. As for classical scholarship, I was