

**EDWARD TRELAWNY:
(A BIOGRAPHICAL
SKETCH)**

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Edward Trelawny: (a Biographical Sketch) by Richard Edgcumbe

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RICHARD EDGCUMBE

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BY

(59)

RICHARD EDGCUMBE.

“To strike out the friendly affections from the moral world, would be like extinguishing the sun in the natural; each of them being the source of the best and most grateful satisfaction that the gods have conferred on the sons of men.” The *Lectures* of Cicero.

PLYMOUTH:

W. H. LUKE, BEDFORD STREET.

1883.



EDWARD JOHN TRELAWNY, THE COMPANION OF BYRON AND SHELLEY
Died Aug. 13, aged 88



EDWARD JOHN TRELAWNY.

ALAS! The dauntless Cornishman who in his youth swept the seas with De Witt, who in his prime fought with Byron for the independence of Greece, and who in old age commanded the sympathy and respect of all true lovers of romance, has passed away. Never more shall we gather round the old man's chair, and approach through him the mighty Dead,—the friends and companions of his youth—men as brave, as adventurous, and as honest as he. The strong frame that triumphed for sixty years over the assassin's bullet has shrunk at last. The kindly heart has ceased to beat. The bright eye is dull, and the voice that spoke with Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth, and many of the remarkable men and women of that epoch is mute for evermore. But the remembrance of the man is fresh in the hearts of a chosen few, and the records of his remarkable life are scattered here and there over the pages of memoirs devoted, for the most part, to the glory of his friends.

Edward Trelawny was born in November 1793. He was the second son of an officer in the Army, and belonged to the great Cornish family, which, as he once cynically remarked, "is so proud of its antiquity that gout and mortgaged estates are traced back many generations on the genealogical tree, and revered as ancient heirlooms of aristocratic origin." His elder brother seems to have been tractable, mild, uncomplaining, submissive, and in every respect a contrast to himself. Although Edward had a soft heart, and a noble and venturous spirit, his father's undue severity and arrogant temper transformed him into a consistent rebel against the paternal authority. His father, who seems to have had strange notions as to the efficacy of early education on children, did not send either of his sons to school until the youngest was ten years of age. In 1803 we find Edward Trelawny described as a great, bony, awkward boy, uneducated and untamed. The circumstances which led to his being sent to school give us an insight into the characteristics of his father.

One day, while young Trelawny's parents were discussing the question as to the period at which the schooling of their sons was to commence, a trivial occurrence decided their fate. Edward Trelawny perched on an apple tree, was in the act of throwing down fruit to his brother, when his father came suddenly upon them. Trembling with anger at this act of disobedience, he loudly commanded his sons to follow him, and, without entering the house, stalked rapidly through the grounds

into the road. For two miles the terrified boys silently followed their stern parent, wondering whither he would lead them. At last they came to a walled and dreary building, and followed their father up a long passage. He rang at a prison looking entrance gate; they were admitted into a court; then crossing a spacious dark hall, they were pushed into a small parlour, and the door was shut in their faces. In about ten minutes there entered a dapper little man, his head high in air, with large bright buckles on his shoes, a stock buckled tightly round his neck, spectacled and powdered. There was an awful precision about the man, well calculated to terrify the youths, and it was evident from the hasty glance from his hawk's eye, first at the father then at the boys, that he had a tolerably clear insight into the affair. "With repeated bows to our father" says Edward Trelawny, "he requested him to take a chair, and commanded us with his finger to do the same. There was an impatience and rapidity in everything he said, which indicated that he liked doing and not talking." In a manner at once cruel and business-like, the father handed his sons to the care of this heartless pedagogue, and, without vouchsafing so much as a parting word, he left the house.

"Consider the outrage to my feelings," writes Edward Trelawny in his spirited autobiography, "torn from my home without notice or preparation; delivered, in bitter words, an outcast, into the power of a stranger; and a minute afterwards to find myself in a slip of

ground dedicated to play, but by its high walls and fastnesses looking more like a prison yard. Thirty or forty boys, from five to fifteen years of age, stood around us, making comments and asking questions. I wished the earth to open and bury me, and so hide the torturing emotions with which my bosom swelled. Now that I look back, I repeat that wish with my whole soul; and could I have known the future, or but have dreamed of the future that awaited me, boy as I was I would have dashed out my brains against the wall, on which I leant in sullenness and silence. My brother's disposition enabled him to bear his fate with comparative calmness; but the red spots on his cheeks, the heavy eyelid, the suppressed voice, showed that our feelings, though differing in acuteness, were the same."

Trelawny's school life was one long scene of suffering. Brutal treatment made him callous; every kind and gentle feeling of his naturally affectionate disposition seemed to have been subdued by his master's harsh and savage treatment. According to his own account, "he began to vent his rage on the boys, and soon gained that respect by fear which he would not obtain by application to his books. He thus learnt his first lesson as to the necessity of depending on himself, and the spirit within him was gathering strength, in despite of every endeavour to destroy it, like a young pine flourishing in the cleft of a bed of granite."

At the end of two years Trelawny left this school for ever, and with unnecessary haste was shipped on board

Admiral Duckworth's flag-ship the "*Superb*," then lying at Portsmouth under orders to join Nelson's squadron off Trafalgar. Owing to a delay—consequent upon Duckworth's partiality for fresh beef—the "*Superb*" did not fall in with the Nelson fleet until two days after its hero's deathless victory. Trelawny has graphically described meeting on the high seas a schooner scudding homeward with the news of Nelson's death.

"Young as I was I shall never forget our falling in with the "*Pickle*" off Trafalgar bearing the despatches of the battle. We had chased her many hours out of our course. Her commander, burning with impatience to be the first to convey the news to England, was at length compelled to 'heave to' and come on board us. Captain Keates received him on deck, and when he heard the news I was at his side. Silence reigned throughout the ship; some great event was anticipated. The officers stood in groups watching with intense anxiety the two Commanders who walked apart. 'Battle—Nelson—ships,' were the only audible words which could be gathered from their conversation. I saw the blood rush into Keates' face. He stamped the deck, walked hurriedly, and spoke as in a passion. I marvelled, for I had never before seen him much moved. He had previously appeared cool, firm, and collected on all occasions, and it struck me some awful event had taken place, or was at hand. The Admiral was still in his cabin, eager for news from the Nelson fleet. He was an irritable and violent man, and had been much