

BELLEVUE AND ITS OWNERS

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Bellevue and Its Owners by C. Pilley

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BY C. PILLEY.



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1879.

251. c. 876

AL NOBIL SIGNOR
COUNT JEROME CODROIPO,

THE AUTHOR

Dedicates this Little Work,

IN MEMORY OF HAPPY YEARS PASSED IN A HOME
VERY DEAR TO HIM.



BELLEVUE AND ITS OWNERS.

CHAPTER I.

NONSENSE, old fellow! No fear of your getting on at Stonyhurst. Why, you must pick up knowledge as the Jews of old gathered their manna on the eve of the Sabbath, in double proportion, to have already learnt so much.'

'The credit is Mr. Hervey's; he has taken great pains with my education.'

'Your disclaimer won't wash, my modest friend. Mr. Hervey can't work without your co-operation, although he may be a man of transcendent ability, created for the purpose

of instructing you and others in the road to fame. Your praise of him reminds me to warn you against falling in with Father Jem's boys, as he calls them. He has a special gift of reducing refractory spirits to docility, and has succeeded in turning many a wayward mind to good; but there is a falseness about one or two of his present disciples which has brought them all into discredit with our set. It is better you should know this, for they are plausible, and are likely to endeavour to catch you, and I mean you to belong to us.'

'I should like you to advise me on any subject you think will be of use to me.'

'Just so, my dear fellow, and I believe myself peculiarly fitted to enact the *rôle* of adviser; therefore, I crave your attention.'

Walter laughed, and the conversation became more animated, as question followed question, until the elder of the two suddenly changed their discourse by exclaiming:

'Uncle Everard's is a grand place from here. He is always trying to cram me with its historical legends: says he must have me well up in subjects affecting the honour of the family;' then, as if aware of boasting, he

continued : ' This is a trim little spot of yours ; but I naturally feel proud of the home of the Dacres.'

Walter winced at the boast ; his slight annoyance was, however, unperceived by his voluble guest, whose talk was unchecked.

' It's an awful shame I should have been here six days and only have got introduced to you this afternoon. I'll give Uncle Ev a piece of my mind about it at dinner. The governor and I are off to-morrow to mamma, who is ordered by old Grimes to the South of Europe. Hope that fellow of yours won't be long ; the dear old boy objects to have his dinner kept waiting.'

He was soon in his saddle, then both youths had so much left to say, although so slightly acquainted, that dinner at the Court was in danger of being forgotten altogether. Even when he had, as he said, finally taken leave, he turned back for a last word, then giving the reins to his horse, he dashed along, to the evident admiration of his new acquaintance, Walter Ferrers. During the few moments Gerald Dacre continued in sight, Walter gazed after his receding figure, shown to advantage

by his practised horsemanship, with evident pleasure; then a deeper shadow of thoughtfulness overspread his delicately-refined features and he abandoned himself to a mental retrospect of the conversation with his newly-found friend. The current of his reflections flowed untroubled by any painful drawback, his frank, noble features gave expression to perfect inward contentment, until his reverie was interrupted by the stirring life around, and his musing changed into thorough enjoyment of the scene before him.

Bellevue was not only, in the words of Gerald Dacre, 'a trim little place,' but also a spot on which Nature had been lavish of her beauty, and although by the heir to broad lands and stately mansions its dimensions were pronounced small, many wealthy persons would have given large sums to possess the picturesque nook inhabited by the successful manufacturer, Trevelyan Ferrers. All this seemed to pass through Walter's mind as he looked on his home, situated on an elevated site in its well-kept grounds, sheltered, north and east, by wooded hills which separated it from the noise and bustle of the busy town,

and commanding southwards a gradually sloping stretch of country of considerable extent, dotted with villages, until the land rose again, and another range of hills towered above the intervening spires.

Westward the eye rested on the plain with its woodland lines, amidst which the tortuous river wound its course, bearing, as it sluggishly flowed onwards, rich cargoes from the industries of the town, and many a noble freight, the produce of the neighbouring country. South and west the rural district teemed with life, harvest having commenced, and as Walter stood, snatches of songs fell on his ear, mellowed by distance; above these, at intervals, would rise the merry laugh of sportive children, or hum of conversation, whilst the fields still untouched by scythe or sickle now showed their golden hues beneath the rays of the setting sun. Poet or painter would not have cavilled at the landscape, which, even to Walter's accustomed eye, had never looked more lovely; and, after silently revelling in the glorious prospect, he murmured softly:

'I care not what he says; no one could have a more beautiful home.'