

**A MEMOIR OF HUGO DANIEL
HARPER, D.D: LATE PRINCIPAL OF
JESUS COLLEGE, OXFORD AND
FOR MANY YEARS HEAD-MASTER
OF SHERBORNE SCHOOL, DORSET**

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A Memoir of Hugo Daniel Harper, D.D: Late Principal of Jesus College, Oxford and for Many Years Head-Master of Sherborne School, Dorset by L. V. Lester

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BY

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PRINCIPAL OF VICTORIA COLLEGE, JERSEY; LATE FELLOW AND
LECTURER OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD

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A MEMOIR
OF
HUGO DANIEL HARPER

CHAPTER I.

EARLY LIFE—COWBRIDGE GRAMMAR-SCHOOL

HUGO DANIEL HARPER was born on May 3, 1821. His family belonged to Staffordshire, but Thomas Harper, his father, had lived almost from his boyhood in Wales, and had so thoroughly mastered the language, and identified himself with the interests and modes of thought of the Principality, that he came to be known among his neighbours as "the best Saxon that ever came to Wales." After his marriage in 1815 with Miss Anne Isabella Roby, a member of a well-known Leicestershire family, he lived for some years at Abercrave, a large house near Neath in Glamorganshire. Dr. Harper was the third child and only son. His father was at first a rich man, and owned large stone quarries and coal-

mines in Wales. He was also a man of considerable ability, and introduced many improvements in the mining processes which were in use at the time. His ingenuity was unfortunately the indirect cause of financial disaster. Owing to the failure of a firm which had undertaken to bring out some of his inventions, and in which he was pecuniarily interested, he lost a large sum of money, and found himself in altered circumstances. In 1829 he moved to Plymouth, and it was here that his son gained his first experience of school-life at a large and flourishing institution, the head-master of which was John Meyricke Macaulay, a cousin of the great historian. Subsequently his change of fortune made him thankful to be able to claim a nomination for the boy at Christ's Hospital as "Founder's Kin."

Of his own school-days, in spite of a very great regard and affection which he entertained for Mr. Webster, head-master of the mathematical school, Dr. Harper seems never to have thought or spoken with the pleasure with which most men recall that period of their lives. He was sent to Christ's Hospital, much against his will, at an age when he was no doubt old enough to realise the blow which had fallen upon his father, and to resent, as boys will, the appearance of being dependent upon charity, even though it was the charity of a great and illustrious foundation. Thus the man who was after-

wards destined to inspire so many generations of pupils with the idea, and to make possible to them the realisation, of a happy, vigorous, healthy-minded boyhood, found his own experiences of school-life discouraging and gloomy. That this was not the result of any failure on his own part to make the best use of his opportunities may be seen from the following extract from a letter of an old school-fellow, the Rev. J. A. L. Airey :—

“ At school his acquirements and morals were of the first stamp, the former having always been to me, as his class-fellow, a subject of fear, the latter of admiration and esteem ; and indeed, during the many years I knew him, up to the time of his leaving school as an Exhibitioner to and Scholar of Jesus College, Oxford, I know not of a single fault, great or small, public or private, that was ever laid to his charge by master or scholar.”

Here is another glimpse of his school-life from Dr. W. Haig Brown, Master of Charterhouse :—

“ I well remember his school-days. He was by two years my senior in the head form (Grecians) at Christ's Hospital, and I was indebted to him for many acts of kindness and generosity. He and Sir Henry Maine were the two Exhibitioners who left the school for the Universities in 1840.”

At Christ's Hospital young Harper gave evidence of marked mathematical ability, and it might have

been expected that, with the consciousness of such powers, he would have availed himself of the special advantages which Pembroke College, Cambridge, then offered to the school; for there were very few openings for a mathematician in those days at the other University. But his father had friends among the Fellows of Jesus College, Oxford, and he was also himself, it can hardly be doubted, eager to keep up his connection with the Wales of his early childhood, and so he stood for and was elected to a scholarship there in 1840.

A blameless school-life was followed by a blameless college career. In after years he was able to declare "that he had never been where he should have felt ashamed for his wife to have known or have seen him." That he must have worked hard goes without saying; no one could "read double," even in those days, without doing so; but he very rarely read in the afternoon or late at night. He was habitually an early riser, and could never endure late hours. The bulk of his work at college was done by the middle of the day. In Michaelmas Term, 1844, he was placed in the first class in mathematics, where he had the whole class to himself, and in the second class in classics at the public examination. Two months before this, his father, whose health had been undermined by trouble and anxiety, had died, and there is every reason to believe that the loss weighed

heavily upon his son, and in all probability was the cause of his not obtaining a "double first." Ample amends were made in the following year, when he obtained both the University mathematical scholarships. He seems, indeed, to have been regarded as the best mathematician of his generation of Oxford men. It is not too much to call this a brilliant University career.

A Fellowship at Jesus College (1845) was the natural sequel, and for the next two years he lived in Oxford, and occupied himself with taking part in the work of the College and attending to his own private pupils, one of whom writes, "I do not speak inadvertently when I say that to him alone I was indebted for the position I obtained in mathematics, viz., a first class;" and another, "I have no hesitation in saying I owe what little success I may have met with in Oxford to his kindness and instruction." The indomitable energy which was one of his most striking characteristics throughout his life soon made itself felt. Before his year of probation as Fellow was out, he had formed designs for what amounted to the complete restoration of the College buildings. It is interesting to find his thoughts thus early turning in the direction of "bricks and mortar." In the following letter to the Rev. E. J. Ffoulkes, afterwards Vicar of St. Mary's, one of his colleagues, he gives a sketch of his proposals:—