

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF YE GENTLEMEN  
OF DOWNSIDE IN YE MIDDLE OF YE  
NINETEENTH CENTURY.

WE present our readers with two more facsimiles on a reduced scale of the etchings from the famous debating book of 1850. The originals have been appreciated almost out of existence, and their reproduction and conservation in the pages of the "Downside Review" can scarcely fail to be of service in recalling to the generation of thirty years ago some of the features and figures of their time, while to that of to-day the idea which they give of Downside as it was, and the comparisons which they invite with Downside as it is, present also much that is interesting and instructive. The diary of Mr. Pips, a grave gentleman of the middle of this century, simple yet shrewd as was his great prototype (and, we must suppose) ancestor refers to the period now upwards of thirty years since, when having a boy at the old Downside of that time, his paternal heart leads him to make frequent visits to his offspring, and the family peculiarity to note in his diary his impressions of the place and the manners and customs of its inhabitants.

To rightly enter into the spirit of his observations no doubt it is necessary that one should have been a boy of those days, for the Downside of 1850 and the Downside of 1881, both as to their internal and external features, present many remarkable distinctions.

An entire generation has passed between these dates: the boy at school of that time is himself to-day the Mr. Pips who takes his boy to the old school, and though the distinctions which have arisen are many and remarkable, still so strong is the force of conservatism and tradition that in many respects the Downside of to-day is the Downside of 1850. The son will as likely as not occupy the same bench, the same desk as his father did before him, sleep in the same bed (and in the same class-room), be animated by the same hopes and fears, and stimulated by the application of the same effective and wholesome incentive to learning.

The record of the manners and customs as Mr. Pips gives it to us is all the more interesting from the fact that it was made at an

important epoch in the history of Downside, at a time which marks a very sensible state of transition. Those may be said to be the days which saw the passing away of the old school as it had existed from the foundation, and the growth of the new one, which in essentials has altered but little since. They were the days when the buildings which formed the Monastery and College of St. Gregory's were confined to the old house the refectory and chapel block, and the old study-room with Paradise-row and the dormitories. In those days our tastes were simple and our manners and customs rude. Looking back, we see again the old dark and dismal play-room, the primitive wash-house, the low studyroom, with its few and comfortless class-rooms, the dreaded prefect's room and the cramped apartment dignified as the library for the twelve first—a library that the lowest form would to-day despise. We see the old refectory, alike the dining-room and exhibition-room, and we think of the *feasts* of those days and of the ostrich-like appetites we possessed. *Calum non animam mutant*, and so it is with Downside. The surroundings have altered, but the Downside boy of to-day differs not greatly from his father of the year 1850. But it is not with the differences that may exist that we wish chiefly to concern ourselves now. "Old and new Downside" is a suggestive title for a future article, brimming over with reminiscence, and bright with anecdote. Yet, while we follow Mr. Pips and examine his faithful etchings (of which in succeeding numbers the series will be completed), it will occur that after all how little has been changed, how much the manners and customs of ye gentlemen of Downside of ye nineteenth century resemble those of ye close.

Mr. Pips, in his diary, it must be confessed, is inclined to be somewhat prolix. We have deemed it better, therefore, to give selected extracts rather than a faithful transcription. We should remind also those of our readers who might be inclined to find fault with the quality of these productions that the interest attaching to them is rather sentimental than on account of their literary merit. On such a ground they appeal to the memories both of the writers and their contemporaries, and of those, who as the years have since rolled on, have whiled away a pleasant hour over the debating book of 1850. Mr. Pips may now speak for himself:—

"Did this morning receive again a letter from my boy, in which, among other sundry matters, he writeth thus:—'There is one matter concerning which I must send you word, and, peradventure, it may be filled with interest to you, as it was for my share filled

with much vexation to me. One morning very early, when I was much intent on my studies, I did hear the study-room door open, and then there was a buzzing sound like to the noise of a swarm of bumble bees, which I did afterwards understand, was meant for a quiet laugh, and on raising my eyes towards the door did see a tall white figure, much like a ghost. The figure did salute us with 'Good morning, gentlemen,' whereupon ye buzzing did change into bleating, as if ye swarm of bees were all on a sudden transformed into a flock of sheep. By degrees, ye sheep were again changed

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MIDDLE OF YE NINETEENTH CENTURY. No VIII



SHOWYNGE YE BARBER A-CUTTYNGE YE HAIRE -

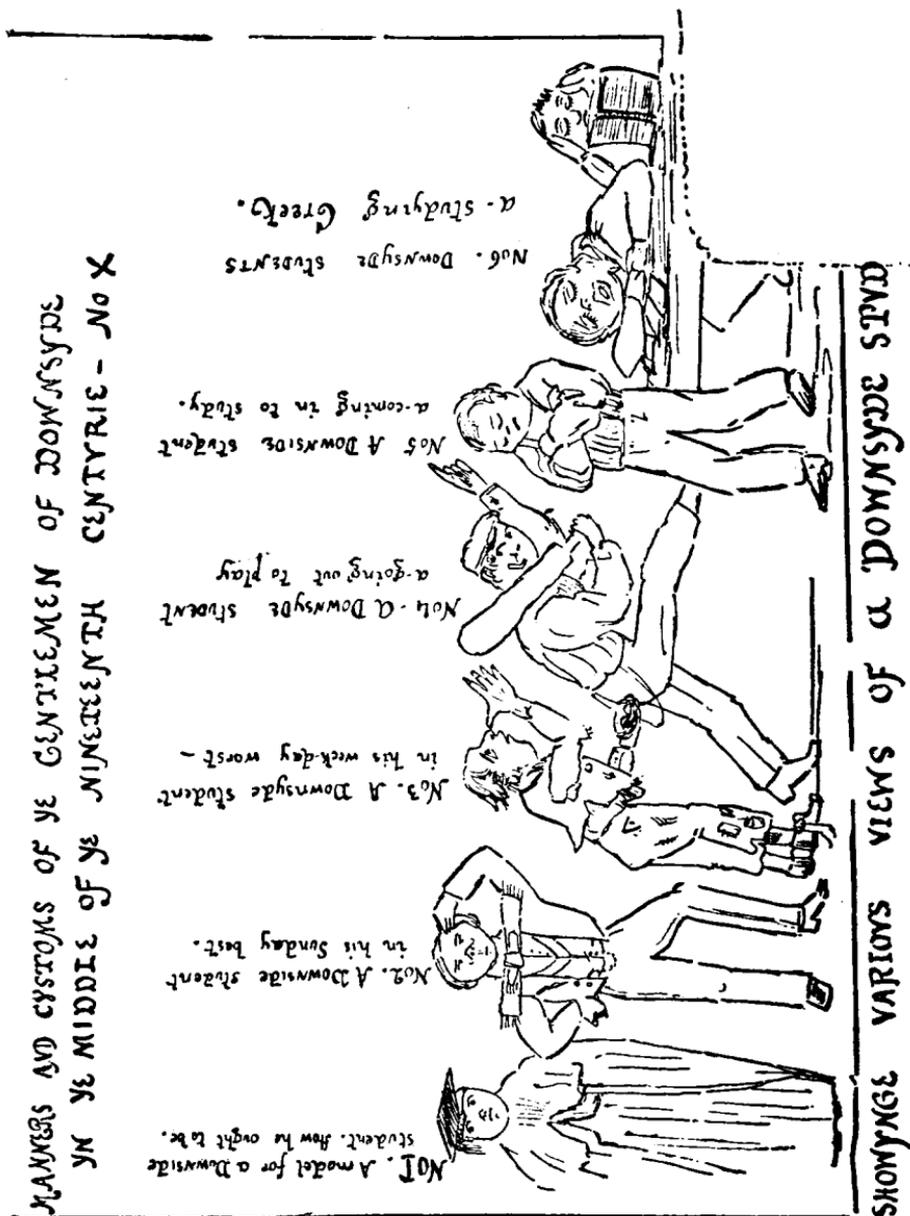
into bees, and ye figure having been turned into ye class-room, ye buzzing became quiet. I did soon understand from my neighbour (with whom I sometimes have a turn of conversation when ye master's eye is not towards me) that this was ye barber from Shepton Mallet come to diminish ye amount of hair on ye head of each student. At first was right pleased (or as they say here was *jolly glad*), for did often find my hair getting in my eyes and over my ears, and was obliged to toss my head with much force backwards to drive away ye inconvenience; but when did see the first ladde come out from ye operation, did marvel much to see ye

change, and was expressing my surprise to my neighbour, when ye intelligence that I was to sit at my desk after dinner and learn twenty lines did force me to keep my wonder to myself. On arriving at my turn to enter for ye operation, did imitate ye others and go in with brush and comb in hand, though was thinking at ye same time might now lock them up for two or three weeks, till ye hair would grow long enough again to be brushed and combed. Ye first idea which entered my brain when viewing ye barber more closely was, that if he did so much like cutting ye hair off other heads, he might at least take a little from his own: for he did not at all lack a supply, and to make it more striking to the sight, did make it stand upright on end, as if to stand as a notice and advertisement that he was a dresser of hair. Did remember ye proverb 'Ye sonne of cobbler is always worst shod,' and did suppose ye head of barber was always worst dressed. In ye midst of my ruminations did sit down on ye chair and get ye cloth thrown over my shoulders and tucked into my neck. Ye conversation was not very animating or with much interest; perhaps ye barber had heard ye advice of Diogenes to barbers. For they tell me that this philosopher being about to submit to have his hair cut was asked by ye barber how he wished it to be done, whereupon he replied 'In silence.' I could have wished to have told our barber to cut my hair before his dinner, for though I do not know for what he has much taste, I should if I were asked, say that he is fond of onions and beer. In days of yore I have been told it was usual for barbers to practice surgery, and methinks our barber is eager to restore this custom of oldentime, for once or twice he performed, while cutting my hair, a very disagreeable surgical operation, by driving ye point of his scissors into ye skin behind my ear, as if he were anxious to find a short cut from ye ear to ye nape of ye neck. T'was droll to see at one time half ye school with ye hair cut, and ye other half not yet cut. T'would bring to your mind ye days of fighting between Cavaliers and Roundheads, of which I have been of late reading in history."

'Not having much news,' "thus writeth to me my dear sonne," 'methinks it not altogether inopportune that I should send you some pieces of information of ye doings in St. Gregory his College.

'We are now much engaged at ye noble English game of cryket, which to my taste is much preferable to Latin and Greek and all such like. I deem this to be the best part of a lyfe in college, and if you were to witness the eagerness and hilarity with which we go out to play, when the time of study is at an end, and

ye regret with which we come into study when ye time of play is at an end, you would think our first object is to play and our last



object is to study. Perhaps you think differently, but they tell me that in this world there is much variety of opinion. A droll friend

of mine (and some of my friends are very droll) has lately observed to me, that if some of our good forefathers had been so kind as to have clapped all ye Greek and Latin Classics into one large bonfire, college life would now have been more tolerable, for we should not have to read how Cæsar did lick ye Frenchmen, and how Cyrus did walk so many parasangs each day. But it seems to me that College boys do much to destroy ye classics, and yet cannot. The Cæsar and Xenophon which it falleth to my lot to parse are much disfigured and torn withal. But they are also much beautified with portraits. I have a figure of Cæsar with huge spectacles on his nose, and Xenophon a playing ye fiddle, and Cyrus riding upon a sorry jack-ass. For the correctness of ye portrait it pertaineth not to me to speak. Ye time indeed for studying Greek maketh it very dull and sleepy work. It has, I remember me, well been said that the best way to learn a lesson is to read it over night, then by putting ye book under your pillow at night, your lesson becomes a subject for your dreams, and in the morning it is well known. So hath it oftentimes been tried here to study Greek after this wise; for first they study for ten minutes then fall asleep over ye books, but I believe when they go into class, the dream proveth deceitful, and the lesson is not well known. But on this point it is better to be silent than to speak much. There is among ye students a great variety of costume, and they say variety is pleasing. It seemeth to me oftentime that on Sundays each tries to cut a great swell, and on weekdays each tries to look most untidy. There is a great thirst amongst us for a kind of hat, invented, I suppose from the name, by one Mr. James Crow, but who this gentleman is or was, passeth my knowledge. They are the kind of hats which in this neighbourhood are worn by the drivers of coal carts. Some are white, some are black, some are grey, some are green, some are brown, some are red, some are blue, some are every colour, and some in fine are no colour at all. Some have no inside, and some have no outside: some have no brim, and some have no crown. To my taste they are exceeding ugly, but they seem to be the fashion and are much worn. What tends much to their favour is that they cost not much money. Some good ones I believe are to be obtained for three half-pennies. It hath sometimes of late entered into the minds of some of ye boys, that it would be well to wear collegè caps and gowns, but in my opinion they would be very inconvenient for cryket, and I think Mr. James Crow his hats much preferable.' So do I agree with my somme, especially as a gown and cap would cost much more than three half-pennies."