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Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman
Darwin Thoreau Twain
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte
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East Anglia Personal Recollections and Historical Associations

J. Ewing (James Ewing) Ritchie

Imprint

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PRESS NOTICES OF THE FIRST EDITION.

'We cordially recommend Mr. Ritchie's book to all who wish to pass an agreeable hour and to learn something of the outward actions and inner life of their predecessors. It is full of sketches of East Anglian celebrities, happily touched if lightly limned.' — *East Anglian Daily Times*.

'A very entertaining and enjoyable book. Local gossip, a wide range of reading and industrious research, have enabled the author to enliven his pages with a wide diversity of subjects, specially attractive to East Anglians, but also of much general interest.' — *Daily Chronicle*.

'The work is written in a light gossipy style, and by reason both of it and of the variety of persons introduced is interesting. To a Suffolk or Norfolk man it is, of course, especially attractive. The reader will go through these pages without being wearied by application. They form a pleasant and entertaining contribution to county literature, and "East Anglia" will, we should think, find its way to many of the east country bookshelves.' — *Suffolk Chronicle*.

'The book is as readable and attractive a volume of local chronicles as could be desired. Though all of our readers may not see "eye to eye" with Mr. Ritchie, in regard to political and theological questions, they cannot fail to gain much enjoyment from his excellent delineation of old days in East Anglia.' — *Norwich Mercury*.

'"East Anglia" has the merit of not being a compilation, which is more than can be said of the great majority of books produced in these days to satisfy the revived taste for topographical gossip. Mr. Ritchie is a Suffolk man — the son of a Noncon-

formist minister of Wrentham in that county — and he looks back to the old neighbourhood and the old times with an affection which is likely to communicate itself to its readers. Altogether we can with confidence recommend this book not only to East Anglians, but to all readers who have any affinity for works of its class.' — *Daily News*.

'Mr. Ritchie's book belongs to a class of which we have none too many, for when well done they illustrate contemporary history in a really charming manner. What with their past grandeur, their present progress, their martyrs, patriots, and authors, there is plenty to tell concerning Eastern counties: and one who writes with native enthusiasm is sure to command an audience.' — *Baptist*.

'Mr. Ritchie, known to the numerous readers of the *Christian World* as "Christopher Crayon," has the pen of a ready, racy, refreshing writer. He never writes a dull line, and never for a moment allows our interest to flag. In the work before us, which is not his first, he is, I should think, at his best. The volume is the outcome of extensive reading, many rambles over the districts described, and of thoughtful observation. We seem to live and move and have our being in East Anglia. Its folklore, its traditions, its worthies, its memorable events, are all vividly and charmingly placed before us, and we close the book sorry that there is no more of it, and wondering why it is that works of a similar kind have not more frequently appeared.' — *Northern Pioneer*.

'It has yielded us more gratification than any work that we have read for a considerable time. The book ought to have a wide circulation in the Eastern counties, and will not fail to yield profit and delight wherever it finds its way.' — *Essex Telegraph*.

'Mr. Ritchie has here written a most attractive chapter of autobiography. He recalls the scenes of his early days, and whatever was quaint or striking in connection with them, and finds in his recollections ready pegs on which to hang historical incident and antiquarian curiosities of many kinds. He passes from point to point in a delightfully cheerful and contagious mood. Mr. Ritchie's reading has been as extensive and careful as his observation is keen and his temper genial; and his pages, which appeared in *The Christian World Magazine*, well deserve the honour of book-form, with the additions he has been able to make to them.' — *British Quarterly Review*.

EAST ANGLIA.

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS
and
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS.
by
J. EWING RITCHIE.

'Behold, there came wise men from the East to
Jerusalem.'

Matthew.

SECOND EDITION,
revised, corrected, and enlarged.
LONDON:
JARROLD & SONS, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS, E.C.
1893.

p. v PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

The chapters of which this little work consists originally appeared in the *Christian World Magazine*, where they were so fortunate as to attract favourable notice, and from which they are now reprinted, with a few slight additions, by permission of the Editor. In bringing out a second edition, I have incorporated the substance of other articles originally written for local journals. It is to be hoped, touching as they do a theme not easily exhausted, but always interesting to East Anglians, that they may help to sustain that love of one's county which, alas! like the love of country, is a matter reckoned to be of little importance in these cosmopolitan days, but which, nevertheless, has had not a little share in the formation of that national greatness and glory in which at all times Englishmen believe.

p. vi One word more. I have retained some strictures on the clergy of East Anglia, partly because they were true at the time to which I refer, and partly because it gives me pleasure to own that they are not so now. The Church of England clergyman of to-day is an immense improvement on that of my youth. In ability, in devotion to the duties of his calling, in intelligence, in self-denial, in zeal, he is equal to the clergy of any other denomination. If he has lost his hold upon Hodge, that, at any rate, is not his fault.

Clacton-on-Sea,
January, 1893.

p. 1 CHAPTER I. a suffolk village.

Distinguished people born there—Its Puritans and Nonconformists—The country round Covehithe—Southwold—Suffolk dialect—The Great Eastern Railway.

In his published Memoirs, the great Metternich observes that if he had never been born he never could have loved or hated. Following so illustrious a precedent, I may observe that if I had not been born in East Anglia I never could have been an East Anglian. Whether I should have been wiser or better off had I been born elsewhere, is an interesting question, which, however, it is to be hoped the public will forgive me if I decline to discuss on the present occasion.

In a paper bearing the date of 1667, a Samuel Baker, of Wattisfield Hall, writes: 'I was born at p. 2a village called Wrentham, which place I cannot pass by the mention of without saying thus much, that religion has there flourished longer, and that in much piety; the Gospel and grace of it have been more powerfully and clearly preached, and more generally received; the professors of it have been more sound in the matter and open and steadfast in the profession of it in an hour of temptation, have manifested a greater oneness amongst themselves and have been more eminently preserved from enemies without (albeit they dwell where Satan's seat is encompassed with his malice and rage), than I think in any village of the like capacity in England; which I speak as my duty to the place, but to my particular shame rather than otherwise, that such a dry and barren plant should spring out of such a soil.' I resemble this worthy Mr. Baker in two respects. In the first place, I was born at Wrentham, though at a considerably later period of time than 1667; and, secondly, if he was a barren plant—he of whom we read, in Harmer's Miscellaneous Works, that 'he was a gentleman of fortune and education, very zealous for the Congregational plan of church government and discipline, and a sufferer in its bonds for a good conscience'—what am I?

p. 3Nor was it only piety that existed in this distant parish. If the reader turns to the diary of John Evelyn, under the date of 1679, he

will find mention made of a child brought up to London, 'son of one Mr. Wotton, formerly amanuensis to Dr. Andrews, Bishop of Winton, who both read and perfectly understood Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Arabic and Syriac, and most of the modern languages, disputed in divinity, law and all the sciences, was skilful in history, both ecclesiastical and profane; in a word, so universally and solidly learned at eleven years of age that he was looked on as a miracle. Dr. Lloyd, one of the most deep-learned divines of this nation in all sorts of literature, with Dr. Burnet, who had severely examined him, came away astonished, and told me they did not believe there had the like appeared in the world. He had only been instructed by his father, who being himself a learned person, confessed that his son knew all that he himself knew. But what was more admirable than his vast memory was his judgment and invention, he being tried with divers hard questions which required maturity of thought and experience. He was also dexterous in chronology, antiquities, mathematics. In sum, an *intellectus universalis* beyond all that we p. 4reade of Picus Mirandula, and other precece witts, and yet withal a very humble child.' This prodigy was the son of the Rev. Henry Wotton, minister of Wrentham, Suffolk. Sir William Skippon, a parishioner, in a letter yet extant, describes the wonderful achievements of the little fellow when but five years old. He was admitted at Katherine Hall, Cambridge, some months before he was ten years old. In after-years he was the friend and defender of Bentley and the antagonist of Sir William Temple in the great controversy about ancient and modern learning. He died in 1726, and was buried at Buxted, in Sussex. It is clear that there was no such intellectual phenomenon in all London under the Stuarts as that little Wrentham lad.

Of that village, when I came into the world, my father was the honoured, laborious and successful minister. The meeting-house, as it was called, which stood in the lane leading from the church to the highroad, was a square red brick building, vastly superior to any of the ancient meeting-houses round. It stood in an enclosure, one side of which was devoted to the reception of the farmers' gigs, which, on a Sunday afternoon, when the principal service was held, made quite a respectable show when drawn up in a line. By p. 5the side of it was a cottage, in which lived the woman who kept the place tidy, and her husband, who looked after the horses as they were unhar-

nessed and put in the stable close by. The backs of the gigs were sheltered from the road by a hedge of lilacs, and over the gateway a gigantic elm kept watch and ward. The house in which we lived was also part of the chapel estate, and, if it was a little way off, it was, at any rate, adapted to the wants of a family of quiet habits and simple tastes. On one side of the house was a water-butt, and I can well remember my first sad experience of the wickedness of the world when, getting up one morning to look after my rabbits and other live stock, I found that water-butt had gone, and that there were thieves in a village so rural and renowned for piety as ours. I say renowned, and not without reason. Years and years back there was a pious clergyman of the name of Steffe, who had a son in Dr. Doddridge's Academy, at Daventry, and it is a fact that the great Doctor himself, at some time or other, had been a guest in the village.

In 1741 the Doctor thus records his East Anglian recollections, in a letter to his wife: 'You have great reason to confide in that very kind Providence which has hitherto watched over p. 6us, and has, since the date of my last, brought us about sixty miles nearer London. From Yarmouth we went on Friday morning to Wrentham, where good Mrs. Steffe lives, and from thence to a gentleman's seat, near Walpole, where I was most respectfully entertained. As I had twenty miles to ride yesterday morning, he, though I had never seen him before last Tuesday, brought me almost half-way in his chaise, to make the journey easier. I reached Woodbridge before two, and rode better in the cool of the evening, and had the happiness to be entertained in a very elegant and friendly family, though perfectly a stranger; and, indeed, I have been escorted from one place to another in every mile of my journey by one, and sometimes by two or three, of my brethren in a most respectful and agreeable manner.' Dr. Doddridge's East Anglian recollections seem to have been uncommonly agreeable, owing quite as much, I must candidly confess, to the presence of the sisters as of the brethren. Writing to his wife an account of a little trip on the river, he adds: 'It was a very pleasant day, and I concluded it in the company of one of the finest women I ever beheld, who, though she had seven children grown up to marriageable years, or very near it, is p. 7still herself almost a beauty, and a person of sense, good breeding, and piety, which

might astonish one who had not the happiness of being intimately acquainted with you.' What a sly rogue was Dr. Doddridge! How could any wife be jealous when her husband finishes off with such a compliment to herself?

But to return to the good Mrs. Steffe, of whom I am, on my mother's side, a descendant. I must add that as there were great men before Agamemnon, so there were good people in the little village of Wrentham before Mrs. Steffe appeared upon the scene. The Brewsters, who were an ancient family, which seems to have culminated under the glorious usurpation of Oliver Cromwell, were eminently good people in Dr. Doddridge's acceptation of the term, and I fancy did much as lords of the manor—and as inhabitants of Wrentham Hall, a building which had ceased to exist long before my time—to leaven with their goodness the surrounding lump. It seems to me that these Brewsters must have been more or less connected with Brewster the elder—of Robinson's Church at Leyden, who, we are told, came of a wealthy and distinguished family—who was well trained at Cambridge, and, says the historian, 'thence, being first seasoned with p. 8the seeds of grace and virtue, he went to the Court, and there served that religious and godly Mr. Davison divers years, when he was Secretary of State, who found him so discreet and faithful as he trusted him, above all others that were about him, and only employed him in matters of great trust and secrecy; he esteemed him rather as a son than a servant, and for his wisdom and godliness in private, he would converse with him more like a familiar than a master.' When evil times came, this Brewster was living in the big Manor House at Scrooby, and how he and his godly associates were driven into exile by a foolish King and cruel priests is known, or ought to be known, to everyone. Of these Wrentham Brewsters, one served his country in Parliament, or I am very much mistaken. It was to their credit that they sought out godly men, to whom they might entrust the cure of souls. In this respect, when I was a lad, their example certainly had not been followed, and Dissent flourished mainly because the moral instincts of the villagers and farmers and small tradesmen were shocked by hearing men on the Sunday reading the Lessons of the Church, leading the devotions of the people, and preaching sermons, who on the weekdays got drunk and led immoral p. 9th lives. As to the right of the

State to interfere in matters of religion, as to the danger to religion itself from the establishment of a State Church, as to the liberty of unlicensed prophesying, such topics the simple villagers ignored. All that they felt was that there came to them more of a quickening of the spiritual life, a fuller realization of God and things divine, in the meeting-house than in the parish church. They were not what pious Churchmen so much dread nowadays—Political Dissenters; how could they be such, having no votes, and never seeing a newspaper from one year's end to the other?

It was to the Brewsters that the village was indebted for the ministry of the Rev. John Phillip, who married the sister of the pious and learned Dr. Ames, Professor of the University of Franeker. Calamy tells us that by means of Dr. Ames, Mr. Phillip had no small furtherance in his studies, and intimate acquaintance with him increased his inclination to the Congregational way. Archbishop Abbot, writing to Winwood, 1611, says: 'I have written to Sir Horace Vere touching the English preacher at the Hague. We heard what he was that preceded, and we cannot be less cognisant what Mr. Ames is, for by a Latin printed book he hath laden the Church and State of England with p. 10a great deal of infamous contumely, so that if he were amongst us he would be so far from receiving preferment, that some exemplary punishment would be his reward. His Majesty had been advertised how this man is entertained and embraced at the Hague, and how he is a fit person to breed up captains and soldiers there in mutiny and faction.' One of Dr. Ames's works, which got him into trouble, was entitled 'A Fresh Suit against Ceremonies,' a work which we may be sure would be as distasteful to the Ritualists of our day as it was to the Ritualists of his own. One of his works, his 'Medulla Theologif,' I believe, adorned the walls of the paternal study. There is, belonging to the Wrentham Congregational Church Library, a volume of tracts, sixty-seven in number, of six or eight pages each, printed in 1622, forming a series of theses on theological topics, maintained by different persons, under the presidency of Dr. Ames; and I believe a son of the Doctor is buried in Wrentham Churchyard, as I recollect my father, on one occasion, had an old gravestone done up and relettered, which bore testimony to the virtues and piety and learning of an Ames. Thus if Mr. Phillip was chased out of Old England into New England for his Nonconformi-

ty, some of the good p. 11old Noncons remained to uphold the lamp which was one day to cast a sacred light on all quarters of the land. That some did emigrate with their pastor is probable, since we learn that there is a town called Wrentham across the Atlantic, said to have received that name because some of the first settlers came from Wrentham in England.

Touching Mr. Phillip, a good deal has been written by the Rev. John Browne, the painstaking author of 'The History of Congregationalism in Suffolk and Norfolk.' It appears that his arrival in America was not unexpected, as the Christian people of Dedham had invited him to that plantation beforehand. He did not, however, accept their invitation, but being much in request, 'and called divers ways, could not resolve; but, at length, upon weighty reasons concerning the public service and foundations of the college, he was persuaded to attend to the call of Cambridge;' and, adds an American writer, 'he might have been the first head of that blessed institution.' On the calling of the Long Parliament, he and his wife returned to England, and in 1642 we find him ministering to his old flock. So satisfied were the neighbouring Independents of his Congregationalism, that when, in 1644, members of Mr. p. 12Bridge's church residing in Norwich desired to form themselves into a separate community, they not only consulted with their brethren in Yarmouth, but with Mr. Phillip also, as the only man then in their neighbourhood on whose judgment and experience they could rely. In 1643 Mr. Phillip was appointed one of the members of the Assembly of Divines, and was recognised by Baillie in his Letters as one of the Independent men there. The Independents, as we know, sat apart, and were a sad thorn in the Presbyterians' side. Five of them, more zealous than the rest, formally dissented from the decisions of the Assembly, and afraid that toleration would not be extended to them, appealed to Parliament, 'as the most sacred refuge and asylum for mistaken and misjudged innocence.' Mr. Phillip's name, however, I do not find in that list; and possibly he was too old to be very active in the matter. He lived on till 1660, when he died at the good old age of seventy-eight. In the later years of his ministry he was assisted by his nephew, W. Ames, who in 1651 preached a sermon at St. Paul's, before the Lord Mayor and Aldermen, 'On the Saint's Security against Seducing Sports, or the

Anointing from the Holy One.' It is to be feared, in our p. 13more enlightened age, a good Wrentham Congregational minister would have little chance of preaching before a London Lord Mayor. Talent is supposed to exist only in the crowded town, where men have no time to think of anything but of the art of getting on.

Other heroic associations – of men who had suffered for the faith, who feared God rather than man, who preferred the peace of an approving conscience to the vain honours of the world – also were connected with the place. I remember being shown a bush in which the conventicle preacher used to hide himself when the enemy, in the shape of the myrmidons of Bishop Wren, of Norwich, were at his heels. That furious prelate, as many of us know, drove upwards of three thousand persons to seek their bread in a foreign land. Indeed, to such an extent did he carry out his persecuting system, that the trade and manufactures of the country materially suffered in consequence. However, in my boyish days I was not troubled much about such things. Dissent in Wrentham was quite respectable. If we had lost the Brewster family, whose arms were still to be seen on the Communion plate, a neighbouring squire attended at the meeting-house, as it was p. 14then the fashion to call our chapel, and so did the leading grocer and draper of the place, and the village doctor, the father of six comely daughters; and the display of gigs on a Sunday was really imposing. Alas! as I grew older I saw that imposing array not a little shorn of its splendour. The neighbouring baronet, Sir Thomas Gooch, M.P., added as he could farm to farm, and that a Dissenter was on no account to have one of his farms was pretty well understood. I fancy our great landlords have, in many parts of East Anglia, pretty well exterminated Dissent, to the real injury of the people all around. I write this advisedly. I dare say the preaching in the meeting-house was often very miserably poor. The service, I must own, seemed to me often peculiarly long and unattractive. There was always that long prayer which was, I fear, to all boys a time of utter weariness; but, nevertheless, there was a moral and intellectual life in our Dissenting circle that did not exist elsewhere. It was true we never attended dinners at the village public-house, nor indulged in card-parties, and regarded with a horror, which I have come to think unwholesome, the frivolity of balls or the attractions of a theatre; but we had all the new books voted into

our bookclub, p. 15and, as a lad, I can well remember how I revelled in the back numbers of the *Edinburgh Review*, though even then I could not but feel the injustice which it did to what it called the Lake school of poets, and more especially to Coleridge and Wordsworth. Shakespeare also was almost a sealed book, and perhaps we had a little too much of religious reading, such as Doddridge's 'Rise and Progress,' or Baxter's 'Saint's Rest,' or Alleine's 'Call to the Unconverted,' or Fleetwood's 'Life of Christ'—excellent books in their way, undoubtedly, but not remarkably attractive to boys redolent of animal life, who had thriven and grown fat in that rustic village, on whose vivid senses the world that now is produced far more effect than the terrors or splendours of the world to come.

The country round, if flat, was full of interesting associations. At the back of us—that is, on the sea—was the village of Covehithe, and when a visitor found his way into the place—an event which happened now and then—our first excursion with him or her—for plenty of donkeys were to be had which ladies could ride—was to Covehithe, known to literary men as the birthplace of John Bale, Bishop of Ossory, in Ireland. In connection with donkeys, I have this interesting recollection, p. 16that one of the old men of the village told me. At the time of the Bristol riots, he remembered Sir Charles Wetherall, the occasion of them, as a boy at Wrentham much given to donkey-riding. In the history of the drama John Bale takes distinguished rank. He was one of those by whom the drama was gradually evolved, and all to whom it is a study and delight must remember him with regard. His play of 'Kynge John' is described by Mr. Collier as occupying an intermediate place between moralities and historical plays—and it is the only known existing specimen of that species of composition of so early a date. Bale, who was trained at the monastery of White Friars, in Norwich, thence went to Jesus College, Cambridge, and was expelled in consequence of the zeal with which he exposed the errors of Popery. However, Bale had a friend and protector in Cromwell, Henry VIII.'s faithful servant. On the death of that nobleman Bale proceeded to Germany, where he appears to have been well received and hospitably entertained by Luther and Melancthon, and on the accession of Edward VI. he returned to England. In Mary's reign persecution recommenced, and Bale fled to Frankfort. He again returned at the com-

mencement of Elizabeth's reign, and p. 17 was made prebend of Canterbury, at which place he died at the age of sixty-three. Covehithe nowadays is not interesting so much as the birthplace of Bale, as on account of its ecclesiastical ruins, which are covered with ivy and venerable in their decay. The church was evidently almost a cathedral, and surely at one time or other there must have been an enormous population to worship in such a sanctuary; and yet all you see now is a public-house just opposite the church, a few cottages, and a farmhouse. A few steps farther bring you to the low cliff, and there is the sea ever encroaching on the land in that quarter and swallowing up farmhouse and farm. Miss Agnes Strickland, who lived at Reydon Hall—a few miles inland—has thus sung the melancholy fate of Covehithe:

'All roofless now the stately pile,
And rent the arches tall,
Through which with bright departing smile
The western sunbeams fall.

* * * * *

'Tradition's voice forgets to tell
Whose ashes sleep below,
And Fancy here unchecked may dwell,
And bid the story flow.'

Ah! what was that story? How the question puzzled my young head, as I walked in the sandy p. 18 lane that led from my native village! How insignificant looked the little church built up inside! What had become of the crowds that at one time must have filled that ancient fane? How was it that no trace of them remained? They had vanished in the historical age, and yet no one could tell how or when. Nature was, then, stronger than man. He was gone, but the stars glittered by night and the sun shone by day, and the ivy had spread its green mantle over all. Yes! what was man, with his pomp and glory, but dust and ashes, after all! How I loved to go to Covehithe and climb its ruins, and dream of the distant past!

Here in that eastern point of England it seemed to me there was a good deal of decay. Sometimes, on a fine summer day, we would take a boat and sail from the pretty little town of Southwold, about four miles from Wrentham, to Dunwich, another relic of the past.

According to an old historian, it was a city surrounded with a stone wall having brazen gates; it had fifty-two churches, chapels, and religious houses; it also boasted hospitals, a huge palace, a bishop's seat, a mayor's mansion, and a Mint. Beyond it a forest appears to have extended some miles into what is now the sea. p. 19 One of our local Suffolk poets, James Bird (I saw him but once, when I walked into his house, about twelve miles from Wrentham, having run away from home at the ripe age of ten, and told him I had come to see him, as he was a poet; and I well remember how then, much to my chagrin, he gave me plum-pudding for dinner, and sent me to play with his boys till a cart was found in which the prodigal was compelled to return), wrote and published a poetical romance, called 'Dunwich; or, a Tale of the Splendid City;' and Agnes Strickland also made it the subject of her melodious verse, commencing:

'Oft gazing on thy craggy brow,
We muse on glories o'er.
Fair Dunwich! Thou art lonely now,
Renowned and sought no more.'

Never has a splendid city more utterly collapsed. After a long ride over sandy lanes and fields, you come to the edge of a cliff, on which stand a few houses. There is all that remains of the Dunwich where the first Bishop of East Anglia taught the Christian faith, and where was born John Daye, the printer of the works of Parker, Latimer, and Fox, who, in the reign of Mary, became, as most real men did then, a prisoner and an exile for the p. 20 truth. He has also the reputation of being the first in England who printed in the Saxon character. In the records of type-founding the name of Daye stands with that of the most illustrious. When the Company of Stationers obtained their charter from Philip and Mary, he was the first person admitted to their livery. In 1580 he was master of the company, to which he bequeathed property at his death. The following is the inscription which marks the place of his burial in Little Bradley, Suffolk:

'Here lyes the Daye that darkness could not blynd,
When Popish fogges had overcast the sunne;
This Daye the cruel night did leave behind,
To view and show what bloudie actes were donne.