

## Henry Maudsley Autobiography, 1912

The third of four brothers, I was born at 'Rome', a farmhouse so called in the Parish of Giggleswick, on February 5th 1834 and was baptized soon after in the vestry of the church on a cold and snowy morning. The farm was inherited by my father from his eldest brother Henry who died unmarried, and had been in the possession of the family for several generations. The present farmhouse was built by my great great grandfather in place of an old one pulled down; and carved in stone over the front door are the letters H. M. and the date. (Curiously, a small adjacent farm called 'Israel' was once in the possession of the family.) My father described himself as a "yeoman": now an almost extinct class.

My mother was Mary Bateson, the eldest daughter of a farmer at Scale Hall (Scale Hall. It was probably because of that relationship that he fell in love and rode 12 miles to the place to do his courtship), near Lancaster. She and my father were, I believe half cousins or something like. When married, besides a small farm called 'Turnerford', she was owner of the farm 'Dubsyke', near Clapham, Yorkshire, which is now occupied by my nephew Thomas Maudsley. A brother of my mother, who was intending to become a clergyman, was drowned while bathing in the river Lune, which flows near Scale Hall. Another brother, after persevering labour under difficulties, became an MD of the London University and Medical Officer of Health to the Borough of Southwark. He died suddenly at the age of 60 years from a fulminating stroke of apoplexy. Apoplexy was apparently a natural mode of death in the family, his father having fallen down and died in an apoplectic fit, and my two elder brothers likewise from apoplexy. My mother suffered much from headaches, and my memories of her are chiefly as a suffering invalid. But suffered worse, I believe, from maltreatment, for one memory of her doctor's visits is of basins of blood owing to frequent medical bleedings to relieve her headaches – until she fainted – as she believed they did at the time but no doubt aggravated afterwards. She died when I was only . . . years old; which, all things considered, was not to be wondered at, seeing that she had eight children – the last two twins – at intervals of two years.

It was from my mother's family that I inherited chiefly the emotional part of my nature. She was a person of good intellect, firm character, and very

pious, instituted daily family prayers, even for a time in the mornings as well as evenings, and was minded to have made me a clergyman, had she lived. Her youngest sister, Elizabeth, who was never married, spent her whole life in beneficent work, walking from Bolton-le-Sands where she resided to Lower Kellett, a village some two miles away, regularly twice a week summer and winter in foul and fair weather, to teach reading, writing and sewing to the village girls, and in training a body of them who were much sought after as servants. Having had some differences with the vicar of Bolton, she ultimately converted a barn (given by her elder brother John of Sandside, a farm which he owned) into a dissenting chapel at Kellett, which still, I believe, flourishes. She was buried in the ground of the chapel. A Lancaster paper published at the time a long and glowing account of her philanthropic work; and there is, I think, some memorial tablet to her over the school or the minister's house. At all events I subscribed five pounds for the purpose. And not without good reason, for I owed more than I can reckon to her for the poetry which she used to repeat to me, and I, having got it by heart, used to rush into the kitchen and declaim to the servant. To that early and useful instruction I owe, I believe, my quality of style in my writings which has been ascribed to them; and my regret now is the frequent regret of maturity – that I can never express my gratitude to her. It would certainly appear that I owed much to the emotional quality of my maternal stock, which I inherited in a degree not displayed by my brothers.

As for physical features and gestures, they have been singularly mixed. More like my mother's family when I was young, and more like my father's family now I am old. It is curious that while my brothers had all greyish eyes I alone had hazel eyes; and that feature (darkish eyes in the Batesons) no doubt went along with other differences in mental and bodily qualities between me and them. That I have not died of apoplexy, like my brothers, and am now 72 years old, with sound arteries, bespeaks my paternal texture.

My intellectual faculties savour most of my father's family. Not that he showed any distinction in that respect, though he had sound understanding and quiet solid sense in the management of his affairs. A stolid Tory all his life, and quietly fixed

to old ways of thinking and doing, he once told me, when I rebelled against traditional custom, that what was good enough for my forefathers was good enough for me. I presumably hark back to my grandfather, who was notable in the countryside for his sayings, sardonic and sarcastic; so much so as to have earned him the sobriquet of "the old philosopher". In which connection I may relate that when I began my literary career by contributing to the *Journal of Mental Science* under S. Bucknill's editorship, was nicknamed "the young philosopher".

There is no doubt that a distinct strain of philosophic thought ran through my paternal ancestors. It showed itself in my uncle John of Grain House while articulated to a solicitor in Wakefield; for among the books which he left behind him were Beattie's *Essay on Truth*, Baron Holbach's *System of Nature* (as rendered by Mirabeau) and Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. Rather remarkable books for an articulated clerk to have purchased and perused, who pursued, I suspect, a rather turbulent career. He was, moreover, a decided Liberal in politics throughout his life, taking in regularly the *Leeds Mercury* of E. Baines. Whatever the reason may have been, he did not pursue his legal career, but returned to Grain House, which he occupied for the rest of his life, the land being let by him to tenants. The house is now occupied by his nephew John Maudsley, who succeeded his father there. The surrounding and adjacent land includes a field extending up the sloping side of "majestic Ingleborough".

Grandfather, father and Uncle John were of a retiring character and remarkably reticent and reserved of speech, not inclined to be what is called sociable. It was only when under the influence of liquor (grandfather and father both most temperate) to which he was too prone in his idle life, that my uncle let himself go and was then sometimes apt to boast of his intellectual powers, which were certainly not inconsiderable. I have heard him then, at the public house which he too often frequented, say - "I should have been Lord Chancellor, Henry, if I had gone on with the law." On another occasion in similar circumstances he related how, while an articulated clerk, he was invited to dinner by his chief and met Dr Adam Sedgwick, the eminent geologist, and the latter, after a philosophical discussion, declared that there was "more philosophy in that young man's little finger than in all the professors". True or not the story, it was certainly a big boast, however diligently he may have studied his books, and at any rate shows what he thought of his own intellectual acquirements. It was no doubt the outcome of the liquor in him for it was sometimes necessary for "Larry John" from the adjacent railway station to conduct him home at

night. The story at all events serves to show the strain of philosophic thought in the paternal line.

Miss Alice Proctor of Close House used to censure sharply the mischief of his indiscreet talk at the inn. She was related to the Proctors of Long Preston, who used to call my father "Cousin Thomas", his mother having been a Proctor.

As regards the pedigree of the Maudsley family this much is certain - that until quite recently the name was not known outside Lancashire, with the exception only of in Giggleswick, the townships of Wigglesworth and Long Preston (the latter opposite Wigglesworth on the other side of the river Ribble). These places are only some twelve miles away from the Lancashire border; and it is surmised that some Maudsley had made his way along the Ribble bank from Preston in Lancashire to Long Preston, and perhaps attracted by the name, stayed there. There at any rate in 1554 was settled Richard Maudsley, who was buried in the churchyard of Long Preston "near to my father, Lucy my mother, Agnes my wife and children". The family had evidently been for some time settled there. From him the descent to the Maudsleys of Rome is directly traced.

My great great grandfather and Henry Maudsley, who left Clapham and enlisted at Norwich as a wheelwright in the Royal Artillery, were brothers. He was married there to Margaret Laundby, and though baptised *-ley* signed his name in the marriage register as *-lay*. His wife signed her new name as *Maudsley*, after her husband, who had signed it *Maudslay*. He was the founder of the firm of engineers known as Maudslay and Field, the latter having married his daughter, and I believe, made some valuable scientific inventions. (See Nasmyth's *Life*, who speaks of him.) A descendant of his in the last century employed a genealogical expert to trace out the pedigree of the Maudsley family.

Nevertheless, though he took the greatest pains and spent money in advertising, he could not find out how and when the first Maudsley arrived at Long Preston. Like the Maudsley who enlisted, the person must probably have broken away from his surroundings and started on an adventurous career. Therefore, the desired connection was never made with the Lancashire County Family from which the many Maudsleys in Lancashire no doubt proceeded. For the family was one of the oldest in the county, as the Duchy records testify. Hugh de Maudesley is mentioned in a document relating to the Priory of Parwortham in 1312, and his son Henry de Madesley purchased lands in and around the village of Mawdesley in 1329-30. From that time the descent is direct. Robert Maudesley was Governor of the Isle of Man in 1703-17, and Sheriff of Lancashire in 1720.

Anne, a coheir, died childless in 1807 and Margaret, a coheir, in 1754. The last male heir seems to have been Robert Maudesley, who was in holy orders, and died at Hirkin Hall in 1735. The estate was then sold, and the mansion converted into a farmhouse. All that remains of the old building is part of what was once a very large hall. The chimney and the Maudesley coat of arms are still there.

That has been the not unusual fate of County Houses. On the occasion of a professional visit into Northamptonshire I was once driven by the coachman of the then owner of the country house, who was the direct descendant of the original owners of the estate. No doubt the Maudsley branches which diverged from the main trunk spread out until they were lost in obscurity, and are now to be found frequently in the lower ranks, where they seem to abound.

Mawdesley is a village between 20 and 30 miles from Preston, situated on a small hill surrounded by a low-lying extent of flat country; the inhabitants now, I believe, chiefly employed in chairmaking. The road from the nearest station is a raised causeway, rendered necessary apparently by the floods on the flat at times.

To return to myself and my personal experiences, I was sent to Giggleswick School when young and remained there for several years. At that time the school was conducted on the old-fashioned fixed lines of Greek and the Eton Latin Grammar. We had to construe the Latin and then repeat the appropriate rule from the Grammar, without in the least understanding what the words meant. Similarly, in the upper school, besides arithmetic I went through a part of the first book of Euclid without any comprehension of the problems, learning the letters of the lines and angles by heart and repeating them offhand and instantly forgetting them.

The little instruction which I obtained was probably not mainly due to the system there, but in part also to the fact that I was a dayboy who had to walk over two miles to the school and back daily in summer and winter, in rain and snow. It was a hard time, but use and no experience of anything better made it tolerable, as it does everything else. Still it was a succession of sombre and dreary years, for my father was so profoundly afflicted by my mother's death, to whom he was ardently attached, that his natural silence was increased and hardly a word ever passed between us boys and him except when absolutely necessary.

At the age of fourteen years or thereabouts, I was at the instigation of my aunt, Elizabeth Bateson, to whom I owed so much, sent as a private pupil to the Rev. Alfred Newth who kept a small school for

dissenting dayboys and received four or five pupils into his house. He was a good classical and mathematical scholar, and well read in general literature, being made afterwards a Professor in the Manchester Independent College. I remained with him for over two years and benefitted immensely by the classical studies and the general opening. During that period I learnt something of Homer, Herodotus, Thucydides, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, and among Latin authors Sallust, Cicero, Tacitus, Horace, Livy. Thucydides, Aeschylus's *Prometheus Vincit* and Tacitus were the authors whom I remember to have made some impression on my mind.

I got on fairly well, though not very far, in mathematics, discovered that there was a meaning in Euclid's problems, and advanced considerably in algebra. But I have always regretted that my mathematic learning was not greater, although with the necessary classical instruction it was probably as great as could well be comprised within the period.

The reason why I was sent to Oundle was that Alfred Newth's brother was a medical man in Southwark with whom my uncle Dr Bateson had resided as dispenser. He died from cholera while I was at Oundle during a severe epidemic of that disease.

At the end of upwards of two years with Mr Newth I went up for the matriculation examination at the London University, which I passed in the first division. Mr Newth was most earnest and pressed me to "go in for honours", but I declined; for though he seemed confident that I should obtain some distinction, I doubted, since but for some lucky accident in the examination questions I don't think that I should have done much. And this, although in writing answers to such questions I have somehow drawn more out of myself than I was conscious of being able to do. Sometimes I have sat down before in something like despair of making anything of it and found that by persevering I did manage to make some kind of answer which must have satisfied the examiner more than it satisfied myself.

Having decided that I should become medical, it became necessary to decide when and where I should begin my studentship. Here again it was that the Bateson family influences evidently counted for much in my life's career. After due consideration of plans it was decided to apprentice me to University College Hospital for five years. The apprenticeship was nominally to Mr J. T. Glover, who was Resident Medical Officer at the time. He did not take much pains to guide and teach me at the time, being himself very much occupied in quickly building up a private practice for himself outside the hospital; and what

little he took he soon abandoned, for I was self-assertive and stubbornly rebellious against all control, as I have always been. After a little while indeed he left the hospital to go into private practice. His experience of me moved him to say that he never had but one pupil and would never have another. After he left the hospital no pretence of meddling with me was made by his successors to whose superintendence I suppose I may have been nominally or legally transferred. In the hospital during my five years of residence I had, of course, good opportunities of seeing patients who had suffered from accidents, of attending post mortem examinations, and of pursuing clinical study; and it was entirely my own fault if I did not adequately avail myself of them, as assuredly I did not. That may perhaps be best indicated by my quoting an incidental remark that Dr Sharpey, the distinguished Professor of Physiology, is said to have made, namely "Maudsley has great abilities but he has chosen to throw them into the gutter." Happily I managed to pick some of them up again before they entirely rotted.

During my studentship I was successful in gaining prizes at University College – the Gold Medal and first place in all the classes in which I competed – six medals in all. That I really deserved them is very doubtful, for I neglected practical work, did little dissection, and learnt my anatomy and botany from books. Worse still, I never attended a midwifery case, although attendance on six cases was obligatory by the regulations for the Licence of the College of Surgeons. The obstetric Physician-Assistant at the hospital was my friend, and he managed to secure for me the requisite number of cases. May it not be counted unrighteousness to him!

In my examinations at the London University I was fairly successful, having gained a scholarship and Gold Medal in Surgery and three more Gold Medals. Altogether therefore I possessed ten gold medals, which in the end I parted with to Deutsch the clockmakers for a gold watch which I leave behind me to tick when my heart shall cease to tick.

At the end of my studentship the difficulty was to know what to do. I had not the resources necessary to stay in London to wait until I might get attached to a hospital. But as my bent was to surgery, and I intended to become a surgeon, I applied for an advertised House Surgeonship at the Liverpool Southern Hospital, which I should have obtained but for the fact that a letter therefrom was sent to my London address and not forwarded to me in Yorkshire where I had gone temporarily after my application to await the reply. A nowise singular instance of the way in which the whole course of a life may be determined by a trivial accident.

Disheartened and disgusted by this contretemps, I thought of going to India in the East India Company's service. Meanwhile my father had sent me an advertisement from a Wakefield newspaper for an assistant medical officer at the Asylum there for six months, the Medical Superintendent thereof having been granted leave of six months by reason of illness. As the East India Company required at that time experience of six months in an asylum, I applied for this appointment, being, I suppose, the only applicant. At any rate I was appointed and remained there for nine months, the leave of absence of the Medical Superintendent having been extended for three months. At the end of that time, his health not having been restored, a new Superintendent (Cleaton) was appointed. I may fairly say that I got on so well with my congenial Yorkshire countrymen that they were sorry to lose me. Returning to London, I was after a short time appointed Assistant Medical Officer to the Essex County Asylum, where I never felt at home, the character of the Essex people, sly, secret and insincere, being distasteful to me. However, after a while, I was recommended by Cleaton to the Governors of the Manchester Royal Lunatic Asylum at Cheadle for Medical Superintendent of that asylum. I was only twenty-three years old, and I think now it was a somewhat rash appointment to make, especially to such a self-assertive character as myself and curiously not self-sufficient, for I am a tormenting critic of myself. This ascribable perhaps to the paternal judgement censoring the maternal impulsion. I have always thought and said that the paternal and maternal were never vitally *welded* in me, but only *riveted*. However, it turned out fairly well, for I had an indulgent and considerate committee. The character of my rule may be indicated by a Valentine which I once received:

I am monarch of all I survey,  
I am Lord of the fool and the brute,  
From the centre all round to the sphere,  
My rite there is none to dispute.

After residing there for three years I became restless and desirous of change, resigned my appointment and threw myself on London, without any definite notion of what I should do there. My father, writing to me at the time, described me as, like a woman, belonging to a *varium et mutabile* genus.

In London I did a little literary work in the way of contributions to the *Lancet* and of continuing articles in the *Journal of Mental Science* which I had sent to it occasionally while at Cheadle; one article especially on Edgar Allen Poe exciting a good deal

of attention at the time and making me favourably known to the subscribers to that Journal. Among others to Dr J. Conolly, whose youngest daughter I subsequently married, succeeding him at Lawn House, Hanwell, a private asylum for six ladies. He died within a month of my going into residence there.

The rest of my life in London was spent in getting such practice in lunacy as I could, which increased gradually, and in writing the books which I published in succession. Each book expressed my feelings and thoughts at the time. If these may sometimes have changed and not always been consistent, that is not a blame, for it is a narrow and barren mind which does not expand and develop with changing circumstances. Consistency signifies prejudice and stagnation.

It remains only for me to say that in my old age I induced the London County Council by a contribution of thirty thousand pounds to build a hospital for the early treatment of mental disease.

The cost of getting the thing done, after the Council had accepted the proposal was, I may say, a greater burden than the money. The "moderates" were then in power, bent on curtailing the lavish expenditure in which the progressives had run riot, and were not really friendly to the proposal; so the matter was delayed for six or seven years on the pretext of the difficulty to obtain a suitable site within the stipulated distance of four miles from Charing Cross. The progressives would undoubtedly have carried the project through much sooner, for they were in earnest. At the last, tired of the delays, I threatened to withdraw the offer in a public letter. As an election was close at hand, and the moderates feared that such a letter, if it appeared, might injure their chances, they soon procured a site at Denmark Hill where the Maudsley Hospital now stands. Meanwhile, they had received the sum, and had the use of it and its interest, so that my contribution really exceeded in value the thirty thousand pounds.