

The German leaves his task undone,  
 The Thracian creeps aside,  
 The swordsmen flee like herds that shun  
 Vexed Arno's foaming tide ;  
 But as a pharos meets the shock  
 Of waves on some unsheltered rock  
 Where seas are deep and wide,  
**TELEMACHUS** looked up and trod  
 That path of danger, true to God.

And when the stony tempest burst  
 On his defenceless head,  
 He stood unshrinking as at first,  
 As free from doubt or dread ;  
 With aspect full of peace and love,  
 As if he came from worlds above,  
 And hands in prayer outspread,  
 He laid him down, nor breathed again,  
 Whelmed by that host of vengeful men.

Yet deem thou not the martyr died  
 Warring for right in vain ;  
**HIS WAS THE PRIZE FOR WHICH HE SIGHED,**  
**AND HIS THE ETERNAL GAIN :**  
 Fierce **ALARIC** shall yet return,  
 And Rome's fair dwellings blaze and burn,  
 Filled with red heaps of slain ;  
 But scenes, where man must bleed for mirth,  
 Shall blast no more the ransomed Earth.

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P O R T E R   P I P E R .

**PORTER PIPER** was a genius ; but do n't imagine for a moment, reader, that Porter was a man addicted to poetry, romance, or stargazing of any kind. Porter was a man of far too much solidity to rise into the airy regions of fairy-land. On the contrary, he looked on poets, novelists and romancers with the same feelings of mingled admiration, contempt and fear with which an old owl, surprised by the return of light, regards the noisy tribe of robins, jays and wrens that flutter and twitter around him. Neither was Porter a philanthropist, nor world-improving schemer, with a noddle full of Utopias. He could see neither profit, utility, nor beauty in universal benevolence, and never were the gates of Paradise more firmly closed upon an unbeliever than were the eyes, ears and pockets of our friend against all attacks from that source. No peripatetic caterer for the stomachs and backs of the poor found grace in the eyes of Porter. No sooner did he bring his prodigious mental machinery to bear upon the gist of their mission, than they prudently vanished from his door, without waiting for verbal warning. Porter was neither historian, theologian, logician, philanthropist, statesman, philosopher, poet, painter, nor sculptor. What then was he ? Porter was a mathematician. From the day of his birth he was no common

being. Omens attended his natal day, and a few weeks before that momentous occasion his mother dreamed she was delivered of a triangle. At the precise moment of his arrival 'ad superas,' or rather 'ad *externas*, aures,' all the lead pipe fell from the roof and sides of the house, and the owls in the neighboring grove struck up a most appalling hoot, accompanied by the tenor-cawing of a flock of crows that flew over the house at that time. The meek and patient ass, who had stood until then quietly in his stall, and had always been noted for the singular gravity of his deportment, commenced kicking most furiously against the sides of his stable, accompanying his exertions with a most terrific and prolonged bray; while a paper fools'- cap, which had long decorated the paternal walls 'in *terrorem*' to the juvenile and boisterous fry that thronged the mansion, fell suddenly down as the new-born babe was borne beneath it to the bath, and, as if directed by some unseen hand, encircled his infantine brow.

Porter, as he advanced in years, was never seen to shed tears, nor to smile, but ever preserved the same invincible gravity of demeanor. He was remarkable, too, for the slowness and deliberation of his movements. When, in infancy, the maternal breast was presented to him, he usually turned his eyes toward it with a pertinacious stare, and it was only after apparently going through a long and severe mental process that he seemed to have the least idea of the use to which it should be put. When grown somewhat older, and sent, with the rest of his brethren, to the neighboring school, he used to suffer the various tricks and petty persecutions of his more volatile mates with the most stolid and unalterable gravity. Many a time did the mischievous rascals insert pins into him, without his apparently having the least idea of what they were doing. Sometimes, when his tormentors thrust beyond all reasonable depth, he would appear to feel uneasy, and after some deliberation, would apply his hand to the part afflicted; but such demonstrations of excitement were unusual.

While his companions were engaged in ball, leap-frog, wrestling, and various other juvenile sports, he employed himself with the most intense gravity in tracing lines in the sand, seemingly engaged in the deepest meditation. When the curly-headed rogues were indulged in 'a molasses-candy pulling,' and were devouring their portions with shouts of merriment, he always seated himself in a corner, and with a solemn expression busied himself in constructing various uncouth figures with his portion of the sticks. He never played at marbles, nor any frivolous games of the kind; but he would occasionally watch the proceedings, at such times, with the most intense interest, and taking the first opportunity, would suddenly pounce upon the polished heap, and scooping up as many as he could hold in his hands, would lumber off toward one of his retreats, with an uncouth mixture of chuckle and wheeze, the nearest approach to a laugh he was ever known to indulge in. If successful in retaining his unlawful prize, he would employ himself for hours in counting and variously arranging them.

One day, Porter, while rummaging over his father's books, which

he did, rather to see in how many ways he could combine them on the floor than from any desire to make the acquaintance of their contents, met with an old Euclid. At the first sight of the uncouth figures and hieroglyphical letters that covered its pages, he jumped from the floor and shuffled about in a perfect ecstasy. Never were the fountains of his soul so stirred before. He see-sawed about the room in a grotesque attempt to dance, and tossing his cap in the air, endeavored to give it a playful kick, but failing in the attempt, came sprawling upon the floor, where he lay for some time, exhausted by his saltatory exertions, and grinning hideously.

As soon as this playful ebullition had subsided, he turned to the book, which he opened somewhat hastily, and was immediately absorbed in its contents. The food for which his mind had been craving was found at last, and he was happy. The '*καλορ*' was his. From that moment his occupation was decided. His beloved Euclid occupied him night and day. His companions and the old people endeavored to argue him out of his unreasonable and exclusive devotion to this pursuit; but in vain. They might as well have reasoned with a post. Porter was impervious to argument. In fact he did not appear to comprehend what they were aiming at. He would listen at first, with a dubious air, which would gradually deepen into a stare of the most intense perplexity and wonder, and if the expostulation were still continued, his face would soon lose all expression and exhibit nothing but a dead unmeaning blank. It was useless to contend against such obstacles to conviction, and Porter was allowed to pursue the even tenor of his way unmolested; beside, it was agreed on all hands that he could dive into a proposition and extract its pith and marrow while others were breaking their teeth against the outside. Thenceforth, every table and chair was carved over with all imaginable grotesque figures, and his mother once discovered him hard at work upon her wedding ring, in an obstinate attempt to square the circle. He cleared the '*Pons Asinorum*' at a stride, and plunged headlong into the deepest mire beyond, and wallowed in it as if it had been his native element. Theories, propositions, formulas and solutions, were devoured with the same insatiable relish that the ostrich exhibits while breaking his fast upon his favorite dishes of old leather and iron.

In the mean time his visage elongated; his shirt, whenever he had one, for he sometimes forgot it entirely, or perhaps put it into his pocket for a handkerchief, was beautifully variegated, with here and there a patch of whitish-brown upon what was apparently a grayish black ground, and his sturdy hairs projected from his head in every direction in the most picturesque confusion, like the lances of a troop of cavalry in a furious fight. His frame was built in the most beautiful mathematical proportion. Nearly every figure in Euclid could have been demonstrated upon the different parts of his body. His belly and shoulders were regularly perfect segments of circles; his legs formed a superb ellipse, scraping a most intimate and affectionate acquaintance with each at the extremities, but retreating apparently in huge disgust at the knees; his head was a correct cone, broad at

the base, and gradually contracting its limits and becoming beautifully less till it rose to the apex, which was decorated with a tuft vulgarly called *cow-lick*, which waved gracefully over the hairy hill beneath, like a warrior's plume. He had a huge mouth, graced with a most portentous set of teeth, forming an acute right angle with a monstrous pair of ears, whose rough and ragged sides it almost touched. He wore a rusty brown hat, stuck upon his head with mathematical precision, and a thread-bare black coat, cut in right angles, each of which was demonstrably correct; and his nose, overlapping his mouth, seemed to threaten a descent upon a huge greasy stock, buckled tightly about his neck. Such was the outward man of Porter Piper.

By dint of persevering and desperate digging, aided by a continual thunder of moods, tenses and conjugations in his ears by his instructor, and a sturdy application of the birch to that part of the 'human frame divine' which has been made from time immemorial to serve as a conducting medium to the brain, Porter mastered a sufficiency of Latin and Greek to enable him to enter college, where his father had determined to send him, wisely thinking that even if his son were an ass, there was nothing to prevent him from becoming a good mathematician.

So Porter, in the fulness of time, was dispatched to college. The evils and accidents that befell him on the road, we have not space to relate. Suffice it to say that he arrived, was examined and admitted on account of his proficiency in mathematics, although it is unnecessary to say, his examination in his other studies was far from being brilliant. The first night of his instalment, his room was entered by a marauding pack of sophomores, who saw a large quantity of rich material for sport in him, and who encased his head in his basin instead of a night-cap, put him into bed, inserted the coal-hod into his embraces, and tucking him nicely up, left him muddled and stupified, without any very clear perception of where he was or what had been done to him.

The next day he commenced the regular routine of study. He was utterly impenetrable to history, philosophy, or metaphysics, which he could neither understand nor remember, but in mathematics he bore away the palm. The brilliant logician, the polished writer, and the profound philosopher, could not compete with him a moment. Like the bat, he could see with the greater ease the thicker the darkness; but if dragged into light he was blind in a moment.

Porter was a hard student. He dug without cessation in the labyrinth of mathematics, until he reached such a depth as was never known to have been attained but by those gifted like himself. His efforts reminded one of an industrious maggot assiduously penetrating a decayed cheese. Nor was his attention distracted from his favorite pursuit by any other studies. For all but the pure mathematics he entertained the most sincere contempt; at least as far as he was capable of the feeling. Various attempts were made to induce him to read something beside propositions and theories, and Milton was put into his hands by a well-meaning friend. Porter perused it for some time in silence. At last he threw down the book with a mingled air of astonishment and disgust, and after a long and pro-

found deliberation, pronounced it as his opinion that the book was good for nothing : ' For, Sir,' said he, ' it is all assertion and not a word of proof.'

After spending the usual time in college, he took his degree with distinguished honors. Shortly after graduating, he published a work upon the ' Parabola of the Concatenary Fluxion,' which immediately attracted the attention of all the mathematical literati, and took a high rank at once. The fame of this work, and the reputation he had before acquired, induced the college to appoint him professor, with a high salary ; being glad at any price to secure the services of a man so singularly adapted to his science.

His friends, after a long series of fruitless attempts, succeeded in convincing him that it would be well for him to take unto himself a helpmate. They accordingly looked about to find a suitable match for him, and pitched at last upon a lusty buxom widow of forty, the relict of a rich vintner. Porter's attempts at wooing were at first abortive. After being introduced to the lady he was persuaded to pay her a visit of ceremony. The widow received him with great politeness, and seating him beside her on the sofa, awaited the object of his mission. But in vain ; for Porter, sitting bolt upright, looked into vacancy, grim and ghastly. At last, driven to desperation, she addressed him some random questions. Porter, roused, turned his huge goggle-eyes upon her with an expression of intense sagacity, and seemed about to reply. But words and sentiments were not the tenants of Porter's brain. The situation grew momentarily more embarrassing ; neither spoke, but the widow sat as if fascinated, gazing upon the portentous pair of blinkers fastened upon her. At last, driven to desperation, he grinned, gasped, wheezed, and finally, grasping his rusty beaver, lumbered from the room with unwonted precipitation.

This had nearly disgusted him with the fair sex ; but at last the importunities of his friends induced him to send her a written proposal. Accordingly, after two days' labor, he produced the following epistle :

' MADAM : My love for you = to marriage.

' Your devoted

' PORTER.'

This laconic epistle was forthwith despatched, and the widow capitulated. It was only after a long training that Mrs. Piper was able to initiate him into his connubial duties, of which he seemed not to have the least idea. But at last she succeeded. In the fulness of time a host of white-headed brats were squalling about the door, to the infinite delight of Mrs. Piper, and to the huge disquiet and vexation of poor Porter, who shambled about, sometimes tumbling over them, and occasionally treading on them, while engaged in deep meditation. In the mean time he went on writing and publishing, until he was allowed on all hands to be the Napoleon of mathematics. But all earthly things must have an end, and so had Porter. On one unlucky day he tumbled into a ditch, whose cubical contents he was endeavoring to ascertain, and received a severe ducking, which carried him off with a fever in two days. His last words were : ' The unknown and known quantities will soon be put into equation.'

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