



CLASSIC LIVING BOOK

THROUGH  
GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND  
WITH CROMWELL

Henrietta E. Marshall

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED



*CROMWELL AS MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT.*

# THROUGH GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND WITH CROMWELL

---

H.E. MARSHALL



This edition published 2023  
By Living Book Press  
Copyright © Living Book Press, 2023

ISBN: 978-1-76153-029-6 (B&W Softcover Edition)  
978-1-76153-028-9 (B&W Hardcover Edition)

First published in 1912.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any other form or means – electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner and the publisher or as provided by Australian law.



A catalogue record for this  
book is available from the  
National Library of Australia

# CONTENTS

1.	CHILDISH DAYS	1
2.	SCHOOL DAYS	5
3.	MAN'S ESTATE	11
4.	THE LORD OF THE FENS	15
5.	THE GATHERING STORM	19
6.	THE STORM BREAKS	22
7.	THE THIMBLE AND BODKIN ARMY	26
8.	THE KING AT OXFORD	31
9.	COLONEL CROMWELL	34
10.	IRONSIDES	38
11.	THE SELF-DENYING ORDINANCE	42
12.	THE KING'S LAST BATTLE	47
13.	THE KING TAKES A JOURNEY	51
14.	THE KING TAKES ANOTHER JOURNEY	54
15.	THE SECOND CIVIL WAR	59
16.	THE TAKING OF PEMBROKE CASTLE	63
17.	ABOUT OLIVER'S NEXT BATTLE-FIELD	66
18.	A THREE DAYS' BATTLE	70
19.	OLIVER'S FIRST VISIT TO SCOTLAND	73
20.	THE KING'S LAST JOURNEY	77
21.	ABOUT THE PLANTING OF ULSTER	81
22.	OLIVER GOES TO THE GREEN ISLAND	85
23.	THE TAKING OF DROGHEDA	88
24.	MORE CONQUESTS IN IRELAND	92
25.	OLIVER'S LAST DAYS IN IRELAND	95
26.	OLIVER'S SECOND VISIT TO SCOTLAND	98
27.	THE BATTLE OF DUNBAR	102
28.	OLIVER GOES TO STIRLING AND TO GLASGOW	105
29.	THE STORY OF WILLIE WASTLE	108
30.	OLIVER VISITS A ROYALIST HOUSE	111
31.	THE CROWNING MERCY	115
32.	TAKE AWAY THAT BAUBLE	118
33.	THE LORD PROTECTOR	121



*Chapter 1.*

## **CHILDISH DAYS**

ON the 25th of April 1599, more than three hundred years ago, when the great Queen Elizabeth was still on the throne of England, a baby was born in the little country town of Huntingdon. Four days later, the tiny baby was carried out of the goodly house at the end of the long straggling street, and taken to the Church of St. John to be christened. "Oliver" was the name given to the baby, and it was a name with which, forty years or more later, all England was to ring. For this tiny baby grew up to be Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of England.

Oliver's father was named Robert and his mother Elizabeth. Before she married her name had been Elizabeth Stewart, and some people say that she was a distant relative of James Stewart, King of Scotland, who afterwards became King of England too. But people only like to believe this because it is curious to think that, in days to come, Oliver Cromwell helped to bring his own distant cousin to death.

The house where Oliver was born is still pointed out in Huntingdon. But we can hardly tell what it looked like on that spring morning, so long ago, for it has twice been pulled down and built again. The church too in which he was christened has now disappeared. But some things are still unchanged. The town, with its one long, narrow street and irregular market-place, is much the same as when little Oliver was first carried out into the sunshine.

The Great Ouse still glides slowly by the town with many windings and twistings, from where it rises in Northampton, until it takes a sudden bend northward, and flows sluggishly onward, through flat fen-lands to the Wash.

The Fens, upon which little Oliver looked out from his nursery windows, were black marshes, here and there covered with stagnant water. There by day was heard the dreary cry of wild water-fowl, and there by night the treacherous will-o'-wisp gleamed and flitted. Now, Huntingdon is a farming county, for the fens have been drained, and where only water-fowl cried and will-o'-wisps danced, sheep and cattle graze, corn ripens, and comfortable red-roofed farm-houses dot the flat lands.

We know but little of what Oliver did when he was a boy. But he must have had some good times, for his grandfather, Sir Henry Cromwell, lived at the great house of Hinchingsbrooke, only a mile or two away. There little Oliver would pass many a happy hour.

There is a story told—I will not say that it is a true one—of how, one day, when Oliver was still a baby, he had been taken to see his grandfather. He lay asleep in his cradle, and his nurse must have been careless, for he was left all alone. As he lay there, a monkey came lolling into the room and right up to the cradle. The monkey thought that the baby would be a lovely plaything, so he seized him and ran away with him. Leaping, swinging, clinging with hand and tail, he swung himself and his prize up to the flat lead roof of the house.

Soon the baby was missed, and when it was discovered that the monkey was playing with him on the roof, the whole household was thrown into a state of confusion. Beds and blankets were brought out and placed on the ground, to catch the baby, in case the monkey should drop or throw him down. But the monkey was careful, and presently he brought Oliver safely to the ground again. So the baby was saved to grow up to be a great man.

Sir Henry Cromwell lived in very fine style and spent a great deal of money. He was so grand indeed that he was called The Golden Knight. When Oliver was nearly four years old

his grandfather "The Golden" died. We can imagine the stir in the great house, the comings and goings, the grave talks, sad faces, and little Oliver among it all hardly understanding what it meant. But perhaps he would cry a little, when he was dressed in black, and told that he would never see his kind grandfather again. He still went often to Hinchbrooke however, for his godfather, Uncle Oliver, now lived there. And Uncle Oliver was almost as splendid and fine, and as kind to little Oliver as his grandfather had been.

Then one day there was again much stir and bustle in the great house. The best silver was brought out, the best silken robes and draperies. Every one was busy, hurrying hither and thither, full of anxious preparations. For why? The King was coming.

The great Queen Elizabeth was dead, and the new King, James, was journeying from Scotland, to claim his crown. Everywhere, in each town and village as he passed, he was greeted with shouts and cheering. The people hung out flags and made their houses and streets gay, and the lords welcomed him to their castles. Everywhere there was hunting, balls, and parties, but nowhere was there greater splendour than at Hinchbrooke.

Just two days after Oliver's birthday, the King came. We can imagine how the little four-year-old boy would watch, as the gay procession came along the road. The glittering dresses, prancing horses, flashing armour, the noise and dust, the clatter and jangle would be something to think about and remember for many a day to come.

For two days the house was full of gay folk, splendidly dressed, coming and going, talking and laughing. Then the King, laden with rich presents from the knight of Hinchbrooke, said good-bye, and rode away towards London.

Once more Oliver watched the grand procession, as it

splashed through the ford over the river Ouse and passed southward along the old Roman road, the Ermine Street. For one of the great roads which the Romans had made hundreds of years before runs right through Huntingdon.

These wise and wonderful people, when they tried to conquer Britain, knew that they must keep a way open to their ships. So, as they fought and chased the Britons from place to place, they made roads which seemed meant to last for ever, and over which their armies could easily pass. One of these roads led from the safe harbour of Southampton Water north-eastward to Huntingdon, then bent north-westward to the estuary of the Dee. Thus, cutting through forest, hill, and valley, the Romans joined two of the best harbourages in the island, and by this road their ships, lying safe in port, could easily be reached. In Southampton Water, Southampton, one of our greatest seaports, still lies. But the estuary of the Dee has long ago been silted up, and is now of little use for shipping.

Some people say that Ermine Street did not go westward to the Dee, but right northward to the Humber. In either case the road led from sea to sea and to safe harbourage. For the wise old Romans knew the value of a port which was as an open door, through which help might come, or escape might be made.

*Chapter 2.*

## **SCHOOL DAYS**

OLIVER had six sisters. He had brothers too, but they all died young, so I expect he grew up rather domineering. It is said that the year after the King visited Hinchingsbrooke, his little son Prince Charles, then about four years old, came to spend a few days there, on his way to London. Oliver was sent for to play with the little Prince. But they did not get on at all well together. They soon began to quarrel, and then to fight. Oliver, who was bigger and a little older, gave Prince Charles such a blow between the eyes that it made his nose bleed. If the story is true, this was not a very good beginning, and, as you will see, these two little boys grew up to be deadly enemies.

When Oliver was old enough, he was sent to school. The school is still pointed out, although it, too, like the house in which he was born, has been built again. We do not know much about what Oliver did at school. Some old writers say he was a very naughty boy. He climbed trees, robbed orchards and dove-cots, and was always getting into mischief and danger. Once he fell into the river and was nearly drowned. But a clergyman, named Johnson, pulled him out. Many years after, when Oliver was marching through Huntingdon at the head of his rebel troops, he met this clergyman, then a very old man. Oliver knew him again. "Do you remember me?" he asked. "Once you saved my life."

"I do," replied the old man, "and I wish now that I had put you in rather than see you in arms against your King."

Some people say that Oliver did not learn much at school. Others say that he did. It seems at least that he was fond



*OLIVER AND CHARLES.*

of history and knew the stories of both Greek and Roman heroes. He liked Sir Walter Raleigh's "History of the World," too, and long years after advised his own son to read it. He also learned enough Latin to be able to talk it when he grew up and became a famous man.

Oliver was good at games. We do not know, but I think he must have played at soldiers with his school-fellows. I am sure that Oliver would always be general, and perhaps they marched along the Ermine Street and played at Romans and Britons. Perhaps, too, he sometimes sailed boats upon the lazy Great Ouse which flowed so slowly past his home.

Then his father might tell him how the river came winding and winding through the clay soil of Bedfordshire, at one place twisting about so much, that although it only got seventeen miles on its way, it wound about for forty-five. He might be told that the reason why the Great Ouse flowed slowly was because the land was so flat that it did not run down hill much to the sea. Then, too, he might know that the Great Ouse flowed into the Wash, where, he had learned in history, the bad King John was nearly drowned.

If you look at the map you will see that the Wash makes a big bend into the land. You will wonder why the clever Romans did not make their road go eastward to the Wash, for surely that big bay must be a good shelter for ships. But it is nothing of the kind. If you will look again at the map you will see that round the Wash there are no towns marked in big letters. That means that there are no large towns there. And the reason is that the Wash is quite useless for shipping. It is full of sand-banks, its low-lying coasts are damp and therefore foggy, the tide is rapid, and altogether it is one of the most dangerous places for ships on the east coast of England. The only part of the bay into which they may safely go lies along the Lincolnshire coast, and is called the Boston Deepes.

All these things and much besides Oliver would learn about his home and the places round it. At last he grew to be a big boy, and when he was seventeen years old it was decided to send him to college. So one fine morning, provided with every thing that befits a gentleman, he mounted upon his horse and rode away to Cambridge.

The country through which Oliver rode was little different from that which he had left. It was flat and swampy fen-land. In those days all the north of Cambridgeshire was little more than a watery desert. In the fens there were men called Fenslodgers, who made a scanty living by catching the wild-fowl and the fish. These men were dreadfully poor, rough, ignorant, and half-savage. They walked about on high stilts, which both raised them out of the wet of the marshes and helped them to see their flocks of geese far across the fens. It was a miserable life, and, pale and gaunt, they prowled about the fens, shaking with ague, and bent with rheumatism, brought on by living in the constant damp.

Now all that is changed. Canals have been dug, dykes built, the water has been drained away, and Cambridgeshire has become one of the finest corn-growing counties of England. There is good pasture too, with dairy farms, where cheese is made which some people think as good as the famous cheese of Stilton.

So through fifteen miles of dreary fen-land Oliver rode until he came to the grey old town of Cambridge. Cambridge was then, as now, one of our two great University towns. It takes its name from the Cam, a tributary of the Great Ouse, upon which it lies.

There are seventeen colleges in Cambridge. The chief of them lie along the river bank, their still gardens and green, green lawns sloping to the water. The grey old buildings show calm and grand against the waving trees, and as one wanders



among them to-day one is carried back to days long past. The University is so old that no one knows quite how old it is. Some Cambridge folk would like to think that it was founded by a Spaniard called Cantabar 375 years before Christ. But the oldest of the colleges now standing was not founded until the time of Edward I., although there was a school there long before, at which Henry Beauclerc, for one, was taught.

To Oliver, as he rode across the bridge over the Cam, the town must have seemed very beautiful and fresh, and he must have looked in wonder at the stately old buildings, for even in Cromwell's day many of the buildings were old. But it was to a new college that Cromwell went. It was Sidney-Sussex College. There he wrote his name in the list of scholars, "Oliver Cromwell from Huntingdon, admitted Fellow Commoner, 23rd April 1616."

*Chapter 3.*

**MAN'S ESTATE**

OLIVER stayed little more than a year at Cambridge, for in the following June his father died, and once more he rode home to Huntingdon. Now he had to take his place as head of the house, and care for his mother and his sisters. But in those days, it was thought right that every country gentleman should know something of law. So once more Oliver put on his travelling dress, mounted his horse, and set out for London, there to study law. This was a much longer journey than he had taken before. We can imagine how excited the country boy—for he was little more—would be when he first rode into the great city, the capital of the kingdom.

London! To those of us who have seen it, what a picture the name calls up. Here are endless streets, miles upon miles of them, flanked by high houses, and pavements crowded with hundreds and thousands of people hurrying to and fro. In the roadway there is a thick and constant stream of cabs, carts, 'buses, grand carriages with prancing horses, little donkey-carts, unwieldy, noisy motors, and silent, swift electric cars. The air seems thick with sound, as the life of the great city hums and roars its way through the teeming streets.

The great broad river, too, which rolls under the many bridges on its way to the sea, is a busy thoroughfare. Up and down go mighty ships, clumsy barges, graceful little craft, laden with merchandise from all parts of the world. The banks are black with warehouses and noisy with shipbuilding. Everywhere there is clamour and bustle. It is a huge, busy, human hive, this London, the chief seaport in the kingdom, the richest and most populous city in all the world. And besides being the

centre of trade, London is the seat of government, for there, in the stately halls at Westminster, Lords and Commons gather to make the laws by which the land shall be ruled.

London has grown to such importance and such greatness partly through its position. It lies upon the broad estuary of the Thames, on the eastern shores of Britain, making it easy to reach the European ports. The channel is safe, as the Wash is not, and wider and deeper than the Humber, although not deep enough for the great ships which are now built, so that many of them cannot come up to the port of London. It has one great fault as a port. It has no coal fields near, nor yet iron ore. These have to be brought a great distance, which makes them dear. So it is to be feared that some of the large shipbuilders will go away from the Thames to places nearer coal fields. Yet in spite of this fault, London has grown to be the heart of a vast network of road-, rail-, and water-ways, which lead out to all the world, and return again, carrying man and merchandise, as the veins and arteries carry blood to and from the heart of our body.

The London which Oliver looked upon was, of course, little like the London which we know. The streets were narrow and dirty, the houses mostly built of wood. Still it was a great and wonderful city. There mingled gay cavaliers, richly clad and decked with feathers and laces, sober Puritans, quaintly dressed soldiers, tradesmen, and merchants, a many-coloured crowd.

But again, of Oliver's life in this great city we know little. He made some friends, however—among them a certain Sir James Burchier. This we know, for in 1620, when Oliver was twenty-one, he married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir James. The marriage took place at St. Giles's Church, Cripplegate. Then the young couple went home to Huntingdon.

There are people who say that Oliver was a naughty boy and a wild young man. Whether that be so or not, now at least he

settled down quietly to farm the land which had been left him by his father. For the next ten years he lived a simple country life with his old mother and his good housewife Elizabeth.

While the years passed peacefully in Huntingdon, the King and his people had begun to quarrel. "The King can do no wrong," said James, and he tried to have all his own way. He tried, for one thing, to force every one to be of the same church—the English Church. But many did not like the English Church. It was too much like the Roman Catholic, which they hated. They wanted to do away with bishops, and robes and ceremonies, and have a very simple service. "No Bishop, no King," said James. And so the quarrel grew.

In 1625 James died, and his son Charles came to the throne. But with the new King things went no better. He wanted his own way quite as much as his father had done. So the quarrel between the King and people, between the King and Parliament, grew worse. Twice Charles called a Parliament. Twice, after a few weeks, he dissolved it in a passion, because the Commons would not vote him money unless he promised something in return. Then in 1628 he called a third Parliament. To this, as member for the town of Huntingdon, went Oliver Cromwell.

This was a remarkable Parliament. It passed an Act called the Petition of Right. This Act forbade the King to tax the people without first getting leave from Parliament. It forbade that men should be put in prison without a reason. It forbade that soldiers and sailors should be sent to live in people's houses, whenever and for as long a time as the King pleased. These were really no new laws. They were old ones, which the King had forgotten and broken. Charles, however, still went on taxing the people without leave, and the quarrel grew worse. Then the King ordered the Parliament to dissolve. At this the members were very angry, and as the Speaker tried to leave

the hall, two of them held him down in his chair, crying, "He shall sit here till it please the House to rise."

There the Speaker was held, while the doors were locked, so that no man might go out and no man, not even the King's messenger, might come in. Then the Commons declared once more that it was against the law for the King to levy taxes without the consent of Parliament, and that any one paying such taxes was a traitor to the liberty of his country. For a few minutes the old hall rang with cheers. Then the members quickly scattered, for it was rumoured that soldiers were coming. That was the end of Parliament for the time, and Charles, finding that he could not make it do what he wanted, ruled without calling another for eleven years.

After taking part in these exciting doings Oliver went home, to settle down once more quietly to his farming.

*Chapter 4.*

## **THE LORD OF THE FENS**

A year or two more passed quietly. Six children had now come to Oliver and Elizabeth. Their names were Robert, Oliver, Bridget, Richard, Henry, and Elizabeth.

Then, in 1631, Oliver made up his mind to sell his land in Huntingdon, and to go to St. Ives, a little town about five miles farther down the Great Ouse.

Except St. Neots, St. Ives is the only other town of any size in Huntingdonshire. In Saxon days, it was called Slepe, and under that name it is to be found in Domesday Book. It is said to have received its new name from a Persian saint called Ivo, who came to England, died, and was buried at an old priory at Slepe about 600 A.D.

Oliver took a grazing farm on the lands of Slepe Hall, and began sheep-farming. Whether he ever lived in the house called Slepe Hall is not quite certain, but it used to be pointed out as his house. Many years ago it was pulled down, and now all that reminds us of him are the names Cromwell Place and Cromwell Terrace, which have been given to the houses built where Slepe Hall stood. But in many ways the town is still unchanged. Across the river there is a bridge over which Oliver must often have tramped in his heavy boots. It has a quaint, old-world air about it, reminding us of other times, and on the middle of it stands a house once used, it is thought, as a lighthouse.

When Oliver went to St. Ives he had grown into a sad, stern man. Perhaps the dreary country in which he lived had something to do with making him so. Certainly the time in which he lived had. Often he was seized with fits of gloom. He felt that, in the eyes of God, he was a great sinner. Then he

would pray in deep trouble of soul. And so, as with fire and with hammer, religion was wrought into his life, and at last he found comfort and calm of spirit.

Oliver looked darkly on the ceremony and service of the Church of England. Yet still he went to church like other people, often, we are told, wearing a piece of red flannel round his neck, as his throat was weak. All his children were baptized too in the church, as other children were.

Oliver would have none but godly men to work for him. Before they went to work he gathered them for prayers; indeed one old writer says that he kept them so long at prayer that they had no time to do their proper work, and that therefore the farm did not prosper.

However that may be, Oliver soon left St. Ives, and went to the cathedral town of Ely. Ely, like St. Ives, is upon the Great Ouse, but it is in Cambridgeshire, not in Huntingdonshire.

Oliver moved to Ely because his uncle, Sir Thomas Stewart, his mother's brother, died and left him money and lands there. The house in which he lived in Ely was then called the Glebe House, and may still be seen.

Ely is a city, yet, save for its cathedral, it looks more like a village, and, unlike any other English city, it sends no member to Parliament. Great numbers of eels used to be found in the waters round, and from that the city takes its name. It is built upon the Isle of Ely, which, before the fens were drained, was really an island rising above the surrounding marsh-land. In summer the city could only be reached by certain roads through the fens. In winter it was quite surrounded by water so deep that boats could sail upon it. Even yet the country looks dreary and deserted in winter, but in summer it is a waving plain of golden corn-fields, and out of it, seen from far, a landmark to all the fen country, rise the towers of the great cathedral.

From very early times there has been a monastery at Ely,

but the oldest part of the present cathedral was built after William the Conqueror came. It was a spot loved by Canute the Dane. Here one winter's day, when the fens were frozen, Budde the Stout, a bondman, crossed the ice before Canute, to try with his great weight if it were strong enough to bear the King. And as a reward for this brave service Budde received his freedom.

When William of Normandy came it was in the Isle of Ely that Englishmen made their last stand against the Conqueror. For the marsh-lands around made it a natural fortress, and it needed both the great William's "land force and ship force" to dislodge them. And so on through all our history Ely plays a part—in the civil war between Matilda and Stephen, in the Barons' War, in the time of Henry III.—and now it gave to Cromwell the title of "Lord of the Fens."

The King, needing money, was hard put to it, and invented many ways to get it. He ordered, for one thing, that London should grow no larger. He fined those who built new houses, and he pulled down some, fining the owners for not having done so sooner. It seemed to him now that some money might be made by draining the fens, and a clever Flemish engineer, called Vermuyden, had already begun the work. But the fen-slodgers cried out against it. If the fens were drained the scanty living which they earned by fishing and fowling would be gone. Others, too, joined the cry. It was but a new trick of the King, they said, to get money without the people's aid, and so to continue to rule without Parliament.

Oliver Cromwell, too, had a word to say. And he said and did with so much force that the drainage works were given up. Then the people whose part he had taken against the King gave him a new name. They called him "Lord of the Fens." Yet later, when it was no longer a question of the

King, but only of the good of the people, Oliver helped on the drainage with all his might. It was not, however, until the nineteenth century that the great work was finished by the engineers Rennie and Telford. It had taken three hundred years to turn a dreary waste of marsh into fertile, smiling plains.