

H. E. Gaddum

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The following Extracts are from a Journal written by my
Father, Walter Aston, when on a visit to Altringham in Sep-
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of age. (Born Nov. 29th, 1805. Died Feb. 13th, 1881).

Aston, (the Editor of the Exchange Herald), his Mother and

A MONTH'S RUSTICATION in ALTRINCHAM,

From this Journal, which was the private record of a
month's holiday as enjoyed by a youth of the period, the
writer has selected such portions as he thinks will give a
fair and accurate view of the time.

By WALTER ASTON.

Manchester, 1825.

The following Extracts are from a Journal written by my Father, Walter Aston, when on a visit to Altringham in September and October 1825, he being then nearly twenty years of age. (Born Nov. 29th. 1805. Died Feb. 14th. 1881).

During his visit he was joined by his Father, Joseph Aston, (the Editor of the Exchange Herald), his Mother and other members of the family.

From this Journal, which was the private record of a month's holiday as enjoyed by a youth of the period, who wrote unreservedly on all he heard and saw, we gain a vivid insight into the life and manners of the time. From these pages certain passages have been selected which, I trust, may be of general interest.

Walter Aston.

60 King Street,

Manchester.

October, 1904.

Sunday, Sept. 11th.

" Went, by the boat, to Altrincham, with my Brother William
"and secured lodgings for my Sisters ^{*}Moxon and Fanny, and myself
"at Mr. Drinkwater's; took a walk through the lower Town, and
"round by Mr. Worthington's, back to the lodgings and dined with
"old "Amen", the Clerk. (*Samuel Drinkwater Higher Town*)

" After dinner went into the Park, there met with my
"Brother Charles and his friend J. Woollam, who had walked from
"Manchester; went with them past the Lodge ^{to} ~~at~~ Bowden Churchyard
"and we had not been in it two minutes before the Churchwardens
"came out, and told us we must either quit the Yard, or go into
"the Church; or if we would not make a noise we might go into
"the Public-house; and setting us the example, walked in them-
"selves, and under pretence of searching for noisy company,
"each got a glass of John Barley corn, by way, I suppose, of
"making the sermon go down the better."

Monday, Sept. 12th.

" Awoke about four o'clock in the morning and could not go
"to sleep again on account of the great noise the good washer-
"women were kicking up with the PEGGY."

Wednesday, Sept. 14th.

" I went to Bowden; look'd through the Church, which happened to be open in consequence of a funeral that was expected, having satisfied my curiosity inside the Church, I went into the Steeple, asked the man who was tolling the bell, if I could go on the top? He replied in the affirmative, and I proceeded up the time-worn steps, and I had got to the Bell-room door when the man gave a great toll, which so startled me that I had as near fallen backwards and broken my neck as could be.

" After recovering myself a little, I proceeded up the remaining steps as fast as their worn out condition would allow me, fearing to encounter another shock; however when I did reach the top I thought myself very well repaid for my trouble, for eyes never beheld a more lovely prospect than presented itself to my view. On one side, the Park formed a beautiful object, especially now the rich tints of Autumn had begun to settle in its noble woods; on the other side, the neat Farm-houses, luxuriant and well wooded fields and the distant hills; before me, Rosthorn Church, Ashley Hall and the vicarage, surrounded by trees, were very pretty objects; and behind me, there was a beautiful prospect over the Country into Lancashire.

" Having looked through my pocket telescope until my eyes

"ached, I took the precaution to wait until I heard the man
"give a toll, and then to set off down directly, in order that
"I might get past the Bell-room before he gave another pull."

Sunday, Sept. 18th.

" Went to Bowden Church in the morning, saw three sets of
"Boarding School Young Ladies, the Earl of Stamford, Lord Grey
"and Lady Jane Grey. In the afternoon it rained very hard,
"so my Sister and I staid in the house, but Mr. Moxon went to
"St. George's, where there was a Charity Sermon preached by a
"Nephew of Mr. Leicester's, for the benefit of the Sunday School.
"After Service, the weather cleared up a little, so we had a
"grand procession, which had it rained would not have taken
"place. The first that came was the Apparitor in a Red Cloak
"and a cock and pinch'd Hat; then Mr Leicester looking as large
"in his own conceit, as the Arch-Bishop of Canterbury; then
"his Nephew who seemed more careful of his gown than appear-
"ances, for he had it tucked up under his elbows; after him
"came the girls, then the boys, ^{guarded} ~~guarded~~ on each side by men
"who carried sundry shaped, long sticks in their hands, for
"which they found constant employment in knocking the poor
"lads' knowledge-boxes, to keep them in something like order;
"and the rear composed of some hundred men and women, who had
"come for miles round, to see this grand and noble procession.
"The children when they got into the School, had by way of

"treat, each a bun, and a drink of hot Ale flavoured with
"either rum or gin, I forget which; for which reason a greater
"number go to the School on that day, than any other in the
"year."

Friday, Sept. 23rd.

" Went to the boat in the hope of meeting my Father and
"Sister Julia, who we expected would come by it, but we were
"terribly disappointed when the boat arrived, not to see in it
"one single person whom we knew. When we reached home we were
"agreeably surprised by Julia bouncing into the room, followed
"by my Father who informed us they were too soon for the boat
"and had walked on and on (thinking the boat would overtake
"them every minute) until they got to Sale moor, where my
"sister Julia, above all other persons in the world, persuaded
"him to enter an Inn to get something to eat and drink! and by
"which means they missed the boat. As they were passing the
"bridge where the boat stops, they asked a girl if it had yet
"come. "Oh no," replied the girl, "it's not come, it's gone."

" I sent my Grandfather a remarkably fine cock Throstle and
"two other small birds for his supper, which being of my own
"shooting, you may be sure he ate with a relish."

Saturday, Sept. 24th.

" ~~My Sister being very unwell, I took her breakfast up to~~
~~"her in bed, and you would have laughed to see how easily I~~
~~"performed the office of Nurse."~~

"

" Monday, Sept. 26th.

"

" Mr. Moxon went by one of the eight o'clock coaches; at
" half after nine went to the boat expecting to meet Fanny, but
" instead of her, my dear Mother came and we were agreeably sur-
" prised by her informing us that she was going to remain all
" the week. After dinner we called at the Shelmerdine's, and
" Miss S. walked with us as far as Mrs. Lignum's cottage, and
" then back with us to our lodgings to tea. Soon after tea
" Miss S. asked me if I had any objection to accompany her to
" Miss Ravald's Boarding School, to inquire how the young ladies
" meant to go to Rosthorn, where the Bishop was going to hold a
" Confirmation. You may be sure I had no objection; so off
" we went together, and when we arrived were shown into a room
" full of knick-knacks. They consisted of Chimney Sweeps,
" Match figures, and ^{fire} ~~fine~~ screens, imitation India Cabinets,
" Work Tables, Boxes &c. &c. Among the living fancy works, were
" the two Miss Ravald's, who it seems are nieces of the late Mr.
" Haughton, whom my Father and Sister Sarah became acquainted
" with in Southport. They are two very amiable looking middle

"aged ladies. We had sat a short time, when there came a
" 'ran-tan' at the door, and immediately after my eyes were re-
" galed with the sight of two as nice, pretty, amiable, modest-
" looking girls, as ever mortal man beheld; their name is Ride-
" out, and I believe my sister Sarah knew a sister of theirs
" equally as lovely as themselves, when she was at Altringham
" with Miss Mary Collier. As we departed, it was settled that
" if the weather ~~was~~^{were} fine, the Ladies should walk, but if wet,
" go in a Chaise. Miss S. who was going with them invited me
" to be of the party, which I gladly accepted when she informed
" me that she was quite sure the Miss Ravald's would not be
" offended if I went."

Tuesday, Sept. 27th.

" As I was to be with Miss Shelmerdine at eight, I got up
" at six o'clock so that I might have plenty of time to prepare
" myself. The first thing I did was to run across the street
" and knock Mr. Bell, the Barber, up, to dress my hair, and after
" enduring a full hour's torture I certainly should have gone
" away with it only half finished, if the old proverb "Pride
" must abide" had not come into my head, and I bore the remain-
" der of my torment like a martyr; but I must do Mr. Bell the
" justice to say, that both my Mother and sister thought he had
" done it remarkably well, and I am sure neither spared time

"nor pains. I went up-stairs to dress, which I performed very
"much to my own satisfaction, having on a green coat, yellow
"satin striped waistcoat, stock of the same, full grey trousers
"and a straw hat. The morning being beautiful in the extreme,
"suited my dress to a tee, and I proceeded to Mrs. Shelmerdine.
"I found Miss ^{Shelmordine} S, ready and in high spirits. We were soon at
"Miss Ravald's and found the ladies waiting for Miss ^{Shelmordine} S., so we
"set off immediately to walk through Bowden and over the fields
"to Rosthorn.

" At length, we arrived at the scene of action, when
"we parted with the two Miss Rideouts, who were going to join
"Mr. Mann, the Vicar of Bowden, and his young people. Miss S.
"and I went into the Churchyard, which overlooks a remarkably
"fine mere; the country people say that in it there dwelleth a
"Mermaid, ^{who} ~~which~~ is seen early in a morning (sitting on a bell
"that fell from the steeple a long time ago, into the water)
"combing her hair. The man at the door told us he had orders
"not to admit anyone into the Church. At ten o'clock it began
"to rain very hard, and the doorkeeper's good nature overcame
"his duty, for he politely invited us to go into the Church,
"which contains a great many monuments of the Egerton and Leigh
"families. About half past ten, the girls began to arrive,
"each district headed by its respective Clergyman. All the
"seats below were appropriated to the girls, and the Organ

"Gallery for the Ladies and Gentlemen who wished to see the
"ceremony. At eleven o'clock, this little rustic gallery
"litterally blazed with Beauty and Fashion, and parties still
"arriving added fresh fuel to the flame, and I expected the
"Church to take fire every minute, and make a greater light
"than all the Candles put together in St. Ann's Church would
"ever make. I was sat near Miss ^{Shelmerdine} S. in a front pew, next the
"door, when I saw a very beautiful young lady (who I thought
"very like Miss Ellen Anderson) standing on the stairs, and evi-
"dently wishing to get a seat. I immediately went out, and
"making her a bow, said if she would do me the honour of accep-
"ting my seat, I should be very proud. She thanked me, with
"one of the sweetest smiles I ever beheld, and accepted my
"offer. I then went into the Organ Loft, if Organ it can be
"called, for I never saw such an apology for one in my life.
"The natural keys were black, and the flats and sharps, yellow,
"and altogether amounted to about twenty in number. It had
"two doors to it like a cupboard, and by way of ornamenting
"them, some house-painter or other had painted or rather daubed
"a Shepherd sitting under a tree with a Milkmaid on his knee,
"and they were so busy clipping one another as not to perceive
"a dog who was licking up the Maid's milk for her.

" At about a quarter before twelve, the Bishop arrived, and
"was conducted into the Vestry by twenty to thirty Parsons of

"all denominations. The female who played the organ, now
"struck up with all her might and main, such a delightful Volun-
"tary that would, without exaggeration, have charmed the heart
"of a Billy-goat.

" The Bishop now mounted the pulpit, and seemed to wish the
"Organist to cease. Someone told her to stop, but she either
"could not or would not hear them. The Bishop now waved his
"hand: I, who sat next her, said, 'if you please, they wish you
"to stop'. She did not please, but went on rattling away at
"a prodigious rate. The Bishop, who now seemed quite out of
"patience, waved his hand several times. I gave her elbow a
"nudge, and said, 'just look behind you, the Bishop is shaking
"his fist at you': and it had the desired effect of stopping
"her disagreeable thump on the horrid instrument, which sounded
"more like an old broken winded Bagpipe than anything else I
"can imagine. During the ceremony, Mr. Horder, the Rector of
"Rosthorn, went out of the Church with Lady Egerton and one of
"her Daughters, and immediately seated himself with them in a
"Curicle and drove several times round a field at full gallop,
"without a hat, robes flying, à la John Gilpin. Then marching
"into the Church again, with a lady hanging on each arm, he
"conducted them back to their seats, and then resumed his
"station among the Clergy as if nothing had happened.

" After the ceremony I joined Miss ^{Shelmerdine} S., who asked me if I

"did not think Mr. Hordern very handsome? We took a walk
"through the village towards Tatton.

" Mr. & Mrs. Drinkwater went to Bowden Wakes, to see the
"races, and contrary to custom Mrs. Drinkwater came home sober
"as a Judge, ^{but Drinkwater} ~~by~~ Mr. D. as usual drunk as a piper."

Friday, Sept. 30th.

" We went to Ashley Hall, through Bowden, past the Vicarage
"over that romantic bridge that crosses the Bollin, and so over
"the fields to the Hall, which we thought a very nice old-
"fashioned place indeed."

Sunday, Oct. 2nd.

" As I did not know of any other Barber but Mr. Bell, I
"went to ask Mr. Drinkwater if he did. "Oh, yes," he replied,
"I'll take you to my Barber's who does not live many yards off.
"However, when we arrived, his barber turned out to be a Bar-
"beress, for she was an old woman who had got her living by
"smoothing the chins of men and boys for the last thirty years.
"However, old woman as she was, I preferred being shaved by her
"to putting myself into Mr. Bell's hands again. She performed
"the operation to a nicety, and I made such a favourable report
"of her to Mr. ^{Charles} C. Moxon, that he went to be shaved by her, and

"she made him laugh so much at her droll speeches that he was
"forced to ask her to give over, as he was afraid that she
"would cut him. She replied "then you will be the first man
"I ever did cut" - then added in an undertone, "anything to
"speak of."

" In the afternoon we went to Bowden and sat in Mr. Hardy's
"pew, which commands an excellent view of the countenances of
"Mrs. Hurdford's young ladies."

Tuesday, Oct. 4th.

" We went through the Earl's Coach-houses and saw seven
"close Carriages of his, besides Landaus &c."

Friday, Oct. 7th.

" As I was proceeding towards the Canal, I saw ^{Charles} C. Poole in
"Mr. Wilson's the Surgeon's; he called out and I went in to him
"and stayed to look at Mr. Harrison's collection of Insects,
"Coins, Minerals, &c. which took me from nine o'clock until
"after ten.

" After dinner, we saw, as we were looking through the
"window, a regular "set-to" between Mr. Bell the barber and a
"Mr. Somebody the joiner. The barber like a farmyard cock,
"fought best on his own premises, for when he came into the

"street he had not the best chance, for the joiner who was a
"thoroughbred Lancashire up and down, kick and bite fighter,
"played about the poor barber's shins with such remarkable
"industry and agility, that he was very soon forced to retire
"into his own shaving apartment. However, when the time
"usually allowed to take breath was expired, he came up to the
"scratch in gallant style, but by way of protecting his poor
"legs he took the precaution to close the half door of his shop
"and fought over it a most manly round in a very scientific
"and decisive manner, for now that he was not annoyed by the
"severe kicks of his adversary he had a fair chance of showing
"that he had taken lessons from one of the most eminent prac-
"titioners in the polite Art of 'Self Defence'; and presently
"the Joiner thought it proper to retreat and leave the Barber
"in full possession of the field. Such was the quietness of
"the streets that during the whole time these two noble comba-
"tants were fighting, not a soul except an old man, stood still
"to look at them.

" After tea, I had a most delightful walk through some
"fields that led from Dunham Lane to Oldfield Hall. The sun
"was setting, and had from these fields the sublimest effect I
"ever beheld. The Landscape before me looked more like en-
"chantment than anything else I could imagine. I was riveted
"to the spot in veneration and delight, and thought what were
"the works of man compared with those of nature. The little

"birds seemed to participate in the loveliness of the scene,
"for they warbled their evening songs with, I thought, more
"than usual sweetness. At length, the sun grew fainter and
"fainter, and at last died entirely away and left nothing be-
"hind it but a faint stream of light as a memorial of its for-
"mer grandeur.

" Thus it is with us. We rise in vigour until the noon of
"life, and then sink gradually away and leave nothing behind
"us but our good or evil works, as a monument of our former
"selves."

Saturday,
Sunday, Oct. 8th.

" We went by Boat as far as Lymm. The first thing we did
"after our arrival, was to walk through the romantic dell that
"leads from the village to the Church. We next proceeded to
"the Church which is beautiful in the extreme.

" As some workmen were repairing the interior, we got in,
"and to my astonishment the first thing I either heard or saw,
"was my old friend the Lady Organist (whom the Bishop shook
"his fist at in Rosthorn Church) striking up in her usual
"thumping style, the old Hundredth psalm, on a new organ that
"had just been put up. There was going to be an election for
"the Organist, and she being one of the Candidates accounted
"for her being here. The Church floor was spread over with

"rushes, and the walls ornamented with the May garlands of the
"previous year, which now began to resume rather a dusty hue.
"After examining the monuments, of which the Church contained
"a great number, we proceeded through some fields and then down
"a lane which leads to a part of the village we had not yet seen.
"It contained nothing worthy our notice except a very curious
"Market-cross, that looked for all the world like a time-piece,
"that we often see set on an old Maid's chimney piece. After
"walking about a short time, we went under the Canal to another
"equally romantic dell (as the one I previously mentioned)
"with a beautiful wooden bridge across the water that runs
"through it; after crossing the bridge we came to a walk over-
"hung by huge masses of projecting rock, interspersed with
"beautiful trees and shrubs, and both combined had a very
"grand effect, for the rock appeared nearly supported by the
"large roots of trees which grew on the land above our heads,
"and threatened the admiring beholder, should they fall, with
"instant destruction. After leaving this delightful spot, we
"went to the Inn and got some Biscuits, butter, and negus,
"which having finished, we proceeded to the Boat that had now
"made its appearance; sailed back to Dunham and walked through
"the Park home."

Sunday, Oct. 9th.

" I got up before seven o'clock and took a walk round the
"outer Park. The morning was beautifully fine and I should
"have had a delightful walk had I not been thinking that I was
"going to leave ~~it~~ for a dirty, nasty, smoky town, that if it
"were not for the people who reside there I should never care
"to enter again. We all went to Bowden Church, and I took a
"last lingering look at the dear Boarding School Young Ladies.

" After the Service was over, we saw five carriages for
"the Nobility, all visitors to the Earl of Stamford, who was
"himself handing in the Ladies, when Lord Grey stepping into
"one was pulled out by the Coat-lap by the Earl who said to
"him "The carriage is full enough, and I am sure you are quite
"big enough to walk." Then shutting the door, bid the Coach-
"man proceed. He then set out himself, with four other gentle-
"men to walk to the Hall.

" After dinner, being rather melancholy, I did not stir out
"until it was time for me to depart. Having despatched a man
"with my luggage towards the Boat, I went to bid Mrs. Drink-
"water 'good-bye'. I now followed the man, whom I overtook
"at the George & Dragon Inn, for as a Chester Coach was stop-
"ping there on its way to Manchester and not being full, the
"man thought I should prefer going by it rather than by the
"boat, which I did. A little on the Manchester side of Wood-
"Heys, I met Mr. ^{Charles} ~~C.~~ Poole who was on horseback, and as soon as

"he saw me, set a grinning like a Cheshire cat and shouted
"out something, but owing to the rattling of the Coach I could
"not hear a word. In passing through Stretford I was astonish-
"ed to see the Gingerbread and Apple Stalls set out, and the
"place so full of people that we were in danger of running
"over some one every minute. I learned from the Coachman
"that it was the Wakes, which accounted for the unusual bustle
"that prevailed.

" I arrived at the 'Talbot' about five o'clock after just a
"month's rustication in a country beautiful by nature and ren-
"dered more so by cultivation, and I had as much real enjoyment
"as anyone could have wished."

*This fair would be kept on old St Michael's day
viz Sept^r 29. old style falling on Oct^r 9*

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*allowing for the Eleven Days alteration
in the Kalendar made Sept^r 1752*