

**Fred M. White**



*The Silver  
Stream: An Idyl  
of the Wye*

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# **The Silver Stream: An Idyl of the Wye**



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# CHAPTER I.

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AS the shadows began to lengthen over Belmont—for the cathedral chimes floating along the bosom of the waters proclaimed the seventh hour—a long outriggered gig pair flashed round the point into the level stretch of dead pool reaching right away to the Wye Bridge. There was a pleasant smell of flowers lying upon the sweet August air, a lowing of cattle, a reflection of many boats in the track as the gig, propelled by four muscular arms, slid on towards the town. There were only two men in the narrow craft; and as they were double sculling, with long clean sweep, making a musical click of oars in the rowlocks, there was not much opportunity for conversation. The 'stroke,' a young fellow with clear gray eyes and pleasant face, was clad in a suit of plain white flannels; and perched upon the back of his head was a light-blue cap—the badge of distinction sacred to those only who have fought for the honour of the 'Varsity against their rivals from the twin seat of learning, Oxford. Egbert—or as his familiars called him—Bertie Trevor, the stroke in question, had rowed 'four' in that year's Cambridge boat, and now, with his friend Frederick Denton, was making a Wye boating tour from Hay to Chepstow. Denton, a somewhat older man, sported the light-blue and black of Caius College. He was not a blue, for two reasons: first, because the severe training was not to his taste; and secondly, a restless ambition and the result dependent upon a successful university career had left him no time for such

a serious and practical business. A hard-working college tutor has no time for the toil of pleasure.

They pulled on with regular sweeping rhythm till they were almost within the bridge-shadows. An arrowy craft bearing a town four rushed by with clean sweep and swirl upstream, a little knot of admirers running along the bank in the wake of a flannel-clad youth who was bent upon exercising an extraordinary ingenuity for giving each of the unhappy crew the most apparently contradictory directions. As they sped swiftly by Denton paused in his stroke and looked over his shoulder at the thin line, like a gigantic spider, fading in the golden track.

'That is what some people call pleasure,' he observed —'sacrificing a perfect summer evening for the satisfaction of sitting in a confined space for two hours to be bullied by an implacable miscreant called a coach. Depend upon it if it was called work, they wouldn't get a man to turn out.'

'I like their stroke,' Trevor replied. 'Well marked and lively, and the last ounce pulled out.—What a grand stretch of water this is, Denton!—two miles without a curve, and room for at least five eights. If we only had such a river at Cambridge!'

A few more strokes and the landing stage was reached. A bronzed Waterman, with visage tanned to the colour of Spanish mahogany, awaited them on the barge: old 'Dick' Jordan, with his solitary keen eye and everlasting pipe, best of men and bravest of watermen, as every rowing man on the Wye can tell. He looked up into the fading blue sky and prophesied, after the manner of his kind, a fair day on the morrow.