



The Chequers

James Runciman

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James Runciman was an English teacher, author and journalist. He was born at Cresswelland educated at Ellington school, and then for two years in the naval school at Greenwich, Kent. He became a pupil-teacher at North Shields ragged school, and after further training, entered the service of the London School Board. While still a schoolmaster, he read for himself at night, and attempted journalism. He soon wrote regularly for the *Teacher*, the *Schoolmaster*, and *Vanity Fair*, where he became a sub-editor. Subsequently he confined himself solely to the profession of journalism. He wrote on a variety of topics, but his best known work described the life of the fishermen of the North Sea.

The Chequers is described as "Being the Natural History of a Public-House, Set Forth in a Loafer's Diary." It's a series of stories about a pub, told by a regular. As Runciman puts it: "If you want to know how Drink really acts on the inner life of this nation you must actually live among the forlorn folk who drink Circe's draft, and you must live as their equal, their friend, their confidant." So he does, as the Loafer, and comes away with tales of the Ramper, the Wanderer, and others, a community defined by the public house and a shared love of drink.

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