LANG ANDREW

ADVENTURES AMONG BOOKS

Andrew Lang

Adventures Among Books

Lang A.

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Содержание

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PREFACE

Of the Essays in this volume "Adventures among Books," and "Rab's Friend," appeared in *Scribner's Magazine*; and "Recollections of Robert Louis Stevenson" (to the best of the author's memory) in *The North American Review*. The Essay on "Smollett" was in the *Anglo-Saxon*, which has ceased to appear; and the shorter papers, such as "The Confessions of Saint Augustine," in a periodical styled *Wit and Wisdom*. For "The Poems of William Morris" the author has to thank the Editor of *Longman's Magazine*; for "The Boy," and "Mrs. Radcliffe's Novels," the Proprietors of *The Cornhill Magazine*; for "Enchanted Cigarettes," and possibly for "The Supernatural in Fiction," the Proprietors of *The Idler*. The portrait, after Sir William Richmond, R.A., was done about the time when most of the Essays were written – and that was not yesterday.

CHAPTER I: ADVENTURES AMONG BOOKS

I

In an age of reminiscences, is there room for the confessions of a veteran, who remembers a great deal about books and very little about people? I have often wondered that a *Biographia Literaria* has so seldom been attempted – a biography or autobiography of a man in his relations with other minds. Coleridge, to be sure, gave this name to a work of his, but he wandered from his apparent purpose into a world of alien disquisitions. The following pages are frankly bookish, and to the bookish only do they appeal. The habit of reading has been praised as a virtue, and has been denounced as a vice. In no case, if we except the perpetual study of newspapers (which cannot fairly be called reading), is the vice, or the virtue, common. It is more innocent than opium-eating, though, like opium-eating, it unlocks to us artificial paradises. I try to say what I have found in books, what distractions from the world, what teaching (not much), and what consolations.

In beginning an *autobiographia literaria*, an account of how, and in what order, books have appealed to a mind, which books have ever above all things delighted, the author must pray to be pardoned for the sin of egotism. There is no other mind, naturally, of which the author knows so much as of his own. *On n'a que soi*, as the poor girl says in one of M. Paul Bourget's novels. In literature, as in love, one can only speak for himself. This author did not, like Fulke Greville, retire into the convent of literature from the strife of the world, rather he was born to be, from the first, a dweller in the cloister of a library. Among the poems which I remember best out of early boyhood is Lucy Ashton's song, in the "Bride of Lammermoor": —

"Look not thou on beauty's charming,
Sit thou still when kings are arming,
Taste not when the wine-cup glistens,
Speak not when the people listens,
Stop thine ear against the singer,
From the red gold keep thy finger,
Vacant heart, and hand, and eye,
Easy live and quiet die."

The rhymes, unlearned, clung to my memory; they would sing themselves to me on the way to school, or cricket-field, and, about the age of ten, probably without quite understanding them, I had chosen them for a kind of motto in life, a tune to murmur along the *fallentis semita vitæ*. This seems a queer idea for a small boy, but it must be confessed.

"It takes all sorts to make a world," some are soldiers from the cradle, some merchants, some orators; nothing but a love of books was the gift given to me by the fairies. It was probably derived from forebears on both sides of my family, one a great reader, the other a considerable collector of books which remained with us and were all tried, persevered with, or abandoned in turn, by a student who has not blanched before the *Epigoniad*.

About the age of four I learned to read by a simple process. I had heard the elegy of Cock Robin till I knew it by rote, and I picked out the letters and words which compose that classic till I could read it for myself. Earlier than that, "Robinson Crusoe" had been read aloud to me, in an abbreviated form, no doubt. I remember the pictures of Robinson finding the footstep in the sand, and a dance of cannibals, and the parrot. But, somehow, I have never read "Robinson" since: it is a pleasure to come.

The first books which vividly impressed me were, naturally, fairy tales, and chap-books about Robert Bruce, William Wallace, and Rob Roy. At that time these little tracts could be bought for a penny apiece. I can still see Bruce in full armour, and Wallace in a kilt, discoursing across a burn, and Rob Roy slipping from the soldier's horse into the stream. They did not then awaken a precocious patriotism; a boy of five is more at home in Fairyland than in his own country. The sudden appearance of the White Cat as a queen after her head was cut off, the fiendish malice of the Yellow Dwarf, the strange cake of crocodile eggs and millet seed which the mother of the Princess Frutilla made for the Fairy of the Desert – these things, all fresh and astonishing, but certainly to be credited, are my first memories of romance. One story of a White Serpent, with a woodcut of that mysterious reptile, I neglected to secure, probably for want of a penny, and I have regretted it ever since. One never sees those chap books now. "The White Serpent," in spite of all research, remains *introuvable*. It was a lost chance, and Fortune does not forgive. Nobody ever interfered with these, or indeed with any other studies of ours at that time, as long as they were not prosecuted on Sundays. "The fightingest parts of the Bible," and the Apocrypha, and stories like that of the Witch of Endor, were sabbatical literature, read in a huge old illustrated Bible. How I advanced from the fairy tales to Shakespeare, what stages there were on the way – for there must have been stages – is a thing that memory cannot recover. A nursery legend tells that I was wont to arrange six open books on six chairs, and go from one to the others, perusing them by turns. No doubt this was what people call "desultory reading," but I did not hear the criticism till later, and then too often for my comfort. Memory holds a picture, more vivid than most, of a small boy reading the "Midsummer Night's Dream" by firelight, in a room where candles were lit, and some one touched the piano, and a young man and a girl were playing chess. The Shakespeare was a volume of Kenny Meadows' edition; there are fairies in it, and the fairies seemed to come out of Shakespeare's dream into the music and the firelight. At that moment I think that I was happy; it seemed an enchanted glimpse of eternity in Paradise; nothing resembling it remains with me, out of all the years.

We went from the border to the south of England, when the number of my years was six, and in England we found another paradise, a circulating library with brown, greasy, ill-printed, odd volumes of Shakespeare and of the "Arabian Nights." How their stained pages come before the eyes again – the pleasure and the puzzle of them! What did the lady in the Geni's glass box want with the Merchants? what meant all these conversations between the Fat Knight and *Ford*, in the "Merry Wives"? It was delightful, but in parts it was difficult. Fragments of "The Tempest," and of other plays, remain stranded in my memory from these readings: *Ferdinand* and *Miranda* at chess, *Cleopatra* cuffing the messenger, the asp in the basket of figs, the *Friar* and the *Apothecary*, *Troilus* on the Ilian walls, a vision of *Cassandra* in white muslin with her hair down. People forbid children to read this or that. I am sure they need not, and that even in our infancy the magician, Shakespeare, brings us nothing worse than a world of beautiful visions, half realised. In the Egyptian wizard's little pool of ink, only the pure can see the visions, and in Shakespeare's magic mirror children see only what is pure. Among other books of that time I only recall a kind of Sunday novel, "Naomi; or, The Last Days of Jerusalem." Who, indeed, could forget the battering-rams, and the man who cried on the battlements, "Woe, woe to myself and to Jerusalem!" I seem to hear him again when boys break the hum of London with yells of the latest "disaster."

We left England in a year, went back to Scotland, and awoke, as it were, to know the glories of our birth. We lived in Scott's country, within four miles of Abbotsford, and, so far, we had heard nothing of it. I remember going with one of the maids into the cottage of a kinsman of hers, a carpenter; a delightful place, where there was sawdust, where our first fishing-rods were fashioned. Rummaging among the books, of course, I found some cheap periodical with verses in it. The lines began —

"The Baron of Smaylhome rose with day,

He spurred his courser on,
Without stop or stay, down the rocky way
That leads to Brotherstone."

A rustic tea-table was spread for us, with scones and honey, not to be neglected. But they *were* neglected till we had learned how —

"The sable score of fingers four
Remains on that board impressed,
And for evermore that lady wore
A covering on her wrist."

We did not know nor ask the poet's name. Children, probably, say very little about what is in their minds; but that unhappy knight, Sir Richard of Coldinghame, and the Priest, with his chamber in the east, and the moody Baron, and the Lady, have dwelt in our mind ever since, and hardly need to be revived by looking at "The Eve of St. John."

Soon after that we were told about Sir Walter, how great he was, how good, how, like Napoleon, his evil destiny found him at last, and he wore his heart away for honour's sake. And we were given the "Lay," and "The Lady of the Lake." It was my father who first read "Tam o' Shanter" to me, for which I confess I did not care at that time, preferring to take witches and bogies with great seriousness. It seemed as if Burns were trifling with a noble subject. But it was in a summer sunset, beside a window looking out on Ettrick and the hill of the Three Brethren's Cairn, that I first read, with the dearest of all friends, how —

"The stag at eve had drunk his fill
Where danced the moon on Monan's rill,
And deep his midnight lair had made
In lone Glenartney's hazel shade."

Then opened the gates of romance, and with Fitz-James we drove the chase, till —

"Few were the stragglers, following far,
That reached the lake of Vennachar,
And when the Brig of Turk was won,
The foremost horseman rode alone."

From that time, for months, there was usually a little volume of Scott in one's pocket, in company with the miscellaneous collection of a boy's treasures. Scott certainly took his fairy folk seriously, and the Mauth Dog was rather a disagreeable companion to a small boy in wakeful hours. [1] After this kind of introduction to Sir Walter, after learning one's first lessons in history from the "Tales of a Grandfather," nobody, one hopes, can criticise him in cold blood, or after the manner of Mr. Leslie Stephen, who is not sentimental. Scott is not an author like another, but our earliest known friend in letters; for, of course, we did not ask who Shakespeare was, nor inquire about the private history of Madame d'Aulnoy. Scott peopled for us the rivers and burnsides with his reivers; the Fairy Queen came out of Eildon Hill and haunted Carterhaugh; at Newark Tower we saw "the embattled portal arch" —

[1] "Mauth" is Manx for dog, I am told.

"Whose ponderous grate and massy bar
Had oft rolled back the tide of war," —

just as, at Foulshiels, on Yarrow, we beheld the very roofless cottage whence Mungo Park went forth to trace the waters of the Niger, and at Oakwood the tower of the Wizard Michael Scott.

Probably the first novel I ever read was read at Elgin, and the story was "Jane Eyre." This tale was a creepy one for a boy of nine, and Rochester was a mystery, St. John a bore. But the lonely little girl in her despair, when something came into the room, and her days of starvation at school, and the terrible first Mrs. Rochester, were not to be forgotten. They abide in one's recollection with a Red Indian's ghost, who carried a rusty ruined gun, and whose acquaintance was made at the same time.

I fancy I was rather an industrious little boy, and that I had minded my lessons, and satisfied my teachers – I know I was reading Pinnock's "History of Rome" for pleasure – till "the wicked day of destiny" came, and I felt a "call," and underwent a process which may be described as the opposite of "conversion." The "call" came from Dickens. "Pickwick" was brought into the house. From that hour it was all over, for five or six years, with anything like industry and lesson-books. I read "Pickwick" in convulsions of mirth. I dropped Pinnock's "Rome" for good. I neglected everything printed in Latin, in fact everything that one was understood to prepare for one's classes in the school whither I was now sent, in Edinburgh. For there, living a rather lonely small boy in the house of an aged relation, I found the Waverley Novels. The rest is transport. A conscientious tutor dragged me through the Latin grammar, and a constitutional dislike to being beaten on the hands with a leather strap urged me to acquire a certain amount of elementary erudition. But, for a year, I was a young hermit, living with Scott in the "Waverleys" and the "Border Minstrelsy," with Pope, and Prior, and a translation of Ariosto, with Lever and Dickens, David Copperfield and Charles O'Malley, Longfellow and Mayne Reid, Dumas, and in brief, with every kind of light literature that I could lay my hands upon. Carlyle did not escape me; I vividly remember the helpless rage with which I read of the Flight to Varennes. In his work on French novelists, Mr. Saintsbury speaks of a disagreeable little boy, in a French romance, who found Scott *assommant*, stunningly stupid. This was a very odious little boy, it seems (I have not read his adventures), and he came, as he deserved, to a bad end. Other and better boys, I learn, find Scott "slow." Extraordinary boys! Perhaps "Ivanhoe" was first favourite of yore; you cannot beat Front de Boeuf, the assault on his castle, the tournament. No other tournament need apply. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, greatly daring, has attempted to enter the lists, but he is a mere Ralph the Hospitaller. Next, I think, in order of delight, came "Quentin Durward," especially the hero of the scar, whose name Thackeray could not remember, Quentin's uncle. Then "The Black Dwarf," and Dugald, our dear Rittmeister. I could not read "Rob Roy" then, nor later; nay, not till I was forty. Now Di Vernon is the lady for me; the queen of fiction, the peerless, the brave, the tender, and true.

The wisdom of the authorities decided that I was to read no more novels, but, as an observer remarked, "I don't see what is the use of preventing the boy from reading novels, for he's just reading 'Don Juan' instead." This was so manifestly no improvement, that the ban on novels was tacitly withdrawn, or was permitted to become a dead letter. They were far more enjoyable than Byron. The worst that came of this was the suggestion of a young friend, whose life had been adventurous – indeed he had served in the Crimea with the Bashi Bazouks – that I should master the writings of Edgar Poe. I do not think that the "Black Cat," and the "Fall of the House of Usher," and the "Murders in the Rue Morgue," are very good reading for a boy who is not peculiarly intrepid. Many a bad hour they gave me, haunting me, especially, with a fear of being prematurely buried, and of waking up before breakfast to find myself in a coffin. Of all the books I devoured in that year, Poe is the only author whom I wish I had reserved for later consideration, and whom I cannot conscientiously recommend to children.

I had already enjoyed a sip of Thackeray, reading at a venture, in "Vanity Fair," about the Battle of Waterloo. It was not like Lever's accounts of battles, but it was enchanting. However, "Vanity Fair"

was under a taboo. It is not easy to say why; but Mr. Thackeray himself informed a small boy, whom he found reading "Vanity Fair" under the table, that he had better read something else. What harm can the story do to a child? He reads about Waterloo, about fat Jos, about little George and the pony, about little Rawdon and the rat-hunt, and is happy and unharmed.

Leaving my hermitage, and going into the very different and very disagreeable world of a master's house, I was lucky enough to find a charming library there. Most of Thackeray was on the shelves, and Thackeray became the chief enchanter. As Henry Kingsley says, a boy reads him and thinks he knows all about life. I do not think that the mundane parts, about Lady Kew and her wiles, about Ethel and the Marquis of Farintosh, appealed to one or enlightened one. Ethel was a mystery, and not an interesting mystery, though one used to copy Doyle's pictures of her, with the straight nose, the impossible eyes, the impossible waist. It was not Ethel who captivated us; it was Clive's youth and art, it was J. J., the painter, it was jolly F. B. and his address to the maid about the lobster. "A finer fish, Mary, my dear, I have never seen. Does not this solve the vexed question whether lobsters are fish, in the French sense?" Then "The Rose and the Ring" came out. It was worth while to be twelve years old, when the Christmas books were written by Dickens and Thackeray. I got hold of "The Rose and the Ring," I know, and of the "Christmas Carol," when they were damp from the press. King Valoroso, and Bulbo, and Angelica were even more delightful than Scrooge, and Tiny Tim, and Trotty Veck. One remembers the fairy monarch more vividly, and the wondrous array of egg-cups from which he sipped brandy – or was it right Nantes? – still "going on sipping, I am sorry to say," even after "Valoroso was himself again."

But, of all Thackeray's books, I suppose "Pendennis" was the favourite. The delightful Marryat had entertained us with Peter Simple and O'Brien (how good their flight through France is!) with Mesty and Mr. Midshipman Easy, with Jacob Faithful (Mr. Thackeray's favourite), and with Snarleyyow; but Marryat never made us wish to run away to sea. That did not seem to be one's vocation. But the story of Pen made one wish to run away to literature, to the Temple, to streets where Brown, the famous reviewer, might be seen walking with his wife and umbrella. The writing of poems "up to" pictures, the beer with Warrington in the mornings, the suppers in the back-kitchen, these were the alluring things, not society, and Lady Rockminster, and Lord Steyne. Well, one has run away to literature since, but where is the matutinal beer? Where is the back-kitchen? Where are Warrington, and Foker, and F. B.? I have never met them in this living world, though Brown, the celebrated reviewer, is familiar to me, and also Mr. Sydney Scraper, of the Oxford and Cambridge Club. Perhaps back-kitchens exist, perhaps there are cakes and ale in the life literary, and F. B. may take his walks by the Round Pond. But one never encounters these rarities, and Bungay and Bacon are no longer the innocent and ignorant rivals whom Thackeray drew. They do not give those wonderful parties; Miss Bunnion has become quite conventional; Percy Popjoy has abandoned letters; Mr. Wenham does not toady; Mr. Wagg does not joke any more. The literary life is very like any other, in London, or is it that we do not see it aright, not having the eyes of genius? Well, a life on the ocean wave, too, may not be so desirable as it seems in Marryat's novels: so many a lad whom he tempted into the navy has discovered. The best part of the existence of a man of letters is his looking forward to it through the spectacles of Titmarsh.

One can never say how much one owes to a school-master who was a friend of literature, who kept a houseful of books, and who was himself a graceful scholar, and an author, while he chose to write, of poetic and humorous genius. Such was the master who wrote the "Day Dreams of a Schoolmaster," Mr. D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, to whom, in this place, I am glad to confess my gratitude after all these many years. While we were deep in the history of Pendennis we were also being dragged through the Commentaries of Caius Julius Cæsar, through the Latin and Greek grammars, through Xenophon, and the Eclogues of Virgil, and a depressing play of Euripides, the "Phœnissæ." I can never say how much I detested these authors, who, taken in small doses, are far, indeed, from being attractive. Horace, to a lazy boy, appears in his Odes to have nothing to

say, and to say it in the most frivolous and vexatious manner. Then Cowper's "Task," or "Paradise Lost," as school-books, with notes, seems arid enough to a school-boy. I remember reading ahead, in Cowper, instead of attending to the lesson and the class-work. His observations on public schools were not uninteresting, but the whole English school-work of those days was repugnant. One's English education was all got out of school.

As to Greek, for years it seemed a mere vacuous terror; one invented for one's self all the current arguments against "compulsory Greek." What was the use of it, who ever spoke in it, who could find any sense in it, or any interest? A language with such cruel superfluities as a middle voice and a dual; a language whose verbs were so fantastically irregular, looked like a barbaric survival, a mere plague and torment. So one thought till Homer was opened before us. Elsewhere I have tried to describe the vivid delight of first reading Homer, delight, by the way, which St. Augustine failed to appreciate. Most boys not wholly immersed in dulness felt it, I think; to myself, for one, Homer was the real beginning of study. One had tried him, when one was very young, in Pope, and had been baffled by Pope, and his artificial manner, his "fairs," and "swains." Homer seemed better reading in the absurd "crib" which Mr. Buckley wrote for Bohn's series. Hector and Ajax, in that disguise, were as great favourites as Horatius on the Bridge, or the younger Tarquin. Scott, by the way, must have made one a furious and consistent Legitimist. In reading the "Lays of Ancient Rome," my sympathies were with the expelled kings, at least with him who fought so well at Lake Regillus: —

> "Titus, the youngest Tarquin,
> Too good for such a breed."

Where —

> "Valerius struck at Titus,
> And lopped off half his crest;
> But Titus stabbed Valerius
> A span deep in the breast," —

I find, on the margin of my old copy, in a schoolboy's hand, the words "Well done, the Jacobites!" Perhaps my politics have never gone much beyond this sentiment. But this is a digression from Homer. The very sound of the hexameter, that long, inimitable roll of the most various music, was enough to win the heart, even if the words were not understood. But the words proved unexpectedly easy to understand, full as they are of all nobility, all tenderness, all courage, courtesy, and romance. The "Morte d'Arthur" itself, which about this time fell into our hands, was not so dear as the "Odyssey," though for a boy to read Sir Thomas Malory is to ride at adventure in enchanted forests, to enter haunted chapels where a light shines from the Graal, to find by lonely mountain meres the magic boat of Sir Galahad.

After once being initiated into the mysteries of Greece by Homer, the work at Greek was no longer tedious. Herodotus was a charming and humorous story-teller, and, as for Thucydides, his account of the Sicilian Expedition and its ending was one of the very rare things in literature which almost, if not quite, brought tears into one's eyes. Few passages, indeed, have done that, and they are curiously discrepant. The first book that ever made me cry, of which feat I was horribly ashamed, was "Uncle Tom's Cabin," with the death of Eva, Topsy's friend. Then it was trying when Colonel Newcome said *Adsum*, and the end of Socrates in the *Phaedo* moved one more than seemed becoming – these, and a passage in the history of Skalagrim Lamb's Tail, and, as I said, the ruin of the Athenians in the Syracusan Bay. I have read these chapters in an old French version derived through the Italian from a Latin translation of Thucydides. Even in this far-descended form, the tale keeps its pathos;

the calm, grave stamp of that tragic telling cannot be worn away by much handling, by long time, by the many changes of human speech. “Others too,” says Nicias, in that fatal speech, when —

> “All was done that men may do,
> And all was done in vain,” —

“having achieved what men may, have borne what men must.” This is the very burden of life, and the last word of tragedy. For now all is vain: courage, wisdom, piety, the bravery of Lamachus, the goodness of Nicias, the brilliance of Alcibiades, all are expended, all wasted, nothing of that brave venture abides, except torture, defeat, and death. No play not poem of individual fortunes is so moving as this ruin of a people; no modern story can stir us, with all its eloquence, like the brief gravity of this ancient history. Nor can we find, at the last, any wisdom more wise than that which bids us do what men may, and bear what men must. Such are the lessons of the Greek, of the people who tried all things, in the morning of the world, and who still speak to us of what they tried in words which are the sum of human gaiety and gloom, of grief and triumph, hope and despair. The world, since their day, has but followed in the same round, which only seems new: has only made the same experiments, and failed with the same failure, but less gallantly and less gloriously.

One’s school-boy adventures among books ended not long after winning the friendship of Homer and Thucydides, of Lucretius and Catullus. One’s application was far too desultory to make a serious and accurate scholar.

I confess to having learned the classical languages, as it were by accident, for the sake of what is in them, and with a provokingly imperfect accuracy. Cricket and trout occupied far too much of my mind and my time: Christopher North, and Walton, and Thomas Tod Stoddart, and “The Moor and the Loch,” were my holiday reading, and I do not regret it. Philologists and Ireland scholars are not made so, but you can, in no way, fashion a scholar out of a casual and inaccurate intelligence. The true scholar is one whom I envy, almost as much as I respect him; but there is a kind of mental short-sightedness, where accents and verbal niceties are concerned, which cannot be sharpened into true scholarship. Yet, even for those afflicted in this way, and with the malady of being “idle, careless little boys,” the ancient classics have a value for which there is no substitute. There is a charm in finding ourselves – our common humanity, our puzzles, our cares, our joys, in the writings of men severed from us by race, religion, speech, and half the gulf of historical time – which no other literary pleasure can equal. Then there is to be added, as the university preacher observed, “the pleasure of despising our fellow-creatures who do not know Greek.” Doubtless in that there is great consolation.

It would be interesting, were it possible, to know what proportion of people really care for poetry, and how the love of poetry came to them, and grew in them, and where and when it stopped. Modern poets whom one meets are apt to say that poetry is not read at all. Byron’s Murray ceased to publish poetry in 1830, just when Tennyson and Browning were striking their preludes. Probably Mr. Murray was wise in his generation. But it is also likely that many persons, even now, are attached to poetry, though they certainly do not buy contemporary verse. How did the passion come to them? How long did it stay? When did the Muse say good-bye? To myself, as I have remarked, poetry came with Sir Walter Scott, for one read Shakespeare as a child, rather in a kind of dream of fairyland and enchanted isles, than with any distinct consciousness that one was occupied with poetry. Next to Scott, with me, came Longfellow, who pleased one as more reflective and tenderly sentimental, while the reflections were not so deep as to be puzzling. I remember how “Hiawatha” came out, when one was a boy, and how delightful was the free forest life, and Minnehaha, and Paupukkeewis, and Nokomis. One did not then know that the same charm, with a yet fresher dew upon it, was to meet one later, in the “Kalewala.” But, at that time, one had no conscious pleasure in poetic style, except in such ringing verse as Scott’s, and Campbell’s in his patriotic pieces. The pleasure and enchantment of style first appealed to me, at about the age of fifteen, when one read for the first time —

"So all day long the noise of battle rolled
Among the mountains by the winter sea;
Until King Arthur's Table, man by man,
Had fallen in Lyonnesse about their Lord."

Previously one had only heard of Mr. Tennyson as a name. When a child I was told that a poet was coming to a house in the Highlands where we chanced to be, a poet named Tennyson. "Is he a poet like Sir Walter Scott?" I remember asking, and was told, "No, he was not like Sir Walter Scott." Hearing no more of him, I was prowling among the books in an ancient house, a rambling old place with a ghost-room, where I found Tupper, and could not get on with "Proverbial Philosophy." Next I tried Tennyson, and instantly a new light of poetry dawned, a new music was audible, a new god came into my medley of a Pantheon, a god never to be dethroned. "Men scarcely know how beautiful fire is," Shelley says. I am convinced that we scarcely know how great a poet Lord Tennyson is; use has made him too familiar. The same hand has "raised the Table Round again," that has written the sacred book of friendship, that has lulled us with the magic of the "Lotus Eaters," and the melody of "Tithonus." He has made us move, like his own Prince —

"Among a world of ghosts,
And feel ourselves the shadows of a dream."

He has enriched our world with conquests of romance; he has recut and reset a thousand ancient gems of Greece and Rome; he has roused our patriotism; he has stirred our pity; there is hardly a human passion but he has purged it and ennobled it, including "this of love." Truly, the Laureate remains the most various, the sweetest, the most exquisite, the most learned, the most Virgilian of all English poets, and we may pity the lovers of poetry who died before Tennyson came.

Here may end the desultory tale of a desultory bookish boyhood. It was not in nature that one should not begin to rhyme for one's self. But those exercises were seldom even written down; they lived a little while in a memory which has lost them long ago. I do remember me that I tried some of my attempts on my dear mother, who said much what Dryden said to "Cousin Swift," "You will never be a poet," a decision in which I straightway acquiesced. For to rhyme is one thing, to be a poet quite another. A good deal of mortification would be avoided if young men and maidens only kept this obvious fact well posed in front of their vanity and their ambition.

In these bookish memories I have said nothing about religion and religious books, for various reasons. But, unlike other Scots of the pen, I got no harm from "The Shorter Catechism," of which I remember little, and neither then nor now was or am able to understand a single sentence. Some precocious metaphysicians comprehended and stood aghast at justification, sanctification, adoption, and effectual calling. These, apparently, were necessary processes in the Scottish spiritual life. But we were not told what they meant, nor were we distressed by a sense that we had not passed through them. From most children, one trusts, Calvinism ran like water off a duck's back; unlucky were they who first absorbed, and later were compelled to get rid of, "The Shorter Catechism!"

One good thing, if no more, these memories may accomplish. Young men, especially in America, write to me and ask me to recommend "a course of reading." Distrust a course of reading! People who really care for books *read all of them*. There is no other course. Let this be a reply. No other answer shall they get from me, the inquiring young men.

II

People talk, in novels, about the delights of a first love. One may venture to doubt whether everybody exactly knows which was his, or her, first love, of men or women, but about our first loves in books there can be no mistake. They were, and remain, the dearest of all; after boyhood the bloom is off the literary rye. The first parcel of these garrulities ended when the author left school, at about the age of seventeen. One's literary equipment seems to have been then almost as complete as it ever will be, one's tastes definitely formed, one's favourites already chosen. As long as we live we hope to read, but we never can "recapture the first fine careless rapture." Besides, one begins to write, and that is fatal. My own first essays were composed at school – for other boys. Not long ago the gentleman who was then our English master wrote to me, informing me he was my earliest public, and that he had never credited my younger brother with the essays which that unscrupulous lad ("I speak of him but brotherly") was accustomed to present for his consideration.

On leaving school at seventeen I went to St. Leonard's Hall, in the University of St. Andrews. That is the oldest of Scotch universities, and was founded by a papal bull. St. Leonard's Hall, after having been a *hospitium* for pilgrims, a home for old ladies (about 1500), and a college in the University, was now a kind of cross between a master's house at school, and, as before 1750, a college. We had more liberty than schoolboys, less than English undergraduates. In the Scotch universities the men live scattered, in lodgings, and only recently, at St. Andrews, have they begun to dine together in hall. We had a common roof, common dinners, wore scarlet gowns, possessed football and cricket clubs, and started, of course, a kind of weekly magazine. It was only a manuscript affair, and was profusely illustrated. For the only time in my life, I was now an editor, under a sub-editor, who kept me up to my work, and cut out my fine passages. The editor's duty was to write most of the magazine – to write essays, reviews (of books by the professors, very severe), novels, short stories, poems, translations, also to illustrate these, and to "fag" his friends for "copy" and drawings. A deplorable flippancy seems, as far as one remembers, to have been the chief characteristic of the periodical – flippancy and an abundant use of the supernatural. These were the days of Lord' Lytton's "Strange Story," which I continue to think a most satisfactory romance. Inspired by Lord Lytton, and aided by the University library, I read Cornelius Agrippa, Trithemius, Petrus de Abano, Michael Scott, and struggled with Iamblichus and Plotinus.

These are really but disappointing writers. It soon became evident enough that the devil was not to be raised by their prescriptions, that the philosopher's stone was beyond the reach of the amateur. Iamblichus is particularly obscure and tedious. To any young beginner I would recommend Petrus de Abano, as the most adequate and gruesome of the school, for "real deevilry and pleesure," while in the wilderness of Plotinus there are many beautiful passages and lofty speculations. Two winters in the Northern University, with the seamy side of school life left behind, among the kindest of professors – Mr. Sellar, Mr. Ferrier, Mr. Shairp – in the society of the warden, Mr. Rhoades, and of many dear old friends, are the happiest time in my life. This was true literary leisure, even if it was not too well employed, and the *religio loci* should be a liberal education in itself. We had debating societies – I hope I am now forgiven for an attack on the character of Sir William Wallace, *latro quidam*, as the chronicler calls him, "a certain brigand." But I am for ever writing about St. Andrews – writing inaccurately, too, the Scotch critics declare. "Farewell," we cried, "dear city of youth and dream," eternally dear and sacred.

Here we first made acquaintance with Mr. Browning, guided to his works by a parody which a lady wrote in our little magazine. Mr. Browning was not a popular poet in 1861. His admirers were few, a little people, but they were not then in the later mood of reverence, they did not awfully question the oracles, as in after years. They read, they admired, they applauded, on occasion they mocked, good-humouredly. The book by which Mr. Browning was best known was the two green volumes of

"Men and Women." In these, I still think, is the heart of his genius beating most strenuously and with an immortal vitality. Perhaps this, for its compass, is the collection of poetry the most various and rich of modern English times, almost of any English times. But just as Mr. Fitzgerald cared little for what Lord Tennyson wrote after 1842, so I have never been able to feel quite the same enthusiasm for Mr. Browning's work after "Men and Women." He seems to have more influence, though that influence is vague, on persons who chiefly care for thought, than on those who chiefly care for poetry. I have met a lady who had read "The Ring and the Book" often, the "Lotus Eaters" not once. Among such students are Mr. Browning's disciples of the Inner Court: I dwell but in the Court of the Gentiles. While we all – all who attempt rhyme – have more or less consciously imitated the manner of Lord Tennyson, Mr. Swinburne, Mr. Rossetti, such imitations of Mr. Browning are uncommonly scarce. He is lucky enough not to have had the seed of his flower stolen and sown everywhere till —

> "Once again the people
> Called it but a weed."

The other new poet of these days was Mr. Clough, who has many undergraduate qualities. But his peculiar wistful scepticism in religion had then no influence on such of us as were still happily in the ages of faith. Anything like doubt comes less of reading, perhaps, than of the sudden necessity which, in almost every life, puts belief on her trial, and cries for an examination of the creeds hitherto held upon authority, and by dint of use and wont. In a different way one can hardly care for Mr. Matthew Arnold, as a boy, till one has come under the influence of Oxford. So Mr. Browning was the only poet added to my pantheon at St. Andrews, though Macaulay then was admitted and appeared to be more the true model of a prose writer than he seems in the light of later reflection. Probably we all have a period of admiring Carlyle almost exclusively. College essays, when the essayist cares for his work, are generally based on one or the other. Then they recede into the background. As for their thought, we cannot for ever remain disciples. We begin to see how much that looks like thought is really the expression of temperament, and how individual a thing temperament is, how each of us must construct his world for himself, or be content to wait for an answer and a synthesis "in that far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves." So, for one, in these high matters, I must be content as a "masterless man" swearing by no philosopher, unless he be the imperial Stoic of the hardy heart, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.

Perhaps nothing in education encourages this incredulity about "masters" of thought like the history of philosophy. The professor of moral philosophy, Mr. Ferrier, was a famous metaphysician and scholar. His lectures on "The History of Greek Philosophy" were an admirable introduction to the subject, afterwards pursued, in the original authorities, at Oxford. Mr. Ferrier was an exponent of other men's ideas so fair and persuasive that, in each new school, we thought we had discovered the secret. We were physicists with Thales and that pre-Socratic "company of gallant gentlemen" for whom Sydney Smith confessed his lack of admiration. We were now Empedocleans, now believers in Heraclitus, now in Socrates, now in Plato, now in Aristotle. In each lecture our professor set up a new master and gently disintegrated him in the next. "Amurath to Amurath succeeds," as Mr. T. H. Green used to say at Oxford. He himself became an Amurath, a sultan of thought, even before his apotheosis as the guide of that bewildered clergyman, Mr. Robert Elsmere. At Oxford, when one went there, one found Mr. Green already in the position of a leader of thought, and of young men. He was a tutor of Balliol, and lectured on Aristotle, and of him eager youth said, in the words of Omar Khayyam, "*He knows*! *he knows*!" What was it that Mr. Green knew? Where was the secret? To a mind already sceptical about masters, it seemed that the secret (apart from the tutor's noble simplicity and rare elevation of character) was a knack of translating St. John and Aristotle alike into a terminology which we then believed to be Hegelian. Hegel we knew, not in the original German, but in lectures and in translations. Reasoning from these inadequate premises, it seemed to me that

Hegel had invented evolution before Mr. Darwin, that his system showed, so to speak, the spirit at work in evolution, the something within the wheels. But this was only a personal impression made on a mind which knew Darwin, and physical speculations in general, merely in the vague popular way. Mr. Green's pupils could generally write in his own language, more or less, and could "envisage" things, as we said then, from his point of view. To do this was believed, probably without cause, to be useful in examinations. For one, I could never take it much more seriously, never believed that "the Absolute," as the *Oxford Spectator* said, had really been "got into a corner." The Absolute has too often been apparently cornered, too often has escaped from that situation. Somewhere in an old notebook I believe I have a portrait in pencil of Mr. Green as he wrestled at lecture with Aristotle, with the Notion, with his chair and table. Perhaps he was the last of that remarkable series of men, who may have begun with Wycliffe, among whom Newman's is a famous name, that were successively accepted at Oxford as knowing something esoteric, as possessing a shrewd guess at the secret.

> "None the less
> I still came out no wiser than I went."

All of these masters and teachers made their mark, probably won their hold, in the first place, by dint of character, not of some peculiar views of theology and philosophy. Doubtless it was the same with Socrates, with Buddha. To be like them, not to believe with them, is the thing needful. But the younger we are, the less, perhaps, we see this clearly, and we persuade ourselves that there is some mystery in these men's possession, some piece of knowledge, some method of thinking which will lead us to certainty and to peace. Alas, their secret is incommunicable, and there is no more a philosophic than there is a royal road to the City.

This may seem a digression from Adventures among Books into the Book of Human Life. But while much of education is still orally communicated by lectures and conversations, many thoughts which are to be found in books, Greek or German, reach us through the hearing. There are many pupils who can best be taught in this way; but, for one, if there be aught that is desirable in a book, I then, as now, preferred, if I could, to go to the book for it.

Yet it is odd that one remembers so little of one's undergraduate readings, apart from the constant study of the ancient classics, which might not be escaped. Of these the calm wisdom of Aristotle, in moral thought and in politics, made perhaps the deepest impression. Probably politicians are the last people who read Aristotle's "Politics." The work is, indeed, apt to disenchant one with political life. It is melancholy to see the little Greek states running the regular round – monarchy, oligarchy, tyranny, democracy in all its degrees, the "ultimate democracy" of plunder, lawlessness, license of women, children, and slaves, and then tyranny again, or subjection to some foreign power. In politics, too, there is no secret of success, of the happy life for all. There is no such road to the City, either democratic or royal. This is the lesson which Aristotle's "Polities" impresses on us, this and the impossibility of imposing ideal constitutions on mankind.

"Whate'er is best administered is best." These are some of the impressions made at Oxford by the studies of the schools, the more or less inevitable "curricoolum," as the Scotch gentleman pronounced the word. But at Oxford, for most men, the regular work of the schools is only a small part of the literary education. People read, in different degrees, according to their private tastes. There are always a few men, at least, who love literary studies for their own sake, regardless of lectures and of "classes." In my own time I really believe you could know nothing which might not "pay" in the schools and prove serviceable in examinations. But a good deal depended on being able to use your knowledge by way of literary illustration. Perhaps the cleverest of my own juniors, since very well known in letters, did not use his own special vein, even when he had the chance, in writing answers to questions in examinations. Hence his academic success was much below his deserts. For my own

part, I remember my tutor saying, “Don’t write as if you were writing for a penny paper.” Alas, it was “a prediction, cruel, smart.” But, “as yet no sin was dreamed.”

At my own college we had to write weekly essays, alternately in English and Latin. This might have been good literary training, but I fear the essays were not taken very seriously. The chief object was to make the late learned Dr. Scott bound on his chair by paradoxes. But nobody ever succeeded. He was experienced in trash. As for what may be called unacademic literature, there were not many essays in that art. There have been very literary generations, as when Corydon and Thyrsis “lived in Oxford as if it had been a great country house;” so Corydon confessed. Probably many of the poems by Mr. Matthew Arnold and many of Mr. Swinburne’s early works were undergraduate poems. A later generation produced “Love in Idleness,” a very pleasing volume. But the gods had not made us poetical. In those days I remember picking up, in the Union Reading-room, a pretty white quarto, “Atalanta in Calydon,” by A. C. Swinburne. Only once had I seen Mr. Swinburne’s name before, signing a brief tale in *Once a Week*. “Atalanta” was a revelation; there was a new and original poet here, a Balliol man, too. In my own mind “Atalanta” remains the best, the most beautiful, the most musical of Mr. Swinburne’s many poems. He instantly became the easily parodied model of undergraduate versifiers.

Swinburnian prize poems, even, were attempted, without success. As yet we had not seen Mr. Matthew Arnold’s verses. I fell in love with them, one long vacation, and never fell out of love. He is not, and cannot be, the poet of the wide world, but his charm is all the more powerful over those whom he attracts and subdues. He is the one Oxford poet of Oxford, and his “Scholar Gypsy” is our “Lycidas.” At this time he was Professor of Poetry; but, alas, he lectured just at the hour when wickets were pitched on Cowley Marsh, and I never was present at his discourses, at his humorous prophecies of England’s fate, which are coming all too true. So many weary lectures had to be attended, could not be “cut,” that we abstained from lectures of supererogation, so to speak. For the rest there was no “literary movement” among contemporary undergraduates. They read for the schools, and they rowed and played cricket. We had no poets, except the stroke of the Corpus boat, Mr. Bridges, and he concealed his courtship of the Muse. Corpus is a small college, but Mr. Bridges pulled its boat to the proud place of second on the river. B. N. C. was the head boat, and even B. N. C. did Corpus bump. But the triumph was brief. B. N. C. made changes in its crew, got a new ship, drank the foaming grape, and bumped Corpus back. I think they went head next year, but not that year. Thus Mr. Bridges, as Kingsley advises, was doing noble deeds, not dreaming them, at that moment.

There existed a periodical entirely devoted to verse, but nobody knew anybody who wrote in it. A comic journal was started; I remember the pride with which when a freshman, I received an invitation to join its councils as an artist. I was to do the caricatures of all things. Now, methought, I shall meet the Oxford wits of whom I have read. But the wits were unutterably disappointing, and the whole thing died early and not lamented. Only one piece of academic literature obtained and deserved success. This was *The Oxford Spectator*, a most humorous little periodical, in shape and size like Addison’s famous journal. The authors were Mr. Reginald Copleston, now Bishop of Colombo, Mr. Humphry Ward, and Mr. Nolan, a great athlete, who died early. There have been good periodicals since; many amusing things occur in the *Echoes from the Oxford Magazine*, but the *Spectator* was the flower of academic journals. “When I look back to my own experience,” says the *Spectator*, “I find one scene, of all Oxford, most deeply engraved upon ‘the mindful tablets of my soul.’ And yet not a scene, but a fairy compound of smell and sound, and sight and thought. The wonderful scent of the meadow air just above Iffley, on a hot May evening, and the gay colours of twenty boats along the shore, the poles all stretched out from the bank to set the boats clear, and the sonorous cries of ‘ten seconds more,’ all down from the green barge to the lasher. And yet that unrivalled moment is only typical of all the term; the various elements of beauty and pleasure are concentrated there.”

Unfortunately, life at Oxford is not all beauty and pleasure. Things go wrong somehow. Life drops her happy mask. But this has nothing to do with books.

About books, however, I have not many more confessions that I care to make. A man's old self is so far away that he can speak about it and its adventures almost as if he were speaking about another who is dead. After taking one's degree, and beginning to write a little for publication, the topic has a tendency to become much more personal. My last undergraduate literary discoveries were of France and the Renaissance. Accidentally finding out that I could read French, I naturally betook myself to Balzac. If you read him straight on, without a dictionary, you begin to learn a good many words. The literature of France has been much more popular in England lately, but thirty years agone it was somewhat neglected. There does seem to be something in French poetry which fails to please "the German paste in our composition." Mr. Matthew Arnold, a disciple of Sainte-Beuve, never could appreciate French poetry. A poet-critic has even remarked that the French language is nearly incapable of poetry! We cannot argue in such matters, where all depends on the taste and the ear.

Our ancestors, like the author of the "Faery Queen," translated and admired Du Bellay and Ronsard; to some critics of our own time this taste seems a modish affectation. For one, I have ever found an original charm in the lyrics of the Pleiad, and have taken great delight in Hugo's amazing variety of music, in the romance of Alfred de Musset, in the beautiful cameos of Gautier. What is poetical, if not the "Song of Roland," the only true national epic since Homer? What is frank, natural verse, if not that of the old *Pastourelles*? Where is there *naïveté* of narrative and unconscious charm, if not in *Aucassin et Nicolette*? In the long normally developed literature of France, so variously rich, we find the nearest analogy to the literature of Greece, though that of England contains greater masterpieces, and her verse falls more winningly on the ear. France has no Shakespeare and no Milton; we have no Molière and no "Song of Roland." One star differs from another in glory, but it is a fortunate moment when this planet of France swims into our ken. Many of our generation saw it first through Mr. Swinburne's telescope, heard of it in his criticisms, and are grateful to that watcher of the skies, even if we do not share all his transports. There then arose at Oxford, out of old French, and old oak, and old china, a "school" or "movement." It was æsthetic, and an early purchaser of Mr. William Morris's wall papers. It existed ten or twelve years before the public "caught on," as they say, to these delights. But, except one or two of the masters, the school were only playing at æsthetics, and laughing at their own performances. There was more fun than fashion in the cult, which was later revived, developed, and gossiped about more than enough.

To a writer now dead, and then first met, I am specially bound in gratitude – the late Mr. J. F. M'Lennan. Mr. M'Lennan had the most acute and ingenious of minds which I have encountered. His writings on early marriage and early religion were revelations which led on to others. The topic of folklore, and the development of custom and myths, is not generally attractive, to be sure. Only a few people seem interested in that spectacle, so full of surprises – the development of all human institutions, from fairy tales to democracy. In beholding it we learn how we owe all things, humanly speaking, to the people and to genius. The natural people, the folk, has supplied us, in its unconscious way, with the stuff of all our poetry, law, ritual: and genius has selected from the mass, has turned customs into codes, nursery tales into romance, myth into science, ballad into epic, magic mummery into gorgeous ritual. The world has been educated, but not as man would have trained and taught it. "He led us by a way we knew not," led, and is leading us, we know not whither; we follow in fear.

The student of this lore can look back and see the long trodden way behind him, the winding tracks through marsh and forest and over burning sands. He sees the caves, the camps, the villages, the towns where the race has tarried, for shorter times or longer, strange places many of them, and strangely haunted, desolate dwellings and inhospitable. But the scarce visible tracks converge at last on the beaten ways, the ways to that city whither mankind is wandering, and which it may never win. We have a foreboding of a purpose which we know not, a sense as of will, working, as we would not have worked, to a hidden end.

This is the lesson, I think, of what we call folklore or anthropology, which to many seems trivial, to many seems dull. It may become the most attractive and serious of the sciences; certainly it

is rich in strange curiosities, like those mystic stones which were fingered and arrayed by the pupils in that allegory of Novalis. I am not likely to regret the accident which brought me up on fairy tales, and the inquisitiveness which led me to examine the other fragments of antiquity. But the poetry and the significance of them are apt to be hidden by the enormous crowd of details. Only late we find the true meaning of what seems like a mass of fantastic, savage eccentricities. I very well remember the moment when it occurred to me, soon after taking my degree, that the usual ideas about some of these matters were the reverse of the truth, that the common theory had to be inverted. The notion was "in the air," it had already flashed on Mannhardt, probably, but, like the White Knight in "Alice," I claimed it for "my own invention."

These reminiscences and reflections have now been produced as far as 1872, or thereabouts, and it is not my intention to pursue them further, nor to speak of any living contemporaries who have not won their way to the classical. In writing of friends and teachers at Oxford, I have not ventured to express gratitude to those who still live, still teach, still are the wisest and kindest friends of the hurrying generations. It is a silence not of thanklessness, but of respect and devotion. About others – contemporaries, or juniors by many years – who have instructed, consoled, strengthened, and amused us, we must also be silent.

CHAPTER II: RECOLLECTIONS OF ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

TUSITALA

We spoke of a rest in a Fairy hill of the north, but he
Far from the firths of the east and the racing tides of the west
Sleeps in the sight and the sound of the infinite southern sea,
Weary and well content, in his grave on the Vaëa crest.

Tusitala, the lover of children, the teller of tales,
Giver of counsel and dreams, a wonder, a world's delight,
Looks o'er the labour of men in the plain and the hill, and the sails
Pass and repass on the sea that he loved, in the day and the night.

Winds of the west and the east in the rainy season blow,
Heavy with perfume, and all his fragrant woods are wet,
Winds of the east and the west as they wander to and fro,
Bear him the love of the lands he loved, and the long regret.

Once we were kindest, he said, when leagues of the limitless sea,
Flowed between us, but now that no range of the refluent tides
Sunders us each from each, yet nearer we seem to be,
When only the unbridged stream of the River of Death divides.

Before attempting to give any "reminiscences" of Mr. Stevenson, it is right to observe that reminiscences of him can best be found in his own works. In his essay on "Child's Play," and in his "Child's Garden of Verse," he gave to the world his vivid recollections of his imaginative infancy. In other essays he spoke of his boyhood, his health, his dreams, his methods of work and study. "The Silverado Squatters" reveals part of his experience in America. The Parisian scenes in "The Wrecker" are inspired by his sojourn in French Bohemia; his journeys are recorded in "Travels with a Donkey" and "An Inland Voyage"; while his South Sea sketches, which appeared in periodicals, deal with his Oceanic adventures. He was the most autobiographical of authors, with an egoism nearly as complete, and to us as delightful, as the egoism of Montaigne. Thus, the proper sources of information about the author of "Kidnapped" are in his delightful books.

"John's own John," as Dr. Holmes says, may be very unlike his neighbour's John; but in the case of Mr. Stevenson, his Louis was very similar to my Louis; I mean that, as he presents his personality to the world in his writings, even so did that personality appear to me in our intercourse. The man I knew was always a boy.

"Sing me a song of the lad that is gone,"

he wrote about Prince Charlie, but in his own case the lad was never "gone." Like Keats and Shelley, he was, and he looked, of the immortally young. He and I were at school together, but I was an elderly boy of seventeen, when he was lost in the crowd of "gytes," as the members of the lowest form are called. Like all Scotch people, we had a vague family connection; a great-uncle of his, I

fancy, married an aunt of my own, called for her beauty, "The Flower of Ettrick." So we had both heard; but these things were before our day. A lady of my kindred remembers carrying Stevenson about when he was "a rather peevish baby," and I have seen a beautiful photograph of him, like one of Raffael's children, taken when his years were three or four. But I never had heard of his existence till, in 1873, I think, I was at Mentone, in the interests of my health. Here I met Mr. Sidney Colvin, now of the British Museum, and, with Mr. Colvin, Stevenson. He looked as, in my eyes, he always did look, more like a lass than a lad, with a rather long, smooth oval face, brown hair worn at greater length than is common, large lucid eyes, but whether blue or brown I cannot remember, if brown, certainly light brown. On appealing to the authority of a lady, I learn that brown *was* the hue. His colour was a trifle hectic, as is not unusual at Mentone, but he seemed, under his big blue cloak, to be of slender, yet agile frame. He was like nobody else whom I ever met. There was a sort of uncommon celerity in changing expression, in thought and speech. His cloak and Tyrolese hat (he would admit the innocent impeachment) were decidedly dear to him. On the frontier of Italy, why should he not do as the Italians do? It would have been well for me if I could have imitated the wearing of the cloak!

I shall not deny that my first impression was not wholly favourable. "Here," I thought, "is one of your æsthetic young men, though a very clever one." What the talk was about, I do not remember; probably of books. Mr. Stevenson afterwards told me that I had spoken of Monsieur Paul de St. Victor, as a fine writer, but added that "he was not a British sportsman." Mr. Stevenson himself, to my surprise, was unable to walk beyond a very short distance, and, as it soon appeared, he thought his thread of life was nearly spun. He had just written his essay, "Ordered South," the first of his published works, for his "Pentland Rising" pamphlet was unknown, a boy's performance. On reading "Ordered South," I saw, at once, that here was a new writer, a writer indeed; one who could do what none of us, *nous autres*, could rival, or approach. I was instantly "sealed of the Tribe of Louis," an admirer, a devotee, a fanatic, if you please. At least my taste has never altered. From this essay it is plain enough that the author (as is so common in youth, but with better reason than many have) thought himself doomed. Most of us have gone through that, the Millevoye phase, but who else has shown such a wise and gay acceptance of the apparently inevitable? We parted; I remember little of our converse, except a shrewd and hearty piece of encouragement given me by my junior, who already knew so much more of life than his senior will ever do. For he ran forth to embrace life like a lover: *his* motto was never Lucy Ashton's —

> "Vacant heart, and hand, and eye,
> Easy live and quiet die."

Mr. Stevenson came presently to visit me at Oxford. I make no hand of reminiscences; I remember nothing about what we did or said, with one exception, which is not going to be published. I heard of him, writing essays in the *Portfolio* and the *Cornhill*, those delightful views of life at twenty-five, so brave, so real, so vivid, so wise, so exquisite, which all should know. How we looked for "R. L. S." at the end of an article, and how devout was our belief, how happy our pride, in the young one!

About 1878, I think (I was now a slave of the quill myself), I received a brief note from Mr. Stevenson, introducing to me the person whom, in his essay on his old college magazine, he called "Glasgow Brown." What his real name was, whence he came, whence the money came, I never knew. G. B. was going to start a weekly Tory paper. Would I contribute? G. B. came to see me. Mr. Stevenson has described him, *not* as I would have described him: like Mr. Bill Sikes's dog, I have the Christian peculiarity of not liking dogs "as are not of my breed." G. B.'s paper, *London*, was to start next week. He had no writer of political leading articles. Would I do a "leader"? But I was *not* in favour of Lord Lytton's Afghan policy. How could I do a Tory leader? Well, I did a neutral-tinted thing, with citations from Aristophanes! I found presently some other scribes for G. B.

What a paper that was! I have heard that G. B. paid in handfuls of gold, in handfuls of bank-notes. Nobody ever read *London*, or advertised in it, or heard of it. It was full of the most wonderfully clever verses in old French forms. They were (it afterwards appeared) by Mr. W. E. Henley. Mr. Stevenson himself astonished and delighted the public of *London* (that is, the contributors) by his "New Arabian Nights." Nobody knew about them but ourselves, a fortunate few. Poor G. B. died and Mr. Henley became the editor. I may not name the contributors, the flower of the young lions, elderly lions now, there is a new race. But one lion, a distinguished and learned lion, said already that fiction, not essay, was Mr. Stevenson's field. Well, both fields were his, and I cannot say whether I would be more sorry to lose *Virginibus Puerisque* and "Studies of Men and Books," or "Treasure Island" and "Catriona." With the decease of G. B., Pactolus dried up in its mysterious sources, *London* struggled and disappeared.

Mr. Stevenson was in town, now and again, at the old Saville Club, in Saville Row, which had the tiniest and blackest of smoking-rooms. Here, or somewhere, he spoke to me of an idea of a tale, a Man who was Two Men. I said "'William Wilson' by Edgar Poe," and declared that it would never do. But his "Brownies," in a vision of the night, showed him a central scene, and he wrote "Jekyll and Hyde." My "friend of these days and of all days," Mr. Charles Longman, sent me the manuscript. In a very commonplace London drawing-room, at 10.30 P.M., I began to read it. Arriving at the place where Utterson the lawyer, and the butler wait outside the Doctor's room, I threw down the manuscript and fled in a hurry. I had no taste for solitude any more. The story won its great success, partly by dint of the moral (whatever that may be), more by its terrible, lucid, visionary power. I remember Mr. Stevenson telling me, at this time, that he was doing some "regular crawlers," for this purist had a boyish habit of slang, and I *think* it was he who called Julius Cæsar "the howlingest cheese who ever lived." One of the "crawlers" was "Thrawn Janet"; after "Wandering Willie's Tale" (but certainly *after* it), to my taste, it seems the most wonderful story of the "supernatural" in our language.

Mr. Stevenson had an infinite pleasure in Boisgobey, Montépin, and, of course, Gaboriau. There was nothing of the "cultured person" about him. Concerning a novel dear to culture, he said that he would die by my side, in the last ditch, proclaiming it the worst fiction in the world. I make haste to add that I have only known two men of letters as free as Mr. Stevenson, not only from literary jealousy, but from the writer's natural, if exaggerated, distaste for work which, though in his own line, is very different in aim and method from his own. I do not remember another case in which he dispraised any book. I do remember his observations on a novel then and now very popular, but not to his taste, nor, indeed, by any means, impeccable, though stirring; his censure and praise were both just. From his occasional fine efforts, the author of this romance, he said, should have cleared away acres of brushwood, of ineffectual matter. It was so, no doubt, as the writer spoken of would be ready to acknowledge. But he was an improviser of genius, and Mr. Stevenson was a conscious artist.

Of course we did by no means always agree in literary estimates; no two people do. But when certain works – in his line in one way – were stupidly set up as rivals of his, the person who was most irritated was not he, but his equally magnanimous contemporary. There was no thought of rivalry or competition in either mind. The younger romancists who arose after Mr. Stevenson went to Samoa were his friends by correspondence; from them, who never saw his face, I hear of his sympathy and encouragement. Every writer knows the special temptations of his tribe: they were temptations not even felt, I do believe, by Mr. Stevenson. His heart was far too high, his nature was in every way as generous as his hand was open. It is in thinking of these things that one feels afresh the greatness of the world's loss; for "a good heart is much more than style," writes one who knew him only by way of letters.

It is a trivial reminiscence that we once plotted a Boisgobesque story together. There was a prisoner in a Muscovite dungeon.

"We'll extract information from him," I said.

"How?"

"With corkscrews."

But the mere suggestion of such a process was terribly distasteful to him; not that I really meant to go to these extreme lengths. We never, of course, could really have worked together; and, his maladies increasing, he became more and more a wanderer, living at Bournemouth, at Davos, in the Grisons, finally, as all know, in Samoa. Thus, though we corresponded, not unfrequently, I never was of the inner circle of his friends. Among men there were school or college companions, or companions of Paris or Fontainebleau, cousins, like Mr. R. A. M. Stevenson, or a stray senior, like Mr. Sidney Colvin. From some of them, or from Mr. Stevenson himself, I have heard tales of "the wild Prince and Poins." That he and a friend travelled utterly without baggage, buying a shirt where a shirt was needed, is a fact, and the incident is used in "The Wrecker." Legend says that once he and a friend *did* possess a bag, and also, nobody ever knew why, a large bottle of scent. But there was no room for the bottle in the bag, so Mr. Stevenson spilled the whole contents over the other man's head, taking him unawares, that nothing might be wasted. I think the tale of the endless staircase, in "The Wrecker," is founded on fact, so are the stories of the *atelier*, which I have heard Mr. Stevenson narrate at the Oxford and Cambridge Club. For a nocturnal adventure, in the manner of the "New Arabian Nights," a learned critic already spoken of must be consulted. It is not my story. In Paris, at a café, I remember that Mr. Stevenson heard a Frenchman say the English were cowards. He got up and slapped the man's face.

"*Monsieur, vous m'avez frappé*!" said the Gaul.

"*A ce qu'il parait*," said the Scot, and there it ended. He also told me that years ago he was present at a play, I forget what play, in Paris, where the moral hero exposes a woman "with a history." He got up and went out, saying to himself:

"What a play! what a people!"

"*Ah, Monsieur, vous êtes bien jeune*!" said an old French gentleman.

Like a right Scot, Mr. Stevenson was fond of "our auld ally of France," to whom our country and our exiled kings owed so much.

I rather vaguely remember another anecdote. He missed his train from Edinburgh to London, and his sole portable property was a return ticket, a meerschaum pipe, and a volume of Mr. Swinburne's poems. The last he found unmarketable; the pipe, I think, he made merchandise of, but somehow his provender for the day's journey consisted in one bath bun, which he could not finish.

These trivial tales illustrate a period in his life and adventures which I only know by rumour. Our own acquaintance was, to a great degree, literary and bookish. Perhaps it began "with a slight aversion," but it seemed, like madeira, to be ripened and improved by his long sea voyage; and the news of his death taught me, at least, the true nature of the affection which he was destined to win. Indeed, our acquaintance was like the friendship of a wild singing bird and of a punctual, domesticated barn-door fowl, laying its daily "article" for the breakfast-table of the citizens. He often wrote to me from Samoa, sometimes with news of native manners and folklore. He sent me a devil-box, the "luck" of some strange island, which he bought at a great price. After parting with its "luck," or fetish (a shell in a curious wooden box), the island was unfortunate, and was ravaged by measles.

I occasionally sent out books needed for Mr. Stevenson's studies, of which more will be said. But I must make it plain that, in the body, we met but rarely. His really intimate friends were Mr. Colvin and Mr. Baxter (who managed the practical side of his literary business between them); Mr. Henley (in partnership with whom he wrote several plays); his cousin, Mr. R. A. M. Stevenson; and, among other *literati*, Mr. Gosse, Mr. Austin Dobson, Mr. Saintsbury, Mr Walter Pollock, knew him well. The best portrait of Mr. Stevenson that I know is by Sir. W. B. Richmond, R.A., and is in that gentleman's collection of contemporaries, with the effigies of Mr. Holman Hunt, Mr. William Morris, Mr. Browning, and others. It is unfinished, owing to an illness which stopped the sittings, and does not show the subject at his best, physically speaking. There is also a brilliant, slight sketch, almost a caricature, by Mr. Sargent. It represents Mr. Stevenson walking about the room in conversation.

The people I have named, or some of them, knew Mr. Stevenson more intimately than I can boast of doing. Unlike each other, opposites in a dozen ways, we always were united by the love of letters, and of Scotland, our dear country. He was a patriot, yet he spoke his mind quite freely about Burns, about that apparent want of heart in the poet's amours, which our countrymen do not care to hear mentioned. Well, perhaps, for some reasons, it had to be mentioned once, and so no more of it.

Mr. Stevenson possessed, more than any man I ever met, the power of making other men fall in love with him. I mean that he excited a passionate admiration and affection, so much so that I verily believe some men were jealous of other men's place in his liking. I once met a stranger who, having become acquainted with him, spoke of him with a touching fondness and pride, his fancy reposing, as it seemed, in a fond contemplation of so much genius and charm. What was so taking in him? and how is one to analyse that dazzling surface of pleasantry, that changeful shining humour, wit, wisdom, recklessness; beneath which beat the most kind and tolerant of hearts?

People were fond of him, and people were proud of him: his achievements, as it were, sensibly raised their pleasure in the world, and, to them, became parts of themselves. They warmed their hands at that centre of light and heat. It is not every success which has these beneficent results. We see the successful sneered at, decried, insulted, even when success is deserved. Very little of all this, hardly aught of all this, I think, came in Mr. Stevenson's way. After the beginning (when the praises of his earliest admirers were irritating to dull scribes) he found the critics fairly kind, I believe, and often enthusiastic. He was so much his own severest critic that he probably paid little heed to professional reviewers. In addition to his "Rathillet," and other MSS. which he destroyed, he once, in the Highlands, long ago, lost a portmanteau with a batch of his writings. Alas, that he should have lost or burned anything! "King's chaff," says our country proverb, "is better than other folk's corn."

I have remembered very little, or very little that I can write, and about our last meeting, when he was so near death, in appearance, and so full of courage – how can I speak? His courage was a strong rock, not to be taken or subdued. When unable to utter a single word, his pencilled remarks to his attendants were pithy and extremely characteristic. This courage and spiritual vitality made one hope that he would, if he desired it, live as long as Voltaire, that reed among oaks. There were of course, in so rare a combination of characteristics, some which were not equally to the liking of all. He was highly original in costume, but, as his photographs are familiar, the point does not need elucidation. Life was a drama to him, and he delighted, like his own British admirals, to do things with a certain air. He observed himself, I used to think, as he observed others, and "saw himself" in every part he played. There was nothing of the *cabotin* in this self-consciousness; it was the unextinguished childish passion for "playing at things" which remained with him. I have a theory that all children possess genius, and that it dies out in the generality of mortals, abiding only with people whose genius the world is forced to recognise. Mr. Stevenson illustrates, and perhaps partly suggested, this private philosophy of mine.

I have said very little; I have no skill in reminiscences, no art to bring the living aspect of the man before those who never knew him. I faintly seem to see the eager face, the light nervous figure, the fingers busy with rolling cigarettes; Mr. Stevenson talking, listening, often rising from his seat, standing, walking to and fro, always full of vivid intelligence, wearing a mysterious smile. I remember one pleasant dark afternoon, when he told me many tales of strange adventures, narratives which he had heard about a murderous lonely inn, somewhere in the States. He was as good to hear as to read. I do not recollect much of that delight in discussion, in controversy, which he shows in his essay on conversation, where he describes, I believe, Mr. Henley as "Burley," and Mr. Symonds as "Opalstein." He had great pleasure in the talk of the late Professor Fleeming Jenkin, which was both various and copious. But in these *noctes coenaeque deum* I was never a partaker. In many topics, such as angling, golf, cricket, whereon I am willingly diffuse, Mr. Stevenson took no interest. He was very fond of boating and sailing in every kind; he hazarded his health by long expeditions among the fairy isles of

ocean, but he "was not a British sportsman," though for his measure of strength a good pedestrian, a friend of the open air, and of all who live and toil therein.

As to his literary likings, they appear in his own confessions. He revelled in Dickens, but, about Thackeray – well, I would rather have talked to somebody else! To my amazement, he was of those (I think) who find Thackeray "cynical." "He takes you into a garden, and then pelts you with" – horrid things! Mr. Stevenson, on the other hand, had a free admiration of Mr. George Meredith. He did not so easily forgive the *longueus* and lazinesses of Scott, as a Scot should do. He read French much; Greek only in translations.

Literature was, of course, his first love, but he was actually an advocate at the Scottish Bar, and, as such, had his name on a brazen door-plate. Once he was a competitor for a Chair of Modern History in Edinburgh University; he knew the romantic side of Scottish history very well. In his novel, "Catriona," the character of James Mohr Macgregor is wonderfully divined. Once I read some unpublished letters of Catriona's unworthy father, written when he was selling himself as a spy (and lying as he spied) to the Hanoverian usurper. Mr. Stevenson might have written these letters for James Mohr; they might be extracts from "Catriona."

In turning over old Jacobite pamphlets, I found a forgotten romance of Prince Charles's hidden years, and longed that Mr. Stevenson should retell it. There was a treasure, an authentic treasure; there were real spies, a real assassin; a real, or reported, rescue of a lovely girl from a fire at Strasbourg, by the Prince. The tale was to begin *sur le pont d'Avignon*: a young Scotch exile watching the Rhone, thinking how much of it he could cover with a salmon fly, thinking of the Tay or Beauly. To him enter another shady tramping exile, Blairthwaite, a murderer. And so it was to run on, as the author's fancy might lead him, with Alan Breck and the Master for characters. At last, in unpublished MSS. I found an actual Master of Ballantrae, a Highland chief – noble, majestically handsome – and a paid spy of England! All these papers I sent out to Samoa, too late. The novel was to have been dedicated to me, and that chance of immortality is gone, with so much else.

Mr. Stevenson's last letters to myself were full of his concern for a common friend of ours, who was very ill. Depressed himself, Mr. Stevenson wrote to this gentleman – why should I not mention Mr. James Payn? – with consoling gaiety. I attributed his depression to any cause but his own health, of which he rarely spoke. He lamented the "ill-staged fifth act of life"; he, at least, had no long hopeless years of diminished force to bear.

I have known no man in whom the pre-eminently manly virtues of kindness, courage, sympathy, generosity, helpfulness, were more beautifully conspicuous than in Mr. Stevenson, no man so much loved – it is not too strong a word – by so many and such various people. He was as unique in character as in literary genius.

CHAPTER III: RAB'S FRIEND

To say what ought to be said concerning Dr. John Brown, a man should have known him well and long, and should remember much of that old generation of Scotchmen to whom the author of "Rab and his Friends" belonged. But that generation has departed. One by one these wits and scholars of the North, these *epigoni* who were not, indeed, of the heroes, but who had seen and remembered Scott and Wilson, have passed away. Aytoun and Carlyle and Dr. Burton, and last, Dr. Brown, are gone. Sir Theodore Martin alone is left. In her memoir of Dr. Burton – the historian of Scotland, and author of "The Book-hunter" – Mrs. Burton remarks that, in her husband's later days, only Dr. John Brown and Professor Blackie remained of all her husband's ancient friends and coevals, of all who remembered Lockhart, and Hogg, and their times. But many are left who knew Dr. Brown far better and more intimately than the author of this notice. I can hardly say when I first became acquainted with him, probably it was in my childhood. Ever since I was a boy, certainly, I used to see him at intervals, especially in the Christmas vacations. But he seldom moved from Edinburgh, except in summer, which he frequently passed in the country house of certain friends of his, whose affection made much of the happiness of his latest years, and whose unfailing kindness attended him in his dying hours. Living always in Scotland, Dr. Brown was seen but rarely by his friends who resided in England. Thus, though Dr. Brown's sweetness of disposition and charm of manner, his humour, and his unfailing sympathy and encouragement, made one feel toward him as to a familiar friend, yet, of his actual life I saw but little, and have few reminiscences to contribute. One can only speak of that singular geniality of his, that temper of goodness and natural tolerance and affection, which, as Scotsmen best know, is not universal among the Scots. Our race does not need to pray, like the mechanic in the story, that Providence will give us "a good conceit of ourselves." But we must acknowledge that the Scotch temper is critical if not captious, argumentative, inclined to look at the seamy side of men and of their performances, and to dwell on imperfections rather than on merits and virtues. An example of these blemishes of the Scotch disposition, carried to an extreme degree in the nature of a man of genius, is offered to the world in the writings and "Reminiscences" of Mr. Carlyle.

Now, Dr. John Brown was at the opposite pole of feeling. He had no mawkish toleration of things and people intolerable, but he preferred not to turn his mind that way. His thoughts were with the good, the wise, the modest, the learned, the brave of times past, and he was eager to catch a reflection of their qualities in the characters of the living, of all with whom he came into contact. He was, for example, almost optimistic in his estimate of the work of young people in art or literature. From everything that was beautiful or good, from a summer day by the Tweed, or from the eyes of a child, or from the humorous saying of a friend, or from treasured memories of old Scotch worthies, from recollections of his own childhood, from experience of the stoical heroism of the poor, he seemed to extract matter for pleasant thoughts of men and the world, and nourishment for his own great and gentle nature. I have never known any man to whom other men seemed so dear – men dead, and men living. He gave his genius to knowing them, and to making them better known, and his unselfishness thus became not only a great personal virtue, but a great literary charm. When you met him, he had some "good story" or some story of goodness to tell – for both came alike to him, and his humour was as unfailing as his kindness. There was in his face a singular charm, blended, as it were, of the expressions of mirth and of patience. Being most sensitive to pain, as well as to pleasure, he was an exception to that rule of Rochefoucauld's – "*nous avons tous assez de force pour supporter les maux d'autrui*." [2]

He did not bear easily the misfortunes of others, and the evils of his own lot were heavy enough. They saddened him; but neither illness, nor his poignant anxiety for others, could sour a nature so

[2] It is easy to bear the misfortunes of others.

unselfish. He appeared not to have lost that anodyne and consolation of religious hope, which had been the strength of his forefathers, and was his best inheritance from a remarkable race of Scotsmen. Wherever he came, he was welcome; people felt glad when they had encountered him in the streets – the streets of Edinburgh, where almost every one knows every one by sight – and he was at least as joyously received by the children and the dogs as by the grown-up people of every family. A friend has kindly shown me a letter in which it is told how Dr. Brown's love of dogs, his interest in a half-blind old Dandy which was attached to him, was evinced in the very last hours of his life. But enough has been said, in general terms, about the character of "the beloved physician," as Dr. Brown was called in Edinburgh, and a brief account may be given, in some detail, of his life and ways.

Dr. John Brown was born in Biggar, one of the gray, slaty-looking little towns in the pastoral moorlands of southern Scotland. These towns have no great beauty that they should be admired by strangers, but the natives, as Scott said to Washington Irving, are attached to their "gray hills," and to the Tweed, so beautiful where man's greed does not pollute it, that the Border people are all in love with it, as Tyro, in Homer, loved the divine Enipeus. We hold it "far the fairest of the floods that run upon the earth." How dear the border scenery was to Dr. John Brown, and how well he knew and could express its legendary magic, its charm woven of countless ancient spells, the music of old ballads, the sorcery of old stories, may be understood by readers of his essay on "Minchmoor." [3] The father of Dr. Brown was the third in a lineage of ministers of the sect called Seceders. To explain who the Seceders were, it would be necessary to explore the sinking morasses of Scotch ecclesiastical history. The minister was proud of being not only a "Seceder" but a "Burgher." He inherited, to be brief, the traditions of a most spiritually-minded and most spirited set of men, too much bent, it may appear to us, on establishing delicate distinctions of opinions, but certainly most true to themselves and to their own ideals of liberty and of faith. Dr. Brown's great-grandfather had been a shepherd boy, who taught himself Greek that he might read the New Testament; who walked twenty-four miles – leaving his folded sheep in the night – to buy the precious volume in St. Andrews, and who, finally, became a teacher of much repute among his own people. Of Dr. Brown's father, he himself wrote a most touching and beautiful account in his "Letter to John Cairns, D.D." This essay contains, perhaps, the very finest passages that the author ever penned. His sayings about his own childhood remind one of the manner of Lamb, without that curious fantastic touch which is of the essence of Lamb's style. The following lines, for example, are a revelation of childish psychology, and probably may be applied, with almost as much truth, to the childhood of our race: —

> "Children are long of seeing, or at least of looking at what is above them; they like the ground, and its flowers and stones, its 'red sodgers' and lady-birds, and all its queer things; *their world is about three feet high*, and they are more often stooping than gazing up. I know I was past ten before I saw, or cared to see, the ceilings of the rooms in the manse at Biggar."

I have often thought that the earliest fathers of our race, child-like in so many ways, were child-like in this, and worshipped, not the phenomena of the heavens, but objects more on a level with their eyes – the "queer things" of their low-lying world. In this essay on his father, Dr. Brown has written lines about a child's first knowledge of death, which seem as noteworthy as Steele's famous passage about his father's death and his own half-conscious grief and anger. Dr. Brown describes a Scottish funeral – the funeral of his own mother – as he saw it with the eyes of a boy of five years old, while his younger brother, a baby of a few months —

> "leaped up and crowed with joy at the strange sight – the crowding horsemen, the coaches, and the nodding plumes of the hearse.. Then, to my surprise and alarm, the coffin, resting on its bearers, was placed over the dark hole, and I watched

[3] In the third volume of his essays.

> with curious eye the unrolling of those neat black bunches of cords, which I have often enough seen since. My father took the one at the head, and also another much smaller, springing from the same point as his, which he had caused to be placed there, and unrolling it, put it into my hand. I twisted it firmly round my fingers, and awaited the result; the burial men with their real ropes lowered the coffin, and when it rested at the bottom it was too far down for me to see it. The grave was made very deep, as he used afterwards to tell us, that it might hold us all. My father first and abruptly let his cord drop, followed by the rest. This was too much. I now saw what was meant, and held on and fixed my fist and feet, and I believe my father had some difficulty in forcing open my small fingers; he let the little black cord drop, and I remember, in my misery and anger, seeing its open end disappearing in the gloom." [4]

The man who wrote this, and many another passage as true and tender, might surely have been famous in fiction, if he had turned his powers that way. He had imagination, humour, pathos; he was always studying and observing life; his last volume, especially, is like a collection of fragments that might have gone toward making a work, in some ways not inferior to the romances of Scott. When the third volume of Essays was published, in the spring of his last year, a reviewer, who apparently had no personal knowledge of Dr. Brown, asked why he did not write a novel. He was by that time over seventy years of age, and, though none guessed it, within a few weeks of his death. What he might have done, had he given himself to literature only, it is impossible to guess. But he caused so much happiness, and did so much good, in that gentle profession of healing which he chose, and which brought him near to many who needed consolation more than physic, that we need not forget his deliberate choice. Literature had only his *horae subsecivae*, as he said: *Subseciva quaedam tempora quae ego perire non patior*, as Cicero writes, "shreds and waste ends of time, which I suffer not to be lost."

The kind of life which Dr. Brown's father and his people lived at Biggar, the austere life of work, and of thought intensely bent on the real aim of existence, on God, on the destiny of the soul, is perhaps rare now, even in rural Scotland. We are less obedient than of old to the motto of that ring found on Magus Moor, where Archbishop Shairp was murdered, *Remember upon Dethe*. If any reader has not yet made the acquaintance of Dr. Brown's works, one might counsel him to begin with the "Letter to John Cairns, D.D.," the fragment of biography and autobiography, the description of the fountainheads from which the genius of the author flowed. In his early boyhood, John Brown was educated by his father, a man who, from his son's affectionate description, seems to have confined a fiery and romantic genius within the channels of Seceder and Burgher theology. When the father received a call to the "Rose Street Secession Church," in Edinburgh, the son became a pupil of that ancient Scottish seminary, the High School – the school where Scott was taught not much Latin and no Greek worth mentioning. Scott was still alive and strong in those days, and Dr. Brown describes how he and his school companions would take off their hats to the Shirra as he passed in the streets.

"Though lame, he was nimble, and all rough and alive with power; had you met him anywhere else, you would say he was a Liddesdale store farmer, come of gentle blood – 'a stout, blunt carle,' as he says of himself, with the swing and stride and the eye of a man of the hills – a large, sunny, out-of-door air all about him. On his broad and stooping shoulders was set that head which, with Shakespeare's and Bonaparte's, is the best known in all the world." Scott was then living in 39 Castle Street. I do not know whether the many pilgrims, whom one meets moving constantly in the direction of Melrose and Abbotsford, have thought of making pilgrimage to Castle Street, and to the grave, there, of Scott's "dear old friend," – his dog Camp. Of Dr. Brown's schoolboy days, one knows little

[4] "I remember I went into the room where my father's body lay, and my mother sat weeping alone by it. I had my battledore in my hand, and fell a-beating the coffin and calling 'Papa,' for I know not how, I had some slight idea that he was locked up there." – STEELE, *The Tatler*, June 6, 1710.

– days when "Bob Ainslie and I were coming up Infirmary Street from the High School, our heads together, and our arms intertwisted, as only lovers and boys know how or why." Concerning the doctor's character, he has left it on record that he liked a dog-fight. "'A dog-fight,' shouted Bob, and was off, and so was I, both of us all hot, praying that it might not be over before we were up.. Dogs like fighting; old Isaac (Watts, not Walton) says they 'delight' in it, and for the best of all reasons; and boys are not cruel because they like to see the fight. This is a very different thing from a love of making dogs fight." And this was the most famous of all dog-fights – since the old Irish Brehons settled the laws of that sport, and gravely decided what was to be done if a child interfered, or an idiot, or a woman, or a one-eyed man – for this was the dog-fight in which Rab first was introduced to his historian.

Six years passed after this battle, and Dr. Brown was a medical student and a clerk at Minto Hospital. How he renewed his acquaintance there, and in what sad circumstances, with Rab and his friends, it is superfluous to tell, for every one who reads at all has read that story, and most readers not without tears. As a medical student in Edinburgh, Dr. Brown made the friendship of Mr. Syme, the famous surgeon – a friendship only closed by death. I only saw them once together, a very long time ago, and then from the point of view of a patient. These occasions are not agreeable, and patients, like the old cock which did not crow when plucked, are apt to be "very much absorbed"; but Dr. Brown's attitude toward the man whom he regarded with the reverence of a disciple, as well as with the affection of a friend, was very remarkable.

When his studies were over, Dr. Brown practised for a year as assistant to a surgeon in Chatham. It must have been when he was at Chatham that a curious event occurred. Many years later, Charles Dickens was in Edinburgh, reading his stories in public, and was dining with some Edinburgh people. Dickens began to speak about the panic which the cholera had caused in England: how ill some people had behaved. As a contrast, he mentioned that, at Chatham, one poor woman had died, deserted by every one except a young physician. Some one, however, ventured to open the door, and found the woman dead, and the young doctor asleep, overcome with the fatigue that mastered him on his patient's death, but quite untouched by the general panic. "Why, that was Dr. John Brown," one of the guests observed; and it seems that, thus early in his career, the doctor had been setting an example of the courage and charity of his profession. After a year spent in Chatham, he returned to Edinburgh, where he spent the rest of his life, busy partly with his art of healing, partly with literature. He lived in Rutland Street, near the railway station, by which Edinburgh is approached from the west, and close to Princes Street, the chief street of the town, separated by a green valley, once a loch, from the high Castle Rock. It was the room in which his friends were accustomed to see Dr. Brown, and a room full of interest it was. In his long life, the doctor had gathered round him many curious relics of artists and men of letters; a drawing of a dog by Turner I remember particularly, and a copy of "Don Juan," in the first edition, with Byron's manuscript notes. Dr. Brown had a great love and knowledge of art and of artists, from Turner to Leech; and he had very many friends among men of letters, such as Mr. Ruskin and Mr. Thackeray. Dr. Brown himself was a clever designer of rapid little grotesques, rough sketches of dogs and men. One or two of them are engraved in the little paper-covered booklets in which some of his essays were separately published – booklets which he was used to present to people who came to see him and who were interested in all that he did. I remember some vivacious grotesques which he drew for one of my brothers when we were schoolboys. These little things were carefully treasured by boys who knew Dr. Brown, and found him friendly, and capable of sustaining a conversation on the points of a Dandy Dinmont terrier and other mysteries important to youth. He was a bibliophile – a taste which he inherited from his father, who "began collecting books when he was twelve, and was collecting to his last hours."

The last time I ever saw Dr. Brown, a year before his death, he was kind enough to lend me one of the rarest of his treasures, "Poems," by Mr. Ruskin. Probably Mr. Ruskin had presented the book to his old friend; in no other way were it easy to procure writings which the author withdrew

from publication, if, indeed, they ever were, properly speaking, published. Thus Dr. Brown was all things to all men, and to all boys. He "had a word for every one," as poor people say, and a word to the point, for he was as much at home with the shepherd on the hills, or with the angler between Hollylea and Clovenfords, as with the dusty book-hunter, or the doggy young Border yeoman, or the child who asked him to "draw her a picture," or the friend of genius famous through all the world, Thackeray, when he "spoke, as he seldom did, of divine things."

Three volumes of essays are all that Dr. Brown has left in the way of compositions: a light, but imperishable literary baggage. His studies are usually derived from personal experience, which he reproduced with singular geniality and simplicity, or they are drawn from the tradition of the elders, the reminiscences of long-lived Scotch people, who, themselves, had listened attentively to those who went before them. Since Scott, these ancient ladies with wonderful memories have had no such attentive listener or appreciative reporter as Dr. Brown. His paper called "Mystifications," a narrative of the pranks of Miss Stirling Graham, is a brief, vivid record of the clever and quaint society of Scotland sixty years ago. Scotland, or at least Scottish society, is now only English society – a little narrower, a little prouder, sometimes even a little duller. But old people of position spoke the old Scotch tongue sixty years ago, and were full of wonderful genealogies, full of reminiscences of the "'45," and the adventures of the Jacobites. The very last echoes of that ancient world are dying now from memory, like the wide reverberations of that gun which Miss Nelly MacWilliam heard on the day when Prince Charles landed, and which resounded strangely all through Scotland.

The children of this generation, one fears, will hardly hear of these old raids and duels, risings and rebellions, by oral tradition handed down, unbroken, through aunts and grandmothers. Scott reaped a full, late harvest of the memories of clannish and feudal Scotland; Dr. Brown came as a later gleaner, and gathered these stirring tales of "A Jacobite Family" which are published in the last volume of his essays. When he was an observer, not a hearer only, Dr. Brown chiefly studied and best wrote of the following topics: passages and characters of humour and pathos which he encountered in his life and profession; children, dogs, Border scenery, and fellow-workers in life and science. Under one or other of these categories all his best compositions might be arranged. The most famous and most exquisite of all his works in the first class is the unrivalled "Rab and his Friends" – a study of the stoicism and tenderness of the Lowland character worthy of Scott. In a minor way the little paper on "Jeems," the door-keeper in a Dissenting house of the Lord, is interesting to Scotch people, though it must seem a rather curious revelation to all others. "Her last Half-crown" is another study of the honesty that survived in a starving and outcast Scotch girl, when all other virtues, as we commonly reckon virtue, had gone before her character to some place where, let us hope, they may rejoin her; for if we are to suffer for the vices which have abandoned us, may we not get some credit for the virtues that we have abandoned, but that once were ours, in some heaven paved with bad resolutions unfulfilled? "The Black Dwarf's Bones" is a sketch of the misshapen creature from whom Scott borrowed the character that gives a name to one of his minor Border stories. The real Black Dwarf (David Ritchie he was called among men) was fond of poetry, but hated Burns. He was polite to the fair, but classed mankind at large with his favourite aversions: ghosts, fairies, and robbers. There was this of human about the Black Dwarf, that "he hated folk that are aye gaun to dee, and never do't." The village beauties were wont to come to him for a Judgment of Paris on their charms, and he presented each with a flower, which was of a fixed value in his standard of things beautiful. One kind of rose, the prize of the most fair, he only gave thrice. Paris could not have done his dooms more courteously, and, if he had but made judicious use of rose, lily, and lotus, as prizes, he might have pleased all the three Goddesses; Troy still might be standing, and the lofty house of King Priam.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.