# Dr. John Brown

Dr JOHN BROWN

from a Remarque on the margin of an etched portrait of
Dr John Brown by Charles O. Murray

# Dr. John Brown

## A Biography and a Criticism

By the late

John Taylor Brown

LL.D., F.S.A. (Scot.)

Edited

With a short Sketch of the Biographer

by

W. B. Dunlop, M.A.

London

Adam & Charles Black

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To the Memory of

DR. JOHN BROWN

OF

ALEXANDER STUART LOGAN

SHERIFF OF FORFARSHIRE

OF

MY BROTHER, WILLIAM SETON BROWN

OF

JOHN HEUGH

OF

PROFESSOR CALDERWOOD

AND OF

DR. ALEXANDER GROSART

"As I began this work to entertain and instruct myself, so, if any other find entertainment or profit by it, let him use it freely, judge honourably of my friend, and moderately of me, which is all the return that out of this barren stock can be desired or expected."—Lord Brooke's *Life of the Renowned Sir Philip Sidney.*

# INTRODUCTORY NOTE BY THE EDITOR

THE MS. of "Dr. John Brown, a Biography and a Criticism," came into my hands on the death, in 1901, in his ninety-first year, of my uncle, the late John Taylor Brown. It is only just to his memory that I should explain that the MS. as I found it was unfinished, though he was engaged on this, his labour of love, to within a few days of his death. Considerable portions of it had never been finally revised by the biographer; part of it was written, sometimes in pencil hardly decipherable, on odd sheets and half sheets, on old envelopes, news-

paper wrappers, and other scraps of paper, often without anything to indicate the continuity of the narrative. And there were frequently many versions of the same passage, without even an indication which version the biographer intended to adopt. In these circumstances, my endeavour has been to discriminate between the various versions and to attempt to unite my uncle's *ipsissima verba*, interpolating as little as possible of my own—for the most part, only a few words here and there to connect the different portions of the MS.

I would ask the reader to deal gently with any lack of continuity or literary finish which he may discover, or at least to lay the blame of any such defects, not upon the biographer, who has been described by a critic as a "master of English pure and undefiled," but rather upon one whose lot in life has been

cast in paths far removed from those of literary effort.

I have appended to the Biography of Dr. John Brown and the Criticism of his literary work, a short notice of the biographer himself, which I have thought might possibly prove of interest to some of the readers of Dr. John Brown's Life.

W. B. DUNLOP.

EDINBURGH,
*August* 1903.

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# PREFACE

I HAVE sometimes been inclined to think that Dr. John Brown had thrown so much of his own beautiful character into his writings that any other memorial of him was not only superfluous, but might even be in danger of impairing the true impression of him which had already been sufficiently given by himself. And it is therefore with some hesitation that I venture upon the attempt to record what an intimacy of over fifty years may enable me to recall of a very remarkable and a very attractive personality. Something, however, as it seems to me, is still wanted to define the exact character and value of his literary work. One generally hears him spoken of as the author of *Rab and*

*his Friends*, as if he had produced nothing else worth notice except that and one or two other, certainly most beautiful and touching narratives. But there is much else in his work which exhibits very special power as a thinker, as an acute critic both of art and of literature, and a shrewd expounder of various practical questions. All this seemed to me to deserve being brought into greater prominence and to receive more attention than it had yet obtained. Whether the following pages will have this effect it is not for me to determine. But it is well at least that the attempt should be made, for even if it does not succeed (and I am very conscious of its imperfection) it may supply the groundwork and suggestion of what may be better done by some other pen than that of the present writer can be hoped by him to effect.

J. T. BROWN.

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# Dr. John Brown

## A BIOGRAPHY AND A CRITICISM

DR. JOHN BROWN used to say that he was the fifth John Brown of his family in direct succession, and I have an idea that he inherited something from all his forebears. Of the first John, indeed, John Brown the customary weaver of Carpow, we know nothing. "He died and made no sign," at least none that has come down to us. But all the others were men of marked character, intellect and worth. His great-grandfather, in particular, John Brown of Haddington, must have had some of the elements of a very true greatness. Left an orphan, utterly unprovided

for, at the age of twelve, bare-footed, ill-clad, and with almost no school-training, "one month only, without his parents' allowance, bestowed upon the Latin," and sent to herd sheep upon the hills about Abernethy, he contrived, like the younger Scaliger, to acquire a knowledge of Greek without the aid of Grammar or Lexicon; and after carrying a pack, keeping a school contending with ecclesiastical bigots who accused him of getting his learning from the Devil! and, it is said, serving as a soldier of the volunteers in the rebellion of 1745, fought his way into the ministry of the Secession Church, and finally into the Professor's chair of Divinity. The other two John Browns, his father and grandfather, were both men of mark in their day. His father, in particular, was distinguished as a master in biblical interpretation, as an accomplished scholar, a great preacher, and a man of wide learning and powerful intellect. The distinguishing character-

istics of the race may, I think, be said to have been intellectual vigour, singular purity of life, piety towards God, and a remarkable serenity and benignity of temper. And all these were transmitted in ample measure to the author of the *Horæ Subsecivæ*. With him, however, they blossomed out into genius which, it may be admitted, had hardly as yet been developed in the family. Those who had gone before him were chiefly men of great acquiring power—men of learning with strong sense and reasoning ability, but not distinctively gifted with original or inventive faculty. John of Haddington, indeed, must have seen a good deal of various life, and was certainly something more than a mere scholar. According to traditions still surviving in the family, he possessed a considerable power of dealing with men, and a faculty of ready retort or repartee which must have made him rather a dangerous subject to attack or contend with. These features

of character were not perhaps particularly conspicuous in his more immediate descendants, John of Whitburn and the first Dr. John, the father, but they distinctly revived in the last inheritor of the name. He liked, as he once told me, to "manage people," and few who knew him could doubt that he generally succeeded; and was seldom at a loss, I think, for a quick retort — usually, however, rather humorous and kindly than cutting or severe, though the sting was not wanting if the occasion required it.

The external events of Dr. John Brown's life were so few that they may almost be told in half a dozen sentences. He was born in the old Secession Manse of Biggar in Lanarkshire, on the 23rd of September 1810. He came to Edinburgh when a little more than eleven years of age in May 1822. His early education up to that time had been conducted, I believe, entirely by his father in private. On coming to Edinburgh

he went to a Latin school kept by William Steele, a good but somewhat severe master, and not one, I suspect, very capable of infusing into his scholars an interest in classical literature, or, to use an expression of Mr. Thackeray's, of relieving them from the "nightmare of τυπτω." In October 1824 he passed into the Rector's class in the High School, then under Dr. Carson, a man of a different stamp, gentle and kindly, an admirable teacher and an excellent man. Here he remained till August 1826, entering the University in the November following. In May 1827 he commenced the study of medicine, beginning at the same time his apprenticeship with Mr. Syme the great surgeon. In 1833 he obtained his degree of M.D., and immediately began practice in Edinburgh. In June 1840 he was married to Miss Catherine M'Kay. In March 1846 his literary career may be said to have commenced with the publication of those

remarkable criticisms on Art which originally appeared in the *Witness* newspaper of that date. In 1849 these were followed by his paper on Locke and Sydenham in the *North British Review*. My impression is that it was this paper which brought him the friendship of Lord Jeffrey and Lord Cockburn; and between this time and 1855 he became closely intimate with Mr. Ruskin and Mr. Thackeray. In 1858 his friend the late Mr. Thomas Constable induced him to publish the first volume of his collected essays in which "Rab and his Friends" appeared. This was followed by another volume in 1861. The last, I think, of his writings appeared about 1866, his period of literary activity thus extending over exactly twenty years. On the 6th of January 1864 (a day ever afterwards sadly recalled by him as the year came round) his beautiful and excellent wife was taken from him after long, most painful, and hopeless suffering. Last of all, his own

death took place on the 11th of May 1882, at the age of seventy-one years and seven and a half months. His family consisted of a son and two daughters, of whom the son—the sixth John Brown—alone survives.

My first acquaintance with him was in May 1822, immediately after his coming to Edinburgh. I met him at a boys' and girls' party in my uncle David's in Buccleuch Place, of which I can only recollect that he made us all laugh by some outbreak of odd or funny remark—so that I suppose his humour had begun to show itself even then. What his life before that had been I can only conjecture; he never spoke much about it to me. But I used to suspect that not a little of what constituted the prevailing features of his character was more or less due to his early upbringing. Even when a child he had shown a good deal of a sensitive disposition, and he once told me —what I have also heard from others—that

his mother, shortly before her death, had expressed some anxiety about him on this ground. It is probable, therefore, that the impressions received in the Biggar manse, whatever they were, would sink pretty deep into his nature. His father, though a man of great intellectual power, was curiously silent, retiring and reticent, absorbed in his work, dignified both in person and manners, "not a man to be trifled with," though in his inner nature singularly devout, gentle, pure-minded and benevolent. I rather fancy that there was something of a solemn shadow pervading the early home. The elder Dr. Brown had lost his mother, a woman, I have understood, of remarkable beauty, and no less remarkable character, when he was still a boy, but old enough to have recognised all her excellence, and to have become attached to her with all a boy's enthusiastic love. And, again, after a few happy years of marriage, the light of his life had gone out at the death of his

amiable wife, the mother of our Dr. John. After this, I suspect, there was not very much laughter in the Biggar house; youthful spirits were perhaps kept under some restraint, and the house had very likely a pervading atmosphere of awe in it—not altogether unfavourable, however, to the growth of habits of filial reverence and obedience, and of modest, humble, truthful dispositions. This, at least, was the impression which the manners and appearance of the children gave, when their father came to Edinburgh in 1822. After their mother's death they had been brought up by their grandmother, and they had all something of the look of being "grandmother's children." John, as I have already said, was at that time not quite twelve years old, and when he made his *début* among us, some of us boys, I think, were inclined to smile at his simple, primitive, country ways and appearance. I remember particularly his little short-tailed coat, made possibly by

the Biggar tailor, to whom the fashions of the Edinburgh boy-world had not yet penetrated—the rest of us having at that time adopted the round jacket for our upper garment.

I remember, too, his old-fashioned fatherly way with children a little younger than himself. If they had been sick and were recovering, perhaps, from the measles, he would pat them patronisingly on the head, and give them a kindly sympathetic look or word, just as his old grandfather of Whitburn would have done. However, simple, primitive, and old-fashioned or not, he had no lack of spirit or liveliness; and as he soon showed that he was a match for any one in the school at Latin, it was not long before he took a high place in Steele's third class; and afterwards at the Rector's class in the High School he was entitled, at the end of his two years' course, to stand second dux in a class of, I think, considerably over one hundred boys. By this time his look of

rural simplicity had pretty well gone off. He still, however, carried himself in a simple, modest, unaffected way, and his lively, sociable, affectionate disposition made him a very general favourite among his schoolfellows. He was at this time rather tall for his age, and had a lounging, careless walk and gait, with a way of leaning on the shoulders of those who were near him, as if his legs were not quite up to carrying his not very heavy body—rather however, perhaps, as his way of expressing his goodwill and affection to the stoop on which he rested. He was to all appearance strong and healthy at that time, full of spirit and courage, ready even to give wagers of battle in the grounds about the Surgeons' Hall, behind the High School, where affairs of that kind were usually decided. In the business of the class, I do not remember that he was remarkable for anything beyond the complete mastery of the lessons. His translations, I have

no doubt, were correct enough, but other boys used to produce more rounded and elegant periods in their free renderings, which Carson encouraged them to practise. He had a quick as well as a retentive memory. But I do not think he was betrayed by it into slurring over his lessons, which, on the contrary, were at all times carefully prepared at home. At the same time, he had always an easy, careless, lounging way with him, as if school-work gave him no trouble, and as if he were only half concerned about it. Oddly enough, in one who afterwards wrote so well, I have no recollection of his taking any part in writing the essays which were given out at the short vacation, at the "Preachings" and the New Year. Map-drawing was made an alternative to the essay, and John, if I mistake not, habitually preferred to draw a map instead of writing an essay—so that his artistic skill, which was afterwards so striking, seems to have been an earlier

growth than the literary tendency. I do not think, either, that he paid much attention to Latin verse-making, as most of the boys of his standing used to do—at least I have no recollection of his doing so, and I discover no trace of it in the "Course of Study" which Carson printed at the end of the yearly sessions. The only notice of him which I find there, is the statement that he had read the whole *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (in Greek, of course) as "private studies," *i.e.*, in addition to the regular work of the class.

My recollection of him at this time, was that he was still in all respects essentially a boy; frank, good-humoured, a little odd, a curious mixture of simplicity and sense, companionable with his schoolfellows in general, taking his due part in their sports, their fun, their mischief; liking those that were likeable and liked by them, and attaching himself to two or three who came in his way, but carrying himself in careless schoolboy fashion to all and sundry—in

short, with manners and character still to a considerable extent unformed, and giving little indication of what he afterwards became. In a large public school it generally happens that the higher boys keep a good deal by themselves, and mingle little with those who take a lower place in the class. But there was little or nothing of this with John, and I rather think that he had friends pretty well throughout the class, and that Bob Ainslie, the hero of a hundred fights, and Lawrence Douglas, the hero of a hundred "palmies," who drove Steele almost mad to find that he made no more impression on him with the *tawse* than if he had lashed a gooseberry-bush, were probably as congenial to John as John Millar, the great scholar, or Thomas Jackson Crawford, the great Latin versifier.

I have some doubts if, notwithstanding the high place he took in the class, he cared much at the time for what he learned either at Steele's or Carson's. As

he had a good memory, he found no great difficulty in mastering the lessons; and as his father naturally wished him to become a good scholar, his sense of filial duty, I have no doubt, had a good deal to do with his success. But apart from this, I suspect that he rather sighed for relief; and though, after leaving school, he went to college in the following November, I think he only attended one or two of the literary classes for one session, and a private class (Mr. Walter Nichol's) for mathematics, and then in the following May took at once to the study of medicine.

At this time, there was probably the making of a good many things in him. A false step in the after course which they take is not uncommon with boys who have proved good scholars at school, and it often needs some elasticity as well as force of character to avoid doing so. When a lad has succeeded well in Greek and Latin, there is a temptation to keep

in the same line. He is supposed to be marked out for one of the learned professions, and so he sinks down into the routine life of a schoolmaster, clergyman, teacher, or professor of some kind, in which Greek and Latin may still continue to play the principal part. And the end of it is, that if you meet him again after twenty years, you find that his intellect has scarcely advanced a step. What he gained at school is supposed to be all that it was necessary to gain. His mind has settled into a mere mechanical activity, harping always on the old strings; has ceased to expand or to obtain any further outlook, and he passes away, having "unbeseemed the promise of his spring." A number of John's compeers I suspect fell into this snare. The better class of mind is, in general, that which makes school and college education simply the base and starting-point for a new career. And this was the case with him. Whether he had then any marked predilection towards

medicine, I do not know. His maternal grandfather and uncle were both, I have understood, distinguished physicians in their day, and there may, through them, have been some hereditary tendency in the same direction. But whatever were the influences at work, a young man must do something for his living, and I have little doubt that it was a true instinct which led him to make his "private studies" in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* his port of departure for a profession which, more perhaps than any other he could have chosen, tended to develop all the best qualities of his intellect and of his character—his benevolent and sympathetic nature, his broad humanity, together with his peculiar power of minute observation, his habits of accurate knowledge and acute discernment—shrewd skill in diagnosis, as doctors call it—and I think I may add, the decidedly practical character of his mind. He once told me that he was strongly urged by some of his friends, at the time

when it became necessary to choose a profession, to go into the ministry, and that he was thankful to have kept himself from doing so.

When he left the High School, and for a considerable time afterwards, the friend to whom I think he most attached himself was his class-fellow, John Millar, who, both at Dr. Carson's and afterwards at college, proved himself a first-rate classical scholar. He carried off the gold medals both in Greek and Latin at the High School, and, according to John, *ought* to have obtained the gold medal in the Humanity class at college, which, as he alleged, was quite unfairly adjudged to another. Millar, on finishing his college course, proceeded to the study of divinity, but I rather think did not prove acceptable as a preacher. At all events, he never got a church. Though a man of high character and ability, he had a somewhat impracticable temper which, I suspect, considerably marred his career in life. After various

ups and downs, he was, about 1843, appointed classical tutor in the Free Church Divinity Hall, but got into some trouble with the Principal which led to his resignation. He afterwards became Rector of the Grammar School of Jedburgh, where he seemed at length to have got into his true sphere, but, in no long time after, he was seized with fever, which cut him off in his 42nd year (February 1855). There is a touching reference to him in the *Life of a Probationer*, by the late Dr. James Brown of Paisley. After leaving school, the two friends carried on some reading together in general literature, and recorded their thoughts and criticisms upon it in a sort of album, which John once showed me. Millar, I remember, who, as became a dux, was no way defective in self-confidence, gave his own cogitations on the subjects in hand; but John, with that curious shrinking from venturing on anything of his own, which he still seems to have retained, generally

contented himself with quoting something applicable to the matter from the *Edinburgh Review*, which to him, as to liberal-minded young Scotsmen at that time, I suppose, constituted the chief standard of taste and chief authority on questions of literature and philosophy. His father had a set of the *Review* in his library, and John, I recollect, browsed a good deal on the earlier volumes, and both knew well and greatly enjoyed the best articles by Jeffrey and Sydney Smith.

When he began the study of medicine, I lost sight of him for a number of years, and of the details of his life at that time I knew very little. But there can be no doubt that he emerged from his apprenticeship to Mr. Syme, well-equipped as a physician. I know at least that Mr. Syme was well satisfied with his work, and expressed himself very strongly to that effect. His chief intimates at this time were, I think, his cousin William Nimmo, and Henry Belfrage, the only son of his

father's friend, the Rev. Dr. Belfrage of Slateford, both of whom were studying medicine along with him. The latter of these died very early. John, I believe, was very much attached to him, and one trace of him I find in a couple of lines, to which Henry's initials are appended, on the back of the title-page of the first volume of the *Horæ Subsecivæ*, probably a quotation from a letter. So he had sent a loving backward glance upon his early friend's memory when he first became an author. There are, however, other traces—in the letter to Dr. Cairns, etc. William Nimmo, from what I have heard, seems to have been a man of strong character, vigorous intellect, a kind of thorough-going energy, some coarseness of nature, a rather imperfect morale, and a considerable violent temper. John liked his strong nature, and was very intimate with him, without, however, being much in sympathy with at least some of the other prominent features of his character,

or coming much under his influence. He went out to the West Indies about 1836, at the invitation, I believe, of some relatives, and returned after two or three years, broken in health and spirits, partly occasioned, I have understood, through some harsh usage he had received which his high spirit could not brook; and reached Scotland only to die. I have just used the words "under his influence," and I think I might extend the phrase a good deal, for I do not think that either now or afterwards John's character was much affected by any one with whom he became intimate. Even at this early period his moral nature was, I believe, in all material points well established. He was never in the way of shrinking from companionship of any kind, and both in his medical student life and afterwards, well knew, and came freely in contact with, various forms of good and evil; but I believe I may state with absolute certainty that in his own conduct he never

deviated from the even tenor of a pure and good life. He was, therefore, more in a position to influence than to be influenced, and I rather think that his friendships were sometimes a good deal founded on the desire to be helpful to the friend he had chosen, than on any hope of good to come to himself. There was a curiously benevolent tendency in his nature.

I do not know when he first became impressed with those strong views of the necessity of a considerably wider culture to a physician than that which is merely professional, which he urges so persistently in the first volume of the *Horæ Subsecivæ*. And it may have struck the reader as rather inconsistent with these opinions, that he should have entered on his own medical studies with little more than his school-learning as a foundation. A lad, however, with any clear tendency to an active life is always impatient to commence his course of action, and it is generally only afterwards that

he becomes conscious of his defects. But, however that may have been, it is certain that in his case a tolerably wide reading, both in general literature and in philosophy, went hand in hand with his medical studies. It is impossible now to specify very particularly what that reading was. Naturally enough, it would be to some extent desultory, and I believe it was so. But to a powerfully reflective mind like his, even the most desultory reading would supply what was necessary to the exercise of much of his best thought: and though the literature of the hour occupied a sufficiently large place in his attention, both his father's fine library and others were made available for all that was best in the older English classics. Not a little attention too was, I believe, given to metaphysical and mental philosophy. Berkeley's *Siris*, *The Minute Philosopher*, and one or two others of his works; Mackintosh, Dugald Stewart, and at a later time

Sir William Hamilton—all came in his way. Poetry I know in particular was not overlooked, and it was about this time I believe that he made himself more or less familiar with the best of the older English poets. Wordsworth, among the contemporary poets, I know that he very early learned to love; and when I became intimate with him some years afterwards, I found that both his works and those of Coleridge had been much in his hands. Byron he very soon ceased to care for, and I remember that he hailed with a cordial assent the estimate placed upon him by Sir Henry Taylor in the preface to his *Philip van Artevelde*.

After about five years under Mr. Syme, he went, by his recommendation, as assistant to a medical man in Chatham, and remained there about a year. One incident of his life there which John, with characteristic modesty, had never mentioned, came out in a curious way, many years afterwards, and is worth

telling. On one of Mr. Charles Dickens's last visits to Scotland, John happened to meet him at the late Sheriff Gordon's. In the course of conversation, Dickens, who was a native of Rochester, which is close by Chatham, said that the thing which had first given him a strongly favourable impression of the character of Scotsmen was what had occurred at Chatham in the year 1832, when the outbreak of cholera took place there. A great panic was immediately produced among the English medical men, and every one of them fled from the place, with the single exception of a young Scotsman, an assistant to one of the doctors, who stuck firmly to his duties and freely attended to every case he was called to. It then turned out that the young Scotsman was no other than the Dr. Brown who was sitting opposite to him at table. upon which, Dickens immediately came round and shook him cordially by the hand. The incident was

quite what I would have expected of John.

In August 1833, shortly after returning to Scotland, he obtained his degree of M.D., and immediately began practice in Edinburgh. During his medical student life, as I have already said, I had almost entirely lost sight of him, and we very seldom met. But in the concluding months of 1833, I was attending Professor Wilson's class of moral philosophy, and John had a habit of occasionally looking in there, attracted, no doubt, both by his own philosophical tastes and by Wilson's peculiar style of eloquence. After the lecture was over, we often took a walk together, and gradually renewed our early intimacy, meeting perhaps now and then in the evenings, and feeling our way, I suppose, into each other's character and ideas of things. This went on until some time in May or June 1835, when one afternoon, about that time, I had called on him by appointment to take a

long walk into the country. A new volume of Wordsworth's poems (his *Yarrow Revisited*) had appeared shortly before, which I had been reading with strong appreciation, and, being very full of the subject, I began talking of it as soon as I came in. I soon found that we were quite at one in our admiration, and I think the most of our talk that evening was about the great poet. We walked out by the Ferry Road, and I remember that we sat a long time on an old crumbling dyke (now, alas! improved away) near Craigcrook Castle, reading the book together and comparing notes about its finest passages. On looking over the old volume now, I can only recall one or two of the passages we were then so full of and so fervid about. There were the fine lines on a portrait by Stone, in which the words of the old Jeronymite monk to Wilkie the painter, as the two were standing before Titian's picture of our Lord's Last Supper, in the

refectory of the Convent of the Escurial, are embodied.

"Here daily do we sit,
Thanks given to God for daily bread, and here
Pondering the mischiefs of these restless times,
And thinking of my brethren, dead, dispersed,
Or changed and changing, I not seldom gaze
Upon this solemn company unmoved
By shock of circumstance, or lapse of years,
Until I cannot but believe that they—
They are in truth the substance, we the shadows."

I recollect our smiling at two passages in one of the *Evening Voluntaries*:—

"Look at the stars, you'll say that there are none;
Look up a second time, and, one by one
You mark them twinkling out with silvery light."

And again:—

"The shepherd bent on rising with the sun
Had closed his door before the day was done,
And now with thankful heart to bed doth creep
And join his little children in their sleep."

The one recalled a familiar experience of childhood, the other some early recollection of country life incident.

And these lines in the sonnet beginning

"Why art thou silent?" did not escape us—

> "—left more desolate, more dreary cold
> Than a forsaken bird's nest filled with snow
> 'Mid its own bush of leafless eglantine."

Ah me! I little thought then how expressive they would become of what is now fulfilled by his death.

I remember that summer evening how animated he became; and when we returned to town I recollect his reading to me with great fervour, by the fading sunlight at his father's open study window in Albany Street, some passages in Milton's prose, particularly that one at the end of his *Reformation in England and the Causes that hitherto have hindered it*":—

> "But they contrary, that by the impairing and diminution of the true faith, the distresses and servitude of their country, aspire to high dignity, rule and promotion here, after a shameful end in this life (which God grant them), shall be thrown down eternally into the darkest and deepest gulf of Hell, where under the despiteful control, the trample and spurn of all the other damned that in the anguish of their torture, shall have no other

ease than to exercise a raving and bestial tyranny over them as their slaves and negroes, they shall remain in that plight for ever, the basest, the lowermost, the most dejected, most underfoot, and down-trodden vassals of perdition."

There was always something curious in his literary sympathies. He was the last person in the world, himself, to write such a terrible invective as the above, and yet he had a strong admiration of its relentless power and passion, and discerned in it, I have no doubt, a generous undercurrent of religious fervour and enthusiastic patriotism, and this it probably was which chiefly drew forth his admiration. He admired it because he could not have written it himself.

Perhaps it was as a relief to this piece of diabolic Miltonism that he then turned to a passage of a different kind which had struck him, in Henry More's *Mystery of Godliness*, in which the author, referring to some early spiritual experiences which had led to his belief in the immortality of the soul, says:—

"My enjoyments then increasing with my victories, and innocency and simplicity filling my mind with ineffable delight in God and His creation, I found myself as loath to die, that is to think my soul mortal, *as I was when a child to be called in to go to bed in summer evenings, there being still light enough as I thought to enjoy my play.*"

The homely simile in italics he particularly appreciated.

I am conscious that all this looks very slight in the telling. But I think it was an evening long remembered by both of us. He recalled it once long afterwards, not many months indeed before his death, when he was in one of his sad moods—recalled it, therefore, with a shiver as of pain.

"Nessun maggior dolore
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria."

I say it looks very slight in the telling. But is it not ever so, that just such slight things as these draw two people together and rivet the bonds of affection, we scarcely know how or why? — some glimpse perhaps into the inner nature

which a chance unconscious look or word has admitted for a moment. Whatever it was, a lifelong friendship began that evening of our youthful days—a friendship on which no cloud descended until that sad night, nigh fifty years afterwards, on which, with panting breath, he struggled in vain to return my last farewell.

How delightful it was I need not say, to have one's own ardours, hitherto perhaps kept to oneself, or if divulged disregarded or perhaps laughed at, thus reciprocated with usury. To me it was a new experience, and one of the happiest which this world had to give.

"Come back into memory, like as thou wert in the dayspring of thy fancies, with hope like a fiery column before thee—the dark pillar not yet turned."

The portrait which best recalls him to me as he was at that time, and indeed for a good while afterwards, is a calotype by D. O. Hill, of which a good etching by Charles O. Murray was published shortly

after Dr. Brown's death. His father had transmitted to him a good deal of his own manly and refined beauty—beauty decidedly, but not that which, as he himself said of his father's beauty, was too beautiful for a man. There were the same handsome features, the same high forehead (with rather more of breadth and mass in John's case than in his father's), the same aquiline nose, and the same thin, firmly compressed lips. The complexions of the two were different. His father's was dark, with black hair, early turning into grey; John was rather fair, with brownish hair (the colour of genius) curling slightly and gracefully at the back, where it escaped from under his hat—*crespe chiome d'oro puro lucente*. The expression of his face had in it something of a very attractive charm, the exact character and import of which it is not quite easy to describe or interpret—chiefly, perhaps, because it conveyed so much and was so various. Mr Andrew Lang has

described it as exhibiting "the blended expression of mirth and pathos." But I would hesitate about this being the habitual expression of his face. Mirth certainly was not, and pathos, I think, belonged rather to the later years of his life, when it had received perhaps a more urgent call. Gravity and seriousness were, I would say, distinctly characteristics; seriousness, however, easily relaxing into an honest and cordial smile. Good humour and kindness, sense and intelligence were assuredly present, with a look of gentleness and benignity which did away with any idea of severity or insistent dogmatism in his thought or temper. It was a face to captivate easily confidence and affection, and it was set off with a simple charm of manner and address which, as a lady once naïvely said to me, "no woman could resist." I have compared his face to his father's, but I don't know that the one would have exactly suggested the other. There was certainly less the

look of command with John than with his father, and less the look of one who stood apart from his fellows and was sufficient in himself to himself. He walked slowly —deliberate in this as in most other things; perhaps did a good deal of his thinking as he walked, certainly a good deal of his observing.

The feature of character which earliest struck anyone in becoming intimate with him, was a certain quickness and breadth of sympathetic insight, which showed itself not only in reference to men and women, but seemed to enter into almost everything which was worthy of human interest—into art, into poetry, philosophy, good literature, and good thought in almost any form, even to some extent into the results of physical science, and I need not say into brute-life, particularly of course that of dogs, whose character and thought he seemed to have an instinct in divining. And along with this—perhaps as its basis—there was a remarkable power

of close and minute observation, almost like that of a child. The two things at least were intimately connected. He observed closely (nothing, in fact, seemed to escape him) because he was interested in and sympathised with so much; and he sympathised so warmly, because he had observed so closely, and therefore knew so well.

In poetry, for example, the fit word, or the true thought and its felicitous expression, caught him in a moment; and as was once remarked to me by one of his friends (himself distinguished both as a poet and a critic),[1] his tact and taste in this discerning power seemed "almost infallible." Observe how well he talks on the subject. "Poetry is the expression of the beautiful—by words—the beautiful of the outer and of the inner world. It presides over *veras dulcedines rerum*. It implies at once a vision and a faculty, a gift and an art. There must be the vivid

[1] The late Principal Shairp of St. Andrews.

conception of the beautiful, and its fit manifestation in luminous language. A thought may be poetical and yet not poetry; it may be a sort of mother-liquor, holding in solution the poetical element, but waiting and wanting its precipitation —its concentration into the bright and compacted crystal. It is the blossom and fragrancy and bloom of all human thoughts passions, emotions, language; having for its immediate object—its very essence—pleasure and delectation rather than truth; but springing from truth, as the flower from its fixed and unseen root. It is not philosophy or science or morality or religion, but it feeds on, it glorifies and exalts, it impassionates them all. Philosophy and poetry are not opposites, but neither are they convertibles. They are twin sisters." He then quotes a very happy illustration of the distinctive character of the two from Fracastorius, to this effect: "If the historian describe the ongoings of this visible universe, I am

taught; if the philosopher announce the doctrine of a spiritual essence pervading and regulating all things, I admire. But if the poet take up the same thing and sing—

'Principio cœlum ac terras camposque liquentes
Lucentemque globum Lunæ, Titaniaque astra
Spiritus intus alit; totamque infusa per artus
Mens agitat molem, et magno se corpore miscet,'

I shall not only admire, but I shall love, and I shall feel as if some divine essence were infused into my soul." In the poetical quotation, Dr. Brown remarks, "we at once detect the proper tools and cunning of the poet; fancy gives us *liquentes campos*, *Titania astra*, *lucentem globum Lunæ*, and phantasy or imagination, in virtue of its royal or transmitting power, gives us *intus alit* — *infusa per artus*—and that magnificent idea, *magno se corpore miscet*. This is the *divinum nescio quid*, the proper work of the imagination — the master and specific faculty of the poet."

It was with human character, however, that his sympathetic insight was most conspicuous. Perhaps his tender, affectionate nature might sometimes interfere with his penetration, and he was no doubt apt to make more than enough of his heroes and heroines. But whatever were the faults of those he liked or admired, if they were balanced by any good qualities, no one could be more quick in discerning them than he. It might be that in this way his insight into the imperfections of his friends became less pronounced, and that his estimate of their general character was thus a little one-sided. It has to be confessed that he was not a "good hater." But, after all, is not this the true way of looking at mankind, to take them always at their best? Still, I would not have advised even an intimate and cherished friend to presume too far upon his blindness to the evil that was in them. If falseness, or treachery, or selfishness, or meanness, or hollow pretence became too

obtrusive, there might be a rupture—and once or twice in his life I believe there was—which could not be healed.

He had a very true social nature, and it was curious to observe how readily he entered into pleasant and friendly relations with anyone. If a stranger met him for the first time he seemed to have a kind of perfect tact in placing himself at once in the exactly appropriate footing with him. His way was, on being introduced, to move his spectacles up to his forehead, and some frank, cordial, original, or unexpected smiling remark, some odd touch of humour, some pleasant reference, perhaps to something the other had done or made himself famous by, broke down at once the barrier of non-acquaintance. I asked him one day how he contrived to get into the full tide of *easy familiar* talk with a lady who happened to sit next him at dinner, but whom he had never met before. "Oh, I find out who is her minister," he said, "and then there is no more difficulty."

He knew, I suppose, the ecclesiastical proclivities of the feminine mind, and this was probably a humorous general indication of his style of procedure, not to be taken altogether *à la lettre*. No matter how any form of mind might differ from his own, he seemed always to have a key to obtain entry, and to have something in his personality which at once inspired unlimited confidence, insomuch that he might ask the most blunt question without giving offence or even exciting surprise; it seemed such a natural thing to open one's whole heart to him. And all his friends knew that they might freely tell him about themselves: what they would not venture to speak of to anyone else; they were sure of kindness and sympathy, and there was no fear of anything being turned to their disadvantage — "Were you ever drunk?" he asked one day of a good man not, I think, specially intimate, but the answer came without a moment's hesitation: "Yes, I was, and once or twice

very drunk." I suppose, however, a physician is accustomed to ask these blunt questions. "Are you not ashamed," he said to a lady, who had come to announce her approaching marriage—"Are you not a little ashamed to be going away all alone with a man in this way?" "Oh, no," she quickly replied; "so many have done the same thing before, that I don't mind." He was delighted to be thus instantly met upon his own ground.

In trouble or sorrow, it is almost needless to say that he had the almost unconscious art of creating an atmosphere of cheer around the sufferer, who was comforted, he scarcely knew how, for there were no comforting "considerations" thrust upon him. Comfort came in some indirect way, without being announced, and without any assumption on the part of the comforter. It was this which made his visit to the sick man better than the medicines which he gave him; and the languor and pain of the sick-bed were

often relieved by the mere visit, or even by the expectation of it.

Very remarkable it was, too, to observe how entirely he entered into all the interests of his friends and made them his own. If a friend had got to some critical point in his life, was a candidate for some office—a professor's chair, for example—or had written a book, or a poem, or a review article, nothing could exceed the generous interest he took in the matter, or the eager effort for his friend's success. It seemed to occupy all his thoughts for the time; and if he required to write testimonials of fitness, his subtle discriminating estimates of character and intellectual qualities were often of themselves worth something as philosophical studies. I rather think that more than a few aspirants to literary distinction were not a little indebted to him for the kind appreciation and encouragement which their youthful attempts received from him. Might I venture to

mention that Mr. Andrew Lang, in an admirable obituary notice of Dr. Brown, which appeared shortly after Dr. Brown's death, seems to hint at this having occurred very specially in his own case?

In his closer intimacies and friendships, indeed, there seemed to be no restraint upon his finest sympathies, and there are some words of Carlyle's in reference to Edward Irving which often occur to me when I recall John Brown. "But for Irving," he says, "I had never known what the communion of man with man means. His was the freest, brotherliest human soul mine ever came in contact with." This did not arise altogether from the curious sweetness, serenity, and generosity of his moral nature, but rather from the combination of these with a singular breadth of intellectual view—and a largeness of heart, to which no real thought could be unworthy of entertainment, and no form of human character

could be entirely alien; a certain frankness, too, openness and simplicity of mind, which had nothing in himself to conceal, and nothing of aptness to distrust in others. No one, I should think, felt unkindness from a friend more acutely, but he was always unwilling to take offence, and he could always both bear much and be ready to forgive much. I could, if it were necessary, mention instances in which, after receiving very injurious treatment, at the hands of men from whom he was entitled to expect something very different, he yet showed to them a simple, childlike placability, and a returning of good for their evil, which, from a man like him, who knew the world and might be expected to have caught some of its hardness, often seemed to me very touching. There was something very Christ-like in his nature, and this did not arise from anything timid or unmanly in his character, for if he was insulted or injured he could always bear

himself with dignity and independence; and though he seldom cared to dispute or wrangle, I never saw him shrink from asserting himself with proper courage on the proper occasion.

Charles Lamb somewhere speaks of "a man of an incorrigible and losing honesty." I might say of John that he was a man of an incorrigible and losing humility.

His intellectual character was of the intuitional rather than the logical kind. He could hold his own, as I have just hinted, for he had very clear and determinate opinions, but he was not disputatious. He "was never able," to use an expression of Mr. Matthew Arnold's, "to hit it off happily with the logicians. They imagine truth to be something to be proved, he something to be seen; they, something to be manufactured, he as something to be found." Truth he saw at once; he had not to seek for it by roundabout methods. He saw it as the

poet does, the original thinker, the scientific discoverer, the man of insight, the closely practical man; not as the man of learning, who gets his truth at second hand, or the reasoner, "the disputer of this world," who accepts nothing but what he can prove demonstratively to be true. His mind was near akin to truth and beauty, and he recognised them at once, as if they had been in his mind before—as perhaps they were. One peculiarity he had which was apt to give the impression of some unsteadfastness of mind, but really was not: that if you broached an idea which he had not before considered, he would sometimes, in the eagerness of his sympathetic interest, receive it as if he agreed with it. But if you introduced the subject again, soon afterwards, under the notion that you had made him a convert, you found that he was still unconvinced, and still on the other side. It was occasionally disappointing, but there had been no real vacillation on

his part. It was only that his mind was always open and expectant towards any new truth, and ever alive to any novelty of thought; and his quickly sympathetic tendency made him ready to seize upon the half-truth which not infrequently lurks under even the most preposterous falsities. But the moment he applied his mind to the subject, the fallacy became apparent, and gave way. In the main, his thought was conservative, and what we call common sense was always a strongly prevailing characteristic of his intellect. And yet, at least in his writings, he had something of an exaggerative way of looking at truth, and in his way of putting it. It was as if he saw truth through a magnifying glass. He held strongly that the *poco piu* was necessary in Art, as if truth were something truer than reality. And he would maintain, in accordance with this, that in order to a portrait being a perfect work of Art, it ought to be, as he expressed

it, "liker to the man than the man himself."

There was, however, a remarkable balance in his intellectual faculties—a singular absence of excess of any kind, and a controlling power of good sense pervading his mind. Though enthusiastic in his love of literature, it never became a passion—or, to state it more accurately, in an expression of his own, it was impassioned yet temperate. It never led to any neglect of the duties of his profession, or even to any abatement of his devotion to it. Many men, who wrote as well as he did, and who acquired so considerable a measure of admiration and even fame, both in this country and in America, might have been seduced into neglecting their professional work and taking largely to literature. But he was saved from this unwisdom by being never very much taken up with himself, and being very destitute of ambition. I rather think he placed little value upon

anything he had written, and would probably have never thought of sending anything to the press—at least, never have become a regular author to the extent he did, if it had not been thrust upon him in the manner so pleasantly described by him in the introductory words of his *Notes on Art*. His writing was part of himself, something that he could not avoid; there was no affectation in it—no striving after what was not already in his mind. It was simply what was familiar to him in the natural process of his thought, and had become commonplace without any conscious effort to attain it.

He was kind, gentle, and affectionate, to all about him, though all the while, as already hinted, curiously clear-sighted to any imperfections of character in those he had to do with, even in his most intimate and attached friends.

He had abounding humour—always there—always ready, but always kept in the background, and only coming out

when occasion called. He never could have become a regular joker of jokes; never could have systematically played the buffoon, or kept the table in a roar, and never could have laid himself open to the reproach of Pascal (himself a humorist of the rarest kind)—"*diseur de bons mots—mauvais caractère.*" The prevailing tone of his mind, indeed, was, as I have already said, thoroughly serious. He was a thinker, and it might be justly said that he possessed no ordinary depth of thought. But he was at the same time a practical man—I would even be inclined to say, essentially a man of action, and that the character of his thought was mainly founded upon action—it was the direct result of his experience. I do not mean by a practical man, a man of business, for that was rather out of his way—nor a man whose practicality served his own material ends; but a man, who, being influenced by a sense of duty, knew both how to do it effectively, and how

not to neglect it. It could not be said of him that he had been infected with what a prophet of our own time has called the Anglo-Saxon contagion of philistinism. His ideals, on the contrary, were always high and generous, unselfish and unworldly. I do not think that either money-making or high reputation came much into his thought; and if they had, I suspect that the special character of his practicality would not have stood him in much stead—especially not for the former of these. He belonged, in short, to those upper souls who dwell somewhat apart, and are not moved by the experiences of life, nor dazzled by its pretensions, its glitter, its false shows.

A prevailing characteristic of his intellectual nature was instinctive good sense. He saw what was right and true, and he saw it in the immediate way. His mind was, as I have already said, intuitional rather than logical, but it was, at the same time, sound and true. What he knew he

knew well. What he learned from books he learned quickly, and he retained well, and utilised well; and though he disclaimed, and perhaps truly disclaimed, being what is called a learned man, he had read widely, and was thoroughly well informed in most subjects of general interest, and his knowledge was both extensive and accurate. As a boy, he had made the most of his school and college education, and entered much into the spirit of both Greek and Latin literature, but it was not his way to go into minute points of classical scholarship, or deep into science, or into what is called the higher criticism in history or theology. As to anything more than this, it might perhaps have been said of him, as an old philosopher said of himself: that if he had read as much as other men he would have been as ignorant as other men. So far from having any taste for the higher criticism in theology, I might say that he rather seemed to shrink from it with a sort of instinctive

impatience and aversion; and, what was unusual with him, and hardly characteristic, he sometimes indicated a sort of lurking suspicion of the religious character of those who addicted themselves to such subjects. He took rather the broad aspect of things than the minute and narrow. Though a minute observer, he was hardly a "minute philosopher."

In connection with this special structure of his mind, I have an idea that his habit of trusting rather to the intuitive way of seeing truth than reasoning it out, was at the root of not a little of the mental conflict and disturbance, of which his friends occasionally observed indications, and which, during the later years of his life, repeatedly became very serious in their character, and gave a painfully morbid turn to his thoughts. It has sometimes occurred to me that his early home education may have had something to do with this. His father was not a man to be called illiberal in his style of religious thought, but, at

least in the earlier part of his life, it unquestionably went very much on the lines of strict Calvinism; and John having been in his childhood indoctrinated into the same hard and relentless beliefs, they had sunk so much into the essence of his mind, that not being strongly logical, or disposed to speculate on such subjects, he never found himself able to do sufficient battle against them, but allowed them to the end to press heavily on his spirit, and perhaps to mar his intelligence. He knew so far that his early ways of thinking were not to be implicitly trusted, but he never, I suspect, so thoroughly made up his mind about them as to deal them the final *coup de grâce*. As an instance of how he appeared to me to be to a certain extent dominated by his father's opinions, I may mention such a question as "Voluntaryism," which he adopted so absolutely as to apply it not only to churches but also to public education and even to medical degrees. He thought that the public

were sufficiently competent to find out the quality of a doctor's skill, whether it had obtained the sanction of a medical board of examiners or not. He may or may not have been right on these points. There is probably a basis of truth in them; I am not arguing the question. I merely wish to indicate the style in which he appeared to me to take up some of his opinions. There is, no doubt, more or less of this with all men. Opinions and ways of thinking are drunk in almost with the mother's milk. They form part of the foundations of our intellectual being, and, though resting entirely on the authority of another's mind, they grow with our growth, and are never afterwards disturbed or questioned. But the peculiarity of Dr. Brown's mind was that he was too clear-sighted to be quite satisfied with some of his beliefs, and yet too exclusively given to deal with truth as something to be arrived at by an effort of direct insight. He was too little accustomed to exercise

his logical faculty, so that when a specula tive question in theology, for example, had once obtained an early entrance into his mind, it was apt at length to fester there, and so become rather an occasion of disturbance and irritation than of healing and satisfying quietude. With many men this style of mind serves all the purposes of their life. They settle all mysteries by a single glance of what they call common sense, and sink contentedly into self-complacent indifference or cynicism. Dr. John's mind, however, was too serious to be put to rest in this way. Indifference or cynical scepticism were both too alien to his nature to bring him any relief, and something of abiding disquietude was the result.

I may add, in connection with what I have said of the paternal influence upon Dr. Brown's style of thought on certain subjects, that in his youthful days the relations between father and child were apt to be considerably different from what

they are now. With religious people, at least in Scotland, matters of theological opinion were inculcated with an assertiveness which I think is now unusual. To doubt or question any generally received theological doctrine was regarded as little short of sin, and few young people religiously brought up thought of venturing on such forbidden ground. Religion and dogma were viewed as simply convertible terms. It was not in the elder Dr. Brown's case that the discipline of the house was severe or high-handed. The control which he exercised over his children was chiefly founded on the reverence and love with which they regarded him. But it was on that very account all the more powerful to secure unquestioning acquiescence, and, in point of fact, I believe that it did so.

I have had some hesitation as to whether these facts in Dr. Brown's inner life were not perhaps too sacred to be thus dwelt on. But they are distinc-

tively characteristic of his quick, susceptible, and various nature, and are necessary to any complete picture of his mind. And I may add that he never himself hesitated to speak of them to his friends. Probably they belong more or less to the very nature of genius, sensitively alive to every wind of thought and feeling that blows. And his genius was especially of that brooding order most apt to be visited by these dark thoughts, and least able to give them a peremptory "Avoid thee!"

I have thrown out all that I have said on this subject as merely an attempt to account for some of the shades of Dr. John Brown's mental attitude towards the prevalent religious thought of his time. But I am quite aware that it by no means meets all the facts of the case, and that in point of fact it explains very little, because much of his mental trouble was unquestionably purely morbid, probably congenital in its character, and

therefore incapable of any explanation. In looking over lately many of his earliest letters to me, dating from 1835 onwards, I find even then frequent complaints of depression of spirits, accompanied with heavy self-reproaches generally upon quite slight and inadequate grounds. At a later period, perhaps about 1866, these attacks became more serious, and were occasionally so severe as to compel him to lay aside practice for a time. Mrs. Brown's painful and distressing illness and her death had weighed heavily upon him, and soon afterwards some little domestic troubles, really of no great consequence, assumed quite an exaggerated aspect to his mind. He fancied himself ruined in his worldly circumstances, and he was in despair about his spiritual condition, like Cowper, thinking of himself as a lost soul. Yet all the while, generally able to talk intelligently either on ordinary subjects or even about his own spiritual condition, insomuch that it was

difficult to determine that there was any material difference between the state of his mind and that which is by no means uncommon at those critical points of the religious life, when men come face to face with the great manifestation of righteousness exhibited in the gospel story, and begin to look at their own life in the light of eternity, and in the light of the great work wrought in behalf of mankind by Jesus Christ. But whatever is the explanation to be given of the nature or origin of the painful mental depression under which Dr. Brown suffered for a good many years, one thing is certain, that its most prominent result was to produce in him that lowly, humble estimate of himself which was so beautiful a feature of his character—that "poorness of spirit," in short, which belongs to those of whom the divine founder of Christianity declared that "theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." A more humble-minded man, who was at the same time

so highly gifted, both morally and intellectually — one so ready to believe all others better than himself,—it has never been my fortune to meet. It is pleasant to add that during the last six or eight months of his life his depression seemed almost entirely to disappear and all his old cheerfulness to return, and that in dying he was able, I understand, to express a tranquil faith and trust in his divine Lord and Saviour.

I am afraid I must give up the hope of being able to convey any adequate idea of how the singular charm of his personality displayed itself in talk, in manner, or other outward behaviour. Mr. Andrew Lang, however, has touched upon the subject so happily in the obituary notice already referred to, that I am tempted to quote, and I am sure I shall be excused for quoting, some of its detached sentences. After mentioning his "sweetness of disposition and charm of manner, his humour, his unfailing

sympathy, that singular geniality of his, that temper of goodness and natural tolerant affection," he adds: "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 character of the living. From everything that was beautiful and good—from a summer day on the Tweed, or from the eyes of a child, or from the humorous saying of a friend, or from the treasured memories of old Scottish 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 were so dear—men dead, and men living. . . . He did not bear easily the mis-

fortunes 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 unselfish. . . . How dear the Border scenery was to him, and how well he 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 from *Minchmoor*."

All this is admirably true and admirably expressed. It is difficult to add anything to it. I may say, however, that there was something distinctively Scottish in his manner. I need not say, it was not a got-up manner. It was plain, natural. quite unaffected, and curiously unpretentious — as if anything he had to say was of no great consequence, yet indicating always fine sense and delicate social tact, just what was fittest for the occasion and the company. His language was well chosen, and that of a well-

cultured man who had habitually mingled in good society, with something of a Scottish accent, perhaps, and tone of voice, but without any taint either of Scottish provincialism or Anglified affectation. It was the language of a gentleman, and with all its plain straightforwardness you could not mistake him for anything else. He had no cringing airs to men of rank, and no airs of superiority to any others. Lord or labourer, he met each upon his own level, without arrogance or assumption. He had always a pleasant joke for the porter who carried his bag to the station, or the cabman who carried himself, and it was curious to observe how both of them at once perfectly understood both his joke and him. He had that happy air about him which immediately commanded regard, and few could meet him, even once, without thinking of him ever afterwards with interest and something of affection.

It used to strike me that there was a

touch of Sir Roger de Coverley in his manner. It might be said of him as of Sir Roger, that "he was very singular in his behaviour"—not that there was any oddness or awkwardness about it, but simply that "it was not the behaviour of anyone else." His singularity, like Sir Roger's, rather "proceeded from his good sense" and his good heart, and was "contradictory to the manner of the world only as the world was in the wrong." One of the peculiarities in which he resembled Sir Roger was, that in any of the houses where he was intimate he generally knew the servants quite as well as the master or mistress, and had often characteristic stories to tell of them. "When he came into a house he called the servants by their names and talked to them all the way upstairs to a visit." I need scarcely say that there was nothing modish or formal in his manner. It was simply his own manner, and I do not think he had caught it from anyone else.

It never struck you as being out of the way. It rather seemed the most perfectly natural of all manners, and you were disposed to wonder why everyone else had not the same manner. It was not, therefore, at all the manner of a man who, like Sir Roger, was a character and an oddity, for he had all his wits always about him. There was an irresistible charm about it all; and I was often struck with the enthusiastic way in which even those who must have known him very slightly would speak of the impression made upon them by him: so kind, so gentle, so dutiful, in all that he said or did. It is difficult to speak of him without some appearance of exaggeration, for to me, at least, he always appeared to be the most faultless character I ever came in contact with. He was singularly free from pride, conceit, ambition, selfishness, guile, malignity, envy or uncharitableness, and in the whole attitude of his mind to other men—though he was too clear-sighted to overlook mean-

ness, falseness, pretension, or selfishness, and never scrupled to denounce them with strong dislike and indignant scorn—no one could be more open-minded to goodness or nobility of any kind in others, even in those whom on other grounds he disliked. And in the case at least of his friends or intimates, this did not end in mere discernment of what was beautiful and good in them, but was in general carried forward to a rare intensity of affection and sympathy.

When I renewed acquaintance with him, in the manner I have already described. and became very closely intimate, it is hardly necessary to say that the *gaucherie* of the schoolboy had pretty well disappeared. Something, no doubt, of the straightforward *naïveté* and simplicity of youth still clung to him, as it did to the last; but he had now finished his professional studies, had seen something of the world, his character was rapidly forming and becoming fixed; he was acquiring

a certain modest self-confidence; he had even begun to take some place in society, not merely as a pleasant companion, but as a liberal-minded thinker and converser whose ideas and opinions told upon the minds of his friends, and often opened up a new outlook to their thoughts. He had found also a circle of choice friends with whom he habitually associated—among them being Sir George Harvey, the painter; Alexander Logan (afterwards Sheriff of Forfarshire), then just passed advocate, a man of strong sense and intellectual power, great social as well as professional gifts, a warm friend, and possessing the most remarkable power of ready and original humour; D. O. Hill, the landscapist, one of the most generous and enthusiastic of men, whose knowledge of Shakespeare and Scott was greater than that of any man I ever knew; Coventry Dick, a man of learning and fine culture, a master in the philosophy of politics;

# Dr. John Brown

John Stuart Blackie, scholar, humorist, a character with a kindly vanity, but a man of sense and worth and lovableness withal.

Another friend he had, whom I should like to name, John Heugh: of longer standing than any of the others — a hereditary friend, for their fathers were friends. More distinctively a man of action, of practical ability, and exhaustless energy than John Brown, there was yet a strong bond of friendship and sympathy between them. Heugh was a merchant, and had travelled extensively (chiefly in the East); had, like Ulysses, "seen many cities and known many men," but was, at the same time, widely read. The reader will perhaps smile, but I think he was the only man I knew—not specially a literary man — who read the *Faerie Queen* through to the end. He had a true appreciation of much of the best literature as well as of art, was well-informed, largely intelligent, and possessed

of a remarkable power of penetrative observation. With a fine manliness of character there was conjoined a thoroughly unselfish nature, full of generosity, benevolence, and philanthropy. Energetic as he was, his energy was quite as readily expended on others as on himself. Self, indeed, had never much place in his thoughts. All this, with a curious simplicity, openness, and truthfulness of nature, remarkable in a man of much shrewdness and insight, attached his friends to him in a quite unusual degree. In addition to his multiplied and varied private business, he threw much of his energy into politics, into the question of telegraphic cable communication with America, and other great public interests, as well as into not a few private charities and other widely beneficial forms of enterprise, which brought no gain to himself. He loved work for its own sake, and this, with his warm friendship, often led him to undertake not a little where he had no self-interest to

serve. Another point remarkable about him was, on any subject on which he felt himself to be imperfectly informed, the simplicity with which he yielded to the opinion of others whom he assumed to be more knowing than himself. Other men who fail in knowledge are often also those who are the most obstinate in their opinions, and hardest to convince. And where he trusted he never trusted by halves. I regret to say that after making a large fortune he was overtaken by severe disaster in business, which, though felt very keenly, he bore uncomplainingly, and, I might almost say cheerfully. The last years of his life were spent in somewhat broken health in Italy, a country which he knew well and loved, and in 1893 he died there rather suddenly, and was buried high up on a lonely spur of the Apennines.

Peace be to the memory of a true and noble soul! Brave, frank, open-hearted, steadfast, generous, unselfish — a soul

which had, perchance, in its abounding energy, over-weighted itself with too much and too many things, and failed because at last it came up against the impossible.

There were probably a good many other friends whom I did not know, or may have forgotten.

John was now, no doubt, beginning to feel somewhat the responsibilities of his profession, though I confess that they did not at that time appear to weigh very heavily upon him. But beside all, and above all, the common fate of young manhood had overtaken him, in the coming upon the scene of a young girl of rare and dangerous beauty, who might be the making or the marring of one whose mind was so susceptible as his, but on whom, whatever might be the outcome, he had lavished all the wealth of his warmly affectionate nature. So the *toga virilis* was now sitting high upon his shoulders.

On renewing acquaintance with him, I was struck with how entirely he had

passed out of his scholastic training. Seven years before, it seemed as if the promise was that he would develop into a great scholar like his father. But now there was no appearance of either school or college learning having had much direct influence in the formation of his intellectual character. Even it seemed as if his family associations had been left behind. The truth then doubtless was that his mind had an original character of its own, for which his youthful training had formed a useful discipline; and when he got beyond it he at once felt that it had fulfilled its purpose, and his natural faculties were then free to follow their own special bent. Whether he had at that time taken quite heartily to his profession, I am not altogether prepared to say. One or two of its branches he very early declined altogether, and he often expressed a good deal of scepticism as to the reliableness of the ordinary methods of medical practice. It was observable, too, that though he mingled

freely with men of his own profession, his more intimate friendships were not, I think, with medical men, and his talk ever ran more upon poetry, and art, and high thought of various kinds than upon medicine. And though he had doubtless been a faithful student of his art, and was thoroughly well equipped at all points in it—for it was not his way to do by halves what he seriously undertook,—it is yet certain that neither then, nor ever afterwards, did it become the object of that exclusive devotion which it does to many physicians — who are not, by the way, however, the best men in the profession, though the public is apt to think so. For a man can seldom be thoroughly good for any one thing unless he is at the same time good for a good many other things, and it is never well to walk always in a rut. On the whole, it appeared to me that the love of literature and philosophy had at this time thrown their strong spell over him. During his apprenticeship he

had evidently found time to absorb a tolerably wide acquaintance with both Scottish and English philosophy (Berkeley's *Siris* was to the last a special favourite with him); and there were few of the great English poets, even the earliest, special passages of whose works he had not often upon his lips. And of the later men, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Charles Lamb —Hartley Coleridge too—were all taken to his heart. I rather think that the Circulating Library, too, was drawn upon for a good deal of the lighter literature, bad and good, of the day. Light literature, however, is light or the reverse, very much according to the quality of the mind receiving it, and even the very lightest is sufficient to awaken thought enough in the thinking mind. And so, I doubt not, it was with him. Certain it is at least that nothing of marked excellence ever appeared which did not at once attract his attention. *Philip van Artevelde*, for example, was

immediately in his hands, and was thoroughly appreciated. Southey's *Doctor*, too, which came out about this time, greatly interested as well as (he says) "provoked" him. And the *Pickwick Papers* caught him at once, and of course greatly amused him, though his interest, I think, in Dickens very soon waned. Tennyson's two volumes were hardly published before I heard him talking with great admiration of them. George Borrow, also, he was very enthusiastic about. And a novel, now I think forgotten (though, by the way, I saw quite lately some inquiries about its authorship, in *Notes and Queries*), called *Violet, or the Danseuse*, I remember him speaking of as a book of noticeable power. *Punch*, I think, came to him as something like a new tendency in English literature, which continued for a good while in its earlier stages to interest him, but which I rather fancy he began to regard as carried to an extreme. But above all, Thackeray, both as a man

and as an author, almost from the very first captivated all his admiration and all his affection, and I have a strong impression that it was he who, earlier than anyone else in Britain, fully recognised the fine genius and noble nature which lurked under the half-veiled cynical surface of the writings of the author of *Esmond*. Thackeray himself, indeed, seems pretty distinctly to indicate this in his reply to Dr. Brown, thanking him for the little silver statue of Punch, subscribed for at Dr. Brown's suggestion by the eighty half-crowns of Edinburgh men and women, Lord Jeffrey and Sir William Hamilton being two of the "octogint." The whole story is told in Dr. Brown's inimitable way, in the note at the end of his paper on Thackeray's death.

He had a curiously quick way of mastering the contents of a book, which I could never fully understand. It seemed to be almost enough for him to cut open the leaves in order to know all

that was in it, and to form a judgment of its character. And though his thought seemed to be sufficiently matured on whatever he talked about, you seldom saw him, at this time, closely occupied either reading or thinking. He always appeared disengaged and at leisure, rather lounging than closely intent upon anything in particular. And there is a remark of his, in his paper on "Arthur Hallam," which perhaps throws some light on this peculiarity, and in which I almost fancy he must have had a side-glance at himself, because what is told of Hallam describes almost exactly his own ways and habits. One of Hallam's friends gives the following account of his manner of life:— "Outwardly," he says, "I do not think there was anything remarkable in his habits *except an irregularity with regard to times and places of study*, which may seem surprising in one whose progress in so many directions was so eminently great and rapid. *He was commonly to be found*

*in some friend's room, reading or conversing.* I daresay he lost something by this irregularity, but less, perhaps, than one would at first imagine. He might seem to be lounging or only amusing himself, but his mind was always active, and active for good. In fact, his energy and quickness of apprehension did not stand in need of outward aid." Upon this, Dr. Brown remarks—"There is much in this worthy of more extended notice. Such minds as his probably grow best in this way, are best left to themselves, to glide on at their own sweet wills; the stream was too deep and clear, and perhaps too entirely bent on its own errand, to be dealt with or regulated by any art or device." And is not this very much the style of all peculiarly thoughtful intellects? The mind under constraint may be able to make attainments in knowledge. But if fresh thought is to come to it, it must be left a good deal to muse and dream, and look about it. And this was very much

John's way. He took up his knowledge easily and rapidly; but restfulness, and waiting, and leisurely freedom were requisite for the thought that came afterwards, if it was to be worth the dream that brought it. The mere writing, however, seemed in general to come easily from him, and to be very spontaneous—"the first pressure of the grape"—the ready outflow of his nature, of his heart. If there had been any throes at the birth of the thought, they must have been over before he sat down to embody it in words.

I have above expressed some doubt as to whether he had at once taken fully to his profession, and I have said that literature had probably, for the time being, flung its strong spell over him. I recollect, too, once or twice hearing of patients or their friends complaining that he had somewhat neglected them. But after all, the sick man, and especially the sick woman, is apt to be a little exacting—

more especially from the young doctor, who is assumed to have time enough on his hands to attend to the individual case; and the truth very probably was, that if the case was not very serious, he had not then acquired, and indeed never did acquire, the affectation of making more visits than it really needed. Besides, his mere presence in the sickroom was often felt to do more good than any medicine—and in nine cases out of ten it was his visit that was missed, not his prescription. The languor of sickness would rouse itself to eager expectation as the hour of his call approached, and sink away into deeper languor if the usual time passed and the loved face did not appear. And so it continued to the end. But this was not to be set down to professional negligence; and any apparent indifference to his profession is not, therefore, to be made too much of. He had a good many sides to his character, and a somewhat multifarious brain, and it did not neces-

sarily follow that because he was much interested in, or addicted to this, he was by consequence less interested in or attentive to that.

With all his interest in literature, however, he had up to this time written little or nothing, and I rather think that he scarcely had contemplated ever writing anything. He had very little ambition, as I have already said, and could scarcely be called impulsive, did most things in a very leisurely way, and perhaps he was only waiting until he had something worth while to say. There was an essay, I remember, which he intended to write for the Royal Medical Society, which hung long upon his hands, about 1838. Whether it was ever written or not, I cannot tell. His first attempt of which I have any recollection was an article on something which had interested him in the *North British Review*, and which he sent for insertion to one of the newspapers. This must have been about 1844 or 1845.

And the editor, as I very well remember, dealing with it according to his light, mangled it very considerably. I recollect, too, something in a country newspaper on a pamphlet of Syme's. But his first serious effort was the series of articles on pictures which he wrote for Hugh Miller in the *Witness* newspaper in 1846. These, of course, struck everyone as something new in the style of art-criticism, and the reception they obtained no doubt encouraged him to venture upon the article in the *North British Review* on Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, which I rather think was nearly the first marked recognition of Mr. Ruskin as a great power in the literature of art; before that time, according to my recollection, every daw thought it had a right to peck at him. This was followed by his elaborate and very valuable paper on "Locke and Sydenham," which brought compliments and congratulations from many quarters, including a call in Albany Street from Lord Jeffrey—full of

gay cordiality, which gave him and his wife great delight—in April 1849, a few months only before Jeffrey's death.

It is curious to observe how well he wrote even from the first. With most men writing well is a difficult acquisition, and of rather slow growth. But with him it seemed to come at once and to cost no effort. His art-criticism in the *Witness* has much of the ease and freedom of an old practised hand. His style is terse, correct, and with a distinct character of its own; without a superfluous word or an awkward phrase, and marked with a kind of freedom, as if he could afford to play with his subject. Yet, except in letter-writing, I almost doubt if he had seriously put pen to paper before. According to his own account, indeed, but for the accident of Hugh Miller's money coming in, and his wife being "peremptory" with him, he would probably never have troubled printers with his proofs. He had long known, however, what good writing was,

and being a very natural, unaffected, and real person, never saying what he did not mean and clearly feel, good writing, I suppose, came to him by instinct—though at first, he says, in his humorously exaggerative way, "with awful sufferings and difficulty, and much destruction of sleep."

It must have been some time early in 1834 that he had made the acquaintance of Miss Catherine (Καθαρα, the pure, as he was careful to point out to his friends) M'Kay. She was then, I think, fourteen, but he was at once attracted by her very peculiar style of delicate and refined beauty. It was still indeed little more than a girlish beauty, and, except as perhaps indicating a certain calm thoughtful steadfastness of mind, it would perhaps have been unsafe to predicate the style of character or intellect that might underlie the expression. I find, however, in one of his papers a slight loving sketch of a young girl, in which I very distinctly dis-

cover some traits of what she was at that early time. He represents a young lad of seventeen as "prowling about the head of North St. David Street keeping his eye on a certain door, and waiting for Mr. White's famous English class for girls coming out. Presently out rushed four or five girls, wild and laughing; *then came one bounding like a roe:*

*'Such eyes were in her head,*
*And so much grace and power!'*

She was surrounded by the rest, and away they went laughing, *she making them always laugh the more.* Seventeen followed at a safe distance, studying *her small, firm, downright heel.* The girls dropped off one by one, and she was away home by herself, *swift and reserved*—this beautiful girl of thirteen."

She was a native, I believe, of Aberdeen, and had just come with her father's family to settle in Edinburgh. On her mother's side she belonged to a somewhat gifted family, one of whom, John Scott, a brother

of her mother, was well known in the earlier years of the century in the literary circles of London, as editor of the *Champion* newspaper, and afterwards of the *London Magazine*, who fell in a duel arising out of certain articles which appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* about 1819 and onwards. There are references to him, I think, in some of Hazlitt's books; and I have seen a considerable number of long letters to him of the most cordial and intimate kind from Mr. Wordsworth. Some of these have since appeared in the life of the poet by Mr. Knight. Mr. Scott is also spoken of by Lord Brougham as "a writer of great power," and one of Brougham's early speeches at the bar was a defence of him from a Government prosecution for what was then called libel, on account of a strong denunciatory article which he had written in 1810 in a Stamford paper, against the horrible system of flogging in the army, then in full vogue. The article was inserted afterwards in the

*Examiner*, and Government prosecutions were raised against both papers, and, verdicts of guilty having been obtained, heavy penalties were inflicted on the publishers, —penalties which, as Lord Brougham remarks, "may well make us doubt if we now live in the same country and under the same system of laws." The public attention, however, thus drawn to the subject by these vindictive proceedings against Mr. Scott and others, happily had "the effect of bringing all state prosecutions for libel soon afterwards into a degree of discredit which led to their disuse."

John, it is needless to say, soon became a pretty frequent visitor at Miss M'Kay's father's house. And what did he find in the young girl? Well, I daresay not much more than we can easily conceive a clever schoolgirl to be: good at her lessons, dutiful to her parents, going out to an occasional public ball or private dance—for she was then and afterwards

*From a marble bust by*
WILLIAM BRODIE, R.S.A.

*From a pencil sketch by*
MISS MARGARET GLASS.

CATHERINE SCOTT M'KAY.

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fond of dancing and danced well; doing more or less in the novel-reading department; surrounded by young admirers, pretty largely I fancy of the other sex; gay and lively, innocent and happy, as young girlhood ought to be. But he looked, I suppose, for something more in a wife, and suggestions began to be offered for attention to other than social levities and conventional accomplishments. Shakespeare, as I remember, was introduced to her notice; some good historical reading was recommended; Sir James Mackintosh's Life, published about that time, was put in her way, and rather diligently read; Charles Lamb, I happen to know, was not overlooked; very likely Coleridge and Wordsworth betimes, and no doubt a good deal of other literature of a wholesome, invigorating, and elevating kind. Such reading, I rather think, very soon began to tell on her mental progress, and "you cannot think what strong things she sometimes says" was the account he gave of

her remarks on the effect of Shakespeare or someone else upon her thoughts. And so the courtship in this sort of way went on for several years—very quietly, I take it, very sensibly, very pleasantly, without any serious hindrances and without anxious or impetuous passion. In the meantime nothing was said, but much was very soon understood between them. And at length the young girl had grown up to womanhood, the young physician's practice had tolerably increased, and then a walk was taken out by the Ferry Road, the declaration of love was made, and the only objection offered was that it might have been made long before, for she "had been ready to be spoken to four years ago." Some delay, however, was still necessary, and in the meanwhile it was thought proper to consult Mr. Syme, which was done as follows:—

J. B.: 'I have come to ask your advice about something."

Mr. S.: "Oh, indeed. I know what it

is; you are going to be married." The confession having been made, Mr. S.: "Ah! it is all right. And I hope she has not a farthing." His hope, as John said afterwards, as near as possible expressed the fact, for unless it were her clothes, all that she brought with her on her marriage was two or three odd volumes of the *Spectator*. "You'll observe," he remarked to me, "that all good women love the *Spectator*."

The marriage took place on the 4th of June 1840, the bridegroom being twenty-nine and the bride twenty, or, I rather think, twenty-one. Young as she was, however, she was full of good sense, good feeling, good moral and religious principle, and I have no reason to think that she was not also a good manager of her household affairs. Some attention to economy, indeed, was necessary, as the doctor's fees were not as yet super-abundant; and if my recollection serves me aright there was some misconduct of

an outsider, which produced considerable pecuniary embarrassment, anxiety, and unhappiness to the young couple almost immediately after their marriage. They were, however, completely happy in each other. Both he and she were sufficiently domestic in their habits; their social circle was not as yet very large, and she was free from vanity, love of dress, or extravagance of any kind; and although not averse to a little occasional gaiety, as was natural to a young girl, as she still was, yet all was kept in very distinct moderation, even to a degree rather remarkable in one who had been accustomed to not a little admiration for her beauty and grace. Her manners were entirely ladylike, she had good social tact, her husband's friends found themselves at home in her house, and, without being highly educated or brilliant in conversation, she was decidedly intelligent. She read, I think somewhat extensively, was a rather particularly good French scholar, and very soon proved

herself able to enter fully into her husband's literary tastes and pursuits, and to be in accord with his special ideas and opinions. One marked feature in her character was her truthfulness and honesty. A lady a good deal younger than herself, but who knew her very well, said to me not long ago, "I always liked her, she was so honest." She never pretended to like anything or any person that she did not really care for, and I rather suspect that she did not always scruple to show her impatience with those whom she disliked, rather plainly and bluntly; and, to tell the truth, I fear it must be said that she was not a universal favourite, for plain honesty is not exactly to be called a social virtue, and it is only a small minority to whom "the mixture of a lie doth *not* ever add pleasure." And with all her good qualities she was not quite destitute of a certain spice of what may be called temper, and her husband once allowed to me that even to him there was now and then a little

outbreak, but he characteristically added —good, kind, loving soul as he was—that this was "rather an advantage," because she was so sorry afterwards and so kind and affectionate to make up for it. She was fond of the society of clever men, or men of genius, and was generally able to meet them upon their own ground and be entirely at home with them. And I have even heard that Miss Gossip had her little prattle and turning up of the eyes about this, if Catherine happened to be seen in the street in such company.

Thackeray and she were great friends, and "Madam" is always affectionately referred to in his letters to her husband after his visit to Edinburgh. "A hundred good wishes to Madam, and I wish I was in the carriage taking a drive with her," is his salutation in a letter now lying before me. "Why did you," she once rather impetuously said to him—"Why did you make Esmond marry that old woman?" "My dear lady," was his answer, "it was not I

who married them. They married themselves,"—a hint, I suppose, that a novelist's characters sometimes obtain the mastery over him, and get into a position which compels him to dispose of them in a way he would not of himself have chosen to do. Having said thus much, it is proper to add that among others than her husband's, her real, her inner friends were always the good and true of her own sex. In a letter mentioning the death of one of her aunts—a very excellent, clever, and intelligent woman—Dr. Brown says: "She and Kitty were great friends; they thoroughly understood each other." And this was quite a typical case. "Understood each other." Yes, that is it. "Kitty" was a little apt to be *not* understood.

I do not know that it is necessary to say more of the lady he had chosen for a life-companion, than to recall what he has himself said of her in one of his papers:—

"The *Sine Quâ Non* who will not be pleased at being spoken of, is such an

one as that vain-glorious and chivalrous Ulric von Hütten — the Reformation's man of wit, and of the world and of the sword, who slew Monkery with the wild laughter of his *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum*—had in his mind when he wrote thus to his friend Fredericus Piscator (Mr. Fred. Fisher) on the 19th May 1519, "*Da mihi uxorem, Frederice, et ut scias qualem, venustam, adolescentulam, probe educatam, hilarem, verecundam, patientem.*" *Qualem*, he lets Frederic understand in the sentence preceding, is one *quâcum ludam, quâ jocos conferam, amœniores et leviusculas fabulas misceam, ubi solicitudinis aciem obtundam curarum æstus mitigem.* And if you would know more of the *Sine Quâ Non*, and in English, for the world is dead to Latin now, you will find her name and nature in Shakespeare's words when King Henry the Eighth says, "Go thy ways."

So, on turning to Henry VIII., Act ii. Scene 4, we find as follows:—

"Go thy ways, *Kate*:
That man i' the world who shall report he has
A better wife, let him in nought be trusted
For speaking false in that: Thou art alone,
If thy rare qualities, sweet gentleness,
Thy meekness saint-like, wife-like government—
Obeying in commanding,—and thy parts
Sovereign and pious else, could speak thee out."

## *Note by the Editor.*

The MS. of the Life ends here. The Editor feels that it is better far to leave the MS. as it is, just as the pen fell from the hands of the Biographer, who loved his friend and knew him as perhaps no one else did, rather than endeavour to bring it down to the date of Dr. John Brown's death. The Editor has the less hesitation in presenting the MS. as it stands, inasmuch as the Biographer has himself dealt in the early part of the MS. with all the outstanding dates in Dr. John Brown's Life. There are, moreover, in the Biographer's Criticism and Appreciation of Dr. Brown's literary work, which forms the second

part of the MS., so many biographical touches, that there would be little left to tell in a continuation of the MS.; and the Editor shrinks from incurring the risk of spoiling by any words or additions of his own the exquisite tribute left by John Taylor Brown to the memory of his beloved friend.

# Part II.

## DR. JOHN BROWN'S LITERARY WORK.

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## THE *HORÆ SUBSECIVÆ* AS A WHOLE.

It is difficult to characterise the *Horæ Subsecivæ* as a whole. They range over a great variety of topics, and vary not a little in tone and manner of treatment. But apart from this, there are some incidental points in them which cannot fail to strike the reader, and make him feel the charm at once of a remarkable intellect and of a very attractive personality in the writer. We discover at once that he is full of a keen but quiet and measured enthusiasm, dwelling with delight on all that is beautiful and true, and best and greatest, either in human character or in inanimate nature. You recognise in him also a man of unfailing sense and intelligence, with a peculiar

power of insight—a widely-read man, an accurate thinker, and possessing what I would call an original gift of style. It is curious how he throws his whole nature into his literary work — not merely his intellect, as most men do, but his tastes, his loves, his whims, his hobbies, and the pervading flavour of his humour. Perhaps I might say that the strong personal element in the book, if not to be regarded as its main characteristic, is that which first attracts the attention. It swarms with characters like a novel or a drama, — and almost everyone done to the life, and everyone full of interest. We have, for example, Dr. Andrew Combe; Dr. Henry Marshall, the soldier's friend, a very excellent and singularly interesting man—interesting both in himself and for the wonderful work he did; the Gideon-Gray types of doctors: Edward Forbes, Samuel Brown, George Wilson, Dr. John Scott and his son—the latter particularly charming with his

wonderful memory and his "minimum of original sin"; Mr. Syme, Sir Robert Christison, the elder Dr. Brown, his father; Dr. Chalmers, the Laird of Stoneywood, and his noble, heroic wife; the Black Dwarf (fuller and truer, more inward than even Sir Walter's delineation of him); Ailie in *Rab and his Friends*, and James, her husband; Arthur Hallam (who in goodness and intellect, depth of thought and beauty of character, might almost stand for a picture of John himself); Alexander Logan, the warm and very true, though sometimes capricious friend, the most original of humorists and pleasantest of companions, and withal a man of wide reading (especially in history) and wide intelligence, sense and shrewdness, a good and sound lawyer, a clever pleader, and an excellent judge (he was Sheriff of Forfarshire),—I have heard that no legal decision of his was ever reversed in any of the higher courts,—and gifted with a peculiar form of genius

which, however, never came fully to a head; Marjorie Fleming (the wondrous child); Miss Stirling Graham (the matchless mystifier); Jeems the doorkeeper; "Uncle Johnston"; and the Duke of Athole (the last quite unequalled, as I think, in character-drawing),—Clarendon himself could not have done it, and yet how curiously, one would have thought, out of the ordinary current of the author's sympathies, if any could be so, and yet how real, how vivid, how true in every line! But they are endless, and every one distinct and distinctive and distinguished. I have said that they swarm throughout the book. They start up everywhere, in the most unexpected way—in philosophical disquisition, in out-of-the-way story, in apt quotation, in bits of song or ballad lore, in reminiscences of his own life. Some of these men and women had, I doubt not, prickles on them, but he has no unkind word to say of any. They may in some

cases have had another side than that he tells of; but it was always true, what he tells of them, none the less. If there were faults, they are rather hinted at as setting off the excellences, than expressed. There is a sundial I have heard of, somewhere in Italy, with this inscription on it: *Horas non numero nisi serenas*, and John was just such a dial.[1]

[1] It is curious to note the width of his sympathies and his insights. Even his dogs are to him as full of character as his men and women; one of them he speaks of as *a lady*. And look at that story he tells, at the end of his paper on the "Black Dwarf," of Willie Nicholson, the Galloway poet, the author of the ballad of the *Brownie of Blednoch*. *Nihil humanum ab illo alienum.* See how he was touched by all the reckless abandon of that poor lost child of genius. One is half inclined to ask what fine restraining force it was which, with all the quick and strong susceptibilities of his own nature, kept him from being just such a one as the author of the *Brownie of Blednoch*. Notice, too, his theory of the popular legend of the Brownie. "I have often thought," he says, "that he must have been some sad, misshapen creature as the Black Dwarf: strong, willing, and forlorn, conscious of his hideous, forbidding look, and ready to purchase affection at any cost of

Even in a serious philosophical disquisition like the paper on "Locke and Sydenham," sketches of character come in, as it were, inevitably. Before he wrote about these two great men, what did we know, or what ideas had we, of their personal characters, of their manner of life as they moved among other men? They were not to us personalities at all. Does the reader remember the account given by Hazlitt of a famous evening at Charles Lamb's house, when he and his friends talked far on into the evening "of persons one would wish to have seen"? Curiously enough, one of the guests suggested the calling up of Mr. Locke, "as one of the greatest names in English literature." But Lamb at once rejected him quite impatiently, saying that "he was not a person — not a person you know. He was simply the Essay on the Human Understanding," which, said Lamb, "we

labours, with a kindly heart and a longing for human sympathy and intercourse."

have to this day." And the same thing might have been said of Sydenham, who was shut up in his Latin books which nobody read, and of whom no one knew more than that he had been called "the prince of English physicians," and that Boerhaave always took his hat off when he had occasion to mention him in lecturing. But in Dr. John Brown's paper both Locke and Sydenham do become "persons" whom we would not only "wish to have seen," but to have met and talked with:—Locke in particular, no longer, as we are apt to fancy him, a thoughtful recluse, shadowy, shadowless, and uninteresting—solemnly expounding the philosophy of mind, or the principles of government, or the great doctrine of religious toleration; but a shrewd, knowing, all-alive man of the world, so worldly-wise as to have been engaged to choose, and actually choosing, a wife for the young Lord Shaftesbury; gifted with a gay, sharp, sarcastic, incisive wit and a

pawky humour[1]— chaffing Dr. Mapletoft, for instance, on his love affair, longing for an opportunity of "throwing an old shoe after him," in order that he might succeed him as Gresham lecturer; sitting as a student at Oxford, full of student-like mischief, impatient, noisy and turbulent at the German Rosicrucian's chemistry lecture, blurting out his not inaudible disdain and disgust at the nonsensical talk about the transmutation of metals, the elixir of life, and the other secrets of nature known only to the lecturer himself and his quackish compeers — the disgust being no doubt sharpened in Locke's mind by the thought that the fees for the course (as Dr. Brown is careful to tell us) were three pounds, one-half paid in advance. And then afterwards settled at Oxford in the full

[1] Anything more full of quiet fun, and the real sense of the ludicrous, than Locke's account of the ceremony of capping a doctor at Montpelier, it would be difficult to come across.

and active practice of medicine (a fact apparently hitherto unknown), in close intimacy with Sydenham, and co-operating with him in denouncing the hypothetising methods of the common run of the medical practitioners of the time; writing "ludicrous, sarcastic, and truly witty letters" on medical subjects, so plainspoken that Dr. Furley (in whose possession they were) declined giving them to the public "in these days of absurd refinement"—drawing from Dr. Brown the remark that "we would gladly forswear our refinement to have a sight of them, as anything that Locke thought worth writing down about anything, is likely to be worth reading"; and withal, so accomplished a physician that Sydenham congratulates himself on the trustworthiness of some of his own methods, on the ground that they were approved of by Locke, whom he speaks of as *ingenium, judiciumque acre et subactum.* And finally, so widespread was his fame

as a skilful practitioner, that his medical reputation had even extended to Scotland, some letters of his being still in existence to the celebrated Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, who had consulted him on the health of his brother's wife, which, according to Dr. Brown, "for unencumbered good sense, rational trust in nature's *vis medicatrix*, and wholesome fear of polypharmacy and the *nimia diligentia* of his time, might have been written by Dr. Andrew Combe or Sir James Clarke"; and then the crowning point in his intellectual character is given in the words, that "he knew something of everything that could be useful to mankind."

And Sydenham too, how vividly is he also brought before us in Dr. Brown's paper!—so different in temper from Locke, but with an intellect quite as large and free; on the one hand, gentle, sweet-natured, full of piety towards God, unperturbed by all the bitter persecution to which he was exposed from the

ignorant hypothetising doctors of that age, yet all the while calmly valiant and defiant for the truth, going on his way with quiet determination and energy, "collecting and arranging his *visa*, before settling his *cogitata*," firm in his faith in the inductive method as the only true way of either advancing medical science or successfully practising his art, "making knowledge a means, not an end," and ever regarding medicine as what it really is, in the main observational.

Referring to both Locke and Sydenham, Dr. Brown says, "It would not be easy to overestimate our obligations as a nation to these two men, in regard to all that is involved in the promotion of health of body and soundness of mind." And in summing up Sydenham's beautiful character, he uses these fine, tender words:— "Human life was to him a sacred, a divine, as well as a curious thing, and he seems to have possessed through life, in rare acuteness, that sense of the value of

what was at stake, of the perilous material he had to work in, and that gentleness and compassion for his suffering fellowmen, without which no man—be his intellect ever so transcendent, his learning ever so vast, his industry ever so accurate and inappeasable—need hope to be a great physician, much less a virtuous and honest man."

The paper on Locke and Sydenham is followed up by several others bearing a good deal on the same subject of practical medicine. They need not perhaps be more particularly noticed here, further than to say that they seem to me to be worthy of careful study, more especially by young medical men, and indeed so full of good thought of much wider application than to medicine, that it would be hard to say who might not study them with advantage.

And here I should like, if I could, to bring out, both to my own mind and to that of my reader, a more or less distinct

conception of what constitute the special character, the special value, and I think I may add the special charm, of Dr. Brown's writings. They have now, in their collected form, been rather more than thirty years in the hands of the public, and, unlike so much of the literature of the time, they are still sought for and still extensively read; and if I may judge from the frequent references made to him both in the periodical press and elsewhere, there is that kind of interest in his personality which is distinctively derivable from the character of his writings. Something of this is no doubt due to his being thought of merely as the author of *Rab and his Friends*, *Marjorie Fleming*, the *Jacobite Family*, and one or two others of his slighter though exquisite sketches. But it is very questionable if his reputation could have lasted so long, or could have gained that degree of solidity which I apprehend it has, had there not been some backbone of substantial wisdom, goodness, value, and

worth, and a penetrating insight of some kind, in his writing. He modestly calls his books *Horæ Subsecivæ*, but they are something very different from the mere indolent literary exercitations, with which we are all familiar, of a man's idle hours. They are not in any proper sense of the words the produce of the relaxed mind, for they are full of a very genuine power, and his thought is that which is specially derived from action and from practice—not from mere observation from without, and not from speculative theorising. But with John the thought is always, I think, securely founded on an intimate acquaintance with the best philosophy. It is indeed rather remarkable how wide his reading in philosophical literature had been, and how just his thought always is. And I am somewhat at a loss to discover (considering that his life of action commenced in his apprenticeship with Syme, within a few months of his leaving school) when and how all his good philosophical

training and depth of literary culture was obtained. I can only conclude that his father, at a very early period of his student life, directed his attention to the subject, either for its own sake, or as intimately bearing on the study of physic. The elder Dr. Brown, I know, had himself prosecuted philosophical study very keenly early in life, and even continued to do so to the last. So eager, indeed, was his interest in it, that when he was dying he read through the whole of David Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature*—a curious fact this, and to me rather touching. Was the good old man trying to found upon Hume's attenuated ideas some conjectural notion and conception of what might be the sort of cognition he would have of persons and things in the world of disembodied spirits—into which he was about to enter? He spoke of Hume's book with great admiration, as a miracle of intellectual and literary power for a man of twenty-eight, and as containing the essence

of all that was best in the philosophy of mind. "It is all there," he said, "if you will only think it out."

I have therefore a strong impression that a great deal of Dr. John's reading in philosophy went on alongside of his medical studies while serving his apprenticeship under Mr. Syme. I recollect that he took a very particular interest in Sir William Hamilton's candidature for the chair of logic and metaphysics in the University, and that he read with particular zest his article on "Reid and Brown," in the *Edinburgh Review*. Sir William's clinching dilemma with which he closed his long and crushing criticism of Dr. Thomas Brown: "Dualism or Nihilism, choose your horn," was often recalled by him with a hearty laugh. Some years later, I can also recall that he was much taken with the very excellent *Dictionnaire des Sciences Philosophiques*, published at Paris between 1844 and 1850. All this seems to point very clearly to the fact

that metaphysical studies had not been taken up lightly, but must have occupied his mind for a long series of years, and been a subject of close and earnest study from a very early period of his life.

What then are the special characteristics, and what the value, of the thought which resulted from this or from whatever other training his mind had received? In answer I would say that there is a curious combination of great powers of thinking, very varied points of interest, and a singular personal charm in whatever he has written.

1. In the first place, whatever he writes about is what he thoroughly knows, and more especially what he knows as matter either of his own practical experience and observation, or of his own thorough thinking out. I might almost say that he speaks because he knows, and that it is all the result of a fine and true insight. It is also something which his mind is, and has long been, full of—the inevitable outcome

of a teeming mind. I need hardly add that it is the outcome not only of a strong, clear, and penetrating intellect, but an intellect of remarkable soundness—a rectitude both intellectual and moral—what Arnauld, as quoted by Dr. Brown himself, called *droiture de l'âme.* There are words of his own in reference to someone else, which very well describe it: "a sober-minded, sound-minded, well-balanced mind, with genius subject to his judgment, and having genius and judgment to begin with."

2. The style of his writing is unstudied and perfectly unaffected, with a pleasant occasional touch of almost childlike *naïveté.* I think I might say that there is little or nothing of the formal or professional author in him. Sometimes it seems as if he were merely speaking to himself, and sometimes almost as if he were putting himself alongside of his reader and speaking directly to him—entering into conversation with him, as it were. It has, in fact,

much of the character of good talk, and one feels always at home with him—there is a distinguishing mark of sense, sincerity, and earnestness in all his writing. It is almost needless to add that one special characteristic is, that a pleasant vein of quiet but very true humour runs through it, breaking out every now and then with a bright and clear sparkle.

3. His work, while full of independent thought, shows at the same time the result of very various and extensive reading—not reading got up for the occasion, but rather such as has wrought itself into the warp and woof of his mind; and one incidental outcome of this is the curious felicity with which he is always ready, on fitting occasion, with a telling word or phrase or felicitous quotation caught up in his reading, to give point to his utterance—to support or illustrate his opinion or confirm his statement. No pat or forcible or especially felicitous word or sentence, indeed, seemed ever to escape

him.[1] Prose or poetry, old song or ballad, classical author, puritan religionist, or Patristic theologian (St. Augustine comes up once and again), Elizabethan drama or modern poet, quaint characteristic Scottish story or expression—all con-

[1] One quotation which he seems to have been fond of, as it occurs again and again in his writings, the reader may perhaps be warned not to look for in any classical author. It was taken from an old monument in the church of St. Just in Cornwall, situated in a quiet sequestered spot on the shore of Falmouth Harbour. "*Heu nimium brevis ævi decus et desiderium.*" The whole inscription has a curiously quaint pathos which may perhaps excuse it being given at length:—

"Ad pedem hujus marmoris quod superest jacet Honoria filia unigenita Ricardi Jack generosi et Honoriæ conjugis. Propius etiam inhumantur corpora duorum filiorum anonymorum de quibus si vixisse dicimus—dicimus omnia—Sed Honoria! heu nimium brevis ævi decus et desiderium Honoria fuit. Obiit annos nata sedecim—decimo nono Novembris, An. Dom. 1704."

One wonders if the touching Latin words had ever before recalled the thought of poor little Honoria to anyone else during the two hundred years she has been in her grave in the chancel of the church of remote, quiet, and lonely St. Just.

tribute their quota, and never without effect.

4. It will not escape notice that while a good deal of original and unconventional opinion occurs throughout his writings, no small portion of it is also, to use a parliamentary word, distinctly contentious; yet I do not think that he can be justly accused of anywhere indulging in what may be called fads or crotchets. On the contrary, it seems to me that his thought is always characterised not only by sound judgment, but by a certain breadth which appears in this, that its principle is distinctly extensible to a wide range of other subjects besides that to which he specially applies it. This feature of it, however, I have already, I think, sufficiently illustrated. It is what John Stuart Mill calls the "Logic of Art."

5. There is very distinct purpose in all his writing. It is never writing for writing's sake, and, with all its literary excellence, it has something in it quite

apart from a mere literary character. I have some idea that this, though so prominently the case, has been rather lost sight of.

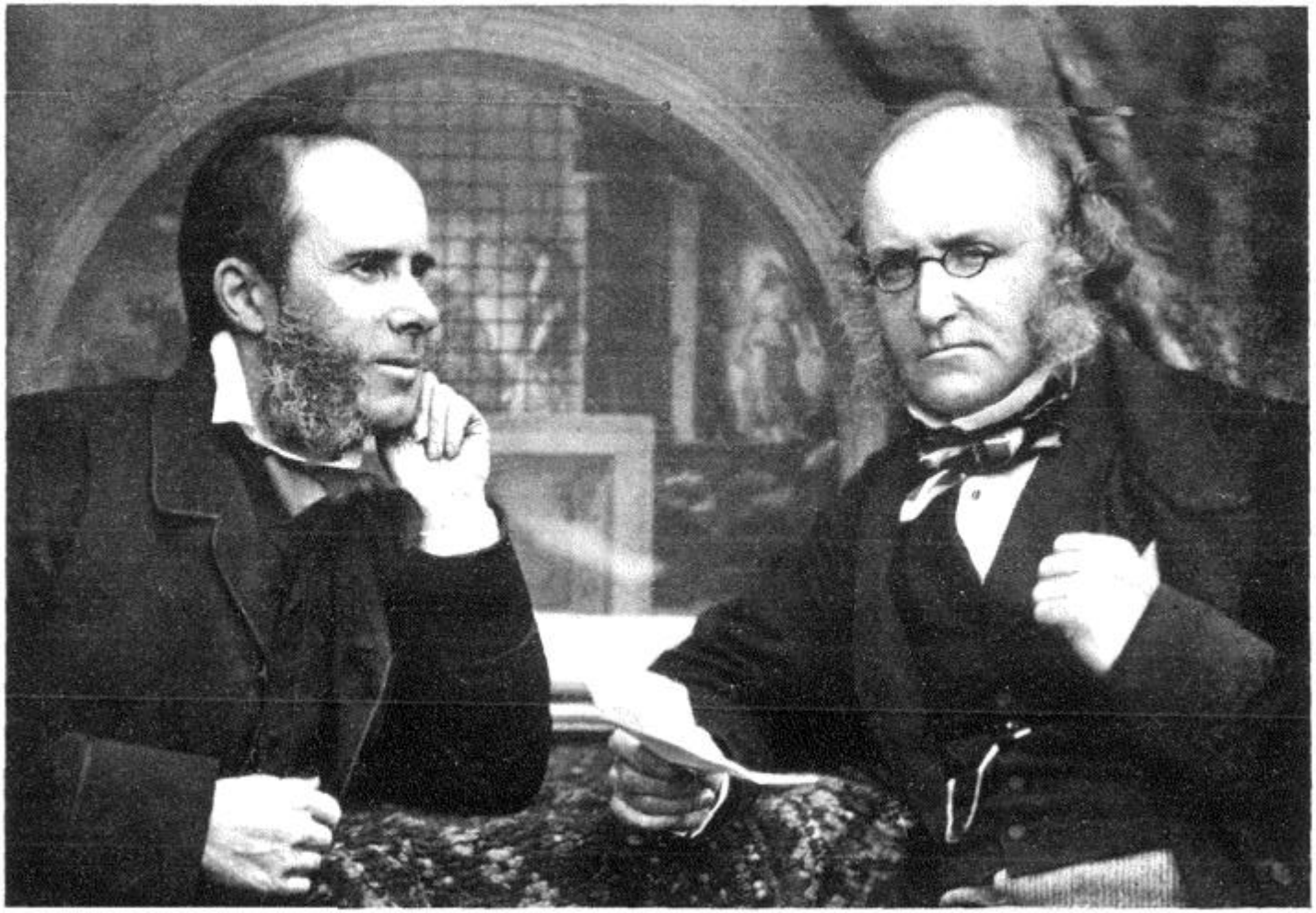
I would be inclined to say that the prevailing character of his writing is didactic, not obtrusively didactic, yet thoughtfully and earnestly didactic. It may be said of him as Mr. Thackeray said of himself, that he set himself to preach to mankind. He discusses in a fine spirit of philosophical criticism the whole circle of subjects which bear upon the practice of medicine—the training of the medical man, the methods of thought, the style of observation, of inquiry and investigation, which best conduce to perfect skill and success in the art of healing; the ethics of medicine, too, and, in other words, the spirit in which the profession should be pursued—all these from the points of view of an experienced practical physician, and, as I have already remarked, are treated with a certain breadth of thought and intelligence which imparts to them an

interest to other than medical men, and suggests much which is equally applicable to other professions and other spheres of active life, and even to inquirers in totally different spheres of investigation. I know of no book in which this whole subject is so pleasantly and effectively treated, with such justness of thought, such vivid lucidity, and such delightful fulness of apt and humorous illustration.

6. It is the writing of a man whose mind was remarkably open to all fine influence—to poetry, to pictorial art, to religious feeling, to whatever is beautiful or great or interesting in human character or human thought. Whatever was especially excellent in literature, whether imaginative, philosophical, or deep-thoughted in any form, never failed to attract his admiration; and in judging of it, his insight is always strikingly acute and true and immediate, as if he saw it all with his bodily eyes. The instinct both of truth and beauty was peculiarly strong in him—

I should say, native,—deeply inwrought in his original nature.

7. They are curiously full of a singularly broad and generous culture. One gathers from them that the author was in his inner and essential nature a happy man. He is playful, humorous, just-minded, pure-minded, full of kindness and benevolence, and much else that should make him to be at peace with himself and with all the world. Perhaps we may know from other sources that there were counteracting elements to all this, and that there was also much sadness in his life. But I am speaking of what appears in his writings, and from these it is manifest enough that whatever the actual result and reality on the whole may have been, there was at least in the background of his mind a source and supply of cheer to enable him to struggle against whatever obstruction it might meet with, and to "still bear up and steer right onward."



JOHN TAYLOR BROWN. DR JOHN BROWN.

*From a photograph by A M'Glashan, Edinburgh, 1860.*

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## "LOCKE AND SYDENHAM."

As I have been led to mention the paper on Locke and Sydenham, I may state that it first appeared in the *North British Review* for April 1849; and though I have an idea that its value has never been adequately recognised, it has always appeared to me a very finished piece of authorship, both as to style and contents—a singularly valuable bit of thinking. It seems to me, indeed, to exhibit in a remarkable manner both the fineness of the author's intelligence and his decided power as a thinker. And this at least is manifest in it, that his thought is firmly founded on a wide general acquaintance with the best philosophy. It exhibits, too, some features which did not elsewhere appear in his writing, and which were not

exactly characteristic of the usual habit of his mind. It was obviously, for instance, the result of very considerable elaboration, and of no small amount of literary research, as well as of philosophical thought. Every source, whether printed or MS., likely to afford information in regard to Locke and Sydenham, seems to have been traced out and examined. Even the British Museum was had recourse to; and I distinctly remember that his friend the first Lord Dunfermline was engaged to get from Lord Lovelace any letters or diaries of Locke which might have come down to him from his ancestor the Lord Chancellor King, to whom Locke's papers were bequeathed. Lord Grenville's very rare, half-forgotten, but very valuable pamphlet on Locke was somehow ferreted out; old Aubray and Anthony à Wood were consulted; Dr. Furley's curious privately printed volume of letters was got access to; Locke's letters here and there and everywhere were made available.

And the result was a distinct accession of new facts and important corrections of previous errors in the lives both of Locke and Sydenham.

What, however, constitutes the special value of the paper is less what he tells of the life and character of Locke and Sydenham, than that it opens up, if I mistake not, a vein of thought which, almost from Lord Bacon's time, has been too much lost sight of both in philosophy and in medicine, but is applicable to a much wider extent than to these—indeed, to almost every branch of knowledge which tends towards practice, or even in many cases to the full establishment of some of the most subtle and recondite branches of truth. It may be described not inaccurately, I think, as the method of investigating such truth as does not lend itself easily to direct observation, but is only cognisable through its practical results. It is the logic of practice. I have an idea that the subject had been long meditated

by him, and I remember, many years before he had any thought of authorship to the extent he afterwards followed out, that he spoke to me of a desire he had long entertained of writing something on what I think he called the logic of medical practice. What he especially contends for is, that the scientific knowledge of medicine is not that which is chiefly or at least most directly available in the practice of medicine, and that the scientific habit of mind is even positively adverse to the practical ends of medicine. The scientific mind, he remarks, "passes rapidly and often passionately from the particular to the general"—and there finds its end; whereas the practical mind dwells more especially on the particulars of each individual case with which it has to deal. And this because the phenomena of disease are so endlessly diversified that scarcely any two cases of even the same disease are ever exactly alike. There are conjunct, compound, and even opposing

causes generally at work wherever disease obtains; and every different case, therefore, requires to be watched and observed as special to itself, and so possibly requiring some difference in its treatment. A man, for example, may exhibit all the symptoms of disease of the stomach, and yet the root of the disease may not be in the stomach at all, but in the brain, as in the remarkable case mentioned by Dr. Brown, which puzzled all the other physicians, but on which Dr. Abercrombie was called in, and was able at once to pronounce upon the real character of the ailment.

What is especially required in medical practice, therefore, is, as he points out, a faculty of close, patient, and minute observation, together with the exercise of what is partly a natural gift and partly acquirable by long experience, a peculiar judgment and instinctive sagacity upon the particular symptoms of the case in hand. And the office of the physician is often simply

to watch the progress of the disease to see what course the *vis medicatrix* takes, and then, by throwing together the elements of judgment thus obtained, to act upon what seems to him the most likely conclusion. The practical physician, in short, ought to have what Dr. Brown, quoting from Richard Baxter, calls "a naturally searching and conjecturing turn of mind" —conjecturing in a good sense, not a mere reckless jumping to a conclusion. This then is something distinctly different from science in the usual sense of that word, and it may even be a question whether it does not belong to a higher order of mind than the scientific mind, which is not unfrequently very wooden and mechanical in its style of operation, lingering among the facts which most readily attract observation, and making no efficient attempt either to understand their meaning, or even to ascertain if facts, the most material to the purpose, have not escaped notice. Medicine, as Dr. Brown reminds his

readers, is not an exact but a tentative science; and in order to complete success in it, something of the nature of genius may be requisite—a mind possessed of what may be called a sort of subtle affinity to truth, and so justifying the remark of Hartley Coleridge, that there is a great deal of what is mysterious in whatever is practical.

In all this it will be readily understood that there is no attempt to disparage the scientific knowledge of medicine, but only a caution offered against the prevalent insistency of making science all in all—and this, both to the exclusion of what ought always to go hand in hand with science, and in practice is even more essential to the medical practitioner, and in point of fact is really a stricter science, proceeding as it does from a finer and more delicate scientific spirit. All this was long ago remarked by Lord Bacon, who attributed the little progress made in medicine from the time of Hippocrates, to the dis-

continuance of the ancient and serious diligence of that great master in medicine —the ἀκρίβεια or nicety of observation by which "the divine old man of Cos" achieved so much; and it is curious to find that it has been so much lost sight of in later times. All that Dr. Brown says on this point is full of very delicate and discriminating criticism and philosophy.

I have said that the principle of investigation which Dr. Brown here discusses is applicable to a good deal else than to medicine, and there is in particular one subject, intimately connected with a certain feature of Sydenham's character, to which it seems to me to have a special applicability; and though it may be somewhat of a digression, I am tempted by the obvious interest and importance of the subject to advert to it. Dr. Brown, it will be observed, dwells a good deal on the great physician's devout habit of mind, and on his constant recognition, in the midst of the known, of a greater, an

infinite, a divine unknown; and it occurs to me that something of this may have been due to his having applied to Christianity the same method of investigating truth that he followed in his medical practice.

Christianity, like medicine, is a tentative branch of science. The medical man, when a difficult case is submitted to him, cannot always or at once form a judgment as to its real character. The symptoms may point in different directions, and he therefore first of all carefully observes their character, and then, putting them together as best he can, forms by means of his own judgment and sagacity, his conclusion, and acts upon it. So in Christianity the student can find no formal or absolute proof of the truth of the Gospel history; he can only ascertain with a certain probability the credibility of the witnesses, and the consistency of the facts which they record. This, indeed, is all that can be done in regard to any historical facts of a long past time. But

he is able so far to assume their truth as to act upon his belief. When he finds, then, that Christ, though represented as in the form of a man, was yet absolutely free from every taint of sin; that He also possessed a power over all nature, being able to control the winds and waves of a stormy sea, to heal all disease and infirmity with a touch, and even to raise the dead to life again; that, being full of benignity and love to all men, He exercised all this power in behalf of all who came to Him for that healing; and that He Himself, after being put to a cruel death, rose to life again, and was caught away from human eyes, leaving this promise behind Him:—"Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world,"—the inference becomes inevitable that His nature was Divine, and that though now unseen, He is still accessible, as of old in Palestine, and that all may still apply to Him—not indeed for the cure of their bodily diseases, for His mission

had nothing whatever to do with the effecting of any change in the material order of nature, but simply to exhibit an outward manifestation of the manner of His working upon the human soul; but that for the healing of their spiritual defects and disorders they shall not apply in vain.

The conclusion which I come to, then, is that Sydenham in his study of the New Testament acted upon it just as he did in his practice of medicine; and that, scientific man though he was, he did not, like some scientific men of the present day (and others, indeed, who are not at all scientific), summarily dismiss the subject from his mind with a contemptuous declaration that he did not believe in the supernatural, but that he carefully and devoutly pondered the subject in his mind, and at length, after a time, found that his soul was subjugated by the intelligence it had brought him—that his heart was moved with love to that great though unseen One, and that

as he read and thought and prayed for help in his need, his natural selfism, his worldly spirit, his tendency to sin, were gradually abated and promised in time to fade away, and the unseen, the future, the spiritual, the eternal, the divine, ruled his mind just as the present, the material, sense and self had previously done.

It is worth while to observe that the peculiar style and form of the Gospels exactly correspond with what we should expect them to be, if the method of belief I have attempted to describe had been distinctly in the minds of their authors, and specially kept in view by them, as that which was best adapted to produce the full effects of faith. They tell the story of the most remarkable series of events that ever took place in this world. But they tell it without the smallest indication of emotion. The facts are set down in the most bare, level, cold, and fragmentary manner, and the reader is left to himself to draw his own conclusions

from them, and to be touched and moved by the thoughts and feelings, which inevitably arise in his breast while he contemplates them. And is not this exactly what should be? If we are to be truly and deeply impressed, we must not have the impression thrust upon us from without by others,—by fervours of eloquence, sensational writing, or hortatory importunity. We must be left to ourselves, to the active effort of our own minds —in meditative thought upon the facts simply as these are set down. Is it not so in the teaching of nature? The landscape never tells us of its own beauty. It lies quiet and serene, and it is only when we think about it, and our sensibilities are awakened, that we discover how beautiful it is. The stars are the grandest objects in nature, but look, how silent they are! They only shine in their own place, in their immeasurable remoteness, and leave mankind to themselves to learn the lesson they teach. And so in the Gospel—if we

are to be touched to the quick—to be pierced to the heart—that must remain with ourselves. We must turn our mind inward for the awakening power—and this, rather in the silent chamber than in the revival meeting or through the turgid eloquence of some modern "Life of Christ," which tries to supply the fancied defects of the Gospels by realistic and emotional depicturings. The excitement manufactured without, speedily dies away of itself. That which is permanent must originate within us. The wise word of the great Apostle was: "*Work out your own salvation.*"

There is another subject which I have no doubt was intimately connected in Dr. Brown's mind with the views set forth in his paper on "Locke and Sydenham," on which they have unquestionably a very special bearing. I refer to his concurrence with Adam Smith, so strongly expressed in the paper at the end of the first volume of the *Horæ*, that all licences and degrees in medicine ought to be done

away with—the public being, as he held, just as able to judge of the competence of their doctor as of their tailor or carpenter. And if the quality of a physician depends so much more on his practical sense, sagacity, and intuitive insight than on an intimate knowledge of all branches of science, it seems a legitimate inference that a medical degree can be of little value as a security against quackery—the quack being just as likely to be found within the regular profession as outside of it. I suspect this is hardly as yet an opinion which has been generally assented to; it is not within my province to express any opinion on the subject. At the same time, there are strong indications that the question is one which will require to be seriously dealt with ere long. The practical evils connected with the present system of scientific examinations preliminary to a medical degree, are now unquestionably very extensively felt by those who have had most experience with

the subject. How far Dr. Brown's opinion may have been founded on the peculiar idiosyncrasy of his intellectual character may of course be a question not easy to determine. I have already said that his mind was rather intuitive than rationalistic; and this, in one who I used to think was apt to be somewhat impatient at the minute definitions and classifications of science, would naturally predispose him to, it may be, an undue disparagement of what had only inferior influence in the determination of his own thoughts. On the whole, then, the question may fairly claim to be an open one. Medicine as a science and medicine as an art, as Dr. Brown has well pointed out, are two different things, and belong so much to two different orders of mind that excellence in the one is seldom connected with excellence in the other. Harvey, the great discoverer of the circulation of the blood, was never, as Dr. Brown tells us, much heard of "in the therapeutic way."

## "NOTES ON ART."

His "Notes on Art" and his delightful paper on "John Leech" have an interest in some respects peculiar to themselves. They show not a little of what was most strongly characteristic of his intellectual tendencies and insights. He seemed to throw more of his real self into the subject of art than into anything else. An artist whose work he admired became, though he had never seen him, very much as if he had been a personal friend. And he understood the language of art (if I may use such an expression) and could interpret it with a penetration altogether his own. The "Notes" are curious, too, as having been the means of awakening in him the consciousness of a faculty for authorship, which strangely enough he seems not to

have fully realised before. The story, as he tells it, is a pleasant little domestic picture of the wifely government which went on in the house; and none who knew him, his wife, and the "Sputchard" at the time, could fail to recognise the likeness. But what is more to the point, they possess, it seems to me, a very distinct, and I venture to call it an educative, value of their own. Though written hurriedly, and simply to serve the purpose of the day, anyone who studies them aright will hardly fail to obtain some expansion of mind, and particularly some enlargement of his ideas on art, some fuller comprehension of its just aims, and some right appreciation of its value in mental culture. At the time when they appeared, they were distinctly recognised as something fresh in newspaper art-criticism. Dr. John Brown's friends, indeed, had been long familiar with his strong instinctive feeling for both art and poetry, as it came out in his habitual talk.

## "Notes on Art"

His love of art was not, as it is with most men, an acquired or educated taste: it was not even founded on any very extensive knowledge of art; for he had been little abroad, and I doubt if, except on a short visit to Spain (undertaken chiefly, I think, on account of the state of his health at the time), he had seen any of the great Continental galleries. But with him the appreciation of art was essentially native —part of his mental constitution. "Art," he says in one of his papers, "is part of my daily food, like the laughter of children, and the common air, the earth, the sky; it is an affection, not a passion to come and go like the gusty wind, nor a principle cold and dead; it penetrates my entire life, it is one of the surest and deepest pleasures, one of the refuges from the 'nature of things' into that enchanted region where we get a glimpse not only of a paradise that is past but of a paradise that is to come." As an instance of his quick and independent power of insight

into the true way of judging art, I may mention that he was among the very first to recognise—at least to make any public recognition of—the remarkable character of Mr. Ruskin's writings. For a good many years after *Modern Painters* appeared, it was quite ignored by all the larger reviews; and even in the journals especially devoted to art it met with nothing but ignorant and fatuous ridicule and abuse. One auspicious voice alone was heard—that of Dr. John Brown, who pronounced it to be "the unmistakable handiwork of genius," and that "anyone who gave himself up to its guidance would find that not only he was richer in true knowledge, but that he would open his eyes upon a new world, and his whole inner man to a new discipline." These brave, unhesitating words, and a good deal more to the same effect, appeared in the *North British Review* for February 1847, and were a voice crying in the wilderness at that time. But they were not long of being recognised as

the true voice. "What a glorious article that is on *Modern Painters*!" is the exclamation of Dr. Chalmers, in the postscript of a letter to the elder Dr. Brown, now lying before me.

On turning to the "Notes" themselves, the reader will find little about the technicalities of art, which ordinary art-critics occupy themselves so much about. Dr. Brown, I rather think, knew quite as well as most men what good "handling" in a picture is, and fit reference to it will occasionally be found in his criticisms. But what he chiefly attends to is rather the thought or "motif" of the picture criticised, and the amount of mental power which it exhibits. What was the idea in the artist's mind? What is the meaning of his work? What does it teach? What story does it tell? What power of observation, or truth of character or expression, or fineness of suggestion, or force of imagination, or beauty of effect, does it evolve? And in general, what im-

pression does it make, or is it fitted to make, on an intelligent student of art? These, and such as these, are the chief questions which he endeavours to answer, and I think I may say answers so well. The idea, in short, which pervades his criticisms is that a picture, to be of any value as a work of art, must be marked by mind and thought as well as manual skill. It must have an idea in it, and not only show mind in the painter but call forth mind in the spectator—"the exercise of mind to bring out the mind." Without this, it had no claim to be regarded as art at all. It was the work of a tradesman and not of an artist. It was curious to see how he seemed to penetrate at once into the spirit of a picture—into its meaning or intention, and how he sometimes startled even the artist himself by pointing out excellences of truth and beauty which the artist had not consciously intended or thought of in executing the work, but only put in by an artistic in-

stinct. He once, for example, surprised and delighted his friend Harvey by the remark on his picture of "The Castaway," on the distinctive characters of the man and the dog in it:—the man looking anxiously to the far-away, the dog entirely occupied with the present and the near at hand—with the sea-birds at play within a few yards from him, which he would so fain have seized and made a meal of. "Has art," he asks in one of his papers, "a power to refine man—to soften his manners, and make him less of a wild beast?" And his answer is worth attending to. "Some," he says, "have thought it omnipotent for this; others have given it as a sign of the decline and fall of the nobler part of us. Neither and both are true. Art does make nobler in us what is higher than the senses through which it passes; but it can only make noble what is already noble; it cannot regenerate, neither can it of itself debase and emasculate and bedevil mankind; but it is a

symptom, and a fatal one, when art ministers to a nation's vice, and glorifies its naughtiness—as in old Rome, as in Oude, as also too much in places nearer in time and space. Art, unless quickened from above and within, has in it nothing beyond itself, which is visible beauty—the ministration to the desire of the eye. But apart from direct spiritual worship, and self-dedication to the Supreme, I do not know any form of ideal thought and feeling which may be made more truly to subserve, not only magnanimity, but the purest devotion and godly fear; by fear, meaning that mixture of love and awe which is specific of the realisation of our relation to God. I am not so silly as to seek painters to paint religious pictures in the usual sense; for the most part, I know nothing so profoundly profane and godless. But if a painter is himself religious; if he feels God in what he is looking at, and in what he is rendering back on his canvas; if he is impressed with the truly divine

beauty, infinity, perfection, and meaning of unspoiled material nature—the earth and the fulness thereof, the heaven and all its hosts, the strength of the hills and all that is therein; if he is himself impressed with the divine origin and end of all visible things, — then will he paint religious pictures and impress men religiously, and thus make good men listen, and possibly make bad men good." He then, in illustration of all this, refers to "the landscapes of our own Harvey"— sometimes, as he says, "solemn and full of gloom, with a look that threatens the profane," sometimes "laughing all over with sunshine and gladness," as always suggesting "something beyond, something greater and more beautiful than their own greatness and beauty." And this, he adds, "is the true moral use of art, to quicken and deepen and enlarge our sense of God," as promotive of "that temper of the soul, that mood of the mind in which we feel the unseen and eternal,

and bend under the power of the world to come."

And when we turn to the "Notes" themselves, we at once discover, not merely how quick the author is to enter into all the excellences, or to mark the defects, of individual paintings, but how well he understands both the true intention of art, and what are its limitations—how it may, on the one hand, "promote the truest mental devotion," and on the other, how it may also "prove a temptation and a snare, and even a curse."

The first picture criticised is Wilkie's "Distraining for Rent," which he pronounces to be Wilkie's "most perfect picture," others having more humour, and one (that of John Knox administering the sacrament) [1] "more of heaven and victorious faith, but this has more of human nature, more of the human heart, and more

[1] "Look at Knox's head in the National Gallery," he says afterwards; "was the eye of Faith ever so expressed—the seeing things that are invisible?"

of the 'still, sad music of humanity'—still and sad but yet musical because of its true ideality." On first looking at the picture he says that it appeared to him so real, so impressive, and took such an immediate hold of his mind, that it seemed to be rather a scene in actual life than a picture; and the poor unfortunate family weighed upon him for days afterwards, and he found himself wondering if nothing could be done for it. There is a curiously characteristic personal touch of the writer himself here, which the reader will not overlook. Then entering into the details of the picture, he points out how the grouping, the perfect handling, and the wonderful truthfulness with which character and expression are varied in accordance with the various characters of the persons represented, is brought out, all contributing to the realistic effect and the powerful impression it makes. "Remark," he says, "the utter sadness of the husband (the chief sufferer), what

sober certainty of misery, yet how manly and uncomplaining withal, no abjectness, no failure of dignity, reason and steady purpose still uppermost in his beautiful face. Then the different ways in which the spectators are affected—some full of silent sympathy, some weeping as if their hearts would break, some full of rage and fury against the unfortunate constable, some railing against him and threatening him with all manner of vengeance, some wholly indifferent, one, a sturdy shoemaker, expounding the law of the case, and so on. Human nature all over." The fainting wife in particular, does not escape the quick eye of the medical critic. "Her heart is failing; the bitterness of death gathering on her soul," and he is especially struck with the precision with which the painter has caught the exact colour and character of a fainting woman's face. The artist had marked the symptoms with the same accuracy as if he had been the physician called in to deal with the case.

Another of his remarks is, I think, worth noting. An inferior artist in depicting the constable would have made him, and wished us to call him, "the brutal bailiff." But Wilkie knew better, and his mode of dealing with him, as Dr. Brown says, "is as astonishing as anything in the picture." He is represented as a man with a presence —inexorable, prompt, not to be trifled with, but in no respect hateful. "What a fine figure he is! the only one standing erect." And this is as it should be. The man is simply doing his duty, and "pointing to his warrant, indicates that he cannot help it, the law must take its course." Wilkie takes no side but that of our common nature, he is thoroughly impartial, and "does justice to the bailiff as well as to the distressed family." It is not his part to make the law and its execution hateful or unsightly, but to represent things as they are. He leaves the spectator to point the moral. His genius is not

melodramatic. All this is admirably true and just.

The paper closes with some remarks on the true place in art of such men as Wilkie and Hogarth, both of whom have often been misunderstood as well as misplaced. "Wilkie," says Dr. Brown, "is not of the Dutch school, not a mere joker upon canvas; he can move other things besides laughter, and he rises with the unconscious ease of greatness to whatever height he chooses." Both he and Hogarth "sounded the same depths, and walked the same terrible road, but Hogarth was more akin to Michael Angelo, while Wilkie has more of Raphael—his affectionate sweetness, his pleasantness, his grouping, his love of the beautiful."

The whole of what is said about Wilkie is a good example of the best kind of criticism, and is well worthy of careful study. Anyone who takes the trouble to enter thoroughly into it will scarcely fail to find himself, not only better able

to understand and enjoy the greatness of Wilkie's art (which has been somewhat, I suspect, lost sight of since his death), but will have his ideas both raised and expanded as to what all true art ought to be. The result of the criticism seems to be that there was something consummate in the essential character of Wilkie's art, and that there was nothing in painting which he might not have accomplished had he chosen—no height to which he might not have risen. The admirers of Wilkie will be glad, I think, to have such an attestation of his greatness, for I suspect that his genius, like Hogarth's, has latterly been too much overlooked and underestimated. And as most of his pictures have been admirably engraved, this imperfect appreciation is the less excusable.

Thomas Duncan's art can scarcely be said to have stood on the same high level with Wilkie's, and Dr. Brown's remarks upon it strike me as singularly discriminat-

ing, and Duncan's place as an artist very accurately defined. His power as a colourist is fixed on as the strong point in his work, as being rather toward that than to expression, and it is very felicitously described as "transparent in its depth, rich to gorgeousness, and *luminous as from within.*" His expression, on the other hand, is defined as "rather that which is in close contact with material beauty than with what penetrates deep into character,—though now and then he brought out very happily some fixed type of character common to a class." "His mind," it is said, "lingered delighted at his eye, so that nature was perceived by him rather than imagined, and he *transferred rather than transfigured its likeness.*" Something of all this was exemplified in his great picture of Prince Charles entering Edinburgh, which, according to Dr. Brown, "brings that great pageant out of its own time into ours, rather than sends us back to it,"

– a description which seems to me to characterise the picture very distinctively; and he adds, "it was a natural result of the objective tendency of Duncan's mind that his portraits should be of peculiar excellence." There may be some exaggeration in speaking of them as "unmatched in modern times," though anyone who remembers Duncan's portrait of Dr. Chalmers will be disposed to concur with what Dr. Brown says about it: "Duncan puts an epitome of a man's character into one look, and the likeness of Chalmers has something of everything that was in him."

In this, as in some others of his "Notes," Dr. Brown has a word or two to say on the personal character of the man whose work he criticises. And this, in the case of a man of genius, is generally very appropriate to any true estimate of his work. Some artists, indeed, put nothing of themselves into their art. Their work is outside of their minds — a certain

manual skill, a clever power of imitating what they see—and nothing more. But it is peculiar to genius that the whole nature of the man is thrown into his work, and you see in it his delicate sensibilities, his power of subtle observation, the purity of his moral nature or the reverse, and above all, his comprehension of a spiritual meaning in nature, not less than the merely material aspect of outward things. "Duncan," says Dr. Brown, "possessed certain primary qualities of mind without which no man however gifted can win and keep true fame. He had a vigorous and quick understanding, invincible diligence, a firm will, and that combination in action of our intellectual, moral, and physical natures, which all acknowledge but cannot easily define, manliness." I may add that Duncan died when he was still in the full flush of his great power, having just before sent forth some of his finest work.

In concluding the paper, the critic is fain

to follow him into the unseen world where, he thinks, "the artist's intense perception of beauty, delight in all lovely forms, and in the goodliness of all visible things, will have full exercise and satisfaction, and where that gift which he carries with him as a part of himself will be dedicated to the glory of its giver—the Father of Lights."

Hitherto the criticisms have been favourable, perhaps I might even say enthusiastic, in the praise bestowed. But these are immediately followed by one which almost tempts me to withdraw what I formerly said of John—that he was not "a good hater." "As vinegar to the teeth," is his pronouncement upon Maclise, "as smoke to the eyes, or as the setting of a saw to the ears, so are any productions of Maclise's pencil we have met with, to our æsthetic senses. We have no pleasure from them but that of hearty anger and strong contrast. Their hot, raw, garish colour—the chalky, dry skin of his women—the grinning, leathery faces of his

men—and the entire absence of toning—are as offensive to our eyesight as the heartlessness, the grimace, the want of all naturalness in expression or feeling in his human beings, are to our moral taste." Again,—"The most lifelike in feature and movement are his bad women. They are prim, not simple; their coyness is as different from true modesty as hemlock is from parsley—a meretriciousness about them all." Then, speaking of another picture than that which he is criticising, he says that though of great power, it is a sort of imbroglio of everything sensual and devilish—the very superfluity of naughtiness." And he finishes off by sending Mr. Maclise to Philippians iv. 8, where he tells him that "he will find a list of subjects more grateful to the moral sense, more for his own good and that of his spectators, and not less fitted to bring into full play all the best powers of his mind, and all the craft of his hand." This is pretty well, is it not, for a man who was "not a good hater"?

## "LETTER TO DR. CAIRNS."

THE letter to Dr. Cairns on his father's character is surely a very remarkable piece of writing,—something, I cannot help thinking, almost unique in literature. In the first place, it was a very difficult thing to do—difficult on various grounds. The elder Dr. Brown did not wear his heart upon his sleeve—and I doubt if anyone but his gifted son could have told exactly what manner of man he was. His reserve, self-absorption, and silence were such that few could have penetrated, or perhaps would have cared to penetrate, into the inner nature of one who to all appearance cared so little to reveal himself. But John knew something of his father's history which explained much to him—much which awakened all the sympathies of his

affectionate nature; and above all, from his earliest childhood he had the insight of a very woman into character, and this enabled him to dash aside the veil which hid what was impenetrable to others. He knew, therefore, that beneath all his father's reticence there lurked a rich, tender, strongly-marked, and very interesting nature, which was well worth the attempt to fathom. And very touchingly he tells the story of how his father's whole character was for the first time suddenly revealed to him "as by a flash of lightning." But before adverting further to this, I would like to draw my reader's attention to a certain delicacy of thought and expression in his manner of introducing the subject of his letter to his correspondent. After thanking Dr. Cairns with a kind of impassioned courtesy for the way in which he had done his "last kindness to the dead," he says that what he himself would have wished to do was to give some faint expression of his father's life—not of what he

did, or said, or wrote, not even of what he was as a man of God and a public teacher, —but what he was in his essential nature; what he would have been if he had been anything else than a minister of the Gospel —or had lived a thousand years ago. Sometimes he had it all so vividly in his mind that he felt as if he had only to sit down and write it out and do it to the quick. The idea of his father's life would sweetly creep into his study of imagination "*as if the sacredness of death and the bloom of eternity were on it.*" But when he tried to put it into words, the image always became broken and bedimmed. The very effort to prolong the picture troubled the vision and killed it. "Everyone," he says, "whose thoughts are not seldom with the dead must have felt both these conditions; how in certain passive, tranquil states, there comes up into the darkened chamber of the mind, its 'chamber of imagery'— uncalled, as if it blossomed out of space— exact, absolute, consummate, vivid, speak-

ing, not darkly as in a glass, but face to face, and 'moving delicate,' this idea of a life: and then how on an effort to prolong and perpetuate and record all this, the vision disappears. It is as if one should try to paint in a mirror the reflection of a dear and unseen face; the coarse, uncertain, passionate handling and colour, ineffectual and hopeless, shut out the very thing itself." He had therefore to give up this as in vain, and try by some fragmentary sketches, scenes, and anecdotes, to tell in some measure what manner of man his father was.

The first clear impression, he then proceeds to say, which he received of his father's character was when he was five years and a few months old. He was awakened one morning by a shriek of pain in which he recognised his father's voice; and on running into the room from which it came, he saw his mother lying dead on the sofa, and his father standing erect with his hands clenched in his hair, his eyes full of

misery and amazement, and his face white as that of the dead. On seeing the frightened look of the child, however, the bereaved husband at once mastered his agony, took his hands from his head, and said slowly and gently, "Let us give thanks." The scene revealed to him at a glance the keen, passionate, wildly affectionate nature of his father, his sharp sense of mental pain, and his supreme, instant, and unsparing will, making himself and his terrified household kneel down and give thanks in the midst of all this desolation—and for it. The over-mastering thought with him was that "her warfare was accomplished, her iniquities were pardoned, she had received from the Lord's hands double for all her sins"; and he gave it utterance in thanks to God. This was the second, or perhaps rather the third, great epoch of his father's life—the event which more than any others influenced his character all the rest of his life—the first being the death of his

beautiful and saintly mother, to whom he had been so devotedly attached. From this, the elasticity of boyhood enabled him ere long to recover—though the memory of it never faded away. The second was his first fronting of the world when, while still a youth, the cold wind of the evening blew chill on his heart as he went forth from his father's house with a guinea in his pocket to be returned in a month—the last he ever received from anyone but himself. But of this, too, the strong self-reliant heart bore the stress, though it left a wound unhealed. But now the cup of sorrow was filled to the brim. He was smitten to the heart by this last crushing blow—smitten in his deepest and tenderest affections; and the effect was a change in his life and habits from which he never recovered. His entire nature got a shock; his blood was driven inward while the surface was chilled; but together with this, fuel was all the more heaped upon the inner fires, and through suffering and

sorrow he was all the more nerved for the special life to which he was called. The new hope which so soon faded away, the revived love, the happy family life with its ringing laughter from the parlour over Miss Edgeworth's or Sir Walter's last novel, had come to an end, and his life for this world was over and gone. But out of his desolation the real man, tried and tested, came forth in his full strength; and the scholar, the saint, the faithful minister, the great preacher, the great Scripture expounder, was evolved. His real life, his true work, the end and purpose of his being, were clearly revealed to him—and henceforth stedfastly followed out. He even gave himself to the work of the ministry in a way he had never done before. There was an end put to the flowery sermons, and the entire character of his preaching took a change. He became urgent, keen, searching, authoritative to fierceness—and this remained to the last. The truth of God's Word

shone out on him with a new meaning, and with the assistance of two German exegetes he began to dig into the deep auriferous rock of Scripture, till Isaiah and St. Paul became to him living men and their words living words, instead of, as to many, a dead letter. He became concentrated, but he was not narrowed. He was changed, but the essential elements of his nature were unaffected. There was no shipwreck of any of the higher or even the more delicate qualities of his intellect or his tastes—no unhealthy turn given to his original nature. His love of literature, for example, of poetry, of a good novel occasionally, even of music (like that of Handel), even of painting, remained. His family and social affections, too, though usually making little show, came out upon occasion with an intensity almost startling. The volcanic fires were still there, though silent for a time. It seems to me a fine picture, finely touched by an

artist-hand—a fine example of the manner in which God in His Providence trains up His servants for their special work, teaches them to fulfil the true purpose of their life, orders their lot aright, and finds a fitting sphere for their best powers. And perhaps in this way even a higher happiness than he had lost came to him in God's good time and way. I remember as a boy, perhaps in the year 1829, being struck and touched by some words which escaped him in closing his lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews. "Happier hours," he said, "than those spent in the composition and delivery of these discourses he did not expect again to find on this side the grave." He was a strong man, and though dark clouds might for a time overshadow him, blight could not take root in a nature like his. The whole man was still there. The current of his mind was changed, but the stream was the same as before. He had been sore pressed and crushed, but he was not

straitened or narrowed; he had been cast down, but he was not destroyed. His social nature had been struck at, but it found an outlet in closer communion with Jesus Christ and with the great men of the past, whose portraits, if they were obtainable, he liked to have about him that he might realise them the better. And, by the way, he had his unfriends too, for I remember him pointing out to me what he called the vulgarity of Archbishop Laud's face. And after all, the outer world of the present was not quite shut out. For was there not "Uncle Johnston" every Friday night bringing him all the gossip of the world of Biggar, which he relished in his own quiet way and was curious about? He got the knowledge of average mankind from it and turned it to account for his own ends, in dealing with his people for sympathy or reproof or instruction. His students, too, when he became a professor, formed another outlet. "His affectionate ways with them," says Dr. John, "were

very often curious; he contrived to get at their hearts, and find out all their family and local specialities, in a sort of shorthand way, and he never forgot them in after life; and watching him with them at tea, speaking his mind freely, and often jocularly upon all sorts of subjects, one got a glimpse of that union of opposites which made him so much what he was—he gave out far more liberally to them the riches of his learning and the deep thoughts of his heart, than he ever did among his full-grown brethren." And yet among these "full-grown brethren" what a fine galaxy of friends he had!—but to this I shall have occasion to return.

Perhaps his own family were the chief sufferers from the change in their father's nature. They were all amiable and affectionate and full of reverence and devotion to him. But they missed, no doubt, the habitual manifestation of a reciprocating love. Still, they knew that it was there, for it broke out upon occasion

through the barriers of reserve, sometimes in rather a startling way. And there was something even in his look which irresistibly attracted their sympathy; "a face"—I quote from Dr. John—"almost too beautiful for a man had not his eyes commanded it, and the close, firm mouth ready to say what the fiery spirit might bid: when at rest, his eyes, more than any other's I almost ever saw, expressed sorrow and tender love, a desire to give and to get sympathy, and a sort of gentle, deep sadness as if that were their permanent state; but when awakened, full of fire, peremptory, and not to be trifled with; and his smile and flash of gaiety and fun, something no one could forget." "The expression of his affection," as Dr. John says rather happily, "was more like the shock of a Leyden jar than the continuous current of a galvanic circle." "I have a well of love," he once said with a strange look of tenderness as if he put his heart and his voice into his eyes, "I have a well of love,

but to your sorrow and mine it is a draw-well, and it seldom overflows, but you may always come hither to draw." On Sabbath evenings at supper-time, when his work was over, he would linger over his meal, and was generally full of cordial talk, early recollections, early friendships, of the rude shock to his young, tender nature when he went forth from home to teach rough colts of schoolboys at Elie. When he was travelling, too, or on horseback, he was always in high spirits and voluble in talk. And no one who has read the "Letter" can have forgotten the ride out to Juniper Green to pay his last visit to his dying friend Mr. Robertson—how on returning to Edinburgh in the evening, his heart was opened and he spoke of old times and old friends; stopped to look at the exquisite view at Hailes into the valley and up the Pentlands beyond, the smoke from his horse's flanks rising in the still, shadowy air; poured out passages from his favourite poets; spoke of Dr. Belfrage, as

they passed Slateford, his great-hearted friend, of his obligations to him; of his son (John's friend), both lying together in Colinton churchyard; of his mother; of himself—his doubts of his own sincerity in religion, his sense of sin, of God: reverting often to his dying friend. "Such a thing," says Dr. John, "only occurred to me with him once or twice all my life, and then when we were home he was silent, shut up, self-contained as before." There is a curious touch of sadness in all this, as if for him, in his habitual mood,

> "Words were weak and most to seek
> When wanted fifty-fold,
> And then, when silence could not speak
> For trembling lip and changing cheek,
> There's nothing told."

I have perhaps dwelt longer than I was called on to do on this sketch of the elder Dr. Brown. But in addition to the interest attached to a somewhat remarkable personality which was well worth depicting,

it exhibits, if I mistake not, in a striking way, the special characteristics of the writer—his power of penetrating beneath the surface of human character, and of so delineating it as to make it vivid and real to others. Some of his father's undemonstrative ways were unquestionably calculated to give a false impression of the man, as if he were essentially haughty, cold, unsocial, and perhaps even selfish, in his self-absorption—a student merely rather than a man in healthy relations with his fellows, or practically interested in human affairs. But in Dr. John's portrait of him all these superficial indications are explained and shown to be misleading; and the real man is disclosed to us as of ample mental breadth, and various and complete both in his manliness and in his culture. The gentle, tender, ardently affectionate nature, for example, is strongly exhibited, both in other instances and in his anguish at the death of his youngest child, "mourning and looking for her all his

days afterwards"; in his occasionally brilliant, happy, energetic talk; in his excitable nature needing and relishing excitement and finding it in his keen political tastes, in his love of imaginative literature, in the highest kind of poetry and of music, in his liking and even hunger for a good novel; in his unqualified enjoyment of all the gossip of Biggar brought to him by "Uncle Johnston" on the Friday evenings; in his love of a high-bred horse and his splendid riding ("never saw a man sit a horse as he did"; "seemed inspired, gay, erect, full of the joy of life, fearless and secure"; "if he had not been a preacher of the Gospel he would (like Sir Walter) have been a cavalry officer, and would have fought as he preached").

And see what a remarkable galaxy of friends he had. And is it not interesting to find men of that princely and royal nature among the lowly unthought-of ministers of the humble Secession Church?

Men of that stamp do not gather round your narrow, or selfish, or limited men. Could it be that John a little exaggerated their fine qualities? I rather think not. One or two of the greatest of them I personally knew, and I think I could even add something to their praises. His uncle Ebenezer, whose father, John (of Haddington), said to his son John (of Whitburn), "John, you and I try to preach, but Eben *can* preach," and whom Brougham, when taken one Sunday by Stuart of Dunearn to hear him preach, pronounced to be "the greatest natural orator he ever heard," and of whom Lord Jeffrey declared, I believe to Dr. John himself, that he had "never heard such words—such a sacred untaught gift of speech." Saintly at all times, but really great once a week—six days brooding over his message, downcast, withdrawn, self-involved, but on the Sabbath—a Son of Thunder. Such a voice, such an eye, such an inevitable forefinger, such a power of asking questions

and letting them fall deep into the hearts of his hearers, and then answering them himself with an "Ah! sirs" that quivered from him to them.

Dr. Henderson of Galashiels, "a preacher for preachers as Spenser was a poet for poets," with "the largest brain I ever saw or measured," but with "a certain lentitude of temperament which shut out his enormous organ of thought and feeling from the outlet of active energy, and rendered him, instead, intensely meditative, his mind acting by its sheer, absolute power, and therefore seldom requiring to make an effort." "His voice," Dr. John says, "had a singular pathos in it," and the thought of him often brought into his mind "a spring of pure water I once saw near the top of Cairngorm; always the same, cool in summer, keeping its few plants alive and happy with its warm breath in winter, floods and droughts never making its pulse change; and all this because it came from the interior

heights, and was distilled by nature's own cunning, and had taken its time."

Dr. Belfrage of Slateford, a man so pre-eminently honest, wise and true, and above all so distinctively a man of affairs, *capax rerum*, that his influence over the elder Dr. Brown in all his outward affairs was almost supreme—"a great man *in posse*," Dr. John says, "greatness being of his very essence, large in body, large and handsome in face, lofty in manner to equals or superiors, but homely, familiar, cordial with the young and the poor— a man of a truly royal nature, native and endued to rule, guide, and benefit mankind; one who in another sphere might have been a prime minister, a lord chancellor," or, as John professionally adds, "a Dr. Gregory."

Dr. Heugh of Glasgow, "the best—the most endeared of them all," also very different from, almost the reverse of Dr. Brown—peculiarly a man of action, an admirable speaker and delighting in public life, clear-headed, ready, intrepid, adroit,

with a fine temper, but keen and honest, keeping his eye always on the immediate, the possible, the attainable, the practicable, but always guided by genuine principle, the finest honour, and the exactest truth. "Had Dr. Heugh gone into Parliament," says Dr. John, "he would have taken a high place as a debater, a practical statesman, and a patriot. He had many of the best qualities of Canning and our own Premier,[1] with purer and higher qualities than either."

[1] This was written in 1860 or 1861, when Lord Palmerston was in power, and it must not therefore be taken as referring to any of the more recent men who have since filled the highest place in the Government, for none of whom, I suspect, Dr. John had any great admiration.

## "DR. CHALMERS."

His paper on Dr. Chalmers is somewhat difficult to characterise. It was one of his earlier attempts at writing for the public. But it shows not a little of the peculiar characteristics of the writer, and has much of his best thought—his keen critical insight, his remarkable power of diagnosing character, and his delicate appreciation of the higher and finer aspects of humanity. I question if anything better has been written about Dr. Chalmers—anything which conveys a more complete and vivid idea of what he was—of the impression he made upon others—of the whole style of his personality, and mode of life, and being, and action. And yet it is no refined analysis either of his mind or of his intellectual nature: how curiously uncon-

ventional it all is—how unlike anything that was ever said either of Dr. Chalmers or of anyone else! Like a good deal of Dr. John Brown's writing, it seems to me to have something of what I might call a primal character—an emanation not merely from the intellect but direct from the man himself—literature before it had become literary, had acquired its regular form, its set phrase, or had developed into the customary and commonplace.

The paper appeared very shortly after Dr. Chalmers's death, and one feels as if the shadow of the great sorrow which that death occasioned was on the writer's mind as he wrote. Perhaps there might even have been an added professional regret in Dr. Brown's mind at the time, for I remember him telling me that Dr. Chalmers died when he happened to be quite alone, that he had simply fainted, and that if anyone had been at hand to administer a glass of brandy his life might have been prolonged for years. Observe the *curiosa*

*felicitas* of his introduction. He hesitates at first to take up the subject. The image of the great man "still lived in the eyes that wept for him," and as Professor Wilson once said on a similar occasion, he could not see to read in the valley of the shadow of death. He rather thinks of the man as a whole, and shrinks from "taking his great genial nature to pieces, and scrutinising its composition—weighing this, measuring that, and then summing up and pronouncing." His death had been like the setting of the sun at the close of a long summer day, our eyes following the great luminary, as it sinks below the horizon, and when it is gone its image still haunts our sight and shuts out everything else. So when a great, good, and beloved man departs, the idea of his life is ever coming into our study of imagination, and we can do little else than let our mind, in a wise passiveness, hush itself to rest. The writer thinks rather of his last hours, and of the loss the world

has sustained by his death. He follows him even into the unseen world where he is gone, and tries to realise the impression there made not only on the great mind of Chalmers himself, but on that made by him on those who had gone there before him. When the sun sets it rises elsewhere, and so when a great and good man departs he too rises elsewhere. And as in the sublime passage in Isaiah we are told that all hell was moved to meet Lucifer at his coming,—so when one who like Chalmers has played a great part here in promoting the good of men and the glory of God enters heaven, we may well imagine that all heaven would be moved at his coming, and that the intellectual kings of the nations would rise from their thrones to welcome a brother. And how would the great childlike spirit of Chalmers himself be affected when the unspeakable scene of the heavenly country burst upon his view, when by some inward sense he becomes conscious of the immediate presence of God,

beholds for the first time His honourable, true, and only Son, and is admitted into the goodly fellowship of the prophets and apostles, the noble army of martyrs, and the general assembly of just men made perfect? "What a change!" the writer exclaims: "death the gate of life, a second birth in the twinkling of an eye; this moment weak, fearful in the amazement of death; the next, strong, joyful, at rest, all things new."

Such are some of the thoughts which pass through the author's mind as he recalls him who is gone, and the whole passage is in a strain of meditative tenderness. I could fancy it being composed in some retired corner of a large old garden, the delight and the dream of one's early years, on a quiet midsummer Sabbath evening, when perhaps the only sounds within hearing were the distant moan of the sea and the measured beat of its breakers on the nearer shore.

Passing away, however, from these

"heavenly musings," he proceeds to notice some of the more prominent characteristics of Dr. Chalmers's personality. And the reader will speedily find that, with all his love and admiration of that distinguished man, what he writes of him is by no means an indiscriminating eulogy, but a very unbiassed, and as far as I am able to judge a remarkably fair and accurate, appreciation of his character. The first thing which strikes him is Chalmers's power over others. "He was a ruler among men," he says, "an ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν." "Everyone who came in contact with him felt this at once. You were drawn to him in spite of yourself." And he thinks that there is a curious mystery in the power of one man over his fellows, which we can never fully explain, the more especially as through it the great Ruler of the universe "has worked out many of His greatest and strongest acts."

Dr. Chalmers himself, it appears, used sometimes to discuss this question, and

held that those who aimed to attain the power of ruling other men were divisible into two classes, men of promptitude and men of power. Men of mere promptitude he did not, of course, recognise as the true men to rule over others, though they often succeed in imposing on the general credulity through the gaping admiration which unusual volubility or restless activity are apt to excite; and in stating his classification there would sometimes be a significant twinkle of his eye, and he would add, "C. is a man of promptitude,"—"C." being one of his ecclesiastical compeers with whose promptitude he was very apt to be considerably at variance. If anyone was mentioned as exercising influence, a question with him would frequently be, "Is he a man of *wecht*?" Dr. Chalmers himself undoubtedly was a man of *wecht*—of power, and, for that matter, of promptitude too. Yet in studying the points of his character, as so

truly touched upon by Dr. Brown, one cannot help suspecting that some of these would be apt to be in the way of his being perfectly successful in the exercise of power. It is true that as a teacher of righteousness his good bodily presence, his earnestness, his fervour, his enthusiastic temperament, his simple directness, and his eloquence were powerful towards this end; but when we are told in addition to these of his fluency, his lightning impetuosity, and even his "rage," his "fine frenzy," we begin to question whether as an organiser in practical affairs of this world (for he was a Church leader, as well as a preacher) he had exactly the qualifications best fitted for leading and ruling over men of a cooler and more cautious temperament. And, as a matter of fact, when we call to mind that many of his favourite schemes were by no means attended with success—for instance, his scheme for dealing with pauperism, his church extension scheme, his anti-patron-

age and non-intrusion agitation, and his movement for ecclesiastical independence, —his power over others becomes rather doubtful (though in the last instance, indeed, his failure was perhaps grander than his success would have been); one almost begins to doubt whether Talleyrand's "point de zèle" was not the true way after all. All this, however, is no drawback, but rather the reverse, upon the remarkable life and truth of Dr. Brown's admirable delineation of Dr. Chalmers's character. And there is much more also in his paper worthy of attention. Harking back to Dr. Chalmers's question, "Is he a man of *weeht*? and has he promptitude; has he power; has he a discerning spirit?" he remarks: "How few even of our greatest men have all these faculties large, fine, sound, and in 'perfect diapason'!" There is never any lack of what are called clever men (men with promptitude), and how often do we see the simple public led away, to the

peril of the best interests of society, by the flashy brilliance of such men—their impressive "presences," their serious self-confidence, and, above all, their wonderful outflow of words, their "promptitude without power or judgment"! Not that these men, as Dr. Brown remarks, may not on occasion be useful, "but they are apt to run wild, to get needlessly brisk, unpleasantly incessant." "A weasel," he adds with a touch of his characteristic manner, "is good or bad as the case may be—good against vermin—bad to meddle with: but inspired weasels on a mission are terrible indeed, mischievous and fell, swiftness making up for want of momentum by inveteracy. Of such men we have now a deal too many." And how true and wise is the following: "Men are too much in the way of supposing that doing is being; that theology and excogitation and fierce dogmatic assertion is godliness; that obedience is only an occasional great act, and not a

series of acts, issuing from a state like a stream of water from the well."

In speaking of Dr. Chalmers's simplicity, he draws a fine distinction between simplicity of the mind and simplicity of the heart. Of the former, Dr. Chalmers had none; he was eminently shrewd and discerning. Of the other, Dr. Brown says: "Considering the size of his understanding, his extensive dealings with the world, his large sympathies, his scientific knowledge, his relish for practical details and for the spirit of public business, he was quite singular for his simplicity." And this simplicity consisted in a certain straightness or greatness of soul, which went at once to its object without any distracting thought as to personal consistency or anything else. Most people, Dr. Brown remarks, are apt to "set aside one portion of themselves to watch the rest. They must keep up appearances and be respectable—by hook or by crook, they must be respectable." In a passage of Fénelon

quoted by D'Alembert (which Dr. Brown used often to refer to), this virtue is very happily described as that directness of soul which forbids any return upon itself or its actions. It is different from sincerity and surpasses it. "One sees plenty of people who are sincere without being simple. They are always anxious to pass for what they are, but are in perpetual alarm lest they should pass for what they are not. The simple man, on the other hand, is never occupied about himself, he seems to have lost that '*ce moi*,' of which most of us are so jealous."

There is a good deal more in the paper of Dr. Brown's curiously observant, often deep-thoughted and wise remark, to which I would like to call attention, but as to which it would be better perhaps to refer the reader to the paper itself, which seems to me to be throughout a piece of strikingly true and delicate criticism. I may just mention the passage referring to the character of Dr. Chalmers's imagination;

that on his style—its thorough effectiveness as a spoken, an oratorical style, but its frequent defects as a written style, "encumbering his thought and the reader's progress and profit," — "from its very vehemence, its haste, there was a want of correctness, of selectness, of nicety, of that curious felicity which makes thought immortal, and enshrines it in imperishable crystal"; and to his remarks towards the end on Dr. Chalmers's posthumous *Daily Scripture Readings.*

## "THE LAST HALF-CROWN."

I HAVE omitted making any remarks on "Rab and his Friends" and "Pet Marjorie," but there is another paper of Dr. Brown's which seems to me to have a deeper pathos than either. "The Last Half-Crown" consists of not quite four pages, and tells in simple words, without any remark on its intense sadness, the story of a poor outcast, which I think it is difficult to read without tears. Any expression of sorrow, indeed, would perhaps have marred the effect of the tale. In another of his papers, however, which has no reference to this one, but which alludes to the same unhappy class, he says: "Who is inclined to cast a stone at such as these? Who blames them alone? Who does not wonder how such things are? Who would not do them every good one could if one only knew how to reach them?" Nor were these words of

course with him, as the following little anecdote will show. He was coming down the High Street late one night, when one of these poor girls came forward and took hold of his arm and was coming along by his side. He did not shake her off as another might have done, but turned and looked at her for a moment and said gently, in that kind, serious voice we all remember, "Go away home." The poor thing immediately dropped his arm and burst into tears, and then, running into an entry which happened to be near, stood for some time weeping. "If we only knew how to reach them." I think this little High Street story shows that he at least knew something of the secret. One would like to know if any change of life ensued upon these tears; and we not very unnaturally think of what appears to me very similar, in the words of Christ to the woman taken in adultery, when dragged before Him by Scribes and Pharisees.[1]

[1] See Appendix.

As to Dr. Brown's paper on Arthur Hallam, though so much the larger part of it is taken up with extracts from the *Memoir*, I rather think that it conveys to me, almost better than any other of his writings, an impression both of the delicate subtlety of his intellect, entering as it does with keen intelligence into all the deepest problems of philosophy which had occupied Hallam's mind, and of the strong enthusiasm of his peculiarly susceptible nature. Anyone acquainted with John, indeed, can scarcely fail to be struck with many points of resemblance between his nature and that of Tennyson's friend; they were evidently near akin to each other, both in their moral and in their intellectual character. And, as if there were some indistinct consciousness of this

on John's part, he seems to have been attracted to Hallam by an instinctive sympathy even before he saw the *Memoir*. He had been struck by a quotation from it by Henry Taylor, and had been searching for the book for many years in vain; and when he at last laid hands on it, he was at once impressed by it as he scarcely remembered being by anything else.

I have already referred to John's early attention to the study of philosophy, and I have also alluded to the depressing effect of some of its insoluble problems, which often seemed to trouble his mind. And here, in the case of Hallam, we are told that "in the period of his transition from boyhood to youth he was taught *too soon for his peace* to sound those depths of thought and feeling from which all that he afterwards wrote was derived." And references are repeatedly made throughout the *Memoir* to "fits of depression of spirits arising from his intensity of reflection and feeling."

In their ideas of art, too, I seem to

see a strong general similarity. "Painting," it is said, "was to Hallam but the visible language of emotion; and when it did not excite it, his admiration was withheld. Hence he highly prized the ancient paintings, both Italian and German, which preceded the full development of art." In all this, it will be found, I think, from Dr. Brown's art-criticisms that he was distinctively in sympathy.

I have already referred to that irregularity with regard to times and places of study which is noticed as being characteristic of Hallam. "His energy and quickness of apprehension," it is said, "did not seem to stand in need of outward aid." And the same thing, I remember, particularly in John's younger years, was rather strikingly the case with him. One was apt to be at a loss to know how and where and when he got his somewhat multifarious knowledge and the curious insight often displayed in his thought. It is amusing to see how in quoting this

remark about Hallam, he instantly seizes upon it with an immediate recognition of its truth. "There is much in this," he says, "worthy of more extended notice. Such minds as his probably grow best in this way, are best left to themselves, to glide on at their own sweet wills; the stream was too deep and clear, and perhaps too entirely bent on its own errand, to be dealt with or regulated by any art or device." I suspect that neither John nor Hallam fully appreciated Dr. Johnson's advice "to set doggedly at it"; it came to them, I suppose, without the urgency of doggedness—and was all the better for so coming.

In Hallam's poetical creed, too, I feel assured that John intensely sympathised. "It seemed to him," says his biographer, "the worst of poetical heresies to desert the absolute, the universal, the eternal, the beautiful and true, which his literary creed taught him to seek in all the higher works of genius, in quest of some

temporary historical allusion which could be of no interest to posterity." The common habit of the "Philistine" order of commentators is to seek in their authors, allusions to particular persons or incidents of their (*i.e.* the authors') own time, whereas the true tendency of the highest poetical minds is to look away from these. Shakespeare and Dante have suffered grievously in this way at the hands of their commentators. Who, for example, but the most utterly prosaic mind could have admitted the idea that when Dante tells that he "saw and knew him who made the great refusal," he was thinking of the weak good man of his own day, who, by the way, did not *refuse* but *resigned* the popedom when he found himself quite unfit for the office? The reference is surely to be sought for in some typical person either perhaps in Scripture or in ancient history.[1]

[1] *Note by the Editor.*—In this connection I append the following extract from the biographer's curiously

# "Arthur Hallam"

"Manhood with a female eye," a quaint expression of Henry Vaughan's, is used by

interesting *brochure* entitled *Bibliomania*, a work intensely characteristic of John Taylor Brown :—

"No. 5 is a copy of Dr. Carlyle's translation of the *Divine Comedy* (out of sight, by the way, the best introduction to the knowledge of Dante in the language. Why has it never been completed?) The former possessor has carefully destroyed all trace of his identity. But the volume contains a note which we think ought to excite some curiosity as to its authorship, because it suggests, we believe, a perfectly original and, we are persuaded, a perfectly correct explanation of a very obscure passage in the *Inferno*, on which no commentator hitherto has been able to throw any satisfactory light.

In the third canto, Dante, speaking of those who lived without either blame or praise (*senza infamia e senza lodo*), says, 'And I saw the shade of him who from cowardice made the great refusal' :

'E vidi l'ombra di colui
Che fece per viltate il gran rifiuto.'

The common interpretation is, that Celestine the Fifth, who abdicated the Papacy in 1294, is the person indicated. But we may safely conclude that Dante knew better than to consign a man to eternal pain for having declined the path of ambition. Our MS. annotator has written on the margin: 'The reference is probably to Matt. xix. 22.' And there cannot be the slightest doubt of it. A young man came asking our Lord, 'What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in

John as describing the quick, delicate insight of Hallam's mind. And I have already remarked that the same feminine keenness of perception used to strike everyone in habitual intimacy with Dr. Brown—indeed, I may say, everyone well acquainted with his writings—as strikingly characteristic of his intellectual nature.

It is, however, chiefly in Dr. Brown's ready recognition of the truth of Hallam's thought, and complete appreciation of it—whether that was critical, theological, or philosophical—that we are struck with the near kinship of the two minds. In speaking of Hallam's poetry, for example, Dr. Brown says: "His mind was too

heaven; and come, follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.' It is the only instance recorded in the Gospels in which Jesus, 'looking on a man and loving him,' asked him to become His friend and companion, but the glorious invitation was declined. Certainly nothing that ever happened in this world could so justly be called 'the great refusal.' And it is touchingly characteristic of the deep purity and spirituality of Dante's mind that he so regarded it."

serious, too thoughtful, too intensely dedicated to truth and the God of truth, to linger long in the pursuit of beauty; he was on his way to God, and could rest in nothing short of Him, otherwise he might have been a poet of genuine excellence." In this there is both a just appreciation of the character of Hallam's mind, and a true perception of the effect upon it of two conflicting mental tendencies.

In characterising the *Theodicæa Novissima* there is not only a singularly just critical estimate of the character and value of Hallam's essay as an inquiry into truth, but a *feeling* perception, indicative probably of an intimate personal experience, of the injurious tendency upon the mind of an addiction to such speculations. The essay, Dr. Brown says, is—

"Not a mere exercitation of the intellect, it is an endeavour to get nearer to God, to assert His eternal providence, and vindicate His ways to men. We know of no performance more wonderful for such a boy. Pascal might have written it. As was to be expected, the tremendous subject remains

where he found it—his glowing love and genius cast a gleam here and there across its gloom; but it is brief as the lightning in the collied night—the jaws of darkness do devour it up—this secret belongs to God. . . . There is, we all know, a certain awful attraction, a nameless charm for all thoughtful spirits in this mystery, the greatest in the universe; and it is well for us at times, so that we have pure eyes and a clean heart, to turn aside and look into its gloom, but it is not good to busy ourselves in clever speculations about it, or briskly to criticise the speculations of others—it is a wise and pious saying of Augustine, *Verius cogitatur Deus, quam dicitur; et verius est quam cogitatur.*"

In quoting the following remarkable words of Hallam, Dr. Brown has marked the more striking passages with italics, showing how thoroughly he had entered into their truth and made it his own:—

"I hesitate not to say that I derive from revelation a conviction of Theism, which without that assistance would have been but a dark and ambiguous hope. *I see that the Bible fits into every fold of the human heart. I am a man, and I believe it to be God's book because it is man's book. If mind had nothing to do with the forma-*

*tion of the universe, doubtless whatever had was competent also to make the Bible;* and I have gained this advantage from it, that my feelings and thoughts can no longer refuse their assent to *what is evidently framed to engage that assent; and what is it to me that I cannot disprove the bare logical possibility of my whole nature being fallacious? To seek for a certainty above certainty, an evidence beyond necessary belief, is the very lunacy of scepticism;* we must trust our own faculties, or we can put no trust in anything. *I am determined, therefore, to receive the Bible as divinely authorised, and the scheme of human and divine things which it contains as essentially true.*"

One or two other of Hallam's thoughts which took an immediate hold on John's mind, as valuable statements of striking and profound truth, it will be enough simply to quote:—

"The great effect of the Incarnation, as far as our nature is concerned, *was to*

*render human love for the Most High a possible thing.*"

And again:—

"*Revelation is a voluntary approximation of the Infinite Being to the ways and thoughts of finite humanity.*"

"There is something to us very striking," Dr. Brown says, "in these words. It states the case with an accuracy and a distinctness not at all common either among the opponents or the apologists of *revealed religion.* In the word of the truth of the Gospel, God draws near to His creatures; He bows His heavens and comes down." A good deal more follows in the further development of this idea. And the whole paper seems to me to bring Christianity very close home to us.

I quote for their impressive truth and their pathetic beauty, some of the closing words of Dr. Brown's paper: "There is," he says, "a sad pleasure,—*non ingrata amaritudo*, and a sort of meditative tenderness in contemplating the little life of this

'dear youth,' and in letting the mind rest upon these his earnest thoughts; to watch his keen and fearless, but child-like spirit, moving itself aright—going straight onward 'along the lines of limitless desires'—throwing himself into the very deepest of the ways of God, and striking out as a strong swimmer striketh out his hands to swim; to see him renewing his mighty youth, and kindling his undazzled eye at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance. It is good for everyone to look upon such a sight, and as we look to love. We should all be the better for it; and should desire to be thankful for, and to use aright, a gift so good and perfect, coming down as it does from above, from the Father of Lights. Thus it is that to each one of us the death of Arthur Hallam—his thoughts and affections—his views of God, of our relations to Him, of duty, of the manners and worth of this world, and the next—where he now is, have an individual significance. He is bound up

in our bundle of life; we must be the better or the worse of having known what manner of man he was; and in a sense less peculiar, but not less true, each of us may say,

> 'The tender grace of a day that is dead
> Will never come back to me.'
>
> 'Oh, for the touch of a vanished hand
> And the sound of a voice that is still.'"

There is a sentence near the end of the *Memoir* by Hallam's father which I cannot refrain from quoting, because while it is so justly applied to Hallam, it also exactly expresses the feeling of John's surviving friends in reference to him:—

"They who loved and admired him living, now revere his sacred memory, as of one to whom, in the fondness of regret, they admit of no rival; they know best what he was in the daily commerce of life, and his eulogy comes better on every account from hearts which, if partial, have been rendered so by the experience of friendship, not by the affection of nature."

"VATTENE IN PACE, ALMA BEATA E BELLA."

# APPENDIX.[1]

(See page 197.)

IN this touching little anecdote, so curiously characteristic of John Brown's tender and sympathetic nature, I am

[1] *Note by the Editor.*—The editor has felt considerable difficulty in regard to this Appendix. He has been advised by one or two friends to leave it out altogether; but while fully conscious of his own incompetence to express any opinion upon the correctness or the reverse of the views set forth therein, he felt that these views were given in so reverent a spirit and without any attempt or desire to force them upon others, that, rightly or wrongly, he has decided to allow the Appendix to go forth, believing that even if those who are competent to judge do not see their way to adopt the author's views, they would prefer to have had the opportunity of perusing and perchance criticising them, rather than have been without what the editor cannot help regarding as an exquisite piece of literary work—practically the last words of the nonagenarian biographer of Dr. John Brown, for the author was engaged on this Appendix to within a few days of the accident by which he met his death.

struck somewhat forcibly with the affinity which it bears to the remarkable incident in the life of Christ, His interview with the woman taken in adultery, of which an account is given in the 8th chapter of St. John's Gospel. And as there are several points of considerable obscurity in the narrative of the incident in question, which receive both a probable explanation and a good deal of a kind of reflected light from what took place between Dr. Brown and the poor outcast of the High Street, perhaps the reader will excuse a remark or two on a subject which is not destitute of considerable interest, and which will even, I think, be found to convey a somewhat valuable lesson.

It is strange that an event so remarkable as an interview between the Saviour of the World and a woman taken in adultery should not have attracted more attention than it seems to have done. Difficulties, indeed, have been raised as to the authenticity of the narrative, and its claim to a place in the sacred record, which may partly account for this. But it is impossible, I think, not to be struck with

its vividly realistic aspect, illustrating as it does the character of Christ under very peculiar circumstances. It is thoroughly in accordance with all we otherwise know of Him, and brings out, too, a certain individualising form of His benevolence which it is interesting to obtain—benevolence, I mean, as proceeding more especially from a personal interest in the individual benefited than is ordinarily attributed to Him in the Gospels. That a disposition for private friendship was a distinctive feature in our Lord's character is not to be doubted. But on the whole, His life was a public life—a life devoted to public teaching and public acts, indicative rather of a generally diffused benevolence than of private or preferential regard.

On these, then, as well as on some other grounds to which I shall presently allude, this singular incident in our Lord's life seems to me to possess a degree of importance in His manifestation, which ought not to be lightly overlooked.

When the woman was dragged up before Christ by the guilty-conscienced representatives of respectable hypocrisy,

# Appendix

His conduct seems to me to indicate that He was struck with a surprise of some kind. He may have seen something in the woman's appearance or behaviour which unexpectedly awakened a special sympathy in His mind; or, as I apprehend, He may have been startled to find that she was one of whom He had some previous knowledge. But whatever the cause was, He paid no attention to the accusations made against her, but, as if hesitating how to act in the matter, He stooped, and making a peculiar motion with His finger on the ground, considered what was best to be done. Presently, however, He had made up His mind, and proceeded first of all to rid Himself of the unwelcome presence of her accusers, and then turned to and addressed the woman, —thus showing that He concerned Himself only with her, and, as we are apt to assume, desired to warn her against her evil life, and perhaps draw her to repentance. What He says to her, however, scarcely bears out this idea. He merely asks two perfectly trivial questions, so trivial that we wonder at first why they

should have been asked, and even though asked, why they should have been recorded. intimates to her that He does not condemn her, and after telling her "to go and sin no more," at once leaves her and goes away. It seems strange. He may have thought that a serious admonition would have been untimely at the moment. But trivial as His words were, from what we know of Christ, they could not have been uttered without a kindness in the tones of His voice, a compassionate sympathy, a clearly marked indication and desire for her well-being. We all know that there is often more in an utterance than in the words uttered. All that John Brown said to the poor unfortunate of the High Street was, "Go away home," yet the words drew a flood of passionate tears from her; and we can have no difficulty in understanding that the heart of the adulteress might be touched in the same way by the words of Christ. We cannot think of Jesus Christ, when we try to realise Him as He lived and moved and discoursed during His life upon earth, without feeling that there must have

been some exquisite and irresistible charm in the entire human personality of that "first true gentleman that ever breathed," and that the simplest words from Him might convey a glimpse of the beauty of holiness to a sin-wearied soul, lighting it up with love to Himself, and through that light imparting to it a sense of its own unworthiness, and perhaps also the conception of its need of a better righteousness than its own. Proceeding then upon such ideas as these of the possible effect of our Lord's words, it would be interesting to ascertain something of the woman's after history. Did she fulfil Christ's hope and become a devout follower of Him? Did she fall away and return to her former sins? The Evangelists, however, evidently desire to throw a veil over her identity, and for many years afterwards no further reference is made to the woman. But it is curious to find that, while maintaining this silence as to her identity, they have not felt precluded from recording a series of incidents which so fall in with and link on to the story of the woman taken in

adultery, that it is difficult not to conjecture that they bear reference to her; but even if they do not, they yet afford not only a vivid picture, but a distinct manifestation of Christ's method of drawing a sinful soul out of the depths of its depravity and winning it over to that faith and love to Himself which constitutes salvation through Him.

The first of these incidents to which I shall refer is that of the woman who came to Jesus as He sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, with her bitter tears of repentance, humbly kissing His feet, washing them with her tears, wiping them with her hair, and obtaining from Him the recognition of her love and faith, the assurance of her sins being forgiven, and an invitation to enter into peace. The previous character of the woman is substantially similar to that of the woman taken in adultery; no third woman of the same character is, I think, mentioned in the Gospels. The depth of her humiliation, the pain of her pierced heart, and the bitterness of her repentance, were just what befitted the heinousness of the sin of adultery, and the

whole result exactly corresponded with what might be expected to follow from our Lord's gentle, kindly dealing with her. All this is so coincident with what is told of the woman taken in adultery, that it is difficult to avoid at least imagining that she might be the same woman. But whether she was or not, she must have come under Christ's influence in the same way. And this much is therefore apparent, from our Lord's action in the matter, that no sooner is a soul awakened to a sense of sin, and touched with that shame and sorrow which constitute repentance, than at that same moment it is visited with a Divine forgiveness, and may begin to taste of that peace which passeth understanding. It may be wanting in religious knowledge or experience or training, and the habits of the new life may hardly as yet have been formed or realised, yet not the less it has been pardoned, strengthened, and bidden God-speed in that new way of hope and peace on which the Divine Saviour has invited it, and in some degree prepared it to enter.

# Appendix

After this, many years were allowed to elapse, and in all probability the story of the woman taken in adultery had been well-nigh forgotten, while the woman herself, and probably all her relatives, had been long laid in the grave. But at last, in his extreme old age, the exile of the lonely isle of Patmos, in writing his Gospel, made known the fact that Mary of Bethany was she who had washed Christ's feet in the Pharisee's house. We have therefore now before us the entire record of Christ's method of dealing with the sinful soul. Her tears for her sin, her love to Himself had been accepted, and forgiveness had followed.

Is it a mere coincidence that we find Christ visiting at a certain house where one of the female members of the family is described as sitting at His feet, listening with eager attention to His words on what He Himself described as "the one thing needful which should not be taken away from her"? The reader is startled at the idea that Mary of Bethany should be supposed to be the same woman. But we know nothing of her previous history to

repel this idea. All that we know is that there was an early tradition in the Church, that a certain Mary, one of Christ's intimate followers, had been a woman of this character. She has generally been supposed without evidence to have been Mary of Magdala, and there is no *a priori* supposition to repel the idea which I am now propounding. On the contrary, it is a singular confirmation of it that we find an express statement by St. John, on his having occasion to mention her name, that "she was that Mary who anointed the Lord's feet with ointment and wiped them with her hair."

Once more, what was the subject on which our Lord discoursed to Mary when she sat at His feet? I am inclined to think that He spoke to her of the decease which He was just about to accomplish at Jerusalem; and it seems to me that this is ascertainable from the circumstance, that when Mary was reproached with imprudent application of her money on the costly ointment, our Lord defended her on the ground that she had done it for His burial. He must therefore have

told her that the time of His death was just at hand. I doubt not but that He at the same time explained to her something of the meaning and effect of His death, that when He was "lifted up" on the Cross He was to draw all men to Him, and that she entered into that meaning, and at once, by anticipation as it were, felt its full effect on her own soul. The remarkable significance, therefore, of her conduct immediately afterwards must not be overlooked. She went and procured the precious oil, which she poured upon His head, thereby intimating, as I understand her act, that she recognised Him as the true Messiah—the anointed One—spoken of by the Prophets. His more immediate disciples might continue to the last to dispute as to who was to be the greatest in His earthly kingdom, and even after His resurrection to keep asking Him, "Wilt Thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?" But she had already discovered that His Kingdom was far other and grander. Is it allowable to imagine that our Lord, having witnessed in this way the full effect of His great manifestation, was

cheered as He returned to Jerusalem, and strengthened to undergo the terrible suffering and experience on which He was about to enter?

Perhaps it may be indulging the fancy too far, but I cannot help being struck by the fact that, after the Resurrection, when He was about to reascend to where He was before, He took the disciples out over against Bethany. May the object of this not have been that Mary might have her faith receive its full and final confirmation by being made an actual eye-witness of His ascension?

Such then is the idea I have formed of the effect of Christ's interview with the woman taken in adultery, and afterwards with her who came to Him in the Pharisee's house, whom I have assumed to have been the same woman, but who may or may not have been so, for this is not material to my argument. What I contend for is, that we have here a distinct picture—I prefer to call it a manifestation —of the process by which a human soul advances out of the original incompleteness and inadequacy of its moral being, to that

higher consciousness and condition of the soul which Christ set forth as the full end and intention of its nature, and which it was the grand object of His manifestation to bring about.

I am quite aware that a good deal of all this will, by many of my readers, be regarded as purely fanciful and, therefore, as unworthy of attention. Well, be it so. I am not greatly concerned at this. If my reader is able to receive it let him receive it. If not, let him leave it alone. The parables of Christ are purely fanciful. But they are not the less impressive and instructive on that account. Most of the interpretations of difficult passages of Scripture must be more or less uncertain, because they are written in a foreign and dead language, and many of the commentators have been only half-instructed scholars.

And thus I leave my interpretation of the narrative of the woman taken in adultery for what it is worth. But I would at least urge this, that the interpretation suggested is true to nature—true especially to the nature of Christ, and true

also to the nature of a soul which has wandered from the right way, but has not become utterly and hopelessly hardened in its depravity—which perhaps few or no souls ever are. And if all this be so, is it not also natural that we should desire to know what became of this woman? And indeed, in whatever way we regard it, this inquiry almost inevitably springs up in our minds—we wish to know the upshot of the tale.

And so I leave the mystery, in the hope that it may some day, perchance, be fully unravelled by a younger hand or a keener intellect than that which is burdened by the weight of over fourscore years and ten.

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JOHN TAYLOR BROWN

in his 80th year.

From a photograph by Alex. A. Inglis. Edinburgh.

# John Taylor Brown

## A Sketch

### BY THE EDITOR

JOHN TAYLOR BROWN was the eldest son of William—in his turn the youngest son of the Rev. John Brown of Haddington. Born in 1811, he came, more especially on his mother's side, of a long-lived race (his mother died in her 97th year), and he used to relate how his grandfather told him tales, which again had been told to him by his grandfather, of the exciting times in Scotland during the reign of Charles II., in which he had lived.

Dr. Taylor Brown's father is best known as the author of *The History of Missions*. From him he inherited, though in an in-

tensified degree, the family love of books, and that stern and unflinching sense of honour which could neither brook nor understand the slightest deviation from the straight line of truth.

His mother was a woman of remarkable individuality of character, emphasised perhaps by the stirring times of her early youth, for she remembered listening to her father as he read aloud from day to day, as they came in, the accounts of the progress of the French Revolution. She was possessed, as a girl, of great personal beauty, to which were added a charm of manner and vivacity of spirit due perhaps to the French blood which ran in her veins. Imbued with all her father's poetic temperament and love of science withal—he was no mean astronomer for his day, as evidenced by pages of abstruse mathematical calculations which lie before me—she was none the less the object of no small admiration on the part of the young bloods of her day in Edinburgh,

whence she received, upon occasion, a peremptory summons from her father to return to the country home when he thought balls and dances had had their day, and that attention should be directed to more serious matters.

Two natures more dissimilar than her own and that of the shy, reserved scholar she married, it would be difficult to imagine; and yet the marriage proved one of happiness unalloyed, her husband, as she remarked, remaining "a lover" to the last, and delighting to the end of his days in her brilliant and piquant sallies. But we trace in her son's writings the deep poetic feeling as well as a certain generous impulsiveness of nature inherited from her.

Dr. Brown was educated at the High School and University of Edinburgh. He was destined by his father for the Church, but these were the days of strict tests, and dogma reigned supreme and unchallenged. Difficulties beset his mind on points not

now regarded as essential, and he regretfully found himself unable to subscribe the necessary declaration.

Henceforth he devoted himself to literature; to the acquisition of that immense store of out-of-the-way information and old-world lore which made him so interesting and unique a personality; and to that quest for rare and curious books which never palled upon him, and which made his library a feature of interest to so many scholars and literary men.

After having acted as the editor of newspapers in various parts of the country, Dr. Brown once more settled in Edinburgh in 1863, and at Gibraltar House, that once picturesque old country home, facing Arthur Seat and Salisbury Crags, he spent the last thirty-eight years of his life—perhaps its happiest period—in the midst of friends old and new; for he had a wonderful power of attaching the affections of the young, a circumstance which,

as his old friends and contemporaries dropped off one by one, served to lessen the solitude which would otherwise have encompassed his later years. He was full of interesting reminiscence of old times in Edinburgh, when society there was led by that brilliant galaxy of talent and intellect whose genius illumined the early numbers of the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews*. For Cockburn especially he had the greatest love and affection, and revelled in stories of his racy humour and kindly wit. He remembered Sir Walter Scott, too, and used to relate how, not long before his death, he had met him in Princes Street, sadly changed from what he had once been; but so struck was Dr. Brown with Sir Walter's "nobility of countenance and expression," that after passing on he felt, he said, impelled to turn and reverently admire.

Dr. Brown was a valued contributor to most of the literary journals; but apart from purely literary topics, there were few

who could treat a touching incident with such pathos, with such a peculiar charm, and yet with such dignified reserve.

He contributed a number of biographies of eminent Scotsmen to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* and the *Dictionary of National Biography*, but he was not a prolific writer of books. *St. Paul's Thorn in the Flesh—what was it?* attracted no little attention when it appeared anonymously in the *Horæ Subsecivæ*. His cousin, Dr. John Brown, defined it as an "exquisite monograph," and proceeds: "Everyone will ask why such a man has not written more—a question my fastidious friend will find is easier asked than answered." That fascinating and intensely characteristic monograph on "Bibliomania" appeared first in the *North British Review*, but was afterwards reprinted in book form. In it he describes a number of the unique volumes in his library, finally dispersed by Messrs. Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge in

April 1903, and the catalogue of which will ever remain a monument to his profound learning and scholarship as well as to his wide culture and catholic tastes. Then there came from his pen, at long intervals, *If the Gospel Narratives are mythical—what then?* and *But how if the Gospels are historic?* Referring to this last work, a friend, in an obituary notice of the author, says: "How his religious faith grew and deepened, till in the evening there was light, will be learned by a study of it. The book is in reality the history of his own experience. Those who knew him best can bear witness to the mellowing effect of those long years of prayer and struggle on one who naturally had his full share of combativeness. He ends the book, into which he had put his truest, deepest self, with these words, written 28th May 1891: 'The manifestation effected by the Great Deliverer could only have been devised by One who alone knew what is in man;

who alone knew the greatness of man as well as what is amiss in him, what is wanting and incomplete; who alone knew how his heart could be touched and his deadly wound could be healed, how his incompleteness of nature could be supplied, and the perfection of his being attained.' '

I quote the following from the same sympathetic hand: "Other guests, however than books could be witnessed to by the house on the hill—human friends this time as deeply loved in their way. There was a world of tenderness even in the tones with which he spoke the names of his friends, unforgettable by those who were present. His best beloved, the cousin and comrade of his life from boyhood, Dr. John Brown, was always simply 'John,' but the monosyllable had a sound of its own on those lips. 'Willie Robertson,' 'John Heugh,' 'Erskine of Linlathen,' 'Kennedy of Dunure,' 'Robertson Smith,' these and many others did he often linger

over with a gentleness of expression that was almost a caress. And if it be urged that, on the other hand, he was a good hater, that at times he forgot magnanimity in the heat of controversy, it must be borne in mind that it was for his friends he fought, in their defence that he used his pen as a weapon.

"Though he was far removed from anything savouring of eccentricity or affectation, it must be allowed that his centre differed from that of many of his neighbours. Of worldly-mindedness, conventionality, or snobbery he was utterly devoid. All opinions starting from such a standpoint he brushed aside with impatient contempt. . . . His sense of humour was keen. How his laugh comes back to mind! Not a hearty, loud, short-lived burst, but a reflective, ruminating kind of merriment, now pausing as if the springs of mirth were dry, now resuming as if freshly tickled, till one sometimes wondered when gravity would be restored. His

reading aloud, too, must be fresh in the recollection of all whom he looked on as in sympathy with him. Perhaps no school of elocution would have commended it, but was there not an entire sympathy with the thought of the writer, a tenderness and seriousness in his rendering of a favourite passage, that made it far more effective than a more ambitious attempt? To hear him read Charles Lamb's well-known saying, 'If Shakespeare were to come into this room, we should all stand up. But if that Person came in, we should all kneel down,' and then to turn to the book and glance at the printed page, is of the nature of a disenchantment. Listening to the pensive and hushed tones of the reader, one felt that just so must Lamb have given expression to his beautiful, reverent thought."

John Taylor Brown was intensely Scottish in his sympathies. He loved his country and he magnified it. The writer can recall the outburst of indignation

when a Southron friend referred, in his hearing, to the *Scotsman* as a "provincial paper." The Southron was told in no measured terms that the *Scotsman* was every whit as much a metropolitan paper in Scotland as any London paper was in England.

Next to the proprietor himself and his library, perhaps the most interesting feature of Gibraltar House was its dinner-party. No stiff and formal gathering this, no long menu-list, no "beggar my neighbour" straining after effect. The writer will ever account it one of the great privileges of his life that he was often admitted to those gatherings, though his *rôle* was but that of the humble listener. The party never numbered more than eight—that was an article of faith never honoured in the breach. And so the talk was general, never a solitary and dull duet. And there will remain as a memory to those who knew it the unique and picturesque appearance of the long

low room which stretched from the front to the back of the house, with windows at either end, the warm glow of the fire lighting up the long rows of bookcases which lined and counter-lined the walls, and illuminating the rich though subdued colouring of many a fine old tooled binding. And then, as some point was raised and a statement was made with which the host found himself at variance, he left his seat and the dinner, to search for some ancient tome, and neither rested nor returned till he had found it and triumphantly confronted his friend with some unknown passage which upheld his own view. True, the dinner was apt to suffer and grow cold on these occasions; but the appetites of the guests had been whetted by the discussion, and their critical powers as regards the viands perchance somewhat anæsthised. On these occasions he gathered round him all that was best and left of the successors of that old band of literary giants among

whom in his early days he had lived. And the talk often turned on these vanished days, for there were old men present who remembered them, days when the brilliance of Edinburgh society was second to none. Of the dead and gone I would recall to the memory of the survivors of those quaint dinners the names of Dr. John Brown, Sir Daniel Macnee, Sir George Harvey, Sheriff Logan, John Heugh, Sir William Fettes Douglas, Robertson Smith, Alexander Russel, that great-souled editor, and J. R. Findlay the proprietor, of the *Scotsman*, and many others, not forgetting that magnetic personality, "the wizard priest of Irvine"—William Robertson. Who, who had ever seen him, can forget his look: the long grey hair falling on his shoulders, the thrill of his voice, and the fire of those eyes lit up with enthusiasm, again dying away into an expression of infinite tenderness? One story of his I recall. He was as much at home in Italy

as in Scotland. He delighted in the sunshine, in the art, in the history, and in the people of Italy. And though a Presbyterian clergyman, he was peculiarly attracted to and in sympathy with many of his Italian friends. One night at Florence, when dining with the late Lord Lindsay, whose house was at that time the centre of cultured society, he found himself seated next a dignitary of the Church of Rome. The polished courtesy and the refined and exquisitely chiselled features of the courtly Italian appealed to William Robertson, and the two became strangely interested in each other: so much so, that the aged representative of Catholicism at last asked him whether he would care to preach from his pulpit. William Robertson turned in surprise to his neighbour: "But, Monsignor, what would your co-religionists say?" The eyes of the Italian saddened as he gently replied, "Perchance, Signor, there be some bigots in thy Church too."

# John Taylor Brown

One of the last of John Taylor Brown's old friends and contemporaries, John Heugh, of whom there is an interesting and loving sketch on page 71, predeceased him in 1893. Some years before Mr. Heugh's death the two made a pilgrimage to Stirling, where Mr. Heugh's father held in his son's early years a ministerial charge. I found among Dr. Taylor Brown's papers a memento of this visit in the form of the following verses by Mr. Heugh, sent by him to his friend. The rhythm and the scansion may be open to criticism, but I quote them for their quaint humour and the touching pathos of the reference to the financial disasters which in his last years overtook the author. The "Backraw Dyke" will be familiar to all who know Stirling. The phrase "Minister Anti-B." (Anti-Burgher) will be understood by those only who have some acquaintance with the phases of difference of opinion in questions theological, which, however slight, were none the less real and determinedly defended.

# John Taylor Brown

They were characteristic—and to some extent still are—of the school of Scottish theological thought.

## "THE BACKRAW DYKE."

Twa auld men sat on the Backraw Dyke,
The Backraw Dyke,
The Backraw Dyke,
Yin was beld and the tither was yell,
Whilk was the aulder ye couldna tell,
Ye couldna tell,
Ye couldna tell,
They cam to look on the land they like.

Weel ken they the Housen an' ilka folde,
An' ilka folde,
An' ilka folde,
The bonnie Touch braes, an' whaur they turn
Beneath them runs quertly the Bannock burn,
Hills to the Wast, an' mair to the North,
And the fair green carse by the links o' Forth,
The links o' Forth,
The links o' Forth,
An' the sinkin' sun cleds a' in gold.

By, doon below, cam a man wi' his son,
A man wi' his son,
A man wi' his son.
Says the laddie, "I'll fling a stane at that wa',
An' gar them to flee, thae corbies twa,

# John Taylor Brown

Thae corbies twa,
Thae corbies twa,"
But the faither was nocht for sic fulege fun.

"My son," said he, "ye'll jist quat that stane,
An' leave thae twa to bide alane
They arena corbies, fu' little ye ken,
They're friends o' the toun, twa decent auld men,
Twa decent auld men,
Twa decent auld men.

"The yin he comes o' auld Bible Brown,[1]
A stieve, thochty, Burgher lad was he;
The tither was bred at the back o' the toun,
His faither, the Minister Anti-B.,
The Minister Anti-B.,
The Minister Anti-B.
But a' thae havers are gane an' deid,
Wi' whilk nane o' them twa did fash his heid.

"The Burgher lad studied an' thocht an' wrote,
The tither sailed aff into lands remote;
The yin frae his studies has gien us a screed
That praises the Lord and uphauds the auld creed,
A book that yer bairns yae day may read,
Yae day may read,
Yae day may read.

"That yin that sailed to far-awa lands,
Whiles brocht he hame muckle, whiles nocht in his hands,

---

[1] Dr. Taylor Brown edited a Stirling newspaper for some years.

An' noo at the last fu' blithe does he dree
In the lang, level road o' adversitie,
For he kens o' a hame in a bonnie Kintree,
A hame in a bonnie Kintree,
A hame in a bonnie Kintree.

"So, Jamie, my man, it's plain to see,
Thegither they've come to their auld kintree,
An' it sets ye weel to let them abee.
An' learn ye weel to tak' tent and pause
Ere ye tak' decent men for corbie craws."

And thus the years glided on. Dr. Brown maintained the vigour of his intellect to the end, and even under the burden of ninety years he retained his power of walking to an extent which ofttimes astonished, and made perhaps slightly envious, friends far less weighted by years than himself. The end came suddenly, tragically; yet to those who knew his dread of outliving his mental powers, thankfulness was mingled with regret.

To the last he insisted on taking his ante-breakfast walk on the grassy slopes of his beloved hill. And one morning—that of Friday, the 16th August 1901—having wandered in meditation perhaps

further than his strength admitted, he took a steep short cut towards his house. stumbled, and, as he fell, hit his head heavily against a rock. He lay for some time unobserved, but when found was just able to say, "Take me home." He never spoke again. Lingering unconscious and oblivious, though once or twice the old tender light of recognition seemed to fill his eyes again, he died on the evening of Sunday, the 18th August. The closing scene was not without a strange pathos and significance. His sister had left his room for a few moments. On her return he had passed beyond the bourne,—died as he had lived—alone.

"JE MOURRAI SEUL."

(*Pascal.*)

The silent chariot standeth at the door,
The house is hushed and still from roof to floor;
None heard the sound of its mysterious wheels,
Yet each its presence feels.

No champing bit, nor sound of pawing feet,
All dark and silent up and down the street,
And yet thou mayst not keep it waiting there,
For one last look or prayer.

# John Taylor Brown

Thy words with some strange other interchanged
Strike cold across us, like loved eyes estranged
With things that are not fraught, our things that are
Fade like a sunstruck star.

And thou, too weak and agonised to lift
The cup to quench thy dying thirst, or shift
Thy pillow, now without our help must rise,
Nor wait our ministries.

Thou, loved and cherished, must go forth alone,
None sees thee fondly to the door, not one;
No head is turned to see thee go: we stay
Where thou art not, and pray.

No panel bars thy white resistless feet,
Our walls are mist to thee; out in the street
It waits, it waits for thee, for thee alone,
Arise, let us begone.

Alone, alone upon thine awful way!
Do any show thee kindness? Any stay
Thy heart? Or does the silent Charioteer
Whisper, "Be of good cheer"?

We know not, none may follow thee afar,
None hear the sound of thy departing car.
Only vast silence, like a strong, black sea,
Rolls in 'twixt us and thee.

*From an old "Spectator."*

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