

**Introduction to John Galt's work**  
**(Blackwood's Edition 1895)**

There is no reason why this new edition of the best works of John Galt should require any introduction of mine, save the purely chronological one that it arose out of some words spoken last year at the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution. Certain chance sentences, expressing admiration and appreciation of Galt, fell upon the wayside of a publisher's mind; where, not being instantly devoured by the birds of the air, they sprang up, and, in due course, they brought forth the excellent fruit of this new edition. Having had thus, at least, a left-handed and god-paternal interest in the enterprise, I am called upon to be present at the christening. And this is the only excuse I have for intruding a prefatory word.

But I may be permitted to say why the books of John Galt appear so excellent and precious to me, and why I am anxious that the world of reading people should not forget him in the press of things new. At the risk of some misunderstanding, I think it best to confine myself to a few personal impressions without attempting to write, what so many are better qualified than I to undertake, a complete study and estimate of the whole works of John Galt.

This appears the best course, first of all, because I do not care for Galt's 'complete works,' or anything like them. After suitable, and even gallant attempts, I am now convinced that I shall die without completely perusing 'The Spaewife,' and 'Ringan Gilhaize,' not to speak of manifold travels and dramas – that is unless I happen to be cast upon a desert island with a complete set and nothing else. But even in a crowded and perpetually elbowing library, I manage to keep a shelf, at the right side of an armchair in a highly eligible position, entirely tenanted by the 'smytrie o' wee duddy' volumes, all at sixes and sevens as to size and appearance which bear on their title-pages the scroll 'By the Author of "The Annals of the Parish."' John Galt was not exactly a name to conjure with in his own days – nor, indeed, is it yet. But nevertheless, we must do our best to change all that.

There never was a more ravelled, hither-and-thither life than that of John Galt. Yet there are no books in our national literature which convey so melodious and continuous an impression of peace. The flavour of Galt's best books is exactly that of a bien and comfortable burgher house, in one of the well-conditioned smaller county towns of Scotland – a house which has been inhabited by generations of well-to-do burgesses, whose happy history is, as sayeth the inscription in a Galloway kirk-yaird, complete in the record that they 'keeped shop in Wigtown – and that's all!'

An aroma of fair white linen, woven on looms that are long since worm-eaten into kindling wood, washed by careful housewives, bleached for generations on green knows by kindly smurrs of warm rain, pressed and folded with lavender laid in the drawers and between the folds – that is the gracious impression we carry away from the 'Annals of the Parish,' and 'The Provost,' the two books of Galt's which I love the most.

But there is a warning, and I will set it in the forefront. There are many things which we have been accustomed to find in great fiction, and even in the more clever imitations of great fiction, to

which Galt was completely a stranger. Galt's best books do not contain even the rudiments of a plot. One day progresses after another, much like a *douce* house-holder's life in the quiet town of Irvine, punctuated only by the yet greater peace of the recurrent Sabbath-day. There is no plot in the lives of such men, no intrigue save that continual one of couthy self-interest, which Galt treats with a kindness and an understanding that is unparalleled.

Above all there is no adventure. Things happen, indeed, but no blood is spilt to speak of. Yet one does not resent this monotone –as, for instance, one is apt to do in some modern Transatlantic novels, where something is always on the point of happening, but never comes off. A recent work of this class held but one excitement between its boards, and that was when a Venetian sentry fired across the Piazza of St. Mark's – and did not hit anyone.

But this complaint does not lie against John Galt, for in his books something is happening all the time. True, it is no more than you get into the habit of running to the window to see, if you live long, for instance, in Irvine – a red cart with one creaking wheel, which complains as it goes of the lack of grease at some farm on the hill- a fight between a terrier tyke and a rough herd's collie - or a small difference between the senior burgh officer and Robin the town's crier. These are interesting, and even exciting – in Irvine. But they must be considered from the proper standpoint, which is that of an intimate and well-informed house-dweller in the main street of the town, in the days before railways, when the newsletter came twice a week by the coach, and was read aloud for the public benefit from the steps of the Blue Bell.

'The grammar school was skailing at the time, and the boys, seeing the stramash, gathered round the officer; and, yelling and shouting, encouraged Robin more and more into rebellion, till at last they worked up his corruption to such a pitch, that he took the drum from about his neck, and made it fly like a bomb-shell at the officer's head.'

Who does not call this sufficiently exciting? Who complains that the incidents do not follow one another quickly enough? How incisive and stirring is the incidence of the characteristic words – 'skailing,' 'stramash,' 'corruption!' These are just the words which the provost would have spoken, had an occurrence so unseemly befallen in the good town of Irvine.

But this admirable passage brings us to another objection to the wide popularity of John Galt, even in his own day. The matter is not so serious now as it once was, thanks to the multiplied editions of Sir Walter, and to other more recent developments. Galt spares no pains to introduce every old and recondite Scots word he knows. He has no mercy on the ignorant Southron. His books are, indeed, the Larger Catechism of the Scottish language, in so far that they are by no means written for those of weaker understanding.

Not only do his characters speak in dialect in every line of his conversations, but as often as not he writes his ordinary narrative in the same admirable Scots, without a thought of self-consciousness or fine-gentlemanship. Thus his every page is a delight to the initiate; but I cannot deny that these very pages which delight so many of us, may prove somewhat more than trying to the profane.

These, so far as I know, are the only reasonable indictments which can be brought against Galt. A possible addition might be made on the score of his confessed long-windedness, especially in his later books. But after all, we read Galt as we go to a but-and-ben in the happily unimproved Isle of Arran, prepared to put up with many things for the sake of the large leisureliness, the rustic air, and the encompassing quiet of heathery mountains and sheltered sea.

To me, as I have said, by far the best of John Galt's books is 'The Annals of the Parish.' 'The Provost,' which comes second, may be the more homogenous, and written, as he himself would say, with more 'birr and smeddum.' But the character of the writer, though made to emerge with conspicuous skill, is not altogether so sympathetic or delightful as that of the Reverend Micah Balwhidder, for fifty years minister of the parish of Dalmailing.

The third and fourth decades of a man's life make the thinker; but the first two make the writer. It is from the experiences of these early years that a man makes his backgrounds, and places and develops his characterisations. He may flavour his books with learning and experience more lately gathered; but at bottom of the world of which he writes, is the world of reality or of fantasy, in which he lived till he was twenty. Now on this principle, the ancient, seemly, douce, moderately God-fearing burgh of Irvine is the foster-mother of most that is excellent in the writing of John Galt. Of course, at times he crosses the breed, and as is the wont of all romancers, he works in the memories of Greenock and other later homes. But the basis and bed-rock are Ayrshire and Irvine. And he is never very successful when he goes farther afield, save when as an alternative he takes some simple people from his native district, and permits them to encounter in a larger and less kindly world the slings and arrows of fortune, which had proved so especially outrageous in his own career.

The town of Irvine is described by the parish minister of Galt's time as then 'dry and well-aired, with one broad street running through it from the south-east. On the south of the river, but connected with the town by a stone bridge, there is a row of houses on each side of the road, leading to the harbour. These are mostly of one story with finished garrets, and occupied chiefly by seafaring people. To the north-west of the town there is a commonty of three hundred acres, of a sandy soil and partly covered with whin and short broom.'

Now, almost as clearly as if we could see him, we may take our oaths that on this commonty were often to be observed the rough head and twinkling legs of John Galt. Hither assuredly his love for flowers would lead him, and here his mother would feel him to be safe among the whins and the short broom.

For though Galt was quiet, and in youth instant upon his books, he was storing energy and knowledge to sustain the strenuous unrest which filled his later life. Everything he afterwards wrote bore token of a constant observations, which, however cultivated, must primarily have been native to the man. Indeed, Galt is always happiest when he gives free play to his surpassing naturalness. He can hardly tell an adventure with any pith or reality. On the other hand, he can scarcely make a mistake with

a character. Of course it is a commonplace that all novelists become their good and bad characters for the occasion.

As the poet sings –

*I am the batsman and the bat,*

*I am the bowler and the ball,*

*The fielders, the pavilion eat,*

*The pitch, the stumps, and all.*

Or words to that effect.

But Galt does all this and does it more abundantly. Who can doubt that all through his active, unresting, post-to-pillar life, he had dreams and visions of the kind of existence he might have led as minister in some country parish, or, mayhap, as a decent burgher of some small Ayrshire town, troubled with no greater worry than that increase of adipose which in due time would have naturally marked him out for the office of magistrate. In Canada and amid multifarious cares and troubles, Galt could set himself down and take over the duties, the pleasures, the limitations, the standpoint of such a man in that quiet old-world society of the south and west of Scotland. He has indeed given us the best account of it that we can ever hope to get. And he has done it with an ease which apparently is wholly without effort. He was charmed to write, and so we, if we are at all to the manner born or endowed with a natural capacity for the ‘Gentle Life,’ of drowsy villages and farms, are also and equally charmed to read.

But it is the most ungracious though the most natural of comparisons to set Galt beside Scott. It is as unjust to do so as it is to say that Galt derived wholly from him and was stimulated to write by Scott’s success. The truth is, as Delta shows in his excellent biography of Galt prefixed to the ‘Annals,’ in Messrs. Blackwood’s Standard Novels, that the ‘Annals’ and probably some of the ‘Legatees’ were written before ‘Waverley.’ Nevertheless it is certain that Scott created a taste and made a market, so that Galt and others entered in to partake of the fruits of labours which were not wholly their own. But this has solely reference to publication, and in no way detracts from the originality of that great book, ‘The Annals of the Parish.’

Galt’s methods were exceedingly simple and natural. When he succeeds best, he always starts out, as it were, without any apparent intention of telling a story at all. A worthy doctor of divinity, the parish minister of the town of Irvine, falls heir to a legacy from India. Accordingly he and all his family must go to London in order to make the necessary legal arrangements. They write letters home to their own special friends in the parish which they have left. There are few incidents, no adventures. Nothing happens except the marriage of the minister’s daughter to a young officer in the army. In this marriage, for the ordinary romancer, there would have been the opportunity for wars and stratagems, plot and counter-plot – for the relief of comic business, as it might be between a country maid, imported for

the purpose, and the marriageable young male domestics of the metropolis. Even an elopement and pursuit might have been arranged. But no, these things seem never to have occurred to Galt; or if they did, his good angel was certainly at his ear, whispering him to beware. For when he does essay this mechanism of tale-building in others of his books, he becomes at once, if not cheap, at least dull and unconvincing.

But, as it is, the interest never for a moment flags, save, as it may be, in some of the windy political prelections of the somewhat priggish Mr Andrew Pringle. But the author means to produce this effect, as we can see in the plain spoken ‘observes’ with which Mr Andrew’s letters were received by the shrewd, level-headed burgesses and goodwives of the town of Irvine. For instance, the Clyde skipper, who had fallen asleep during the reading of the young advocate’s ‘infinite deal of nothing,’ exclaimed upon waking, ‘I thought myself in a fog, and could not tell whether the land ahead was Pladda or the Lady’s Isle.’ Some of the company thought the observation not inapplicable to what they had been hearing, while the most sharp-witted, and keenly orthodox Mrs Glibbans was even more outspoken in her censure, for she roundly declared the Mr Andrew Pringle’s letter was ‘nothing but a peasemeal of clichemaclavers; there was no more sense in it; it was just like the writer, a canary idiot, a touch here and a touch there, without anything in the shape of cordiality or satisfaction.’

Galt’s wonderful skill in characterisation shows itself in every Scottish character he touches. Not only does he bring out all the characteristics of the various writers of the letters – in itself not a small success, for letters are most kittle things to handle in romance – but with equal vividness he presents to us the circle which received them, so that we add to our gallery of acquaintances Dominie Micklewham, the favourite correspondent of the Doctor, Mr Craig, the orthodox elder – inexorably severe, till he finds that he cannot afford to throw stones at others – Mrs. Gibblins, his fit and ultimate partner, and above all, the ‘helper’ Mr Snodgrass, eager for a parish, though not quite sure that a rural one will quite suit him – willing, however, to take Irvine on his way to a better, even when coupled with the necessity for espousals with Miss Isabella Todd.

Galt is a tired man’s author, and to such as love him there is no better tonic and restorative. It is better than well to read him on a winter’s night by the fireside, tasting every paragraph, too happy and too much at east to be critical. It is then that the delightfulness of the Doctor, when he has to explain to the difficult Irvine audience that when he went to the theatre in the city of Babylon it was to hear an oratorio, tickles as with a feather those silent humours which lie far below laughter. We turn the delightful pages, stretching luxuriously like a cat on the hearthrug, while the rain dashes and the windows rattle. We do not want incident. At such time Shakespeare is too high for us, even Scott too mighty and many-sided. It is John Galt’s hour, and for the fiftieth time of asking we are eagerly interested to know everything that has been going on in the parish of Dalmailing. And the Reverend Micah Balwhidder is, we find, as ready as ever to tell us.

I suppose that it is partly early association which keeps me faithful to the ‘Annals,’ in preference to all Galt’s other works. For I read that book many years before I had ever heard the name of the

author. How such a book came in the 'loft' of a decent Cameronian house it is perhaps better not asking. I fancy that some grown-up uncle must in time past have secretly conveyed it into the house, unostentatiously deposited between waistcoat and shirt.

At any rate, there it was, and it was with deliciously wicked qualms that upon a day of quiet smurring rain, a boy of ten took it out, also under his jacket, into the cartshed; and there with one ear bend for the footsteps of a foreign foe, he made his first excursion to the parish of Dalmailing. To this day that boy can smell the warm damp of the misty summer rain, and hear the complaining of the hens which shared his shelter, and who having no 'Annals' to read, did nothing but stare roopily and querulously at the drizzle.

Yet, even as Eve very likely found her apple no great thing after all, I found no spice of popular commandment-breaking in the placid reminiscences of Micah Balwhidder. It was but the mystery of the forbidden which fascinated. For the minister does not settle First and Final Cause, as can now be done with accuracy and despatch over the teacups of the afternoon curate. His views are in no way dangerous. But the book was a *novell* (with a strong accent on the second syllable), and therefore in our house forbidden. Yet if any man in all the leaseholds of imagination would seem to be designed to please a good Cameronian, surely that man was the minister of Dalmailing.

I almost despair of giving an idea of the delicacy and dignity of Galt's characterisation in this book. There is no doubt that Micah Balwhidder is the author's masterpiece. Yet there is no laborious working out of traits or heaping up of descriptions. Every part of the minister's character is allowed to emerge with an inevitableness and simplicity which is beyond all art. It is not, indeed, till the third or fourth time of reading that one really understands the strength and power of the man, or how perfectly we seem to know his hero. For we learn to love the good minister better as we become better acquainted with his whimsicalities, and can put our finger readily on the more cross-grained patches – which, even more than his virtues, endear him to us.

We love him as he is 'sauntering along the edge of Eglesham Wood, looking at the industrious bee going from flower to flower, and the idle butterfly that layeth up no store but perisheth ere it is winter.' We thrill with interest (that is, if we are of the elect and worthy to tie the latchet of John Galt's shoe) when he feels 'a spirit from on high descending upon him, when he is transported out of himself, and seized with the notion of writing a book.'

How delightful are his meditations as to what the book is to be! It may be, he thinks, an orthodox poem, like 'Paradise Lost,' by John Milton. Howe excellent is the 'like!' The book, in fact, as it appears to his mind, is to be as 'Paradise Lost,' but with additions and improvements; for Milton was not free of Brownism, or at least of the suspicion of that heresy. Mr Balwhidder will, he tells us, treat more at large of Original Sin, and the great mystery of Redemption. At other times he fancies that a 'connect treatise,' on the efficacy of Free Grace would be 'more taking.' But even with such inspiring subjects, fresh and original as sin itself, how we sympathise with him when he confesses to us that, owing to the

‘gilravaging of his servant lasses,’ and the new thoughts that came crowding into his mind, the whole summer passed away without a single line being written.

It is one of the greatest merits of the book that Galt never condescends to cheap caricature of his greater creations. The whole passage which tells of the minister’s great design of writing a book is written directly, simply, sympathetically and without the least exaggeration. Yet how easily could a humorous and amusing list have been made of the possible subjects upon which the Reverend Micah could have exercised himself. I am intimately acquainted with some authors who, I am certain, could not have resisted such an opportunity. Yet undeniably, how much better is the plain inevitable fact.

An example of this exquisite fidelity, in which the art is so concealed that we can hardly believe its existence, is to be found in the epitaph upon the original Mrs Balwhidder, which her distracted husband first proposed to write in Latin – a plan which he abandoned for the excellent and undeniable reason that Latin ‘is naturally a crabbed language and very difficult to write properly.’ The inscription, the composition of which beguiled the lonesome winter nights, is too long for quotation, but may be consulted at length in the ‘Annals’. It begins

*A lovely Christian, spouse, and friend,  
Pleasant in life and at her end –  
A pale consumption dealt the blow  
That laid her here with dust below.  
Sore was the cough that shook her frame,  
That cough her patience did proclaim –  
And as she drew her latest breath,  
She said, the Lord is sweet in death.*

Now, to one who knows the South of Scotland, and is familiar with the rhyming tombstones to be found in almost all its kirkyards, it is hard to believe that these lines are not wholly taken from genuine ‘throughs,’ and not only, as the author himself confesses, the first four lines.

Now, there is no doubt that, as a man of the world and of experience in many lands, Galt quite understood that there was a humorous side to the minister’s simplicity. Yet it is to his credit, and, to me, no mean proof of his genius, that he never lets this appear. The writer never appears to be laughing at his own creations.

Still another excellent quality which underlies Galt’s books is their mellow view of life. They are written by a man kindly to the core. Douce, pawky, sound-hearted humour lies on the surface of every page. No satyr ever looks at us, grinning goatish in the midst of a paragraph, such as continually surprises us in the sensitive prose of Sterne. The inhuman laughter of the great Dean is never heard. Nay, even the hearty roistering of countryside mirth is mostly banished from Galt’s soberly charming pages.

Yet how delightful is that which is present. I do not mistake Galt for either a great writer or a great man. He was of ‘those humbler poets whose songs gushed from their heart.’

He is like the best oatmeal porridge – with cream. It is, to some, no doubt, the finest diet in the world. But, all the same, not every one likes it; and those who do not, cannot understand the taste of those who do. Galt deserves much of the credit for that full-eared crop, which in the fullness of time has come after him. He was the first that ever burst into that silent sea. For the Wizard was too great, too completely filled to the brim with incident and the creation of character. He could not be ‘taigled’ with a whole book about the uneventful happenings of one small village. Princes had to rebel, and kings to totter, in order that the epic capacity of his pages might be filled.

But even after Scott, the homeliness of Galt comes to us with a restfulness like a Scottish Sabbath day in the olden times, when the very barn-yard was not so clamorous as upon ordinary unhallowed days.

It is because of the abundance of this characteristic that I have asked the publishers to include in this edition the ‘Last of the Lairds,’ which is one of his latest works, and not, perhaps, in all respects quite one of his best. Yet, even Galt has never surpassed the descriptions of the approaches to the mansion house of Auldbiggings. I may be permitted, all the more that my quotations hitherto have been of the briefest, to extract a few lines and erect them here in the introduction – a load-stone of attraction to some and a danger signal to others. Many persons of respectable life and demeanour, persons even of sound opinions on other subjects, do not, indeed, care for the kind of thing. Luckily, there are others who do, which is so much happiness the more assured to them in their lives, for Galt wrote many books better than the ‘Last of the Lairds.’

‘The mansion house of Auldbiggings was a multiform aggregate of corners, and gables, and chimneys. Appended to it, but of somewhat lower and ruder structure, was a desultory mass of shapeless buildings – the stable, sty, barn, and byre, with all the appurtenances thereunto belonging, such as peat-stack, dunghill, and coal-heap, with a bivouac of invalided utensils, such as bottomless boyns, headless barrels, and brushes maimed of the cat, which the undealt-with packman’s cur worried on Saturday se’nnight. At the far end was the court-house, in which, when the day was wet, the poultry were accustomed to murmur their sullen and envious Whiggery against the same weather, which was making their friends the ducks as garrulous with enjoyment at the midden hole as Tories in the pools of corruption.

‘The garden was suitable to the offices and mansion. It was surrounded, but not enclosed, by an undressed hedge, which in more than fifty places offered tempting admission to the cows. The luxuriant grass walks were never mowed but just before haytime, and every stock of kail and cabbage stood in its garmentry of curled blades, like a new-made Glasgow bailie’s wife on the first Sunday after Michaelmas, dressed for the kirk in the monypolies of her flounces. Clumps of apple-ringie, daisies and Dutch-admirables, marigolds and nonesopretties, jonquils and gillyflowers, with here and there a peony, a bunch of gardener’s garters, a sunflower or an orange lily, mingled their elegant perfumes and delicate

flourishes along the borders. Where the walks met stood a gnomeless dial, opposite to which, in a honeysuckle bower, a white-painted seat invited the laird's visitors of a sentimental turn to read Hervey's 'Meditations in a Flower Garden.' And there, in the still moonlight nights, in the nightingale singing season of southern climes, you might overhear one of the servant lasses keckling with her sweetheart.'

There! That is Galt at his best, when he is writing simply and graciously about familiar things. I declare that, even if I were not a Scot, I should love him as much as Goldsmith. And being one, I love him more.

Again when Galt writes in Scots, he writes the language and not the dialect belonging to any particular locality. He is in the main stream. He belongs to the great tradition. Practically, he writes the Scots of Robert Burns. His vocabulary is not so extensive, his adjectives scantily so trenchant. His is by no means so 'free in his discourse' as the poet. But they are essentially shoots of the same stem. They learned, as it were, at one parent's knee. Galt's variety of his Scottish tongue is full of fine old grandmotherly words, marrow with pith and sap. Scott, like Stevenson, wrote his vernacular a little from the heights. He had learned it, as it were, for love and adventurousness, as men in these days learn Romany. But Galt writes his Scots like one who has been cradled in it, who lisped it in the doorways and cried it to other loons across the street. He lived among men and women who habitually spoke it. In some ways the Doric of Scott may be finer, more literary, a 'clear metropolitan utterance' indeed. But, though I reverence Sir Walter Scott above all the sons of men, yet I do say that the Scots, even of Caleb Balderston and Andrew Fairservice has hardly the rich tang of the mother-earth which I find in the 'Annals' and the best books of John Galt. But that may be because I am West-land born, and of the Whigs, Whiggish.

What special words of introduction the present volume requires may be very briefly said. The 'Annals of the Parish' is in the main a book of the development of character, a chronicle of episodes. Not only is the shrewd, simple, clever, orthodox and upright old Christian gentleman, with one eye on the stipend and one on the kingdom of heaven, most delicately and sufficiently drawn; but his three wives are so accurately individualised, that we seem to know them almost as well as the husband of their various bosoms. We sympathise with the first somewhat shadowy Mrs Balwhidder with her imperfect domestic abilities, but her excellent performance of parish duties. We mourn when in providence she was removed by a 'dwining,' in fatal combination with the loss of twelve pounds of lint, intended, as her bereaved husband affectingly puts the matter, for 'sarking for ourselves, for sheets and for napery.'

A personality even more distinctive, though perhaps less good to live with, is the second Mrs Balwhidder, whom her dutiful partner delights to think of as a great manager, the bee that gathered the honey; but who did it withal with a birr and jangle which made the honest man regret the piping times of peace he enjoyed with the first Mrs Balwhidder. Often in his calm and considerate manner would the minister point out to his second spouse the error of her ways, but alas! it did her little good, for the

sufficient reason ‘that she was so engrained with the management of cows and grumphies in her father’s house, that she could not desist – ‘at the which’ says the worthy man, ‘I was greatly grieved.’”

The third Mrs Balwhidder does not enter so much into the chronicle. But that argues well-being, for, as in the case of a nation, that marriage is also most blessed that has no history. Indeed, the second Mrs Balwhidder had so well provided the things necessary for this life that all the happy couple had to do was to enter into her providing, and in the evening of the life enjoy the happiness of each other’s society.

Galt’s Lady Macadam is also one of the finest studies in the book, full of brightness and distinction, with a fine flavour of good-breeding, self-will, and hatred of all Whiggery. The chapter which describes the amusements of the Lady Macadam, is bright with all Galt’s best qualities. It has that humour which is beyond wit, the shrewd insight, the kindly point of view, the quipsome, couthy homeliness of phrase, which endear John Galt to us. I can indeed understand some people not liking John Galt; but, all the same, I am most mortally sorry for them.

Certainly no such picture of the life of Scotland during the closing years of the last century has even been written. So that the place of John Galt in Scottish literature, though not a supreme one, is at least a perfectly well assured one. He may be forgotten, but he will be remembered again. His books may creep up the shelves till they stand a-tiptoe on the highest and dustiest ledge among the ‘dear and the dumpy twelves.’ But assuredly a time will come when they will be taken down again. For he does what no other can do so well. He shows us with vivid directness and reality what like were the quiet country lives of leal folk, burghers and ministers and country lairds, a hundred years ago. He makes us fall in love with their simple (but not short) annals, and causes our over-selfish hearts to beat in unison with the pleasures and heartbreaks of men and women who for a century and more have lain asleep in the quiet places of the land.

*S.R.Crockett, 1895*

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