

SCOTTISH MEN OF LETTERS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

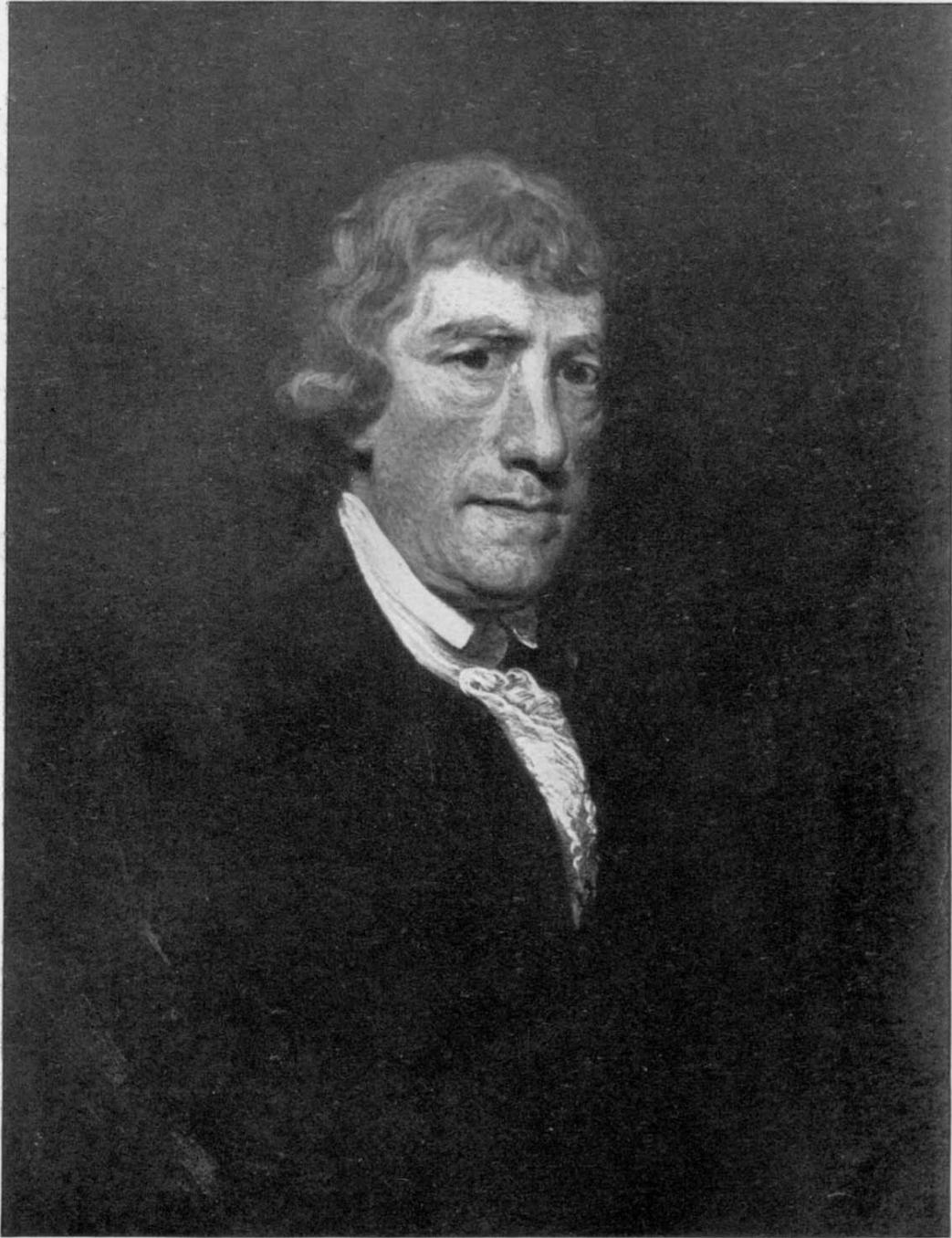
CHAPTER XV

HENRY MACKENZIE - DUGALD STEWART - CLOSE OF THE CENTURY

IN 1771 a small volume appeared anonymously called *The Man of Feeling*. Soaked with sentiment, it gives the story of a man sensitive to his finger-tips to every form of emotion, who passes through a succession of harrowing scenes, by which he is wrung with agonised compassion. At once it gained popularity. The libraries of Tunbridge Wells, Bath, and Cheltenham were besieged by ladies demanding to be the first to read it; it lay on the drawing-room tables of every one pretending to fashion, who, jaded with routs and gaming-tables, wept till their rouged and powdered cheeks presented runnels of tears, like cracks on old china, over “dear, good Mr. Harley,” who would not let a beggar pass without a shilling and a sigh, though the reader herself would not cross a puddle to save a life. This novel appeared at a period when the tide of sentiment had been set flowing by *Clarissa Harlowe*, which was then affecting “feeling hearts” in England, to whom Sterne’s *Sentimental Journey* appealed adroitly with its falsetto pathos.

The author, whose name the public did not know, was a kindly, lively, hard-headed man of business. Born in August 1747, in Libberton’s Wynd, Henry Mackenzie from his earliest days was familiar with the brightest, liveliest literary company in Edinburgh. As a boy he heard the best talk in High Street flats, when up the dark stairs ladies and men of note picked their steps carefully over the dirt to reach them. As they drank their tea he was proud to hand round cups and napkins for their laps, and listened wonderingly to great literati’s talk. Destined for the legal profession, he studied Exchequer business in London, and married and settled as a lawyer in his native town.

In a lofty tenement in M’Lelland’s Land, where the Cowgate joins the Grassmarket, for years lived old Dr. Mackenzie, his second wife and family, with Henry Mackenzie, his wife and children - all forming a harmonious and genial household. On the third floor Mrs. Sym, Principal Robertson’s sister kept boarders - one of them being young Mr. Brougham of Brougham Hall, who was to marry the



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From the Painting by W. Staveley in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh.

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daughter, Eleanor, and become father of Lord Brougham. From the windows they looked down on the twenty carriers' carts which came from and departed to all parts of Scotland from Candlemaker Row.

He was at the age of twenty-six when he turned from his writs and his law cases to write the book on the fame of which his memory and his familiar title the "Man of Feeling" rest. As no one claimed this anonymous work, a Mr. John Eccles, an Irish clergyman living in Bath, thought it a pity that its authorship should go a-begging, so he carefully transcribed the whole book, made appropriate blots and pseudo corrections to give his papers a plausible appearance of being an original manuscript, and fatuously proclaimed it to be his own. The publishers denied the claims of this poor creature, whose death in trying to save a boy from drowning in the Avon may be allowed to atone for his mendacity. Evidently in Bath his imposture was not known, for in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1777 there are verses "by an invalid" "on seeing the turfless grave" of the Rev. Mr. Eccles, winding up with a epitaph which begins:

Beneath this stone "The Man of Feeling" lies:
Humanity had marked him for his own,
His virtues raised him to his native skies,
Ere half his merit to the world was known.

[*Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1777, pp. 404, 452; Boswell's *Johnson* (ed. Hill), i. 423.]

The phrase "beneath this stone 'The Man of Feeling' *lies*" is excellently appropriate.

In the tale the Man of Feeling sets forth for London, on his journey encountering characters that touch his "sensible heart" - for "sensible" was not the prosaic cold-blooded quality of to-day. Beggars on the road who steal hens and tell fortunes win his charity and his tears; humorists in inns impose on his infantine simplicity; he visits Bedlam - then one of the favourite sights of London for pleasure-parties - where he witnesses with anguish the lunatics, on straw and in fetters, who moved the visitors to merriment. From scene to scene he passes, his good-nature imposed on by rogues and his heart touched by the misery of unfortunates whom he restores to peace. At last, after a quaint love episode, Mr. Harley dies. The book is moist with weeping. The hero is always ready with "the tribute of a tear." An old cobbler turns out to be a friend of his youth. " 'Edwards,' cried Mr. Harley, 'O Heavens!' and he sprang to embrace him, 'let me clasp thy knees on which I have sat so often'"; and after hearing his tale he "gave vent to the

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fulness of his heart by a shower of tears.” “ ‘Edwards, let me hold thee to my bosom, let me imprint the virtues of thy suffering on my soul,’ ” etc. A shepherd blows his horn. “The romantic melancholy quite overcame him, he dropped a tear.” The lachrymal ducts are in excessive working order in all the characters, and Mr. Harley is an inveterate sobber. There is in the novel a gentle humour which reminds us of Goldsmith’s, a pathos that recalls that of Richardson, and a lack of strength which is the author’s very own. Yet here is a tale which in a few years Burns was to prize - of course “next to the Bible” - which he bore about his person as he ploughed, and fingered till two copies were worn out; one of the books of sentiment on which he says he “endeavoured to form his conduct,” and which he loved incessantly to quote. [Chambers’s *Life and Works of Burns*, i. 64: “In the charming words of my favourite author, ‘May the Great Spirit bear up the weight of thy grey hairs and blunt the arrows that bring them rest.’” (Chambers’s *Burns*, iv. 180).] Samuel Rogers in his youth went to Edinburgh, anxious to see - not Dr. Robertson or Adam Smith, but the author of *The Man of Feeling*. [Clayden’s *Early Days of Rogers*, p. 112.]

The success of his story stimulated Mackenzie to write *The Man of the World*, a contrast to the tearful Mr. Harley. Here is a man who rushes into selfish pleasures, and consequent misery and ruin. Even here the sentimentalist plies his business - good persons in the pages are strongly addicted to tears. Though it tries to be vivacious, it is dull reading to-day. In fact, the only things not dry in the novel the eyes of its personages. In *Julie de Roubigné*, his next work, he strikes a more tender chord, and works out a finer theme, though not too powerfully. There is, however, pathos in this epistolary romance. Sir Walter Scott called it “one of the most heart-wringing histories that has ever been written”; but “heart-wringing” is not the sensation one feels to-day as we take it from the highest shelf, blow the top and bang the boards together to dispel the dust of years that has fallen undisturbed upon it. Allan Cunningham said it was too melancholy to read; Christopher North pronounced it of all Mackenzie’s works the “most delightful.”

It is sad destiny which makes the fine thoughts of yesterday the platitudes of to-day, and the pathos of one age the maudlin sentiment of the next. We cannot weep over what our fathers, and especially our mothers, cried half a century ago. One day at a country-house the company wanted something to be read aloud. *The Man of Feeling* was selected, though some were afraid it might prove too affecting. Lady Louisa Stuart tells the result: “I, who was the reader had not seen it for many years [this was in 1826]. The rest did not know it at all. I am afraid I perceived a sad change in it, or myself, which was worse, and the effect altogether failed.

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Nobody cried, and at some passages, the touches that I used to think so exquisite - oh dear! they laughed. I thought we never should get over Harley's walking down to breakfast with his shoe-buckles in his hand. Yet I remember so well its first publication, my mother and sisters crying over it, dwelling on it with rapture." [*Lady Louisa Stuart*, edit. by Home, p. 235.]

While writing touchingly, and with a gentle humour too, books to which he never put his name, the author was passing an active, prosaic legal existence in Edinburgh. No pathetic lachrymose Mr. Harley was he, but Henry Mackenzie, Writer to the Signet, keen as a hawk over a title-deed, shrewd as a ferret over a pleading - indifferent to the tears of defendants in his insistence on the claims of his clients. He had his sentiment under perfect control. See him at a cock-fight in a Canongate slum, among an eager throng of beaux, burglars, and bullies, in the dirty, ill-smelling, ill-lighted cock-pit, his kindly face all alert, and his heart palpitating with excitement as he watches the "mains" and the mangled bodies of disfeathered, bleeding combatants, which would have made Mr. Harley sob his heart out. After the fight of fowls was over, up the turnpike stair to his house jubilant he would go, proclaiming that he had had "a glorious night." "Where had he been?" "Why, at a splendid fight!" "Oh, Harry, Harry," his wife would plaintively exclaim, "you have only feeling on paper!" [Burgon's *Life of Patrick F. Tytler*, p. 25.]

The "Man of Feeling," by which name the literary lawyer became and remains known, was incessantly busy with literature. There were plays which managers declined to take; plays, such as the *Prince of Tunis*, which the public declined to see; there were essays in the *Mirror* and the *Lounger*, which were published weekly in Edinburgh, modelled after the *Spectator* or the *Adventurer*, containing contributions from lawyers addicted to polite letters, like Lord Craig and Lord Hailes, by not very humorous humorists, mildly facetious, politely moralising, with literary reviews which were sensibly critical. The best papers were by Mackenzie - such as his "La Roche," in which he delineates delicately David Hume, and his warm appreciations of the new poet, Robert Burns, in 1787. Characteristically the amiable literary sentimentalist singles out for special praise the addresses "To a Mouse" and "To a Mountain Daisy." His novels, his essays, his abortive plays, with his biographies of John Home and Blacklock, form the staple of works which he consigned to posterity in eight volumes octavo.

It is really the character of the man rather than his writings which retains our interest in the patriarch of letters, who died in 1831, the last survivor of a brilliant age. In his young days he had danced in the Old Assembly rooms in Bell's Close,

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and danced attendance at the concerts of St. Cecilia's Hall in Niddry Wynd. He had been a welcome guest and pleasant entertainer of Hume and Blair, and of Adam Smith and Lord Kames. He was the gentlest visitor in the little parlour of Dr. Blacklock, where the blind poet would stand to recite his verses with his strangely swaying body, and there he had seen great Dr. Johnson talk loudly and swallow slobberingly the nineteen cups of tea which caused such dismay to good Mrs. Blacklock. He had seen, as time passed on, the men who had shed lustre on Scottish literature grow old and feeble, attired still in the cocked hats and trim wigs, each bearing the long staff, which were old-world fashions to a new century - surviving as toothless shadows of their olden selves. He saw them die one by one, leaving fragrant memories behind them, as link after link was broken with the quaint past when literature was styled "Belles Lettres."

As he grew old his memory was stored with curious recollections of the past, to which persons of another century loved to listen, when the modern political air was filled with talk of a Reform Bill. He could remember when the ground covered by the New Town was fields and meadows; and cattle browsed where Princes Street now stands; he had caught eels in the Nor' Loch when Princes Street Gardens were not even a dream of the future; he had shot snipe and coursed hares where George Street now runs; and got curds and cream at the remote inn called "Peace and Plenty," on the place where Heriot Row, in which he was living, was built. [Scott's *Works*, iv. 178.] The High Street when he was young had been thronged with the finest of Scottish fashion and learning and wealth, who dwelt in those miserable flats which, when he was middle-aged, he saw abandoned to the poor and the squalid. In his old age he looked back on that poor and dingy past with romantic affection.

When he was past eighty, visitors at Heriot Row found the lively little patriarch in his study, [Peter's *Letters to his Kinsfolk*, i. pp. 106-9.] seated in the high-backed chair, with his black velvet cap, his brown wig, his face with innumerable wrinkles, his blue eyes shrewd beneath his white eyebrows, munching out his words with mouth sans teeth, while his wife, the graceful old lady, sat in black silk gown, high cap, fixed with lace beneath her chin; and as each visitor came in there was the eager talk of all that was going on that day. Sir Walter Scott describes [Lockhart's *Scott*, vi. 240; iii. 140.] the old gentleman on his visit to Abbotsford setting forth on a shooting expedition attired in white hat turned up with green, green jacket, green spectacles, brown leather gaiters, a dog whistle round his wrinkled neck, like a venerable Mr. Winkle - a juvenile of eighty years of age, as eager after a hare as after a law deed, sharp as a needle on politics or trout. The attenuated figure was to

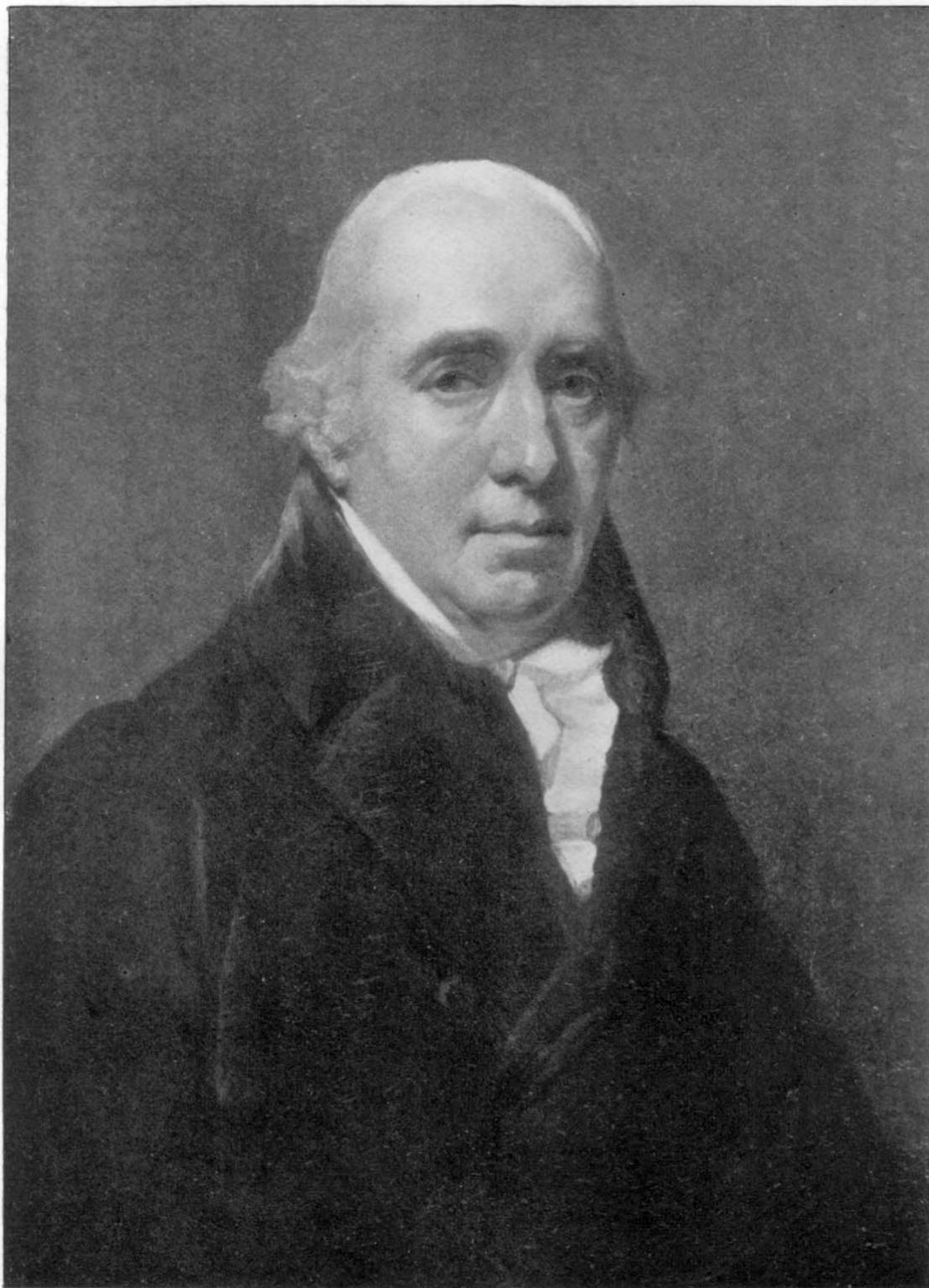
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be seen on days when hardly any mortal could venture out, as the wind blew hurricanes, tottering across the North Bridge before the blast, his big surtout clinging close to his fragile figure. [R. P. Gillies's *Memoirs of a Literary Veteran*, iii. 51.] On such a tempestuous day he would pass eagerly and panting into the printing-office of John Ballantyne - the clever, lively, and bibulous printer receiving him with profound obeisance, as he came to look over some proofs for his friend Walter Scott. At last the familiar face was seen no more - thin, shrivelled, yellow, and "kiln-dried," with its profile like that of an amiable Voltaire. [Cockburn's *Memorials*, p. 265.]

When he died on the 14th of January 1831 the new generation had almost forgotten the writings of the "Man of Feeling," though the old remembered in their youth having read with moist eyes the once famous books of which Lockhart speaks with unwonted gentleness: "The very names of the heroes and heroines sounded in my ears like the echoes of some old romantic melody, too simple, too beautiful to have been framed in those degenerate, over-scientific days. Harley, La Roche, Montalban, Julie de Roubigné, what graceful mellow music is in the well-remembered cadences!" [Peter's *Letters to his Kinsfolk*, i. 109.] Where are they now? Where are the roses of last summer?

DUGALD STEWART

When society was still sentimental over Julie de Roubigné, more robust intellects were interested by the lectures at the College of Dugald Stewart, who was teaching with eloquence the philosophy of Thomas Reid. When the views and arguments of the old master were expounded to enthusiastic students in the classroom of the new College, never had philosophy been so agreeable, so intelligible. As it came from the lips of the urbane teacher, psychology seemed almost an intellectual pastime. One remembers Sydney Smith's jokes about the Scots' love for "metapheesics," and of his overhearing at a ball a young lady remark to her partner in the dance, "What you say, my lord, is very true of love in the *aibstract* - " the rest of the sentence being unfortunately drowned by the tumult of the fiddles. In truth, Stewart did make mental philosophy a pleasant theme even for drawing-rooms. There was something fascinating in this professor, with broad, bald head, bushy eyebrows, and eyes of alert intelligence, standing at his desk [Cockburn's *Memorials*, p. 25.] prelecting on mental powers and moral qualities with only notes before him,



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From the Mezzotint Engraving after Raeburn.

DUGALD STEWART

uttering with pleasing soft voice his mellifluous sentences and sonorous periods “possessed of cathedral pomp.”

He was born in 1751 in the precincts of the College, where his father, Matthew Stewart, the Professor of Mathematics, resided - that lively little geometer who had made a very brilliant scientific reputation after quitting his quiet manse of Roseneath. After studying in the College at Edinburgh, young Stewart went to Glasgow, where he lodged along with his friend Archibald Alison, who was to become known as an admired preacher of the Scottish Episcopal Church, and to be esteemed as the author of an *Essay on Taste* - the last of that century's many futile theories concerning the “Beautiful.” Doubtless the attraction to the western university was the teaching of Professor Reid, and he eagerly imbibed from those plain and ponderous lectures the principles of “common-sense philosophy” which he himself was to expound in after years with an eloquence to which philosophy was quite unaccustomed.

When his father was laid aside by illness, Stewart, though only nineteen years old, acted as his substitute, and when Adam Ferguson went to America on the futile Peace Commission, he also undertook to lecture for his friend on Moral Philosophy, with the easy versatility peculiar to those perfunctory days. It was on a Thursday he was asked if he would teach ethics, and he was ready to begin on the Monday, daily working up his lectures with infinite zest as he paced up and down the College gardens. No wonder when the session was done the young man was so exhausted that he required to be lifted into a carriage. Relying on Stewart's varied accomplishments, whenever a professor was ill or abroad he would ask him to take his duty, and Stewart was ready at once to teach Rhetoric or Logic or Greek.

On his father's death [Stewart's *Works*, ix.; *Memoir* by Veitch.] he succeeded to the chair of Mathematics, but he was glad to exchange that post for the chair of Moral Philosophy ten years after, on Ferguson's retiral, in 1785 - for he owns he was “groaning at teaching Euclid for the thirteenth time.” Now he was in his element. With no great capacity for intellectual subtleties, no love for metaphysical problems, he studied the powers and faculties of the mind, the passions and emotions of the heart, with the minuteness of an observant naturalist. His opinions and his system were substantially those of his master Thomas Reid. He broke no new ground, indulged in no original speculation. He had a cautious and astute way of evading difficulties, and when his students were expectant as he approached some fine problem, he usually deferred the solution to another day which never arrived. [Cockburn, p. 26; *Memoir of Sydney Smith*, ii. p. 134. Sydney Smith writes characteristically of his timid

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old friend. "We have had Dugald Stewart and his family here for a few days. We spoke much of the weather and other harmless subjects. He became once, however, a little elevated, and in the gaiety of his soul let out some opinions which will doubtless make him writhe with remorse. He went so far as to say he considered the King's recovery as very problematical" (*Memoir of Sydney Smith*, ii. p. 90).] But then his literary grace none disputed; his exquisite elocution bore off the fine-sounding sentences and added beauty to his poetical quotations; his art of putting things was admirable, the speculations of others became clear and attractive, set forth with his copious - too copious - illustrations and fluent periods, too diffuse and ornate. Of German philosophers, since they had given up writing in Latin, he knew nothing, for he was ignorant of their language, and of Kant he owned he could make nothing. [This is apparent enough in his *Dissertation on the Progress of Metaphysical Philosophy*.]

For many a year - ever since Blair and Ferguson began to teach - it had been the fashion for members of English families of rank and fortune to be sent to Scottish Universities, to attend lectures of professors whose fame was far spread, and they were welcomed like godsend as boarders by those teachers who were glad to have additions to their humble incomes. Towards the end of the century, when the war hindered travelling and studying abroad, high-born youths in greater numbers came north, either with their tutors or to live with professors, who could look after their morals and their studies. Noblemen did not grudge £400 for the privilege of their son being admitted to Professor Stewart's charming home. On the benches in the College sat Lord Henry Petty, afterwards Lord Lansdowne, and lads to be afterwards notable as Lord Palmerston, Lord John Russell, Lord Dudley and Ward, who had as class-mates Henry Brougham, Francis Horner, Henry Cockburn, and Francis Jeffrey. These men looked fondly back in their older years to those delightful days of plain living and high thinking in Edinburgh, "amidst odious smells, barbarous sounds, bad suppers, excellent hearts, and most enlightened and cultivated understandings," [*Memoir of Sydney Smith*, i. 22.] where they studied under Playfair and Robison and Dalziel. But it was Dugald Stewart whom they regarded as their master, as he set forth fine moral aims and ideals - especially when discussing the application of ethics to the principles of government and the conduct of citizens in political life. He was liberal in politics, and when the French Revolution came, with its rage of democracy, Whig views were regarded with dismay. The very phrase "*political economy*" had to the ears of parents a suspicious sound, unaware that it concerned itself with such innocuous affairs as duties on corn and malt, free trade and exchange. Dreading all dangerous sentiments Francis Jeffrey's father kept his son out of that classroom [Cockburn's *Life of Jeffrey*, i. 52.] lest his mind should be contaminated with democratic heresies. Never, however, was there

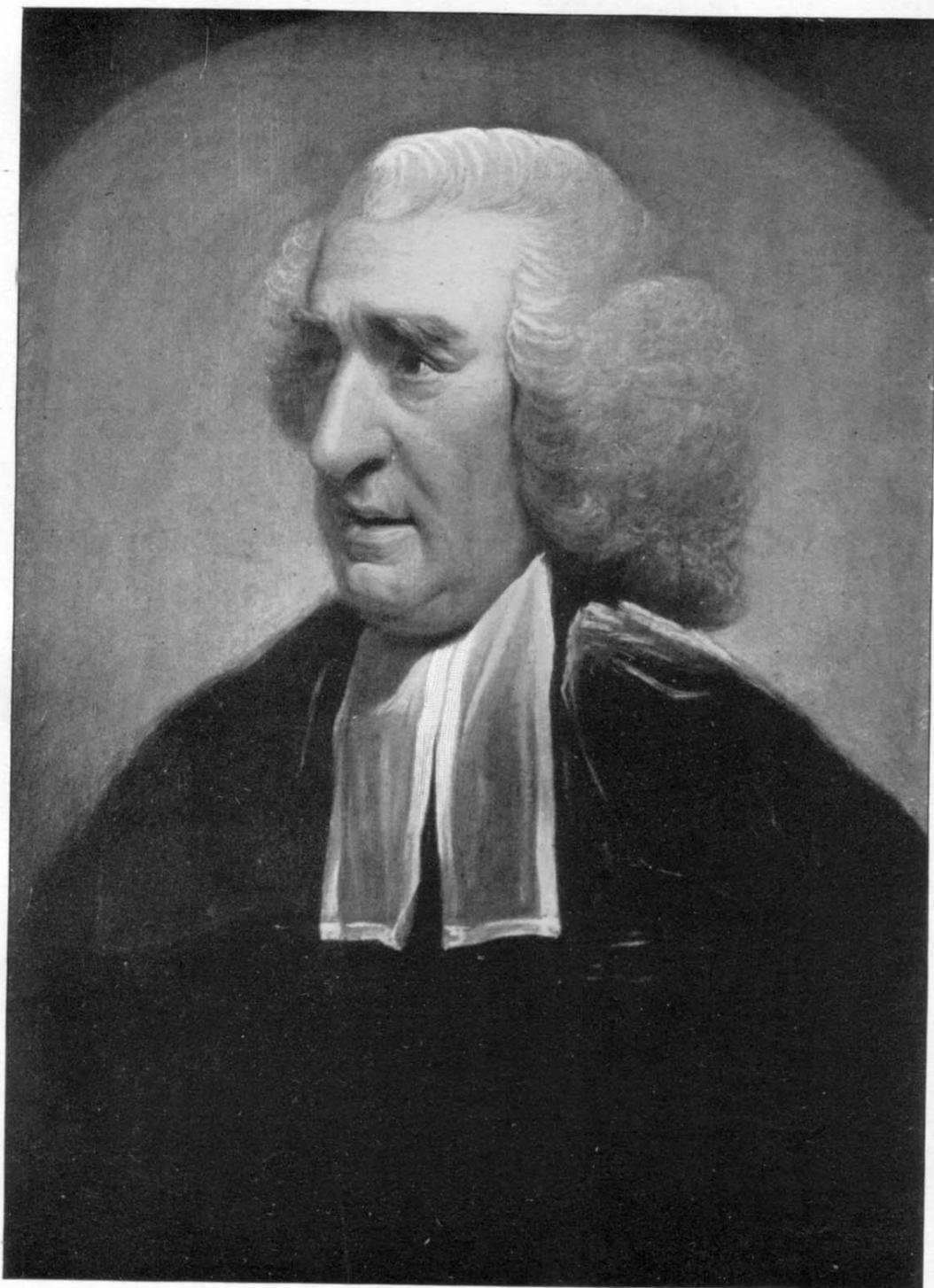
DUGALD STEWART

a man less revolutionary than that mild, polished, most, prudent gentleman. As Henry Cockburn listened in his boyhood to the persuasive eloquence, he felt his whole nature changed by his teacher: "his noble views unfolded in glorious sentences elevated me into a higher world." [Cockburn's *Memorials*, p. 26.] Francis Horner was touched and moved to admiration; and it was the inculcating of high moral purpose on men and citizens which influenced young men who had a public career before them. As Sir James Mackintosh said, his disciples were his best works. He was, in fact, an eloquent philosophic preacher. This position he retained till he retired in 1811, when Thomas Brown succeeded him, and dismayed him by teaching doctrines he vehemently rejected.

In the class and out of it he was the same - the courteous, kindly gentleman. No gatherings were more delightful than those at his house every fortnight - at the old house in Horse Wynd and at Ainslie Place, with his accomplished, clever, plain-faced wife as hostess. His rooms were the resort of all persons of position and culture in the city. The same attention was paid to the awkward student, who trod the carpet shrinking at every squeak his new pumps made on the floor, as to the judge or peer, to whom the company was deferential. There Whig and Tory both agreed, political and ecclesiastical differences were laid aside for the evening. Not being gifted with much humour, it was all the more delightful to catch the eminent philosopher in some playful mood, as at Woodhouselee, when, on opening the drawing-room door, the old professor was discovered playing with little Patrick Tytler, his host's son, the future historian of Scotland - both prancing on the floor, seeing which should longest maintain the peacock's feathers poised on their respective noses. [Burgon's *Life of Patrick F. Tytler*.] In his country house at Catrine and in Edinburgh he entertained Robert Burns, not with the pompous patronage of old Dr. Blair, not with the peddling criticism of Dr. Gregory, but with the easy frankness of a friend. All these social and intellectual graces he bore finely to his death in 1829. [When Stewart's death was announced at a large dinner-party in England, the news was received with levity by a lady of rank. Sydney Smith, who sat beside her, turned round and cuttingly said: "Madam, when we are told of the death of so great a man as Mr. Dugald Stewart, it is usual in civilised society to be grave for at least the space of five minutes" (Memoir, i.319).] No great thinker, no founder of any new school of speculation, he was an acute exponent, a stimulating teacher of an accepted philosophy; according to Lord Cockburn, "one of the greatest didactic orators."

CLOSE OF THE CENTURY

As the century drew to its close the men of the old generation were passing away one by one. Venerable, picturesque figures they were, who had contributed so long to the social and intellectual life of the country. In 1790 died the historian, Dr. Robert Henry, minister of the Old Kirk of Edinburgh - who should not pass without notice - a man of whom we hear little in literary and convivial circles, though respected as a worthy member of them. It was in 1771 the first volume of his *History of Scotland* was published - a history formed on an original plan, each period having its political, military, literary, social, ecclesiastical affairs treated in separate departments. The writer appreciated better than other men the importance of studying the social movements of a nation as essential parts of its real history, and in his wake later historians were led to follow. It was a work novel in design, showing ability and industry, if not great literary skill, which met with praise both from men of letters and from his Church, which elected him Moderator of the General Assembly. Published at his own cost, though afterwards he sold it for £3000, it came out in successive quartos from 1771 to 1785. As on fine sunny days the wasps abound, so when prosperity is shining on an author literary wasps are sure to come forth. That clever but consummate rascal Gilbert Stuart, who was venomous whether he was drunk or sober, attacked Henry and his works with untiring pertinacity. In 1773 he had tried his utmost to vent his spleen on men of letters as editor of the *Edinburgh Magazine* - on Monboddo, Kames, Robertson, Henry - and when all this became intolerable in Edinburgh, he sought an outlet for his malice in London newspapers and reviews. [Hume's *Letters to Strahan*, p. 158; Kerr's *Life of Smellie*, i.] Dr. Henry was his special victim; he "vowed to crush his work." On every opportunity this amiable divine was attacked - his sermons, his speeches, his book - till the sale of his *History* was stopped, and the work to which he had devoted his many years and his few savings seemed ruined. Stuart would spy out when he was going to London to look after the sale of his work, and then in hot haste would write to his satellites in London to have damaging paragraphs in the *Chronicle* or elsewhere to scathe him on his arrival. In 1775 the scoundrel gloated over rumours that his victim was dying, and jubilantly he writes: "Poor Henry is on the point of death, and his friends declare that I have killed him. I have received this information as a compliment." [Disraeli's *Quarrels and Calamities of Authors*, 1858, p. 135.] However, the reverend doctor survived the malice of his assailant, and the assailant himself, who, after making a considerable name as an able, florid writer on history, died of intemperance. Of the rascal's habits many stories were flying. Smellie, the printer, would relate how the man, when intoxicated, staggered into the ash-pit of a



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From the Painting by David Martin in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh.

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great steam-engine which stood by the roadside, and, awakening from drunken sleep, as he saw the furnace opened and grimy black figures stoking the fire and raking the bars of the enormous grate, while the machinery clanked furiously with its beams and chains, he thought that this was hell, and in horror exclaimed, "Good God, is it come to this at last!" [Kerr's *Life of W Smellie*, i. 304.]

Dr. Henry was one of those characteristic Moderates of the old school who were genial in society, humorous at table, and deplorably dry - and deliciously conscious of being dry - in the pulpit. He belonged to that class of ministers who, according to Lord Robertson, of facetious memory, "are better in bottle than in wood." His colleague was Dr. James MacKnight, an estimable and learned divine, whose *Harmony of the Gospels* was regarded in its day as a marvel of criticism, though simple folk wondered that the doctor should write a book to "make four men agree who never cast oot." ["I think I see his large, square, bony visage, his enormous white wig, girdled by many tiers of curls, his old, snuffy black clothes, his broad, flat felt, and his threadbare blue greatcoat. He rarely walked without reading. His elbows were stuck immovably to his haunches, on which they rested as brackets and enabled him to form a desk for his book. In this attitude he shuffled forward [in the Meadows] at the rate of half an inch a step, moving his rigid, angular bulk forward without giving place to any person or thing, or being aware there was anything in the world except himself and his volume. He died in 1800" (Cockburn's *Memorials*, p. 53).] Like the historian he was deeply dull as a preacher, so that the Old Kirk pews were sparsely attended by a slumbrous congregation. Dr. Henry would quietly observe to his friend that it was a blessing they were ministers of the same church, for otherwise "there would be two toom (empty) kirks instead of one." One pouring Sabbath Dr. MacKnight came into the vestry drenched. Carefully the beadle wiped him down, as the bells were "ringing in," and the harmonist anxiously exclaimed, "Oh! I wush I was dry - I wush I was dry; do you think I'm dry noo?" "Never mind, doctor," the historian consolingly remarked, "when ye get to the pulpit ye'll be dry eneuch." It was in 1790 that one day a summons came to the Rev. Sir Henry Moncreiff to come and see Dr. Henry at Stirling. "Come out directly, I have got something to do this week - I have got to die." He found his friend sinking fast, but cheerful and chatty; and as they were talking a neighbouring minister was announced. "That wearisome body!" sighed Mrs. Henry. "Keep him oot - keep him oot; dinna let the cratur in!" exclaimed the moribund divine. But in he came, and the sick man, with a meaning wink at his attendants, closed his eyes as if fast asleep. The visitor sat motionless, waiting for the invalid to awake, and if he ventured to whisper, a motion of Mrs. Henry's finger to her lips reduced him to silence. At last he slipped out on tiptoe, and as the door was closed the dying man opened his eyes and broke into a merry laugh. [Cockburn's *Memorials*, p. 51.] That night the old man was

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dead, at the age of seventy-two.

In the same year passed away Dr. Cullen, eminent as a physician, a lecturer on physiology, a reformer in medicine a brilliant teacher in his chair of Theory of Physic, and Edinburgh missed that tall, slouching man, with his massive wig and cocked hat, huge arched nose and pendulous lips, who used to walk contemplatively up the street with his hand in the bosom of his coat, or be borne in a sedan-chair to patients. Dr. Joseph Black, the brilliant chemist, was to be seen till 1799 - the year Lord Monboddo died - tall, cadaverously pale, with face of sweetest expression, and dark, clear, benignant eyes, the sparse hair carefully powdered and gathered into a long, thin queue, and his body clad in speckless black coat and silk stockings and silvered buckles, carrying a green silk umbrella. Everybody honoured and loved him. Rough boys and impudent caddies made way respectfully for him on the pavement. One day in March he was found dead in his study - before him his simple fare of bread and a few prunes, and carefully measured quantity of milk and water, his cup set on his knees, held by his hand, as if he had just ceased to speak. [Black's *Lectures*, i.; Memoir by Robison, p. 74.]

Others of an illustrious brotherhood survived. Dr. Carlyle lived on, active, vivacious, full of social and literary interests, and wondrous handsome, with that figure which age had not bent when he died in 1805. "He was one of the noblest-looking old gentlemen I almost ever beheld," says Lord Cockburn. Dr. Adam Ferguson was hale and rosy in silvered old age; and John Home, pleasant, good-humoured, but mentally enfeebled. These old friends had stood at the grave of their old companion Dr. Robertson in 1793 and of Dr. Blair in 1800.

In the College were professors well sustaining the fame of the venerable university. In the chair of Medicine was Dr. James Gregory, successor to his father, one of a family which had sent into the world many men of science throughout a century - one of the most able of lecturers, acute, bluff, and caustic, constantly in professional disputes, when his opinions were generally right, and engaged in feuds, when his ways were always wrong - maintaining his cause both by his ferocious pamphlets, which he hurled forth in huge quartos, and by his stick, which mauled his opponent Dr. Hamilton - though he avowed, as he paid the fine of £100, that he would willingly pay double to do it again. His appearance conformed to his militant character - a large figure, bold and stalwart, walking with his cane suggestively over his shoulder like a weapon. [Kay's *Edinburgh Portraits*, i. 450; and as in Raeburn's portrait.] A fine Latinist, in frequent request to concoct epitaphs and dedications, he knew a good deal of literature and a great deal of physic. His

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kindliness and virtues were to remain long fragrant in the memories of the people, while his famed and infamous “Gregory’s mixture” was to stink in their nostrils. Professor Playfair was lecturing to full classrooms on mathematics, with a European fame as a scientific writer; adored by students, liked by all men and loved by all women, of whom this “philanderer of the needles,” as Jeffrey called him, was a devoted champion. He was growing more youthful in soul as he grew old in body, with a florid face of beaming good-nature. As his fellow-professor he had Dr. John Robison in the chair of Natural Philosophy, who was to continue till 1805 his distinguished career in mechanical philosophy. Quaint in character as in appearance, this philosopher was a lively, humorous man in spite of bouts of hypochondria - unconventional in dress as in opinion, with his long pigtail, thin and curled, hanging down his back; his enormous head surmounted by a huge cocked hat when walking the High Street, and by a capacious nightcap when in his study; having the legs of his vast frame covered up to the thighs with white worsted hose.

[Cockburn’s *Memorials*, p. 264; Raeburn’s portrait of Robison.]

By the close of the century the clergy had almost ceased to contribute to science, learning, and letters, though many were admirable writers on agriculture. [The best county surveys of agriculture issued by the Board of Agriculture were written by shrewd moderate clergymen who farmed their land.] The wonderful crop of able men who were born between 1718 and 1724, and entered the Church when it was freeing itself from the fanaticism of the “wild party” and the domination of the people, had few successors. At the middle of the century, and on to about 1770, the clergy held a higher social position than they did at any other time. “With the advantages always of a classical, and sometimes of a polite, education, their knowledge,” says Henry Mackenzie, “was equal or superior to that of any man in their parish. When the value of land was low, and when proprietors lived more at home, the clergyman stood high in the scale of rank among his parishioners, and, as I can well remember, was able to maintain a certain style of plain and cordial hospitality which gave him all the advantages of rational, gentleman-like society. The clergy of Edinburgh mixed more than I think they have done at any subsequent period with the first and most distinguished persons of the place - distinguished whether for science, literature, and polite manners - and even as far as the clerical character might allow with men of fashion conspicuous for wit and gaiety.” [Mackenzie’s *Life of Home*, p. 10.] The most notable specimen of the accomplished country clergyman was Dr. Carlyle of Inveresk, the companion of all men of letters, who, being born in 1722, appeared at the time which, by some strange coincidence, produced most of

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the famous Scots literati. By right of good lineage, of culture and talent, he took his place with the best of them, and he was more adapted to shine in society than perhaps any one of them. Tall, strikingly handsome in form, with noble features that won for him the name of “Jupiter” Carlyle, with dignity of manners, humour, and vivacity in talk, he was a notable figure in his day. There was he living in his manse on a stipend of about £100 a year, yet entertaining at times Lord Elibank, and the Hon. Charles Townshend, and Sir William Pulteney, with his friends Hume, Ferguson, and Robertson. He was an able man of affairs in the Church, the brilliant associate of people of fashion, as welcome at Dalkeith Palace as in an Edinburgh tavern, the trusted friend of politicians like Townshend, Dundas, and Sir Gilbert Elliot, the favourite companion of men of letters and law in Edinburgh and of Smollett in London, and yet a popular pastor to his people. A cool, shrewd man, he was a moderate of the most distinct type; very apt to mistake enthusiasm for cant and zeal for fanaticism, and disposed to look with contempt on men of a narrower type. It was indeed difficult to hide that contempt for dull-witted brethren in his Presbytery who had libelled and censured him for “contravening the laws of God, of this kingdom, and the Church,” in witnessing *Douglas* performed - a play which they averred “contained tremendous oaths and woeful exclamations.” These brethren complained that the culprit “did not feel humble.” [In the Presbytery trial, one dull-pated minister condemned with holy horror such impious expressions as “despiteful Fate,” where he protested: “Fate must signify God, and consequently ‘despiteful God’ was blasphemy; also the following were quite impious, such as ‘Mighty God, what have I done to merit this affliction!’ and in like manner, speaking of Matilda’s death, ‘Her white hands to heaven seeming to say, Why am I forced to this!’ But, above all, the monstrous and unnatural crime of suicide was represented in such a manner as to render it more familiar to these kingdoms, which are already branded with that very crime above all the rest of the globe. Whereas the author might have represented Matilda bearing her misfortunes, and thereby showing the excellency of the Christian religion, saying, ‘The Lord gave and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord,’ which would support her under her calamities.” Another co-presbyter quoted words from the tragedy, “which,” he cried, “Moderator, appeared to me so horrid - they shocked me so much, that I freely own to you, Moderator, I threw the book from me on the ground!” (from Carlyle’s MS. account of the proceedings of the Presbytery of Dalkeith, April 19, 1757). Home withdrew from his play some expressions that had given offence.] It is not as a man of letters that Carlyle can rank, for with all his keen taste for literature he made but slight contributions to it. When he appeared in later years at St. James’s, being in London on Church affairs, we are told he impressed courtiers with his striking appearance, “his portly form, his fine expressive countenance, with aquiline nose, and the freshness of his face” [Description by Chief Commissioner Adams. Carlyle’s *Autobiography*, p. 567.]; while he impressed politicians with his sound sense, his honourable principles, and social qualities, in which he never forgot his character as a clergyman. Living on in vigorous old age, he deplored the departure of learning and culture and high breeding from the Church before the end

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of the century. Owing to several causes had this great change taken place. Other professions, more lucrative employments, had allured able and ambitious minds from a profession which remained poor in days when the ways of living had become less frugal. While cheap education brought into the ministry men of humble birth, the meagreness of the livings kept the best intellects out. The moderates who were then chosen by Tory patrons had seldom a taste for letters, while evangelical ministers devoted themselves exclusively to their pastoral work.

[Cockburn, p. 236; Mackenzie's *Home*, p. 10.]

When the century came to an end, those who were to be famous in the next were scarcely known. Scott, after translating German poetry, which Henry Mackenzie had first brought to knowledge, had settled down as Sheriff-Substitute of Selkirkshire, amusing his leisure time with collecting Border minstrelsy. Francis Jeffrey was making his nimble way at the Bar, not dreaming of his future career as critic and reviewer, as dispenser and demolisher of reputations. James Hogg, while herding sheep in Ettrick, was composing ballads sung by the lasses in the district - who called him "Jamie the poeter" - and on the hillsides was scribbling verses on scraps of paper in uncouth printed letters, with a phial full of ink hanging to his button-hole. With delicious self-confidence even then he was sure that he could equal his brother peasant Robert Burns. John Leyden, who in Teviotdale had also herded his father's sheep, was acting as tutor during intervals of study at college, yet already possessed of vast stores of reading in most European and Eastern languages. He was often to be found in that favourite resort of book collectors, the little shop in the High Street newly set up by young Archibald Constable, who put over his door the legend "Scarce Old Books," which sarcastic brothers of the trade persistently read "Scarce o' Books." [Archibald Constable and his *Literary Correspondents*, i. 20.] There, amid the frequenters (including old Dr. Blair, who would often come in for some novel or romance), Leyden would prowl among the shelves - a sandy-haired youth with staring eyes, talking with "saw tones," screech voice, and excited gestures on Icelandic or Arabic. Quite satisfied that his multifarious knowledge could issue in solid work, "Dash it, man," he would say, "if you have the scaffolding ready, you can run up the masonry when you please." He was to die at Batavia at the age of thirty-six, great as an Orientalist and of repute as a poet. Susan Ferrier, the future novelist, a tall, dark, and handsome girl of twenty, was keeping house for her father, the Writer to the Signet. Joanna Baillie, the poetess, living at Hampstead, among a pleasant, tea-drinking literary coterie, was to be seen at the gatherings at Mr. Barbauld's, demurely sitting as they praised her *Plays of the*

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Passions, quite unaware that she ever had written a line in her life; for, as Miss Aikin expressed it, “she lay snug in the asylum of her taciturnity.” [Clayden’s *Early Life of Rogers*, p 80.] Encouraged by the liberal teaching of Dugald Stewart, his pupils, Henry Brougham and Sydney Smith (then taking charge of his pupil in Edinburgh), with Francis Jeffrey, were concocting the *Edinburgh Review*, which was to startle the world by its youthful audacity when it appeared in 1802, clad in the buff and blue colours of the Whigs, which they copied from the hues of their idol Charles Fox’s capacious coat and waistcoat. Men like Dugald Stewart, Adam Ferguson, and Henry Mackenzie, who had seen much of the famous old days, saw that the venerable generation had finished its task. They could not yet, however, foresee whence were to come those literary forces in Scotland which should make the new century as brilliant as the last.