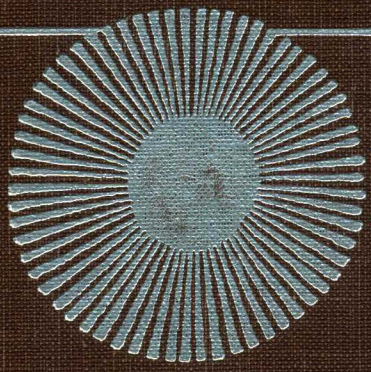
The
CHELSEA HOUSE LIBRARY
of LITERARY CRITICISM



The NEW MOULTON'S

Volume 9

HAROLD BLOOM

General Editor

EDITOR
S. T. Joshi

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Jack Bishop

EDITORIAL COORDINATOR
Karyn Gullen Browne

COPY CHIEF
Richard Fumosa

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Susanne E. Rosenberg

RESEARCH
Ann Bartunek
Anthony C. Coulter

PICTURE RESEARCH
Monica Gannon

DESIGN
Susan Lusk

Printed and bound in the United States of America.

First Printing

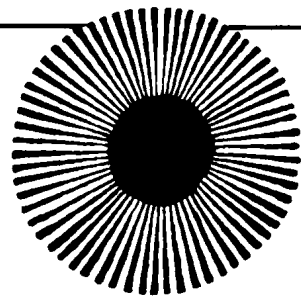
1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

The New Moulton's library of literary criticism.
(The Chelsea House library of literary criticism)
Cover title: The New Moulton's.
Rev. ed. of: Moulton's library of literary criticism.
Contents: v. 1. Medieval—early Renaissance.— —v. 9. Late Victorian.
1. English literature—History and criticism—Collected works. 2. American literature—History and criticism—Collected works. I. Bloom, Harold. II. Moulton's library of literary criticism.
PR85.N39 1985 820'.9 84-27429
ISBN 0-87754-779-3 (v. 1)
0-87754-787-4 (v. 9)

The

CHELSEA HOUSE LIBRARY *of* LITERARY CRITICISM



CONTENTS

The Index to this series, *The New Moulton's Library*, appears in Volume 11.

ILLUSTRATIONS

GEORGE GROTE

1794–1871

George Grote was born in Kent on November 17, 1794. At the age of fifteen, after studying at Charterhouse, he began working at his father's bank, where he remained until his retirement in 1843. In 1820 Grote married Harriet Lewin, the daughter of a local family. By that time he had already met James Mill, whose utilitarian views on philosophy and political economy were to have a great influence on him. An active supporter of the reform movement, Grote published pamphlets on Parliamentary reform in 1821 and 1831, and from 1832 to 1841 sat as M.P. for the City of London.

In 1822 Grote began work on his famous *History of Greece*, first published in twelve volumes between 1846 and 1856. Subsequent volumes include *Plato and the Other Contemporaries of Sokrates* (3 vols., 1865) and the posthumous *Aristotle* (2 vols., 1872), *Poems by George Grote, 1815–1823* (privately printed in 1872), *The Minor Works of George Grote* (ed. Alexander Bain, 1873), and *Fragments on Ethical Subjects* (ed. Alexander Bain, 1876). Grote died on June 18, 1871, having outlived his younger brother John (1813–1866), a professor of moral philosophy at Cambridge and the author of several well-received philosophical works, including *Exploratio Philosophica* (2 parts, 1865 and 1900), *Examination of the Utilitarian Philosophy* (an attack on utilitarianism, 1870), and *A Treatise on the Moral Ideals* (1876).

Personal

I have been making a tour of Ilfracombe and Lynton. The moral of my journey is, I am too old to make journeys, and had better stay at home. Mr. and Mrs. Grote have been staying here some days. She is very clever and very odd. Grote is a reasonable and reasoning Radical, with manners a little formal but very polished.—SYDNEY SMITH, Letter to Lady Holland (Oct. 9, 1843)

The last house where we were visiting a week ago is a very different place, belonging to very different persons—Mr. and Mrs. Grote. I do not know whether you have ever read Grote's *History of Greece*. But it is one of the great works of the age, is fully recognised as such, and will last as long as Gibbon's *Roman Empire*. I feel it a great honour to have been commended and taken cordially by the hand by such a man. He had been reading my book, and showed me many passages which he had marked and commented upon. He is very kind-hearted, and with most genuine, childlike simplicity of manner, not always found in company with such exuberant and accurate erudition as he possesses.—JOHN LOTHROP MOTLEY, Letter to His Mother (Feb. 13, 1860), *Correspondence*, ed. George William Curtis, 1889, Vol. 1, p. 333

⟨. . .⟩ unlike most persons who have the prospect of being rich by inheritance, he had, though actively engaged in the business of banking, devoted a great portion of time to philosophic studies; and his intimacy with my father did much to decide the character of the next stage in his mental progress. Him I often visited, and my conversations with him on political, moral, and philosophical subjects gave me, in addition to much valuable instruction, all the pleasure and benefit of sympathetic communion with a man of the high intellectual and moral eminence which his life and writings have since manifested to the world.—JOHN STUART MILL, *Autobiography*, 1873, Ch. 3

I have often regretted that, though I passed a month in daily intercourse with Grote, I kept no record of his conversation; and I have regretted it all the more from the impression it made upon me at the time. He was not like Johnson, an overwhelming talker, nor like Macaulay, an eloquent talker, much less like Sydney Smith, a scintillating and brilliant talker; but he was an earnest and truth-loving talker, who made social intercourse a means of testing and elucidating his subject. We were talking one evening about Roman dwellings. This naturally brought up the vexed question of *domus* and *insula*. I had studied it with no little care, and fancied myself at home in it. Grote had taken a different view of the subject, and as he went on calmly but distinctly adducing his authorities and interpreting his texts, I felt my ground gradually sinking under me, till I had hardly an inch of it left me to stand upon. I could only wonder at my own audacity in trying to hold it. For him it was evidently not a conversational triumph, but a careful review of a subject on which his opinion—always the result of careful thought and extensive reading—had been already formed. He talked like the friend of Ricardo and the two Mills. And this was the distinctive characteristic of his conversation: he sought truth everywhere, and seemed to feel that he had no time to talk for victory. He could take up a theory and lay it down again as facts demanded. In historical questions especially, he held all trifling with truth to act like a malignant pustule, poisoning and corrupting the whole system.

His manner corresponded with his matter,—calm, firm, and earnest; and though a frequent speaker in the House of Commons, he never put on the tone of a declaimer at the dinner table or an evening circle. His words were well chosen, neither elaborately Saxon, nor fastidiously Latin, but coming freely at his bidding from either source. The structure of his sentences was simple and direct, rising at times to eloquence under the inspiration of his deep convictions, but leaving something, perhaps, to desire in harmony and variety. He would seem, indeed, to have contented himself with a secondary place among pictorial historians, if he could but make for himself a sure place among the philosophers who have written history.

We took long walks in the pleasant winter afternoons, and more than once gave ourselves up to the inspiration of the gorgeous sunsets of San Pietro in Montorio, where you stand with Rome and her Tiber at your feet, and with a sweep of the eye embrace Soracte naked and bare on the northern horizon, and the rugged mountains of Sabina, and the soft outline of the Alban Mount, and, solemnly brooding over all, sweet memo-

ries of Horace and Cicero. But our longest walk was round the walls. We took our time for it, often pausing to dwell upon some historical association, or call each other's attention to some new feature of the landscape; Rome's blue sky over our heads, and under our feet the catacombs. And there, as we walked slowly along, sometimes in glowing interchange of thought, sometimes in silent meditation, he yielded himself to the influences of the spot, and told me the story of his life,—told me at how early an age he had conceived the idea of a book which should interpret the marvels of Greek civilization; and how diligently he had worked upon it in hours stolen from uncongenial pursuits and painful conflicts of duties; and how, having brought it down to Pisistratus, public cares, the banking house, and Parliament had pressed upon him so urgently that, yielding the past to the present, he laid Greece aside for Great Britain, the reform of Solon for the reform of English representation.

And now, after anxious, exciting years of uncongenial labor, the presence of these classic scenes awoke a longing for the sweet companionship of books and the hopes which had cheered his early manhood. He had stood on the floor of the House of Commons as the representative of one of the greatest constituencies of England; had always raised his voice for progress and freedom; had borne his part in stormy debates and laborious investigations; had learned how men and parties are formed and governed,—how difficult the progress of truth, and how deep set the roots of error. He had brought a new interpreter to the elucidation of ancient history, by whose aid dark places became clear and crooked ways were made straight. He was passing from the hustings to the Pnyx, from Leadenhall Street to the Parthenon; from the damps and fogs of London to the skies which look down so lovingly upon the seat of ancient art. He was but just touching the prime of life. How many years of happy labor lay before him!—GEORGE WASHINGTON GREENE, "Reminiscences of George Grote," *Atlantic*, Dec. 1879, pp. 772–73

General

You have, no doubt, been enjoying, as I have, Grote's *History*. High as my expectations were of it, it has very much surpassed them all, and affords an earnest of something which has never been done for the subject either in our own or any other literature. It has afforded me some gratification to find that in the flood of new light which he has poured upon it his views do not appear greatly to diverge from mine on more than a few important points, and those of a special nature not involving any general principles. For though I am not yet satisfied with the limits he prescribes in his first volume to the investigations which occupy a part of mine, I think it would be found on a further analysis that the difference between us is not very material.—CONNOP THIRLWALL, Letter to Dr. Schmitz (April 9, 1846)

Mr. Grote has written on the ballot, has contributed to the *Edinburgh* and *Westminster*; has issued a pamphlet on Plato's theory of the Earth, and another on the Republic of Switzerland. A philosophical republican and yet a despiser of *demus*, an ardent supporter of the ballot because, we fancy, he fears the corruption of the people, a man of learned ease and yet a most laborious scholar, this great historian seems to be a contradiction, and yet is a wholehearted, honest, wise man. To give a specimen of his great history—a large work, in twelve volumes—would be to bring a brick from Babylon under the notion of picturing the elevation of the houses and plan of the streets. Let the reader dip into it wherever he may, he cannot go wrong, and will be abundantly rewarded. For the scholar there is an interesting and masterly discussion on the myths and legends of early Greece; for the student of literature the disquisitions upon Homer, and all the poets, historians, and philosophers, from Æschylus and Herodotus down to Plato and Plutarch; for the statesman, the remarkable descriptions of the legislation of Lycurgus, the object of ostracism, the working of the Athenian constitution, the influence of the democratic form of government, and the causes of the decline of the once invincible republics of Greece; and for the "general reader," the narrative of the war against Xerxes, the battles of Marathon and Thermopylæ, the retreat of the Ten Thousand, the expedition to Syracuse, and a hundred other episodes, any or all of which he will follow with breathless and sustained interest. Mr. Grote's work has revolutionised our notions of ancient Greece. It is a wonderful story, and is wonderfully told.—J. HAIN FRISWELL, "Mr. George Grote," *Modern Men of Letters Honestly Criticised*, 1870, pp. 190–91

The *History of Greece* is, indeed, enriched by all those qualities which are necessary to make such a work at once trustworthy, entertaining, and instructive. Its style—and this is perhaps most marked in the first volume, wherein he develops the wonderful theological system, wreathed as it is in allegory and symbolism, of the Greeks—has a fresh and racy vigor, which contrasts with Gibbon's stately march of sentences, and with Hume's dry and often even arid simplicity. The elaborate preparation of the author did not apparently wear upon his enthusiasm for his subject, which maintains the interest of the narrative, and the earnestness of the argument, to the last page. It is one of those few long histories which the desultory reader, after dipping into it, does not shrink from and abandon after the first or second volume has been perused. To be sure, the subject is full of all the allurements which a remote heroic age, already illuminated by a noble literature, presents, and which could not but win a mind like that of Grote. But the threefold task of acquiring the vast amount of knowledge necessary to such a work, of digesting it—separating wheat from chaff—and of presenting it in a readable form, is one which can only be appreciated by the historian himself, who has in his own person surmounted its difficulties.

The *History of Greece* proper—the work known under that name—was, however, only a part of the lofty design of the writer. In this he surveyed the mythology, the political changes, the military career, the march of laws, the manners and customs of the Greeks, from the remotest tradition down to the period when Grecian splendor dimmed, and the power of Rome eclipsed, the renown and prestige of Hellas in Europe. The philosophy and the philosophers of Greece were indeed considered, their systems and influence upon the ages described; but this was in a manner incidentally, as a subject rather collateral than immediately pertinent. In one of the chapters there is a description of Socrates, which is one of the noblest and best-known passages of the whole book; therein Grote dwells at some length on the influence of that philosopher on contemporary scholars, and on the succeeding philosophical schools, and especially on Plato, as exhibited in Plato's later writings; he shows (what was, perhaps, scarcely before recognized by modern classical students) that, although Socrates was but one of a company of scholars, which included, as his friends and fellow-thinkers, Plato, Xenophon, Æschines, Aristippus, and Antisthenes, he impressed upon them to a large degree his own method of reasoning, and gave the prevailing, though sometimes underlying, tone to the current of their speculations, which became subject to systems

derived from this controlling mind. Grote reserved for a later work the amplification of the philosophical schools, and the execution of an intellectual history of Greece from his point of view. This was *Plato and Other Companions of Socrates*, published, in three octavo volumes, in 1865. It is, necessarily, a less popular and less widely-known work than its predecessor; but has an equal if not a superior value, as a permanent addition to literature; for, while history teaches affairs by examples, the results of all profound philosophical thought must, more or less, aid in the solution of the deepest and gravest problems which affect humanity. The felicities of Grote's style have done much to lighten the abstract tenor of the instruction conveyed by the *Plato;* he seems equally at home in the soberly-lighted porch of the Stoics, and among the revels of Olympus, and the shows at Corinth; and comprehends equally the value to all mankind of a Platonic aphorism, and the significance of Mercury's or Vulcan's godlike attributes. The intellectual activity and results of the Socratic age, the previous preparation in the Greek commonwealth for the advent of this remarkable school, and its influence upon that country at periods remotely subsequent, are clearly comprehended by Grote, who gives to his exposition a profoundly critical discrimination and analysis, which are of especial value to the reader who is not already familiar with the subject. —GEORGE M. TOWLE, "George Grote," *Appleton's Journal*, July 22, 1871, pp. 86–87

Mr. Grote's history of Greece is indeed a monumental piece of work. It has all that patience and exhaustive care which principally mark the German historians, and it has an earnestness which is not to be found generally in the representatives of what Carlyle has called the Dryasdust school. Grote threw himself completely into the life and the politics of Athens. It was said of him with some truth that he entered so thoroughly into all the political life of Greece as to become now and then the partisan of this or that public man. His own practical acquaintance with politics was undoubtedly of great service to him. We have all grown somewhat tired of hearing the words of Gibbon quoted in which he tells us that "the discipline and evolutions of a modern battalion gave me a clearer notion of the phalanx and the legion; and the captain of the Hampshire Grenadiers (the reader may smile) has not been useless to the historian of the Roman Empire." Assuredly the practical knowledge of politics which Grote acquired during the nine or ten years of his parliamentary career was of much service to the historian of Greece. It has been said indeed of him that he never could quite keep from regarding the struggles of parties in Athens as exactly illustrating the principles disputed between the Liberals and the Tories in England. It does not seem to us, however, that his political career affected his historical studies in any way but by throwing greater vitality and nervousness into his descriptions of Athenian controversies. The difference between a man who has mingled anywhere in the active life of politics, and one who only knows that life from books and the talk of others, is specially likely to show itself in such a study as Grote's history. His political training enabled Grote to see in the statesmen and soldiers of the Greek peoples men and not trees walking. It taught him how to make the dry bones live. Mr. Grote began life as what would have been called in later years a Philosophical Radical. He was a close friend of Stuart Mill, although he did not always agree with Mill in his opinions. During his Parliamentary career he devoted himself for the most part to the advocacy of the system of vote by ballot. He brought forward a motion on the subject every session, as Mr. Charles Villiers did at one time for the repeal of the Corn Laws. He only gave up the House of Commons in order that he might be free to complete his great history. He did not retain all his radical opinions to the end of his life so thoroughly as Mill did, but owned with a certain regret that in many ways his views had undergone modification, and that he grew less and less ardent for political change, less hopeful, we may suppose, of the amount of good to be done for human happiness and virtue by the spread and movement of what are now called advanced opinions. It must be owned that it takes a very vigorous and elastic mind to enable a man to resist the growth of that natural and physical tendency towards conservatism or reaction which comes with advancing years. It is as well for society on the whole that this should be so, and that the elders as a rule should form themselves into a guard to challenge very pertinaciously all the eager claims and demands for change made by hopeful and restless youth. No one would more readily have admitted the advantage that may come from this common law of life than Grote's friend, Mill; although Mill remained to the close of his career as full of hope in the movement of liberal opinions as he had been in his boyhood; still, to quote from some noble words of Schiller, "reverencing as a man the dreams of his youth." In his later years Grote withdrew from all connection with active political controversy, and was indeed curiously ignorant of the very bearings of some of the greatest questions around the settlement of which the passions and interests of another hemisphere were brought into fierce and vast dispute.—JUSTIN MCCARTHY, *A History of Our Own Times*, 1879–80, Ch. 29

As the names of Greece and Rome are ever associated together in the history of antiquity, so the names of Grote and Gibbon will ever be mentioned together in the literary history of England. There is a certain propriety that a country which has surpassed Rome in the extent of her empire, and at least equals Greece in all matters of philosophical and intellectual accomplishment, should have given birth to the greatest writer on the decline and fall of the one, and the best historian of the rise and progress of the other. We cannot tell what the future may have in store for us, but it is difficult to believe the histories of Gibbon and Grote can ever be superseded. Discoveries may be made that may cast fresh light on particular points, writers may arise who may survey certain portions of the field from other and truer stand-points, isolated conclusions of the historians may be called in question or proved to be erroneous—all these things may occur, as indeed, some of them have occurred already, but that the histories of Greece and Rome, as written by Grote and Gibbon, will ever become obsolete it is very difficult to conceive. They have been written with so much genius and care, that they will survive as literary works even when they are found to be faulty as histories.

There have not been wanting those who have said that the writers of history are more worthy of our admiration than the makers of it, that it is Gibbon we admire and not Constantine, Grote and not Alcibiades, Motley and not William the Silent. The statement is too sweeping to be accepted in its entirety, but there can be no doubt it contains in it a certain element of truth. The historian is not a mere annalist—a bare recorder of the facts of a nation's life. He differs from the latter as the painter differs from the photographer, and for the carrying out of his work the historian, like the painter, requires a severely disciplined artistic sense. To put down in their order the dates of the births and deaths of princes, the names of the places where battles were fought, the names of the generals, and which side won, is the part of the chronicler; but it is the work of the historian to group, to paint, and to vivify, to trace the

hidden stream of tendency which has brought about particular events, and to calculate the results which are likely to proceed or flow from them. It is the artistic elements which the historian embodies in his narrative that attract the attention of the reader to the genius of the former, while perusing the events of the latter. It is these elements, entering as they do in so large a measure into the substance of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and the *History of Greece*, which give these works a permanent literary value, apart altogether from the importance or accuracy of the facts they record.—PETER ANTON, "George Grote," *Masters in History*, 1880, pp. 63–64

Grote belongs to that class of writers whose services in the good cause of learning command our respect as students, but to whom, when we have gone our way, we forget to be grateful. Write he never so wisely and well, he fails to capture our allegiance, for neither to Grote's imagination, nor to his style, belonged the qualities that enlist sympathy for the person of the writer, or lure one back to his company. Yet his work, philosophical in aim and nobly planned, may fairly be said to mark an epoch in the development of historical science. In the *History of Greece*, built upon the foundation of sound learning, the political and social aspects of Hellenic life were for the first time brought into the foreground, formerly occupied by the deeds of heroes, by embassies to and fro among the cities, by portraits of statesmen drawn from Plutarch, and by rhetoric on the golden occasions afforded by Salamis, Platæa, Marathon. In scope and conception all is admirable, but Grote's attitude is too confident, the very assurance of his knowledge in itself begets indefinable suspicions. The arguments are too good, the causes of things too abundantly evident, and despite the clearness of atmosphere we are not inclined to believe that the last secrets of the Hellenic temper and genius are presented to us in these pat conclusions of a disciple of Bentham. If this be his offence in the region of history, what shall be said of his later work in philosophy? With the same assurance with which, to use his own phrase, he had planned "to exhaust the free life of collective Hellas," he proceeded to pluck out the heart of Plato's mystery. But philosophy was not enriched by Grote's attempt to prove Plato a Utilitarian philosopher, or to find in Platonism the original of his own system. A James Mill might, indeed, be found there—and other philosophers—but without serious encroachment on the broad expanse of that intellectual territory. Keenly intelligent as was Grote's mind, it was of the practical Teutonic type, which in the rarified air of the Platonic philosophy breathes only with difficulty, is baffled by the irony that leavens it throughout, and lags far behind in appreciation of the delicate elusive subtleties of that marvellous dialectic.

Were his reputation now in the balance, to part from so indefatigable a worker, and, despite his limitations, so strong a thinker and writer, with no word of praise, would be scant courtesy, and scanter appreciation. But we have passed in our intellectual development the point at which Grote, like his fellow-historian Macaulay, was an inspiring force, and no discriminating estimate could assign him the rank among Englishmen which he held among his contemporaries. Rhetoric has lost its ancient charm, we are no longer enamoured of logical vigour, unaccompanied by imaginative insight, or of style that lacks the light and shade everywhere present in nature. Nor was it proved by his parliamentary career, that Grote was a statesman. The world is half a century older since he entered public life, and the science of politics, of which he was an admirable representative, does not yet supply the principles that control the democracy, or govern the deliberations of assemblies. "Mr. Grote," said Sydney Smith, "is a very worthy, honest, and able man; and if the world were a chessboard, would have been an important politician."

Indisputably, history was the field of Grote's best work, his equipment as historian embraced not a few of the essential qualities; a fresh and real interest in life, its colour, breadth, and variety, a true instinct for narrative, an impartial judgment, the patience of the student, and the knowledge of the man of affairs. A little more, and he might have been a great man; as it is, we can only say, that he is a commanding figure in the history of English scholarship.—W. MACNEILE DIXON, "George Grote," *English Prose*, ed. Henry Craik, 1896, Vol. 5, pp. 357–59

Grote was a Benthamite, and had all the hardness without quite all the force of that school. It was the rising school, and part of Grote's success was due to the fact that he was moving along the line of least resistance. He was a persevering, clear-sighted, determined man. As a historian of Greece he was patient and thorough. He had marked out the subject as his own more than twenty years before the publication, in 1846, of his first two volumes; and ten years more passed before the work was finished. Indeed, we may say that his whole life was devoted to it; for, according to his conception of history, *Plato and the Other Companions of Sokrates* (1865), and the incomplete Aristotelian studies issued posthumously in 1872, were parts and appendages of the history.

Grote was spurred on to this work by political feelings more nearly related to the present time. He was irritated by the Toryism of Mitford's *History of Greece*, which he exposed in an article in the *Westminster Review*. Yet one of his own most conspicuous defects is that he too evidently holds a brief on the opposite side. He does not slur facts, still less does he falsify, but his arguments have sometimes the character of special pleading. Democracy becomes a kind of fetish to him. Its success in the Athens of the fifth century B.C. is made an argument for extending the English franchise in the nineteenth century A.D.; and Grote is wholly blind to the fact that the wide difference of circumstances makes futile all reasoning from the one case to the other.

Grote's style is heavy and ungainly. He plods along, correct as a rule, but uninspiring and unattractive. He is similarly clumsy in the use of materials. Skilful selection might have appreciably shortened his history; but Grote rarely prunes with sufficient severity, and often he does not prune at all. His habit of pouring out the whole mass of his material in the shape of notes lightens the labour of his successors, but injures his own work as an artistic history. Nevertheless, though Grote had no genius, and nothing that deserves to be called a style, his *History of Greece* holds the field. It does so because of its solidity and conscientious thoroughness, because of its patient investigation of the origin and meaning of institutions, and because its very faults were, after all, faults which sprang from sympathy. Grote was the first who did full justice to the Athenian people; and he may be pardoned if he sometimes did them more than justice. —HUGH WALKER, *The Age of Tennyson*, 1897, pp. 125–26

A. V. DICEY

"Grote's Character as an Historian"

Nation, August 6, 1874, pp. 91–92

Grote's permanent reputation depends on his history. The publication of his minor works, which unfortunately do not include his remarkable 'Letters on Politics of Switzerland,' gives the opportunity and the means of considering his character as an historian. The interesting essays edited by Mr.

Alexander Bain are not, it is true, mainly historical, though they contain three valuable contributions to the theory of history; but the philosophical essays, which make up the mass of the volume, are themselves of importance in estimating Mr. Grote's position among writers on history. The review, for example, of Sir William Hamilton's philosophy contains a splendid eulogy of James Mill, and a noble tribute of gratitude from his pupil, who owed, in his own judgment, to the historian of British India "an amount of intellectual stimulus and guidance such as he can never forget." This expression of gratitude is as true as it is generous, and points to the fact, which ought never to be forgotten in any estimate of the work done by Grote, that to the philosophical enthusiasm stirred up in his mind by James Mill is due at least half of his literary success. His own great powers, his rare industry, his rarer intellectual singleness of purpose, would of themselves have led him to eminence. But something more was needed to enable him to open a new era in the study of Grecian history. His success was, moreover, achieved under no common difficulty, for he was forced to contend with a man in every respect but one his equal or superior. To expose the fallacies and weakness of Mitford was nothing. To occupy a field which Bishop Thirlwall had marked as his own was a triumph of which any man might be proud. As a scholar, Thirlwall was Grote's superior. He equalled Grote in knowledge, and probably surpassed him in judgment. The Bishop further possessed a greater command of style than his rival, who though a forcible is always an awkward and occasionally an incorrect writer. Grote, nevertheless, as the Bishop had the singular generosity both to see and admit, produced a work which has permanently thrown Dr. Thirlwall's meritorious labors into the shade. The cause of this is that Grote, with some defects, shows a force or grasp and above all an originality of mind and boldness of conception quite foreign to the somewhat episcopal caution of the Bishop's intellect. But this boldness in speculation is due, if in part to nature, in great measure also to the philosophy of James Mill, which taught his pupils not to be overawed by received opinions. "*Ausus vana contemnere*" is often as good a description of the man who has triumphed in the province of philosophical or historical speculation as of the victor who has conquered in the field of battle. Grote's success at least is due above all things to the intellectual boldness which, while it did not lead him to waste his strength on the maintenance of unprofitable paradoxes, enabled him to look at the wants of the past with his own eyes unblinded by traditional phrases or prejudices sanctioned by a weight of high authority. That this is so becomes apparent the moment we consider the two main features which give its originality to Grote's *History of Greece*. Its first peculiarity is that Grote throughout his history judges of political institutions, and to some extent of politicians, according to the principles of modern civilization, rather than in accordance with the views which have been handed down by writers whose opinions are opposed to all modern ideas of progress. Thus, even so early as 1830 he had begun to look at the ancient democracies in a light quite different from that in which they were regarded by persons who derived their impressions solely from the language of ancient authors whose sympathies are anti-democratic. "Taking," he writes, "these defects" (of the ancient democracies) "at the utmost, and comparing the Grecian democracies with any other form of government, either existing in ancient times or projected by the ancient philosophers, we have no hesitation in pronouncing them decidedly and unquestionably superior. That the securities they provided for good government were lamentably deficient we fully admit, but the oligarchies and monarchies afforded no securities at all." This principle affords the clue which guides him throughout all his criticisms on Athenian history, and it is a clue which, if it occasionally led him into mistakes, far more frequently saved him from fatal errors and led him to perceive truths which were hidden from all other students. The boldness with which he seized on the true character of the ancient democratic governments is itself a specimen of the happy audacity with which he questioned accepted dogmas. In his explanation of the real nature of ostracism; in his marvellously sagacious comments upon the different effects of usury in the modern and in the ancient worlds; in the apt illustration, by parallels drawn from modern history, of events such as the mutilation of the Hermae, in his defence of the Sophists, there is seen exactly the same keenness of insight and freedom of view which made it possible for him to perceive that the democratic governments of the ancient world were, if not perfect, still the best governments of their day. No one will assert that Mr. Grote's distrust of prejudices did not occasionally lead him to underestimate views of history which, though generally received, were grounded on truth. But even where the opinions he maintained are most open to question, they always bring into view facts which most readers overlook. Few critics, for example, will hold that Mr. Grote's defence of the Sophists is entirely successful. He seems to have underrated the weight which must be attached to the uniformly adverse testimony of ancient writers. But his argument has not been without fruit. No one can write of them as every one wrote of them before the publication of Grote's history. The Sophists had their vices, and Grote has underrated these vices, but no one since he wrote can treat the Sophists as a body who might be described as the Jesuits of antiquity.

The second characteristic of Grote's history is that it is the first attempt made by an historian to estimate the credibility of ancient annals in accordance with avowed and systematic canons of evidence. Niebuhr had already thrown doubt on the credibility of early legends, but he does not seem to have realized to himself, and certainly never placed before his readers, definite principles by which to determine the credibility of existing narratives. Thirlwall, again, in dealing with the legendary history of Greece, clearly showed that his belief in its worth was tempered by the dictates of educated common sense. Yet though in effect he often attached little weight to early traditions, he never lays down any general rule as to the amount of belief which ought to be assigned to the ancient myths. Grote, on the other hand, has clearly fixed principles which he never hesitates to apply. On this point, his essay on Grecian legends and his review of "Sir George C. Lewis on the Credibility of Early Roman History" are most instructive, for they unfold with great lucidity his theory of historical evidence. The fundamental principle on which it rests is that "the *onus probandi* always lies upon the historian, and the simple absence of evidence is sufficient to put him out of court." This rule he applies with the utmost rigor, combining it with another of at least equal importance, viz., that in many states of society alleged facts are believed to have happened, not because of what we in modern days should consider proof of their having taken place, but because of their coincidence with a certain condition of sentiment. Of a great part of the legends which have been handed down as originally traditions, and have been ultimately received as history, he thus writes:

> They are tales which grow out of and are accommodated to the emotions of the public among whom they circulate. They exemplify and illustrate the partialities or antipathies, the hopes or fears, the religious or political sentiments of a given audience.

There is no other evidence to certify them except their plausibility, but that title is amply sufficient.

Combine these two causes, and the result which follows is obvious. You have history as long as you can trace the narrative of past events up to persons who have been witnesses of them. You may also, of course, find evidence for past facts in existing laws or customs, or in laws or customs known to have existed; but where evidence ceases, there history ceases also. Hence Grote rigidly excludes from the field of history all the great myths of Greece. He shows both that it is perfectly possible to modify and adapt such legends so as to make them read like history, and further, such modification and adaptation is absolutely worthless. He also shows, and this is a matter deserving the most careful attention, that the tendency to form myths exists in all states of society, though as civilization advances it is kept in check by counteracting influences. Nothing can be happier as an illustration of this tendency than the wild story of Byron, which Grote points out as believed as a fact, without a tittle of real evidence in its support, by no less a person than Goethe. If the historian had written the article in which this illustration occurs in 1870 instead of 1843, he might have drawn further illustrations of the growth of legend from controversies and speculations connected with the history or legend of Byron.

It is, however, of consequence fully to understand Grote's position. He was not a mere historical sceptic. He was not possessed by anything like that rooted disposition to disbelieve received statements which was the weak point in the strong mind of his friend, Sir G. C. Lewis. Few things are in this respect better worth reading than his comments on Lewis's excessive scepticism. Grote points out for example that the weight to be attached to mere inconsistencies in early history may very well be overrated, for discrepancies quite as many and as great are often to be found in the accounts given by witnesses contemporary with the events they narrate, and cites in confirmation of this assertion the almost incredible obscurity in which the facts of the war in La Vendée have been involved by the carelessness or dishonesty of the persons by whom the accounts of these wars have been given. He, therefore, insists that the spirit of hypothesis and recombination, though often abused in the hands of a writer like Niebuhr, whose imagination certainly at times mastered his judgment, is in itself legitimate. In other words, he held (and this is perfectly consistent with denial of historical character to early myths) that where the particular events of a period could not be traced out because of the want of evidence on which to erect an historical narrative, many general inferences of value may be established by the use of analogy or by comparison with corresponding states of civilization in the history of better-known countries. "What we expect," he writes, "from the further study of the early republic, is not so much a corrected version of the facts of detail as better and clearer views of the institutional practice and development gathered by combination, inference, and cautious hypothesis from a variety of distinct sources." This expectation has in the case to which it refers been fully justified, for the words of Grote might be taken to describe the effect of Mommsen's labors in elucidating the earlier stages of Roman history. It expresses, moreover, the hopes of all judicious students with regard to the earlier periods of history. To turn myth into historical narrative is impossible. What is possible is to substitute for a belief in baseless though long accredited legends a certain amount of knowledge of the early development of society. The great achievement of a writer such as Grote is to have placed the facts we do know in new lights, and by making us perceive distinctly where our knowledge ceases, to have cleared the path for new and fruitful investigation.

ROBERT CHAMBERS

1802–1871

Robert Chambers was born in Peebles, Scotland, on July 10, 1802. He began working in 1818 as a bookstall keeper in Edinburgh, and soon formed friendships with a number of writers, including Sir Walter Scott. In 1823 he published *Traditions of Edinburgh* (much admired by Scott), and followed by various books, including *Popular Rhymes of Scotland* (1826), a *Life of Robert Burns* (1851), the *Domestic Annals of Scotland* (1859–61), and *Songs of Scotland prior to Burns* (1862). The anonymously published *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844) caused much controversy and, though not strictly a scientific work, helped pave the way for *The Origin of Species*.

In 1832 Robert Chambers and his brother William (1800–1883) together started *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*. This led to the establishment of the publishing firm of W. & R. Chambers, which issued, among other things, *Chambers's Cyclopaedia of English Literature* (1842–44), mostly written by Robert, and *Chambers's Encyclopaedia* (1859–68), edited by Andrew Findlater but personally supervised by the brothers. Robert died at St. Andrews, Fifeshire, on March 17, 1871, followed by William in 1883, but the management of the firm remained within the family, and many subsequent editions of the *Cyclopaedia* and *Encyclopaedia* followed. *The Memoir of William and Robert Chambers*, written by William Chambers, appeared in 1872.

Personal

Of Robert Chambers's friendly, open-armed reception to those who went to Edinburgh and needed introduction to the beauties of this Queen City of North Britain, no terms can be too strong or too high. He placed himself at the disposal of such visitors with the utmost unreserve and the most unwearied kindness; and no man was better fitted to act cicerone by the most interesting among the numerous noteworthy objects there to be seen. He shone to great advantage himself while indicating them; for his talk was intelligent, clear, well-informed, and extremely pleasant. He seemed to enjoy afresh the things

he was discussing and displaying for the thousandth time; and to be as much interested in them himself, as he made them doubly and trebly interesting to the person he was guiding. —CHARLES COWDEN CLARKE, MARY COWDEN CLARKE, *Recollections of Writers*, 1878, pp. 96–97

Dr. Robert Chambers presented a curious admixture of antiquarian and conservative instincts, and old nonjuring sympathies, with an extreme liberalism in thought on all educational or scientific questions of his own day, which often gave occasion for friendly banter in the lighter moods of social intercourse. But he was himself very tender in regard to the feelings of others; and had all the sensitiveness of a singularly gentle and loving nature, which made his friends careful not to push their banter to an extreme. With his keen Jacobite sentiment, and his no less ardent sympathy with all modern progress; his archaic veneration, and the bold scientific radicalism which won for him, rightly or not, the repute of author of the *Vestiges of Creation*: there was a rare compass in the genial sympathy of the man. Whatever interested his friends could not fail for the time being to command his interest. And now he lives only in memory! though with me as one of the kindliest, most amiable, and loving of men; very sensitive, and tender towards others: as one who amid all the prosperity of maturer years, never forgot his early struggles, or allowed himself to grow callous to early strugglers.—DANIEL WILSON, *Reminiscences of Old Edinburgh*, 1878, Vol. 2, p. 150

His manner was dry, and though his eye twinkled with humor, I did not immediately recognize it as such. It was, in fact, the first acquaintance that I had made with a man of his type, and he puzzled me. I never fell into the Englishman's error in connection with northern "wut." Of epigram and repartee the Scotch have indeed very little; they do not understand the use of the rapier; but their humor, generally grim as that of the Americans (though not the least like it), yet sometimes very good-natured, I did not fail to appreciate from the first. Robert Chambers's humor was of the good-natured sort. His nature was essentially "good;" from the pleasure he took in the popularity of his friends, I used to call him "the Well-wisher;" nor did he confine himself, as so many benevolent folks do, to wishing. I was intimately connected with him for twenty years, every one of which increased my regard for him, and when he died I lost one of the truest friends I ever had.

His manner, however, on first acquaintance, was somewhat solid and unsympathetic. He had a very striking face and figure, as well known in Edinburgh as St. Giles's Cathedral, but a stranger would have taken him for a divine, possibly even for one of the "unco' guid." In London his white tie and grave demeanor caused him to be always taken for a clergyman—a very great mistake—which used to tickle him exceedingly. —JAMES PAYN, *Some Literary Recollections*, 1884, pp. 109–10

General

I wrought to day, but not much—rather dawdled, and took to reading Chambers' *Beauties of Scotland*, which would be admirable if they were more accurate. He is a clever young fellow, but hurts himself by too much haste.—SIR WALTER SCOTT, *Journal*, Feb. 15, 1829

In 1844 Robert Chambers, with the help of Dr. Robert Carruthers of Inverness, completed in two large volumes a *Cyclopædia of English Literature*, intended to diffuse a knowledge of the great English writers by setting numerous extracts from their writings in brief records of their lives. This work has been, and still is, widely serviceable. A new and revised edition of it was produced in 1860. Essays from Chambers's Journal and other works of Robert Chambers were collected in 1847 as his *Select Writings* in seven volumes. For some years past, he had been studying geology. In 1840 he had been elected a member of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. He has generally been credited with the authorship of a book published in 1844, *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* that set many talking and some thinking, and was one of the first signs of a new rise in the tide of scientific thought. *Ancient Sea Margins*, published in 1848, was an acknowledged book. ⟨. . .⟩ Robert's later books had been *The Life and Works of Burns* in 1851; *Tracings of Iceland and the Faroe Islands* in 1856; *Domestic Annals of Scotland from the Reformation to the Revolution* in 1858; the same work continued in 1861 to the Rebellion. His *Book of Days*, a work upon which great labour was spent, was in course of issue from 1860 to 1867. Some help that was anticipated failed him, and the strain of labour was too great. While engaged in the work, he lost his wife, also a daughter. *The Book of Days* was a success, but he himself spoke of it as his death blow. He went for health to St. Andrews, was made L.L.D. by the University there, and known as "the Doctor;" but vigour of life was gone. In the course of his life he had produced, says his brother, upwards of seventy volumes, besides detached papers which could hardly be counted. So it is that our strong men now fight with the dragons.—HENRY MORLEY, *Of English Literature in the Reign of Victoria*, 1881, pp. 226–28

Chambers adopted a chronological arrangement of poems and letters, which he sandwiched between slices of gossip and biography. Most industrious in the interviewing of everybody with even a remote acquaintance with the poet, and in the chronicling of tradition and report, he aimed, above all, at the production of a book which should do credit to his *Instructive and Entertaining Library*. His *Burns* has therefore the defects of its qualities. It contains much that was new, and is true; but it is overloaded with detail, in which hearsay too often does duty for fact. It is worth noting, too, that while Chambers—(who did not hesitate to suppress or even change, in the interests of decorum)—took credit for a faithfully zealous 'attempt' to 'place the writings of Burns before the world' with 'fidelity as to text,' he in the same breath declared that 'here there is little room for amendment.' The natural consequence of such fundamental nescience was that, instead of appreciably improving the text, he added to it his own peculiar quota of corruptions. Several new pieces were included by him, but little or no definite information was given as to how or where they were got.—W. E. HENLEY, T. F. HENDERSON, *The Poetry of Robert Burns*, 1896, Vol. 2, pp. 289–90

Works

VESTIGES OF THE NATURAL HISTORY OF CREATION

A book which has been reprinted here, and read, perhaps, quite as much as it has in England. I read it through at once, in the beautiful copy you sent me, and enjoyed the transparent style in which it is written, and the boldness of its philosophical generalization, very much. But I have no faith in the conclusion to which it comes, because almost every step in the argument is set upon some not sure theory, and the whole consists of a series of nicely fitted links, in which "ten, or ten thousandth, breaks the chain alike." If the author fails in a single instance,—even in the poor matter of the Mac Lac speculations at the end,—the whole system explodes, just as a Prince Rupert's drop does when you break off its tail.—GEORGE

TICKNOR, Letter to John Kenyon (March 30, 1845), *Life, Letters, and Journals of George Ticknor*, ed. Anna Ticknor, 1876, Vol. 2, p. 224

I now know the *Vestiges* well, and I detest the book for its shallowness, for the intense vulgarity of its philosophy, for its gross, unblushing materialism, for its silly credulity in catering out of every fool's dish, for its utter ignorance of what is meant by induction, for its gross (and I dare to say filthy) views of physiology—most ignorant and most false—and for its shameful shuffling of the facts of geology so as to make them play a rogue's game. I believe some woman is the author, partly from the fair dress and agreeable exterior of the *Vestiges*, and partly from the utter ignorance the book displays of all sound physical logic. A *man* who knew so much of the surface of physics must, at least on some one point or other, have taken a deeper plunge; but *all* parts of the book are shallow. ⟨. . .⟩ From the bottom of my soul I loathe and detest the *Vestiges*. 'Tis a rank pill of asafœtida and arsenic covered with gold-leaf.—ADAM SEDGWICK, Letter to Macvey Napier (April 10, 1845), *Selection from the Correspondence of Macvey Napier*, ed. Macvey Napier, 1879, pp. 490–92

There are few literary men of the time who have exercised a more extensive or a more beneficial influence on their fellow-men, and who better deserve to be held in grateful remembrance by the people of Scotland and all other English-speaking portions of the globe, than Robert Chambers. He was not a writer of first-rate genius, but in the course of an industrious literary career of twoscore and ten years he accomplished a vast amount of useful work. His name will occupy an honorable place in the royal guild of letters in connection with the introduction of cheap, instructive and unobjectionable popular literature. ⟨. . .⟩

No notice of the works of Robert Chambers would be considered complete without some mention of a philosophical work, published anonymously, which created a great stir in the world of thought. This was the *Vestiges of Creation*. The controversy which this remarkable book, the matrix of Darwin's, engendered, was most envenomed, and when in 1848 Mr. Chambers was selected to be Lord Provost of Edinburgh, he thought it expedient to withdraw in the face of a storm raised against him as the supposed author. There were good reasons why he should not admit the authorship. Had he done so, the religious bodies of Scotland and England would have risen against the firm, and the numerous educational works of the Brothers Chambers would have been driven from the schools. For business reasons, rather than from any other cause, the author chose not to father a book which must certainly be regarded as one of the greatest speculative works of the nineteenth century. Should it be proved that Robert Chambers wrote it, his title to fame will be materially strengthened, for the writer of that book was the forerunner of Darwin.—JAMES GRANT WILSON, "Robert Chambers," *Lippincott's Magazine*, July 1871, pp. 17, 23

Few of the works of which we have yet spoken produced so great a sensation as greeted the appearance of the anonymous *Vestiges of the Natural History of the Creation*. Of Robert Chambers, the author, we have already given some account. This work, which drew down upon its at first unknown author a perfect avalanche of ecclesiastical censure, was perhaps the boldest and most outspoken account of the origin of nature, as we know it, that had yet been published, but it substantially advanced little that was especially new. The most risky speculations of the author had been adventured already in each separate department of science. What Chambers was left to do was to make, as he himself says, "the first attempt to connect the natural sciences into a history of creation." The *Vestiges* dealt successively with the formation of the solar system, that of the earth itself with all its successive formations and the kinds of life to be found in each, the origin of all animated tribes and the early history of mankind. The book was undoubtedly conceived in a reverent spirit; it professed to give a wider and nobler view of the Creator's work than that which was ordinarily accepted. But the writer evidently knew, if only by the elaborate precautions that he took to conceal the authorship, that it would raise a storm of criticism. Indeed, to those who regarded the Mosaic account of the creation as the authoritative description revealed by God Himself of the various steps of the process, there was something peculiarly offensive in the manner in which the writer appeared to assume the part of one who was in the Creator's confidence. Such of course was not the intention of Chambers, who took particular pains to show that his theory was not contradictory to that propounded in Genesis, that, on the contrary, such expressions as "Let there be light," "Let the waters bring forth the moving creature that hath life" etc., represented "all the procedure as flowing from commands and expressions of will, not from direct acts," and that, according to his view, the order of creation indicated by scientific research coincided with that given in the Mosaic record; but these protestations did not avail him. The world of Edinburgh still stuck to the six days and nights of twenty-four hours each, and ordered science to get behind them. Nor was mankind yet educated up to the pitch of regarding itself as merely the typical group, to use Macleay's language, of the cheirotheria group of mammals, or in other words as the highest class of the monkey species. The authorship of the book was for some time doubtful and many possible authors were suggested,—the Prince Consort being among the number,—but at last there seemed no question that Robert Chambers was the culprit, though he never explicitly acknowledged it. As we have already seen, the book cost him the Lord Provostship, to which he would certainly have been elected but for the prejudice created thereby.—MARGARET OLIPHANT, *The Victorian Age of English Literature*, 1892, Vol. 2, pp. 65–67

A very remarkable book which was in a way Darwinism before Darwin, which attracted much attention and violent opposition in 1844, the year of its publication, and which for a long time remained unowned, was the *Vestiges of Creation*, subsequently known to be the work of Robert Chambers, the younger of two brothers who did great things in the popular publishing trade at Edinburgh, and who founded a house which has always been foremost in the diffusion of sound and cheap literature, information, and amusement. Robert was born at Peebles in 1802 and died at St. Andrews in 1871, having been, besides his publishing labours, a voluminous author and compiler. Nothing he did was quite equal to the *Vestiges*, a book rather literary than scientific, and treating the still crude evolution theory rather from the point of view of popular philosophy than from that of strict biological investigation; but curiously stimulating and enthusiastic, with a touch of poetry in it not often to be found in such books, and attractive as showing the way in which doctrines which are about to take a strong hold of the general mind not infrequently communicate themselves, in an unfinished but inspiring form, to persons who, except general literary culture and interest, do not seem to offer any specially favourable soil for their germination. Purely scientific men have usually rather pooh-poohed the *Vestiges*, but there is the Platonic quality in it.—GEORGE SAINTSBURY, *A History of Nineteenth Century Literature*, 1896, p. 414

Robert Chambers stands by himself. He was of the best class of self-made men, and as a publisher perhaps even more than as a writer did service to literature. He had great talent for not only acquiring information but making it popular. His most remarkable book, the *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844), was published anonymously, and, in fear of the outcry of orthodoxy, extraordinary precautions were taken to guard the secret of the authorship. For a long time the efforts were successful, and, though the secret gradually became an open one, it was not till 1884 that his responsibility for the book was authoritatively avowed. The *Vestiges of Creation* has been unduly depreciated since the time of Darwin. The gaps in the argument, and still more perhaps the untenable assumptions and mistaken assertions, are easy to detect now; but it is at least ungracious to insist upon them. Chambers was not an accomplished naturalist; on the contrary, Huxley charges him with 'prodigious ignorance.' He had not laboured as long, as patiently or as strenuously at the subject as Darwin; but at the same time his book is in an uncommon degree bold and suggestive. The best minds were already dallying with the idea of evolution, but in 1844 there nowhere existed in English such a concrete and clear presentation of it as Chambers gave. Judged in relation to what was known and thought then, his work was a memorable, though, from lack of a sufficiently firm foundation, hardly a great one.—HUGH WALKER, *The Age of Tennyson*, 1897, pp. 180–81

WILLIAM CHAMBERS

From *Memoir of Robert Chambers*

1872, pp. 310–13

With regard to my brother's literary character and works, I shall not, having said so much already, attempt any elaborate estimate or analysis. His best services were devoted to his native country, and, with the exception of his illustrious contemporary, Sir Walter Scott, no other author has done so much to illustrate its social state, its scenery, romantic historical incidents, and antiquities, the lives of its eminent men, and the changes in Scottish society and the condition of the people (especially those in the capital), during the last two centuries. His first work, the *Traditions of Edinburgh*, evinced this strong bias and ruling passion of his mind. He was, as has been stated, assisted by Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe and Sir Walter Scott, but the great bulk of the traditions and all their *setting* were his own. He knew every remarkable house, its possessors, and their genealogy; every wynd and close from the Castle-hill to Holyrood; and in describing these, he poured forth a vast amount of curious reading and information, much of which would have been lost but for the taste and diligence of so enthusiastic a collector. Perhaps this work will hereafter be considered the most unique and valuable of all his labors. His next production, however, has enjoyed a still greater share of popularity. I allude to the *History of the Rebellion of 1745–46*, a work which was very carefully written; and the subject had a wide and deep interest, for the enterprise of Charles Edward was one of those bold and striking events in which history assumes the color and fascination of romance. As latterly extended, by materials gathered from the *Lyon in Mourning*,[1] the book has taken its place among our standard historical works, as a faithful and animated narrative of one of the most striking and memorable periods in our national annals.

The other popular histories written between 1827 and 1830 are less original and less valuable than the narrative of the '45. The *Calendars of State Papers* were not then published, nor had antiquarian clubs and family repositories enriched our stores of historical knowledge with those minute and graphic details which add life, and spirit, and individuality to the pages of Macaulay and Froude. My brother's works are of the nature of memoirs. His object was to present a view or portraiture of the external circumstances of the period embraced—a series of military narratives—rather than to attempt "histories of the legitimate description, which should appeal only to the moral faculties of the select few." He anticipated Macaulay in desiring to make history interesting to the many, embracing details of the manners, customs, social habits, and daily life of the nation; and with all young readers, and generally with the middle and lower ranks of the Scottish people, he was eminently successful. Of a kindred character with these works was the *Popular Rhymes of Scotland*, an amusing embodiment of folk-lore and mementoes of childhood descending from one generation to another in various countries of Europe.

By the establishment of *Chambers's Journal*, my brother was happily led into a new walk of literature. He came forward as a weekly essayist. During fifteen years, as he has himself related, he labored in this field, "alternately gay, grave, sentimental, and philosophical," until not much fewer than four hundred separate papers proceeded from his pen. In these were best seen his imaginative faculties. His familiar and humorous sketches of Scottish life and character are allowed to be true to nature; they were certainly drawn from the life, and may be compared to the descriptions of Henry Mackenzie in the *Mirror* and *Lounger* as to discrimination and fidelity of portraiture; but those of the earliest essayist are confined to the higher ranks of Scottish society. Many of my brother's essays are also on literary and antiquarian topics, and will be found not only honorable to his diligence as a self-directed and self-upheld student, but replete with correct, humane, and manly feeling. Essays or short disquisitions on scientific subjects were occasionally inserted in the *Journal*, for, as has been shown, my brother, latterly, devoted much time and study to geology and other departments of physical science; the result of which was the work on *Ancient Sea-margins*, and a variety of papers communicated to the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

The patient investigation, long journeys, and careful accumulation of facts employed in establishing his geological theories, indicate the true scientific spirit and enthusiasm, and there can be little doubt that, had the circumstances of his early life been more favorable, he would have taken a high place among the men of science who have illustrated the nineteenth century. Considering that his education, as he frankly avows, never cost his parents so much as ten pounds, the wonder is that he did so much.

As regards his *Cyclopædia of English Literature*, his *Life and Writings of Burns*, his *Domestic Annals of Scotland*, his *Book of Days*, and the lesser works he produced, sufficient has perhaps been said in the course of this Memoir. On none of his later works did he look back with so much heartfelt pleasure and satisfaction, and none deserves greater praise, for its remarkable fidelity, than that concerning Robert Burns. Here, for the first time, the life of the poet, with all its lights and shades, was correctly delineated. The story of Highland Mary, and the dark days of Dumfries, were placed truly before the world, and allusions in the poems and letters were fully explained. Of all future editions of the Scottish poet, this explanatory and chronological one must form the basis.

Altogether, as nearly as can be reckoned, my brother produced upwards of seventy volumes, exclusively of detached papers which it would be impossible to enumerate. His whole writings had for their aim the good of society, the advancement in some shape or other of the true and beautiful. It will hardly be thought that I exceed the proper bounds of panegyric in stating, that in the long list of literary compositions of Robert Chambers, we see the zealous and successful student, the sagacious and benevolent citizen, and the devoted lover of his country.

Notes

1. This curious and valuable collection of manuscripts has been bequeathed to the Faculty of Advocates, Edinburgh, in grateful acknowledgment of the many benefits derived from their extensive library.

ALICE CARY AND PHOEBE CARY

1820–1871 1824–1871

Alice and Phoebe Cary were born near Cincinnati, Ohio, on, respectively, April 26, 1820, and September 4, 1824. They were largely self-educated, and, after moving to New York, where they came under the patronage of Rufus W. Griswold and Horace Greeley, began their literary careers with the publication in 1850 of the *Poems of Alice and Phoebe Cary*. Alice, by far the more prolific of the two, brought out on her own prose sketches, novels, and poems, many dealing with the surroundings and friendships of her childhood. Phoebe, for her part, published two volumes of verse, *Poems and Parodies* (1854) and *Poems of Faith, Hope and Love* (1868), but is best known as the author of the hymn "Nearer Home," beginning "One sweetly solemn thought." Alice died in New York City on February 17, 1871, and Phoebe in Newport, Rhode Island, on July 31, 1871. *Last Poems* (1873) is a posthumous collection containing work by both sisters.

Personal

Years since (but names to me before),
Two sisters sought at eve my door;
Two song-birds wandering from their nest,
A gray old farm-house in the West.

How fresh of life the younger one,
Half smiles, half tears, like rain in sun!
Her gravest mood could scarce displace
The dimples of her nut-brown face.

Wit sparkled on her lips not less
For quick and tremulous tenderness;
And, following close her merriest glance,
Dreamed through her eyes the heart's romance.

Timid and still, the elder had
Even then a smile too sweetly sad;
The crown of pain that all must wear
Too early pressed her midnight hair.

Yet ere the summer eve grew long,
Her modest lips were sweet with song;
A memory haunted all her words
Of clover-fields and singing birds.

Her dark, dilating eyes expressed
The broad horizons of the west;
Her speech dropped prairie flowers; the gol
Of harvest wheat about her rolled.

Fore-doomed to song she seemed to me;
I queried not with destiny;
I knew the trial and the need,
Yet, all the more, I said, God speed!

What could I other than I did?
Could I a singing-bird forbid?
Deny the wind-stirred leaf? Rebuke
The music of the forest brook?

She went with morning from my door,
But left me richer than before;
Thenceforth I knew her voice of cheer,
The welcome of her partial ear.

Years passed: through all the land her name
A pleasant household word became:
All felt behind the singer stood
A sweet and gracious womanhood.

Her life was earnest work, not play;
Her tired feet climbed a weary way;
And even through her lightest strain
We heard an undertone of pain.

Unseen of her her fair fame grew,
The good she did she rarely knew,
Unguessed of her in life the love
That rained its tears her grave above.

When last I saw her, full of peace,
She waited for her great release;
And that old friend so sage and bland,
Our later Franklin, held her hand.

For all that patriot bosoms stirs
Had moved that woman's heart of hers,
And men who toiled in storm and sun
Found her their meet companion.

Our converse, from her suffering bed
To healthful themes of life she led:
The out-door world of bud and bloom
And light and sweetness filled her room.

Yet evermore an underthought
Of loss to come within us wrought,
And all the while we felt the strain
Of the strong will that conquered pain.

God giveth quietness at last!
The common way that all have passed
She went, with mortal yearnings fond,
To fuller life and love beyond.

Fold the rapt soul in your embrace,
My dear ones! Give the singer place

To you, to her,—I know not where,—
I lift the silence of a prayer.

For only thus our own we find;
The gone before, the left behind,
All mortal voices die between;
The unheard reaches the unseen.

Again the blackbirds sing; the streams
Wake, laughing, from their winter dreams,
And tremble in the April showers
The tassels of the maple flowers.

But not for her has spring renewed
The sweet surprises of the wood;
And bird and flower are lost to her
Who was their best interpreter!

What to shut eyes has God revealed?
What hear the ears that death has sealed?
What undreamed beauty passing show
Requites the loss of all we know?

O silent land, to which we move,
Enough if there alone be love,
And mortal need can ne'er outgrow
What it is waiting to bestow!

O white soul! from that far-off shore
Float some sweet song the waters o'er,
Our faith confirm, our fears dispel.
With the old voice we loved so well!

—JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER, "The Singer," 1872

The sisters were in striking contrast. Phœbe, the younger, was a jocund, hearty, vivacious, witty, merry young woman, short and round; her older sister, Alice, was taller and more slender, with large, dark eyes; she was meditative, thoughtful, pensive, and rather grave in temperament; but the two were most heartily in sympathy in every opinion and in all their literary and social aims.—OCTAVIUS BROOKS FROTHINGHAM, *Recollections and Impressions*, 1891, p. 225

Sometimes the Whittiers had guests; and "Lizzie" delighted to tell how their mother was once met at the door by two plump maidens who announced that they had come from Ohio mainly to see her son. She explained that he was in Boston. No matter; they would come in and await his return. But he might be away a week. No matter; they would willingly wait that time for such a pleasure. So in they came. The proved to be Alice and Phœbe Cary, whose earlier poems, which had already preceded them, were filled with dirges and despair; but they were the merriest of housemates, and as the poet luckily returned next day, they stayed as long as they pleased, and were welcome.—THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON, *Cheerful Yesterdays*, 1898, pp. 134–35

General

Among the younger American poets there are few whom we regard with more interest, or whose writings inspire us with more hopeful anticipations, than these two sisters, who were born in a quiet and pleasant district in the vicinity of Cincinnati, where they have always resided, and most of the time in portionless and unprotected orphanage. Their education has been limited by the meagre and infrequent advantages of an obscure country school, from which they were removed altogether at a very early age; and with neither books nor literary friends to guide or encourage them, and in circumstances which would have chilled and withered common natures, they "have been and still are, humble" but most acceptable "worshippers in the glorious temple of song."

Alice and Phœbe Carey have but very recently become known at all in the literary world. It is but two or three years since I first saw the name of either of them, in a western newspaper, and of nearly a hundred of the poems which are now before me, probably not one has been written more than that time. "We write," observes Alice Carey, in a letter which I regret that I may not copy here entire, that the reader's affection might be kindled with his admiration, "we write with much facility, often producing two or three poems in a day, and never elaborate. We have printed, exclusive of our early productions, some three hundred and fifty, which those in your possession fairly represent." And these are the fruits of no literary leisure, but the mere pastimes of lives that are spent in prosaic duties, lightened and made grateful only by the presence of the muse.

In the west, song gushes and flows, like the springs and rivers, more imperially than elsewhere, as they will believe who study her journals, or who read these effusions and those of Amelia Welby, the authors of *The Wife of Leon*, and other young poets, whose minds seem to be elevated, by the glorious nature there, into the atmosphere where all thought takes a shape of beauty and harmony. A delicious play of fancy distinguishes much of the finest poetry of the sex; but Alice Carey evinces in many poems a genuine imagination and a creative energy that challenges peculiar praise. We have perhaps no other author, so young, in whom the poetical faculty is so largely developed. Her sister writes with vigor, and a hopeful and genial spirit, and there are many felicities of expression, particularly in her later pieces. She refers more than Alice to the common experience, and has perhaps a deeper sympathy with that philosophy and those movements of the day, which look for a nearer approach to equality, in culture, fortune, and social relations.—RUFUS W. GRISWOLD, "Alice and Phoebe Carey," *The Female Poets of America*, 1848, p. 372

Alice Cary has, within the last few years, written poetry that justly places her among the gifted daughters of America. The lyre seems to obey her heart as the Æolian harp does the wind, every impulse gushing out in song. ⟨. . .⟩

Two striking peculiarities enhance the interest of the poems of Alice; the absence of learning, properly so called; and the capacity of the heart to endow the true poet for the high office of interpreter of nature without the aid of learning. Doubtless, these sisters would find great benefit from such a course of study as Mrs. Hemans pursued, or such advantages as Mrs. Norton has enjoyed. Still the magic of genius is felt most powerfully, when it triumphs over obstacles seemingly insuperable; the poems we are now considering are fairly entitled to higher praise than those written by a scholar, with all appliances and means for study and composition at command. That, "in the West, song gushes and flows, like the springs and rivers, more imperially than elsewhere" may be true; but it is chiefly from the soul of woman that these beautiful strains are thus, bird-like, poured. In the sentiment of these songs we find the secret of their inspiration; the Bible is the fount from which these young poetesses have quaffed. With the Bible in her hand, and its spirit in her heart, woman can nourish her genius, and prove a guiding angel to all who look heaven-ward for the Temple of Fame. ⟨. . .⟩

⟨Phoebe Cary⟩, sister of the preceding, and usually named with her, though their poetical genius differs, as a double star, when viewed by a telescope, which makes the two distinctly visible, shows different colours of light. The elder sister is superior in genius to the younger, whose light seems to be