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Behind my library door: some chapters on authors, books and miniatures by G. C. Williamson

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**G. C. WILLIAMSON**

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SOME CHAPTERS ON AUTHORS, BOOKS  
AND MINIATURES

*George  
Harrill*  
BY  
DR. G. C. WILLIAMSON

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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## NOTE

Two of these articles have already appeared in *The Nineteenth Century*, in 1905 and 1908.

One has already appeared in the *New Review*, in 1894.

They are here corrected, added to, and reprinted at the request of friends and by the kind permission of the proprietors and editors respectively of these two publications.

The other material has not appeared in print before, save that a *part* of Chapter XII. is to be found in the privately printed catalogue of his Collection of Watches which I compiled for Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan, and of which only eighty-five copies were produced.

G. C. W.

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### \* NOTE ON THE FRONTISPIECE

#### A JOKE

*The clever caricature of the author, reproduced at the special request of several friends, was drawn by Vernon Hill. Some conversation had taken place, when the author was sitting for his portrait, concerning a certain Guzman ancestor whose portrait has been painted by El Greco, and the artist in a jocular mood declared that the doctrine of re-incarnation was a true one, and "I will draw you," said he, "as you were when you sat to El Greco." This portrait is the result.*

# BEHIND MY LIBRARY DOOR

## CHAPTER I

### OUIDA

THERE are many books in my library bearing inscriptions in the handwriting of the author, and such volumes have a special and particular interest. The interest is intensified when the writer has passed into the Land of Silence. One such lies before me at this moment. My name is written upon its title page, and the following words are added, "In token of many points of sympathy between us—Ouida." The book is "The Massarenes" which Ouida published in 1897, and which she herself regarded, so she told me, "as the best book she had ever written." It is extraordinary to notice how seldom authors have any true sense of proportion, when speaking of their own books, and how, as a rule, they attach a fictitious importance to some volumes. It is seldom also that the opinion expressed by an author is confirmed by posterity. In a letter quoted in the recent memoir of Ouida, she says about this very book, "There is not an iota of exaggeration

in my book, and I am thankful I have lived to show English society as it is; the Englishman of our old ideas is dead, or nearly so." Her statement is curiously inexact. She was amazed at my opinion that "Bimbi" contained some of her best work, and regarded that as a volume of trivial importance compared to others.

How well I remember my first visit to Ouida, when, in 1900, I went over, at her request, from Florence to interview her in her villa at Sant' Alessio, near Lucca. It was not a very easy day's excursion, the journey from Florence to Lucca was a tiring one, and the day was hot.

I had to leave Florence quite early in the morning, and on reaching Lucca, went at once to obtain some refreshment, but did not stay long, as I was anxious to give as much time as possible to the forthcoming interview. The house was difficult to find. It was a long drive from Lucca, and until one got near to Sant' Alessio, the people did not seem to know for whom I was seeking, but at length I arrived at a charming old-fashioned villa, and was greeted by a perfect roar of barking from the numerous dogs that Ouida had about her. The gates were locked, the bell was at a distance and not a loud one, and it was some time before I could gain admittance, and even then, having once obtained access to the house, it was again some little while before I could see my hostess.