

**THE BROTHERHOOD  
OF LETTERS**

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The brotherhood of letters by J. Rogers Rees

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**J. ROGERS REES**

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LETTERS.

BY

J. ROGERS REES,

AUTHOR OF

"THE DIVERSIONS OF A BOOKWORM," "THE PLEASURES OF A  
BOOKWORM," ETC.

*" Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,  
And did he stop and speak to you?  
And did you speak to him again?  
How strange it seems, and new!"*

ROBERT BROWNING.

NEW YORK:  
LOCKWOOD & COOMBES, 275, FIFTH AVENUE.

1889.

PN511  
R47  
1889  
MAIN

To

MY DEAR AND VALUED FRIEND,

HOBART CLARK,

I SEND THIS LITTLE VOLUME ACROSS THE  
ATLANTIC.

*The unspoken lies nearer the heart than any uttered  
word.*



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## I.

### IMAGINATION DEMANDED OF THE READER.

*"It is the nature of the soul to appropriate all things. . . . I conquer and incorporate them in my own conscious domain. His virtue,—is not that mine? His wit,—if it cannot be made mine, it is not wit."*—EMERSON: "Compensation."

*"My respiration rose; I felt a rapid fire colouring my face. . . . I was Eucharis for Telemachus, and Erminia for Tancred; however, during this perfect transformation, I did not yet think that I myself was anything, for anyone. The whole had no connection with myself; I sought for nothing around me; I was them, I saw only the objects which existed for them; it was a dream, without being awoken."*—MADAME ROLAND'S description of her first reading of Telemachus and Tasso.

THE gods need never trouble themselves to bestow a greater gift upon a favourite child than a powerful and healthy imagination. I use

TO THE  
IMAGINATION DEMANDED OF

the word "healthy" as a qualifier, knowing right well, with every student of literary biography, that an untamed imagination, running riot and causing its possessor to indulge in all kinds of freaks, mental and otherwise, is often a curse. Let there, however, but be mixed with it in its original bestowment a spice of pure and honest reasonableness—a wee grain of the power to look at everyday facts as they are—and the future of the chosen child of the gods is assured.\* *Without* this "wee grain" on board ship the unmanaged sails will prove but playthings for wildest winds, and the craft be thrown on all kinds of perilous rocks; but *with* it its course will be pursued with ease and harmony; still rapid, but safe.

\* One is tempted to parody the axiom of the elder Shandy, and to say: "An ounce of judgment, in its proper place, is worth a ton of fancy, running wild."

To read literary biography rightly and with fullest enjoyment, a man should certainly possess this healthy imagination. Were I a phrase-coiner, I would say that in his case it should attain its fullest development as an inquisitive-realistic-imagination; and for fear of being thought a heaper-up of unnecessary words, I will go a little further with these words of mine, which threaten to hang about in plenty just here. A writer of biography occasionally works as an artist; he has carefully gone through the materials at hand and formed for himself the picture he desires his readers to see. This he generally gives, and no one can blame him; for his natural bias has been (we will suppose) honestly followed, and his best is the result. Not so, however, always. Another writer of biography or autobiography will run in the cart-rut he finds in front of him; he has no theory, no