

# **THE LUGGIE: AND OTHER POEMS**

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The Luggie: and other poems by David Gray

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**DAVID GRAY**

**THE LUGGIE: AND  
OTHER POEMS**



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# THE LUGGIE

*AND OTHER POEMS.*

BY DAVID GRAY.

WITH

A MEMOIR BY JAMES HEDDERWICK, AND A PREFATORY  
NOTICE BY R. M. MULNES, M.P.

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

IN the Spring of 1860 I received a letter signed DAVID GRAY, enclosing some manuscript verses. The writer stated that he was a Scotchman, who had had the ordinary education of the artisans of that country; that he had written these and other Poems, and desired my advice as to his coming up to London and making his way there in the career of Literature. I was struck with the superiority of the verses to almost all the productions of self-taught men that had been brought under my observation, and I therefore answered the letter at some length, recognising the remarkable faculty which Mr. Gray seemed to me to possess; urging him to cultivate it not exclusively nor even especially but to make it part of his general culture and intellectual development; and above all desiring him not to make the perilous venture of a London literary life, but, at any rate for some time, to content himself with such opportunities as he had, and to strive to obtain

some professional independence, however humble, in which his poetical powers might securely expand and become the solace of his existence instead of the precarious purveyor of his daily bread. A few weeks afterwards I was told a young man wished to see me, and when he came into the room I at once saw it could be no other than the young Scotch Poet. It was a light, well-built, but somewhat stooping figure, with a countenance that at once brought strongly to my recollection a cast of the face of Shelley in his youth, which I had seen at Mr. Leigh Hunt's. There was the same full brow, out-looking eyes, and sensitive melancholy mouth. He told me at once that he had come to London in consequence of my letter, as from the tone of it he was sure I should befriend him. I was dismayed at this unexpected result of my advice, and could do no more than press him to return home as soon as possible. I painted as darkly as I could the chances and difficulties of a literary struggle in the crowded competition of this great city, and how strong a swimmer it required to be not to sink in such a sea of tumultuous life. "No—he would not return." I determined in my own mind that he should do so before I myself left town for the country, but at the same time I believed that he might derive advantage from a short personal experience of hard realities. He had a confidence in his own powers, a simple

certainty of his own worth, which I saw would keep him in good heart and preserve him from base temptations. He refused to take money, saying he had enough to go on with; but I gave him some light literary work, for which he was very grateful. When he came to me again, I went over some of his verse with him, and I shall not forget the passionate gratification he shewed when I told him that, in my judgment, he was an undeniable Poet. After this admission he was ready to submit to my criticism or correction, though he was sadly depressed at the rejection of one of his Poems, over which he had evidently spent much labour and care, by the Editor of a distinguished popular periodical, to whom I had sent it with a hearty recommendation. His indeed was not a spirit to be seriously injured by a temporary disappointment; but when he fell ill so soon afterwards, one had something of the feeling of regret that the notorious review of Keats inspires in connection with the premature loss of the author of "*Endymion*."

It was only a few weeks after his arrival in London that the poor boy came to my house apparently under the influence of violent fever. He said he had caught cold in the wet weather, having been insufficiently protected by clothing; but had delayed coming to me for fear of giving me unnecessary trouble. I at once sent him back to his lodgings,

which were sufficiently comfortable, and put him under good medical superintendence. It soon became apparent that pulmonary disease had set in, but there were good hopes of arresting its progress. I visited him often, and every time with increasing interest. He had somehow found out that his lungs were affected, and the image of the destiny of Keats was ever before him. I leave to his excellent friend Mr. Hedderwick to tell the rest of this sad story. I never saw him after he left London. I much regret that imperative circumstances did not permit me to take him under my roof, that I at least might have the satisfaction of thinking that all human means of saving his life had been exhausted: for there was in him the making of a great man. His lyrical faculty, astonishing as it was, might not have outlived the ardour and susceptibilities of youth; but there was that simple persistence of character about him, which is so prominent in the best of his countrymen. I was much struck with seeing how he had hitherto made the best of all his scanty opportunities; how he had got all the good out of the homely virtues of his domestic life with no sign of reproach at the plain practical people about him for not making much of his poetry and sympathising with his visions of fame. These indeed must have seemed, to say the least, intolerably presumptuous to those about him, and indeed to most of those with