

**LETTERS OF THOMAS
EDWARD
BROWN, AUTHOR OF
'FO'C'SLE YARNS'**

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Letters of Thomas Edward Brown, author of 'fo'c'sle yarns' by T. E. Brown & Sidney T. Irwin

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T. E. BROWN & SIDNEY T. IRWIN

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AUTHOR OF 'FOC'SLE YARNS'

EDITED

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY MEMOIR

BY

SIDNEY T. IRWIN

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LETTERS OF T. E. BROWN

To J. R. MOZLEY.

RAMSEY,

January 10, 1894.

IT is not too late, I hope, to wish you a very happy New Year. You shrank from that rough sea, and I don't wonder; it really was very bad. When will you come over in February? Tell me, and I will order a primrose or two. Last year the fine weather began at the opening of March, and lasted all spring and summer. It was quite delicious. I discovered a new country, the flat land lying between the hills and the north shore, more particularly that portion of it which we call the Curragh (*agh* strong guttural). The Curragh is a green bog, many miles in extent. It is full of bog-plants: for instance, there are whole acres of that most lovely flower the bog-bean. I had conjectured the beauty of this level space, with its sweet winding ways, and in 'Tommy Big-eyes' I had expressed what was after all a merely superficial appreciation. Now I know it. The haunt of innumerable cuckoos, the home of gorse and such

delights, dreams so soothing made up of soft creamy vapours—dreams that are creams in fact, not whipped into artificial luxuries, but placid, smooth, and all but unctuous. So I was very happy there: few people, those that I met very simple and good: for instance, a dear nice woman who was proud of the bog-bean, and knew its *habitat* and the changes of its condition. I felt how much can be done by level surface. The glen, with its rocks and waterfalls and steep hillsides, I absolutely ceased to care for. Tarver felt just the same, and, staying at the Sulby Glen Hotel, always walked out along the plain, not up the glen.

I wish you could come across some time in May, and see this little paradise of a bog. It is perhaps hard to imagine Adam and Eve in a bog, though one of the orchids so abundant there is popularly called 'Adam and Eve.' Add cuckoos galore, and I think you have a fairly decent notion of what might have been the abode of 'our first parents.' Not oriental, I grant, but surely the Orient has had its innings by this time. I should be well content with the Occidental version. Adam was probably a gorgeous sort of person, certainly a *gourmand*. How dreadful all that talk about 'balmy spoils,' 'Sabaeon odours from the spicy shores of Araby the blest,' 'ambrosial fruit of vegetable gold,' 'nectareous draughts,' 'groves of myrrh,' and 'cassia, nard,' and God knows what! *Sabaeon!* In my Manx paradise there are wholesome smells, and plenty of them.

Of course February will not show the Curraghs at their best.

What a thing it is to have the command of your

own time! It must be admitted that I don't do much. My reading is not exactly desultory; at any rate, it is not sporadic or accidental. I *desult*, but of set purpose, knowing the horse I change to. Milton, as perhaps you observe, occupies me much, and I have revived my old '*Rep.*'¹ This, it strikes me, is a great benefit, and it is undoubtedly a pleasant practice. One knew it in one's youth as a harassing, burdensome task. But that was because one never had proper time, could not expatiate, could not lie down in the shady pastures with Tityrus and Menalcas. Happily I find that my memory is not a bit impaired, and this fact adds wings to my energy, and to my pleasure the sense of security, and the ballast of great example.

My lectures (Reminiscences, and so forth). I sometimes speak for upwards of two hours, and the people listen and seem well pleased. These speeches are asynartete, *solutae* to *dissolutae*. They occasionally give offence, and to sundry kinds of people, but, as a rule, are much appreciated by the vulgar!! They were originally intended as an *ἀφορμή* to a book, *The Island Diocese*. But I don't know whether this will go on.

My tendency at present is to give up all this sort of thing, and to take to poetry again. It would be more serious than most of what I have hitherto written. I have three poems smouldering within me. So there is enough for some time to come. Don't you think it is well to let those things simmer behind the oven for a good long while? I don't feel that they lose at all from the bubblings of Manx

¹ Repetition, 'learning poetry by heart.'