

**THE LIFE AND TIMES
OF HUGH MILLER**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649632909

The Life and Times of Hugh Miller by Thomas N. Brown

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

THOMAS N. BROWN

**THE LIFE AND TIMES
OF HUGH MILLER**

THE
LIFE AND TIMES
OF
HUGH MILLER.

BY THOMAS N. BROWN.

"A star hath left the kindling sky,
A lovely northern light:
Many a planet is on high,
But that hath left the night."



NEW YORK:
RUDD & CARLETON, 130 GRAND STREET,
(BROOKS BUILDING, COR. OF BROADWAY.)

MDCCCLX.

Contents.



	Page
Introductory,	1
1. Ancestry and Early Life,	15
2. The Dame's and Grammar Schools,	26
3. The Quarry,	42
4. The Bothy,	63
5. Edinburgh,	77
6. Christianity,	93
7. Poetry and a Patron,	108
8. Church and State,	124
9. Non-Intrusion,	153
10. The Witness,	164
11. Popular Distrust,	181
12. State Carpenters,	193
13. The Disruption,	208
14. A Retrospect,	225
15. Hero Worship,	242
16. Education,	266
17. Modern Light Literature,	288
18. Science,	312
19. Death,	329
Appendix,	343

INTRODUCTORY.



It is somewhere said by Goldsmith, that the life of a literary man seldom abounds with adventure. His fame is acquired in solitude; and the historian, who only views him from a distance, must be content with a dry detail of actions by which he is hardly distinguished from the rest of mankind. Though embodying a general truth, the observation we have quoted does not exactly sum up the life we have chosen to illustrate. Its even tenor was, indeed, not much disturbed by adventure, but it can scarcely be said of Hugh Miller his fame was acquired in solitude, or that his actions were not in a very marked degree distinguished from the actions of the mass of mankind. On the contrary, the more closely his life and writings are scanned, the more clearly will Scotchmen begin to discover that, amongst the men of genius these latter times have produced, Hugh Miller is Scotland's representative man.

This statement is made with a full appreciation of its

import, and with a perfect knowledge that names will instantly rise in many minds, disputing the pedestal on which we seek to place the Cromarty stone-mason. It may, therefore, be well the reader should distinctly understand that, in claiming for Hugh Miller this representative character, no comparison is instituted, and no superiority is asserted for him over such men as Burns and Scott, either of whom may be supposed, by a large class of admirers, to possess superior claims to the position we seek to assign the late editor of the *Witness*. It may even be acknowledged that, in native intellectual force, Scott and Burns equalled—may, in certain special mental attributes, excelled—Hugh Miller; while yet it is asserted, that neither so fully gathered up into himself the ideas, sentiments, and passions, that mark the representative man.

Notwithstanding his geniality and breadth of character, Sir Walter Scott was rather a relic of feudalism than a representative of modern times. Without the conscious and pronounced loathing of the present, everywhere to be met with in the writings of another great countryman, Scott turned instinctively to the golden glories of the past—his spirit revelled in the jousts and tournaments of the age of chivalry; but for all that had been done in Scotland subsequent to the Reformation era he had little sympathy, and certainly no enthusiasm. It was this chasm of centuries—lying a great gulf between Sir

Walter and the ideas and sentiments of his countrymen—which, though coloured with the exaggeration of controversy, gave a tone of truth to the elder M'Crie's assertion, that his characters were for the most part most-troopers and Border reivers, rather than genuinely Scottish. The laureate of chivalry fallen upon an age from which chivalry was gone—whelmed in the wide-weltering chaos French democracy had created—Scott's mission was to gather up that minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, and in those metrical and prose romances with which his name is now so indissolubly and so gloriously associated—the image of the vanished age—bequeathing to democracy a mirror in which it might evermore behold a faithful portrait of the glories laid in the dust in its march to universal dominion. That mission accomplished—the literature of chivalry carried to the ends of the earth—Scott's work was done. “No sky-born messenger, heaven looking through his eyes,” was the Lord of Abbotsford; and no voice from the celestial land did the literary Vandyke of a demi-savage age bring near to the children of men. A couple of trivial and seemingly unimportant facts brought together, will better illustrate the antithesis, on the spiritual side, between the characters of Scott and Miller than a whole chapter of dissertation. If we recollect aright, it is the Ettrick Shepherd who relates how charmed Scott had been with the conversation of an intelligent mechanic, whose acquaintance he

had made on the lands of Abbotsford ; but on discovering that this intelligent operative, from whose converse he had enjoyed so much delight throughout the week, was a Baptist preacher on Sabbath, Scott never spoke with him more. Hugh Miller, in his "Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland" (his first prose work), has not scrupled to present his readers with one of the finest illustrations of unostentatious Christian philanthropy, in the person of an humble Baptist shoemaker.

Burns did embody at once in his intuitions and ideas—very distinctly embody—the spirit of the age, in certain of its aspects ; he had, indeed, an affection for the antique, but the dead past did not, as in the case of Scott, swallow up his sympathies for the living present. What, then, was necessary to complete his representative character? assuredly neither native force nor established and diffusive fame. The foremost man of all his time, after gauging his intellectual capacity, pronounced him fitted to excel in whatever walk of ambition he had chosen to exert his faculties. And in our day we are witnesses of what could scarcely have been predicted in his own, the voice that first rose in lowly cadence in that "auld clay biggin' by the banks o' bonny Doon," is now "heard on every wave, and sounds on every sea." Yet, despite his superior endowments and pre-eminent fame, there is a fatal flaw in the character of Burns which prevents us assigning him the position we