

Principal "Rory" Macleod and His Posterity.



HAVE been urged by an old friend to accede to Mr. P. J. Anderson's request that I should write something about the Old Town, not the present one, but *our* Old Town, the one *we* knew. As I am probably the last person in touch with that vanished time, perhaps it is right that I should try to recall something of the inhabitants who in their

day gave it such unique character and charm.

For me history seems to begin in 1748 with the advent of Roderick Macleod, who was connected with the Talisker branch of the family, and I owe him an eternal debt of gratitude for the many pleasant friendships I have made in every generation of his posterity, some of them the best and dearest of my life. He held successively the offices of Regent, Sub-Principal, and Principal of King's College for the space of sixty-seven years, dying in 1815 shortly after Waterloo. His son-in-law, Hugh Macpherson, also had a prolonged period of office, as Professor of Hebrew and Greek and then as Sub-Principal, for sixty-one years, so that their service made up 128 years, their joint lives covering the period from the birth of Macleod in 1729, to the death of Macpherson in 1854.

We are familiar with the countenance of Rory Macleod in the picture of "The Sapient Septem Viri of King's College," a skit which emanated from Marischal College during one of the abortive attempts to effect a union of the Colleges. The portrait is no doubt a caricature, but it bears the unmistakable stamp of character and is probably quite suggestive of his personality. We are indebted for a vivid portrait of another kind to that delightful scamp, George Colman the younger, whose banishment from the gay doings of London to the "Academic Penitentiary" of Old Aberdeen took place during the Regency of Rory. We can see the hearty, good-humoured old gentleman, who was for ever preaching economy, and, unlike the preachers of to-day, practising it. He evidently had much ado to restrain George within

the limits of the paternal allowance, which, according to the young man, was doled out to him in quarterly dribbles by the hands of Rory. The incorrigible George is frankness itself in regard to his own delinquencies, owning that his frequent visits to the "Professor of Economy," as he nicknames him, were as often to petition for an advance as to receive the dole. He seems to have been far from resenting Rory's exhortations, though perhaps he may have thought a little economy might not have been amiss in regard to them, and, though he poses as a graceless dog, he evidently had a thorough respect for Rory's character. George was quite amused, if not a little surprised, by the declaration of the Regent that, so far from being uplifted by the coming of the gilded youth, he was quite the reverse, "for a young Englishman breeds muckle harm to our lads frae the highlands; he is allowed what I may ca' a little fortune and sets unco bad examples of economy." George's astonishment, therefore, was all the greater when it was noised abroad that the venerable professor was himself out for an extravagance of the wildest kind, inasmuch as he proposed to take to his "parsimonious bosom," a young wife, "a bonny bride," for whom "rings and things in rich array" had to be provided, while for the bridegroom there had to be a new suit for the wedding, and, according to George, a much-needed overhauling of his whole wardrobe. The "bonny bride" was Isabella Chrystie, and the marriage took place in 1780, so that Rory was not on the verge of three score and ten as George avers, but no doubt fifty-one was to his youthful eyes there or thereabouts. The Macleods make a charming pair in the portraits done about this time, and if the garments are not the wedding ones, Rory must have turned over a new leaf under the eyes of his wife. Somebody must have had a pretty taste in furniture, as Rory's Chippendale sideboard was a great beauty and the ornament of his granddaughters' dining-room in 10 The Chanonry. Like the patriarchs of old, Rory begat many sons and daughters, and his posterity, like theirs, became as the sands of the sea, innumerable. Some of his descendants were gifted with an excellence and a charm beyond compare, but, whatever its origin, the exquisite result could not have been achieved by any amount of Eugenics, had that dismal science and other evils been even dreamt of in these days, when it was a joy to be alive, and to be young was very heaven.

Rory's son Roderick was a medical man, and married a Macleod, of some other branch of the clan. He was the father of Jessie, who

became Countess of Caithness, wife of the 16th Earl, whom we knew so well as Mr. James Augustus Sinclair, a noble man in every sense, whose fine character so well adorned his ancestral honours. She was the mother of the 17th Earl and of the present holder of the title. Dr. Roderick's son, who became a Roman Catholic priest, I once met at the house of a friend in London, Miss Busk, one of Cardinal Manning's converts. It was a large party, and I was talking to, I forget what fellow-guest—possibly the word Aberdeen may have been mentioned, I cannot say—but a voice said "My grandfather was Principal of King's College." "So was my father," I instantly replied, and turned to see the speaker, but I only saw a clerical figure vanishing in the crowd. The attempt at mystification was very well done, but I soon discovered the identity of my friend.

Dr. Roderick had a grandson "Roddy," who was one of my earliest playmates, but I have only a dim recollection of a large thing in a green kilt that carried me about. Later experience has taught me that the thing must have been a boy! We have never met since these days, as he has spent all his life in the Indian army, but every now and then a greeting comes—the frontier post is far away—and I hear a tale of a meeting of two Aberdonians and a talk about the days of yore. Roddy lived in what is now 81 High Street with his great-aunt, Miss Ann Macleod, Rory's eldest daughter, a lady of great character who ruled her circle with a severity greater than that permitted even to aunts. She took the opportunity of departing from the world at a moment when all her more immediate relatives were beyond recall, and the present Lord Caithness, then a very small boy indeed, had to be thrust into the position of chief mourner on the occasion—his first appearance in an official capacity. Another daughter of Rory's, Margaret, became Mrs. Gordon, and two of her daughters are still alive. Should they succeed in living till 1929, they will have put a space of 200 years between themselves and their grandfather's birth. Another daughter, Christina, became the second wife of Professor Hugh Macpherson, a nephew of Sir John Macpherson, Bart, who succeeded Warren Hastings as Governor-General of India. He was an M.A. of King's College, and founded the Macpherson bursaries for Gaelic-speaking students. It was from him that Hugh Macpherson inherited the Island of Eigg. They were the parents of thirteen children, who all lived to old age, and whose united ages reached the magnificent total of 1060 years, making the family a

sort of composite Methuselah and actually beating his record. This long-lived family was raised in the beautiful old house of the Sub-Principal, now, alas! no more! Loud have been the maledictions and deep the lamentations I have had to listen to over its destruction, and the Goths of the University who compassed the deed. Judging by the accounts of its beautiful situation near the Hermitage Hill, it must have been a lovely home, the house low and picturesque, the Powis burn running bright and clear beside it, its waters full of banstickles, affording much sport to the young Macphersons. If the Goths demolished the old house, surely the Vandals presided over the erection of its graceless successor, adding an abiding insult to the original injury. It was supposed to be a replica of Powis House, but it seems to have been eminently successful in reproducing the drawbacks of that mansion, while carefully avoiding any of its merits. The Snow Churchyard was in the grounds, and in these days it was full of wild raspberry bushes which produced large crops of fruit. This was eagerly consumed by the Macpherson boys, but the girls would never touch it, as the berries were believed to be dyed with the blood of those who lay in the churchyard.

The Macphersons were remarkable as a family for their passionate attachment to the Old Town, and never did a summer pass without one or more of them revisiting their old haunts. Dr. John came often from his home in Curzon Street, and the handsome Hugh, a retired Indian Army doctor, hardly ever missed a year. He was as remarkable for his beautiful and gracious manner as for his tall stature and distinguished bearing. He never married, and it was whispered that his romance ended when a charming and much courted belle of the Old Town gave her hand to the Professor of Mathematics. Norman was Professor of Scots Law in Edinburgh, and was the author of the "Notes on King's College Chapel," which he wrote at my father's request. We spent a springtime together at Alassio, and, though he was so deaf as to be cut off from ordinary conversation, he was greatly assisted by a tube, but one of such a formidable character as to indicate that no communications other than those of the most momentous nature could be received. In its presence I became entirely incapable of speech, but he had such an engaging way of wagging the monster, as an invitation to come and tell or hear stories of the Old Town, that I soon became on quite confidential terms with it. I am afraid some of the other inhabitants did not

quite appreciate these never-ending conversations, and a highly irritable clergyman, in a moment of supreme exasperation, said across the table, "But what *is* this Old Aberdeen that you are for ever talking about?" Norman, being, of course, completely deaf, was unaware of the rude remark addressed to him. La parole était à moi, so I said "It is the place where Professor Macpherson and I and so many distinguished people come from that I am surprised you should require to ask!" Norman was always walking on the seashore and comparing it with the beach at Aberdeen, but my patriotism was not robust enough to be able to follow him in his vehement preference for the latter. He used to describe how, in his student days, the bajans congregated round the parapet of the draw-well at King's College, to watch the movements of the enormous eel that had its habitation there from a time no man could remember. One can see the students of to-day smiling at the simple pleasures that so entranced their predecessors! One day I found Norman amusing himself with some painting, and to my surprise I recognized some of the shields from the roof of St. Machar's Cathedral, which he was reproducing from memory. As the Escarbuncle of Navarre and the quarterings of Sicily presented no terrors to him, he confessed that he had learned them all in his boyhood during the long sermons he had to sit through. I congratulated him on having had this alleviation to his sufferings, as, owing to my bad sight, mine had to be endured without the mitigation of heraldic distractions.

Mrs. Norman was a fragile woman, belonging to a delightful family whose connection with Glasgow University began about 400 years ago. Her learned brother, Mr. Ninian Hill Thomson, the translator of Guicciardini and Macchiavelli, died last summer at his lovely villa near Florence, where he and his wife (*née* Cowper), also of a Glasgow University family, dispensed much pleasant hospitality. They all belonged to the Macleod-Macpherson circle by the ties of sympathy and congenial tastes as well as that of kindred.

William Macpherson was editor of the "Quarterly Review," and his wife was connected with the Dunvegan Macleods. I have heard Norman telling his niece, William's daughter, that it was a good thing her two grandmothers never met, as the Dunvegan would not have spoken to the Talisker. No doubt the Dunvegan lady's feelings would have been similar to those that a bottle of Clos Vougeot might be supposed to entertain for a bottle of St. Julien. William's

clergyman son was unhappy enough to be chosen as his heir by an uncle who bequeathed him a property in Skye, which was selected as the scene of a political agitation, and seeds were sown which came up as Glendale martyrs. As it produced little else, the inheritance was a perfect curse, and his life was made a burden by the unmerited abuse he was subjected to, as well as the litigation and financial trouble which followed. He was one of the first martyrs to the crofter agitation, and the irony of the position was the more tragic that it was just on account of his high character that the uncle had chosen him to be the owner of the property. William's daughter was a very fragile girl who delighted in planning what we were to do if her health ever permitted her to come to see the Old Town of which she had heard so many fairy tales. Sir Arthur, who was a class-fellow of my father's at King's College, and General Roderick spent most of their lives in India and came north less than the other brothers. The General's grandson, Lord Johnston, won the case for the Constitutional party of the Free Church in the litigation over the money which took place after the union with the U.P.s.

There were very many unmarried Miss Macphersons, whom I recollect only as having reached that stage of prudence which involves wearing goloshes and waterproofs at tea parties in summer. Three Macphersons were married—one to a half-brother of Maria Edgeworth's, a son of one of her father's numerous marriages; another, Mrs. Innes, was the mother of the present Bursar of Trinity College, Cambridge; the third, Mrs. Young, lived for many years in Florence, where her two daughters are still to be found. They have, among other family relics, a portrait of their grandfather, Professor Hugh Macpherson, in his study in the old Sub-Principal's House. Miss Christina Young is a charming artist, who follows in the footsteps of her cousin, Miss Georgina Forbes. That gifted lady, who united in herself all that was best in the family both of heart and head, in addition to the artistic gifts peculiarly her own, was a daughter of another daughter of Rory's, Isabella, who married Lieut.-Col. Arthur Forbes, son of Sir Arthur Forbes, 4th baronet of Fintray and Craigievar, and lived at 10 The Chanonry. Their only son, Arthur Forbes-Gordon of Rayne, was the father of the present laird of Rayne and of Mrs. Burnett of Kemnay. Mrs. Burnett's youngest daughter, Dorothy, married Mr. Quentin Irvine younger of Barra and Straloch. Their children are therefore the sixth generation in descent from Rory and the "bonny

bride". Colonel Arthur Forbes spent some years in a fortress in France during the wars of the eighteenth century, as he was arrested while travelling in that country and was allowed no time to leave when war was declared. He married late in life, so that his daughters were able to relate many of his anecdotes about events that took place in the middle of the eighteenth century. They always described him as a man of a most gentle and peaceable disposition, though on one occasion he broke all records in the way of fury, when he discovered that his family tombstone, that of Bishop Forbes of Corse, had been transplanted to the burying ground of the parish minister, who also bore the name of Forbes, though not Forbes of Fintray. A severe tussle ensued, as the minister claimed to have absolute power in all matters concerning the churchyard, but in the end Colonel Forbes compelled him to disgorge the tombstone, which was triumphantly restored to the ancestral vault.

There were three daughters of the marriage of Colonel Forbes and Isabella Macleod—Isabella, Christina and Georgina—who were all remarkable women, and pre-eminently distinguished by their social gifts and personal charm. Isabella married two Irish husbands—first, Mr. Newton of Rathmade, County Carlow, and then Mr. Aylward of Shankhill Castle, County Kilkenny; but she left no descendants. She was the most lively and entertaining of women, and as she was always on the top of the wave when she was with her sisters in the old home in the Chanonry, her visits were much looked forward to, and we laughed over her sallies and repeated her bon-mots, long after she had returned to her Irish home. After her death, her sisters fulfilled a promise made to her that they would not leave Mr. Aylward, who had long been in precarious health, and for years they devotedly endured not only banishment from everything they loved, but the nerve-shattering strain of some of the worst years of the Irish terror, as their lives hung on one thread of safety due to the fact that the parish priest was well disposed to Mr. Aylward. Mr. Aylward wished to leave them his estates, but they declined the splendid offer, and when his death at last set them free, they shook the dust of Ireland off their feet and thenceforward divided their time, as they did their affections, between the Chanonry and their lovely home in Florence. They were frequently called *Le Forbice*, and though it was a play of words on their name, the idea of a pair of scissors was appropriate in suggesting their absolute oneness, for though they were totally different, no one

could ever think of the one without the other. They had no use for the first person singular, and always used the royal "we". Miss Christina was a majestic figure; her aristocratic carriage and superb bearing suggested the ideal duchess. She was not a little awe-inspiring to strangers, but her friends knew what depths of kindness lay in her motherly heart. There was a certain touch of aloofness about her, just a suggestion of the space around a royal personage, and the tragedy which occurred on the eve of the marriage that would have given her the position she was so clearly destined for, as head of a historic house, may have perhaps been the origin of it. Latterly, too, her lameness, the result of a carriage accident, kept her seated when in company, so that she seemed to be receiving the homage of her subjects.

Miss Georgina, the much younger sister, was an absolute contrast. Always full of mirth and droll sayings, no one ever had a dull moment in her presence, and every one who knew her found her the best company in the world, the keenness of her mind being only surpassed by her matchless sense of humour. She would no doubt have developed into an original artist had she stayed at home, but from the time she began to visit the picture galleries of the Continent, she dedicated herself wholly to the study of the early Italian painters, who at that time were not merely suffering from neglect, but were held in absolute contumely. She was one of the pioneers in the work of re-establishing their fame and in proclaiming the beauty of their art. Along with another artist, Mr. Wheelwright, she devoted her time and talents to copying the frescoes that were going to wreck and ruin in damp chapels and mouldering sacristies.

Wherever a fresco peels and drops,
 Wherever an outline weakens and wanes,
 Till the latest life in the painting stops,
 Stands One, whom each fainter pulse-tick pains;
 One wishful each scrap should clutch the brick,
 Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster—
 A lion who dies of an ass's kick,
 The wronged great soul of an Ancient Master.

She met with little sympathy and not a little opposition in regard to these *brutte cose*, as the works of these old masters were called. Even the Director of the Uffizzi Gallery did not scruple to remonstrate with her when she wished to copy Botticelli's Madonna of the Magnificat, and asked, Why should she choose that *brutto brutto*

picture when there were so many beautiful ones? The tables are indeed turned! But in these days when one would almost hate Botticelli (if one did not love him too much) because of the trash that is talked about him by people who hardly know whether he is a wine or a cheese, one feels what a priceless privilege it was to have been brought up from childhood in the faith and love of the early Italian painters by Miss Georgina Forbes. Mrs. Graham, an Anglo-Florentine, the author of "From a Tuscan Garden," says of her, "I am the fortunate possessor of one of this lady's copies and of some other work of hers from the lower church at Assisi. Of the latter work the present P.R.A. (Lord Leighton) once said to me that, although one could see that it was that of an amateur, he had never seen any copies so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the Quattro Cento."

Much as Georgina loved Botticelli, he did not hold quite the first place in her heart; that was reserved for Fra Filippo Lippi. She bore a strong resemblance to his favourite type of model, and in his great picture in the Badia at Florence, of the Vision of St. Bernard, the Madonna might have been Miss Georgina in her girlhood. I mentioned this to Miss Christina Young last time I was in Florence, and she said it was perfectly true, though she had never thought of it before, and that nothing would have given her cousin so much pleasure as to think of herself as being so much at one with the painter's thought. I think she may have been conscious herself of the resemblance; she could not fail to observe the resemblance in her colouring, and this may perhaps be the explanation of the peculiar attraction his pictures had for her. Miss Georgina was not beautiful—indeed, many people who only looked at her casually would have called her plain—but she had a rare grace all her own, and her light brown hair must have been auburn in her youth. She had beautiful expressive hands which gave her great distinction; and one feels that the ex-Kaiser's admiration for beautiful hands rather than for faces has much to be said in its favour. Men were always greatly attracted by her interesting conversation which was lit up by her flashes of humour, but we always felt that there never could be a man worthy to be permitted to monopolize her for good and all.

When the sisters first went abroad in the early fifties of last century, they spent some years in Dresden, where the Hon. Francis Forbes, brother of the then Lord Granard, was head of the British Legation. He claimed them as cousins, and as he was an old bachelor,

they entertained for him, and his official position gave them a splendid opportunity for the exercise of their great social gifts, while he no doubt fully appreciated their qualities as hostesses. Mr. Forbes was rather an eccentric, and one of his hobbies was keeping a flock of snow-white Pomeranian dogs, which accompanied him everywhere. Their birthdays were noted, and each dog had a special festival when the anniversary arrived. Mr. Ainslie of Delgaty was for some time at the Legation with Mr. Forbes, and he well remembers the dogs, and still better the Miss Forbeses and their charm. The only failing the sisters had, if failing it could be called, was a fondness for white Pomeranians that barked atrociously and were always called "Puffy"—scions no doubt of that ambassadorial race.

After their life in Dresden the sisters migrated to Florence, where they became as well known as Giotto's Tower, and all that was best in society flowed to their *salon*, as naturally as rivers to the sea. Much have I heard from my parents of the charming society they had the happiness of joining in the sixties when the sisters were in their prime, and received much company at their house in the Lungarno Arquebusieri, overlooking the passage which connects the Uffizzi and the Pitti Palace, which at that point is carried on arches above the street till it reaches the Ponte Vecchio. They had the gift of making their surroundings beautiful wherever they pitched their tent, and their houses, both in Old Aberdeen and Florence, were filled with treasures which made a perfect setting for them and their friends. Never did any people have so many and such delightful friendships. Fortunately for me, I succeeded to a hereditary one, and was one of three little girls for whom they had a special favour, thanks to their love for our parents. The other two were the daughters of Mrs. Fuller, who, as Annie Smith at the Manse, had been a quite special friend of their girlhood. We perhaps did not altogether realize our great privileges, any more than we understood what it was to be brought up in the perpetual presence of a perfect thing like the Crown of King's, but their influence entered deeply into our lives, and we knew at least that we occupied a specially favoured position. There were the constant little gifts that came from Italy in triplets, and when the sisters were at the Chanonry there was the kind instruction in needlecraft and the copying of pieces of old embroidery which had been picked up during the winter in Italy. Their unfailing kindness and affection has followed me through life, and even after their death their influence

lives on. Constantly in speaking of this or that friend, they would say, "My dear, if you ever meet so and so, you must go straight up to them and say we sent you." I frequently received this injunction about one of their greatest friends, Mrs. Sotheby, afterwards Mrs. Ingram Bywater. I met her at a party in London, after both Christina and Georgina were dead, and I spoke of their message, but the poor lady was so overcome with emotion at the mention of their names that she could hardly speak of them. Mr. Sotheby left instructions in his will that his wife was to study Greek as he wished her to have something to distract her mind, the result being that she married Mr. Bywater, who was Professor of Greek in Oxford. We used to meet him at Sir Theodore Martin's, but it was at another friend's that I met his wife.

The Miss Forbeses were on intimate terms with Lord and Lady Crawford, both at Dunecht and at the Villa Palmieri where the scene of the first part of the Decameron is laid. Lord Crawford, as the author of the "History of Christian Art," had much in common with Miss Georgina in his tastes and sympathies. Mr. George Howard, afterwards Lord Carlisle, was also an artist friend, and Mr. and Mrs. Harry Scott, first at Culter House and later in Florence. At Culter we all admired Mrs. Scott's lovely daughters by her first marriage, the Miss Cavendish-Bentincks, who might have sat for three child-graces. The eldest one, who afterwards married Lord Glamis and is now Countess of Strathmore, would have been Duke of Portland had she been a boy. Another friend was Mme. Helbig, who lived in Rome, however. She was a Russian, by birth Princess Schachovskaia, of a most exalted family. Her parents took her to Rome as a girl, and being people for whom red cloth is always spread, Liszt became her music master, and the head of the German Archæological School, Herr Helbig, conducted her through her Roman history. Rome became a passion with her, and, unfortunately for herself, it culminated in an elopement with Herr Helbig, a costly infatuation, as it involved estrangement from her parents, banishment from Russia, deprivation of her inheritance, and, worst affliction of all, being Helbig's wife. It was not a world well lost for love, as he was a man of vulgar and common nature, even for a German, absolutely incapable of understanding or even appreciating the very great lady which the foolish girl developed into. She became a superb musician and played constantly with Liszt and she had many artistic and intellectual gifts, but

she devoted herself entirely to caring for the poor children of the Trastevere, by means of a dispensary which she founded. She collected some charming sketches of Rome which she had written from time to time in English, in the hope of raising some money for her charity, and I had the pleasure of helping her with it and correcting the proofs. The first time I went to see her with a mutual friend, Miss Leigh Smith, also a friend of the Miss Forbeses, she exclaimed, "Was I not a fortunate girl to have had Liszt to teach me music, and Miss Georgie Forbes to teach me drawing?" I fear the war broke her heart, as her only son sided with Germany, against his mother's two beloved countries, Russia and Italy. The lovely Marchioness of Waterford was another friend who used to roam the galleries with Miss Georgina, while her mother, Lady Stuart de Rothesay, was happy confiding all the scandals of London to Miss Christina—so at least Miss Georgina declared. Lady Waterford was a wonderful colourist and her work was full of poetry and imagination. I have seen her scrap books which were given or bequeathed to Miss Georgina, full of interesting and suggestive sketches. The Hon. Mrs. Boyle, "E.V.B.," the illustrator of that book of our youth, the "Story without an End," was also an intimate friend, and a neighbour when she lived at Ellon Castle.

Mr. Holman Hunt was much with Miss Georgina when he was painting "The Pot of Basil". As he could not find the pot of his dreams anywhere, he at last modelled one himself in clay and painted it with beautiful decorations. When he had finished the picture he gave the pot to Miss Georgina, and it was a most decorative object in their drawing-room. Unfortunately, being only a thin shell of clay, it was extremely fragile, and it was impossible to bring it to the Chanonry when the house in Florence was broken up at Miss Georgina's death. The saintly Bishop of Brechin, Bishop Forbes, was a much-loved friend, and a tale used to be told of how he accompanied Miss Georgina on her sketching expeditions, his episcopal hands gloved in purple and his episcopal head sheltered by a scarlet umbrella. His godson and kinsman, Mr. Horatio Brown of Venice, repudiates the purple gloves, but confirms the rest of the story. Mr. Brown's witty mother was another of the circle both in Italy and in Scotland. Dr. John Peddie Steele, physician and scholar, they were bound to by their Irish ties, his wife having been a Trench and a cousin of Mr. Kavanagh, who so wonderfully conquered his disabilities and represented his

county in Parliament, though he was born without arms and legs. John Addington Symonds was another friend; Mr. Spence, whose discovery of the long-lost Botticelli in a dark corner of the royal apartments in the Pitti Palace thrilled lovers of the Quattro Cento; Senatore Pasquale Villari, the author of so many historical works on Florence, and his wife, Donna Linda, who translated them into English; Miss Alexander, "Francesca," Ruskin's friend, who collected the songs of the peasants in Tuscany; Lady Dalhousie; Marchesa Peruzzi, a daughter of Story the sculptor and wife of the King of Italy's chamberlain; Miss Burke, who turned her back on Ireland after the foul murder of her brother with Lord Frederick Cavendish; the Miss Horners, who wrote the first great guide book to Florence; Mr. Spencer-Stanhope, the pre-Raphaelite painter, and his niece, Mrs. de Morgan, with her husband, then famous for his beautiful pottery, though in late years better known as a successful novelist, were all to be met at their *salon*. There were, however, sometimes guests of another type, and I remember the Princess Croy, a Belgian lady resembling a mountain range, turning to me to explain her reason for continuing her conversation about a Swiss hotel, and saying, "Il faut que je m'informe de la cuisine, parceque moi je mange énormément et de tous les plats". Guests of that type, however, were exceptional.

Miss Christina and Miss Georgina had quite strong likes and dislikes, and in my young days I used to feel rather sad that they had no use for Mrs. Browning, though they liked Robert Browning himself. I have no doubt now that they were perfectly right in disliking the sickly atmosphere of adulation from her small circle, in which Mrs. Browning lived, and they also greatly objected to the spiritualism of her later phase, and the mediums with whom she surrounded herself. Another lady who did not come into their circle was "Ouida," who at that time was in her hey-day, but they had many tales of her doings, and I think they were present at the priceless scene when she and another Anglo-Florentine lady slapped each other's faces at a great reception, after a violent altercation in which they slanged each other like fish wives. "Ouida" had been engaged to the Marchese Stufa, a handsome young Italian, but the match was broken off, as "Ouida" believed, through the machinations of her friend. "Ouida" retaliated by writing her novel called "Friendship," in which she paints her quondam friend in lurid colours. The lady, who belonged to an Aberdeenshire family, was not related to the Miss Forbeses, but

“Ouida” represents them as her kinsfolk, perhaps on the principle that all Scotch people are cousins. She also makes them converse in what she supposes to be broad Scotch, which hugely diverted the originals. “We know we are very Scotch,” they used to say, “but we had no idea we were like that.” As might be supposed, “Ouida’s” Scotch is like anything but what it is supposed to be, and is not fit even to adorn the pages of *Punch*.

The Miss Forbeses were not less interested in Italian literature than they were in Italian art, and they had many Dante scholars among their friends. I do not remember if Lord Vernon was one of them, but his son, the Hon. William Warren Vernon, who carried on the work Lord Vernon had begun, and was himself a most learned Dantist, was a great friend. It was at the Miss Forbes’ house that he began the “Readings” on Dante, which, first unsystematic, then as time went on, regularly systematized, became the great Commentary in six volumes, so helpful to students. The Hon. Alethea Lawley, afterwards Mme. Wiel—from whom we have received much kindness in Venice—was the first applicant for his assistance in her studies, and she was afterwards joined by a number of other friends. Mr. Vernon was brought up in Florence from his childhood, and Tuscan was almost his mother tongue. This is one of the reasons that his help is so invaluable to students, as most of the commentators know only Ollendorf Italian and some not much of that. It is impossible to say how much kindness I have myself received from Mr. Vernon, through this friendship, and when he was so kind as to give me a copy of his great work, he wrote in it “In memory of Christina and Georgina Forbes,” thereby greatly enhancing my pleasure in his gift.

Another Dantist was the great Duke of Sermoneta, a most remarkable man who lived to extreme old age and was totally blind for many years. He was of the most illustrious birth, the head of the great house of Caetani, one of the most distinguished in Italy, which had the honour or otherwise of supplying the Papacy with the 8th Boniface, that Pope who is held up to such obloquy by Dante. This ancient family feud, however, did not prevent the Duke from being a most earnest student of the Divine Comedy, of which he knew every word by heart. According to Mr. Vernon, he was the most learned Dantist of the world. In the years of his blindness, he used to recite and then expound a canto of the poem, and it was an unforgettable pleasure to listen to his exquisite Italian. He often gave these recitations at the

Miss Forbes' house, and their friends were allowed to share the privilege of hearing them. The Duke lived to be so old that people were apt to forget that it was he who acted as cicerone to Sir Walter Scott when he paid his sad visit to Rome shortly before his death. The Duke was also a great statesman and patriot, and figured largely in politics in the time of Pio Nono. At that time, when no expression of opinion was allowed in the Papal States, views were ventilated by means of pieces of paper which were attached during the night to a statue that went by the name of Pasquin. These were read and passed from mouth to mouth among the people. "What does Pasquin say this morning?" was the universal question at that time, and Rome rocked with laughter over the witty pasquinades, as they were called. The Duke of Sermoneta was the author of many of these. When the doctrine of the Papal Infallibility was promulgated, Pasquin said: "Hitherto the Pope has been Christ's Vicar on Earth, but now Christ is going to be the Pope's Vicar in Heaven." That is only one I remember of the many I have heard. The Duke's favourite passage in Dante was where the warning occurs to men that to come of illustrious descent is nothing unless a man not only lives up to his traditions, but excels them, and the Duke faithfully carried out the motto "Noblesse oblige." The Duchess—his last Duchess—was a daughter of Lord Howard de Walden, and of all the Italian circle, she was perhaps the Miss Forbes' most intimate friend. One day I went to give a message to the ladies about something they had asked me to do, and as I came and went at all hours and was never announced, I as usual walked straight through to the *salon*. As I lifted the portière, I saw there was a third lady in the room, to whom the Miss Forbeses were talking very earnestly, indeed. I hesitated for a moment, wondering whether I could disappear, or whether I had been observed, as the lifting of the portière had let the sunshine stream into the dark cool room. The stranger, who was facing me, turned to Miss Forbes and said, "I think we have got La Primavera with us." I was wearing a white dress covered with bunches of flowers, but the comparison of it with Botticelli's creation made me blush for my garment. Miss Forbes at once said "Come in, my dear; we wish to introduce you to the Duchess of Sermoneta," so I went forward and paid my respects to the great lady, of whom I had heard so much. After a few charming words of greeting on her part, I took my leave, saying my message would keep till later, as I knew how precious their

moments together were, but I had time to observe the beauty of her hands as she stretched them out in welcome. It is an instance of how gracious natures can transmute an awkward little contretemps into a pleasant incident.

Although I have mentioned some of the well-known people who were Christina and Georgina's friends, they had hosts of others. The only passport to their *salon* was the fact that they liked you; there was no other. They had not the smallest pretence about them, and, though their interests and sympathies were so wide and they touched life at so many points, their feelings were always perfectly sincere, and that was one of the secrets of the restfulness of their friendship. They had the will and the power to do many kindnesses, and they never failed to use their opportunities, and many a little student working in the galleries in Florence found them ready with a welcome and sympathy. The little house in the Chanonry saw many of the great ones of the Earth, and one knew they were perfectly happy with their hostesses; but one could not help wondering sometimes what the great one's maids thought—of the hot water supply, for instance! The house was quite unchanged since their girlhood, but it was perfection in their eyes, and it would have greatly surprised them to think that it left anything to be desired! They would not have changed it for any palace! The house remains, but who ever visits it now?

I have tried to show something of the love that Rory Macleod and his posterity bore for King's College, and the influence they were in the Old Town. There are few left who remember its gracious past and the society "*cujus pars parvula fui*," but the picture may not be without interest for the present generation.

RACHEL BLANCHE HARROWER.