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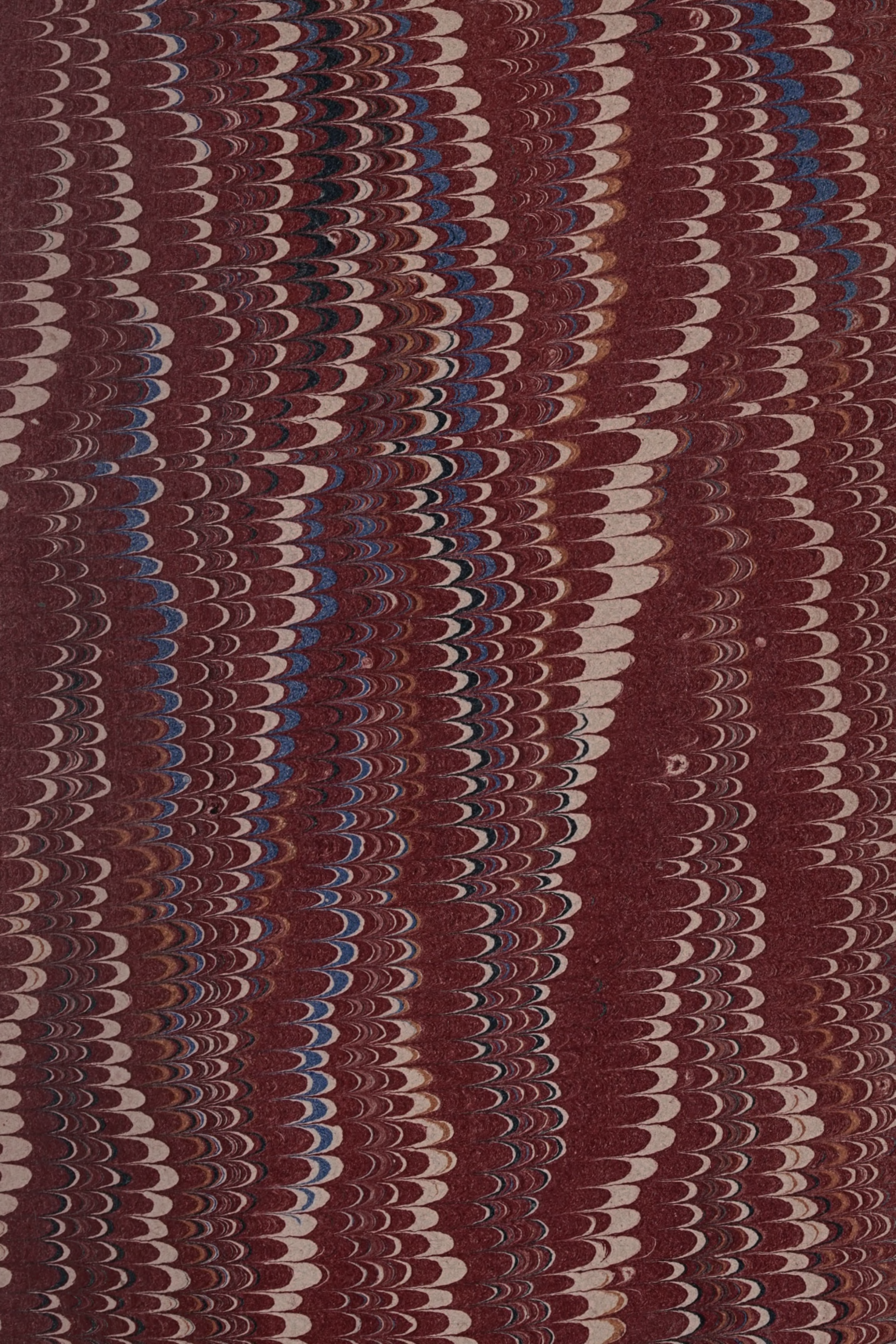
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ENGLISH CLASSIC SERIES

WITH EXPLANATORY NOTES

RAB
AND HIS FRIENDS
BY JOHN BROWN

NEW YORK:
CLARK & MAYNARD, PUBLISHERS,
734 BROADWAY.
1884.

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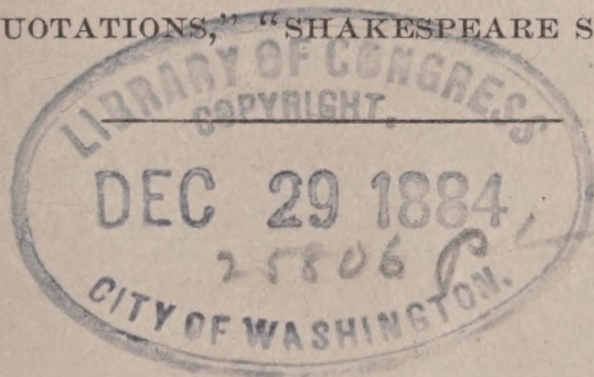
RAB AND HIS FRIENDS,

BY JOHN BROWN, M.D.,



WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY
ALBERT F. BLAISDELL, A.M.,

AUTHOR OF "OUTLINES FOR THE STUDY OF ENGLISH CLASSICS,"
"MEMORY QUOTATIONS," "SHAKESPEARE SPEAKER," ETC.



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INTRODUCTION.

Some twenty years ago, Charles Dickens was in Edinburgh, reading his stories in public, and was dining with some Edinburgh people. The distinguished novelist began to speak about the panic which the cholera had caused in England; how ill some people had behaved. As a contrast, he mentioned that, at Chatham, one poor woman had died, deserted by every one except a young physician. Some one, however, ventured to open the door, and found the woman dead, and the young doctor asleep, overcome with the fatigue that mastered him on his patient's death, but quite untouched by the general panic. "Why that was Dr. John Brown," one of the guests observed; and it seems thus early in his career, "the beloved physician" as Dr. Brown was called in Edinburgh, had been setting an example of the courage and charity of his profession. Dr. John Brown, widely known as the author of "Rab and his Friends" and many delightful essays, was born in 1811, in a little town, called Biggar, in the pastoral moorlands of Southern Scotland. This was the region, the valley of the Tweed, "far the fairest of the floods that run upon the earth," so beloved by Sir Walter Scott. How dear this border scenery was to Dr. Brown, and how well he knew and could express its legendary magic, the music of its old ballads, the sorcery of its old stories, may be understood by those who have read his charming essay on "Minchmoor." The father of Dr. Brown was the third in a lineage of ministers of the sect called "Seceders." Dr. Brown's great-grandfather had been a shepherd boy, who taught himself Greek that he might read the New Testament; who walked twenty-four miles—leaving his folded sheep in the night—to buy the precious volume in St. Andrews, and who finally, became a teacher of much repute among his own people. Dr. Brown wrote a touching and beautiful account of his father in his "Letter to John Cairns." This essay contains, perhaps, the very finest passages that the author ever wrote. His sayings about his own childhood remind one of the quaint and tender touches of the "gentle Elia." When the father received a call to a church in Edinburgh, the son became a pupil of that ancient Scotch Seminary, the High School,—the school where Sir Walter Scott was taught "not much Latin and no Greek worth mentioning." This great master of fiction was still alive and strong in

those days. He lived in Edinburgh, and Dr. Brown tells us how he and his schoolmates used to take off their hats to Sir Walter as he passed in the streets. We have a glimpse into Brown's school days in the opening part of "Rab and his Friends," in which the dog-fight is described. Six years passed and the high school boy becomes a medical student and clerk at Minto Hospital. How he renewed his acquaintance there, and under what sad circumstances, with Rab and his friends, it is superfluous to tell, for every one who reads has read the story, and most readers not without tears. As a medical student at Edinburgh, our young doctor made the friendship of Mr. Syme, the famous surgeon,—a friendship only closed by death. The kind and gentle surgeon who removes the cancer from Ailie's breast is, of course, Mr. Syme whom Dr. Brown ever regarded with the reverence of a disciple, as well as with the affection of a friend. When his studies were over the young doctor practised for a year as assistant to a surgeon in Chatham. Afterwards he returned to Edinburgh, where he spent the rest of his life as a busy and successful physician. He devoted his "spare hours" to literature. Three volumes of essays are all that Dr. Brown has left in the way of literary work, "a light but imperishable literary baggage." These essays have been republished in a series of three volumes under the name of "Spare Hours." His studies are usually derived from personal experience, which he reproduced with singular geniality and simplicity; or they are drawn from the traditions of the long-lived Scotch people, who, themselves had listened attentively to those who went before them. He chiefly studied and best wrote of the characters of humor and pathos which he met with in his life and profession, children, dogs, Scotch scenery and fellow-workers in life and medicine. Under one or the other of these heads, all his best writings might be arranged. The most famous and most exquisite of all his works is the unrivaled "Rab and his Friends"—a study of the stoicism and tenderness of the Lowland character worthy of Scott. "Her last Half Crown" is another study of the honesty that survived in a starving and outcast Scotch girl. Among the genial doctor's papers on children, that called "Pet Marjorie" holds the highest place. It is the story of little Marjorie Fleming, the precocious child, so loved by Sir Walter Scott. The memory of this fairy-like child remains sweet and blossoming in its dust, like that of little Penelope Boohby, the child in the mob cap whom Sir Joshua Reynolds painted and whose sweet face is found on sale in every picture dealer's collections even to this day. "Queen Mary's Child Garden" is a description of the little garden in which Mary Queen of Scots played when a child. "Our Dogs" is a good second to "Rab," containing some choice bits about the good doctor's favorite dogs.

Like most people of kindly and joyous temperament, Dr. Brown was subject to fits of melancholy, or "the blues," in which the world seemed very dark to him. With his habitual unselfishness, he kept his melancholy to himself, and, though he did not care for society at such

times, he said nothing of his own condition that could distress his friends. In the last year of his life, he was less subject to these spells and even returned to his literary work. Three editions of a new volume of essays were published in some six weeks a few weeks before his death. A cold settled on his lungs, and in spite of the most affectionate nursing, he grew rapidly weaker. He had little suffering at the end, and his mind remained unclouded. He died May 11, 1882. No man of letters could be more widely regretted, for he was the friend of all who read his books, as, even to people who only met him once or twice in life, he seemed to become dear and familiar. His popularity in this country was even greater than in Scotland. He was often visited by Americans whom he hospitably received. The praise which Oliver Wendell Holmes gave his work afforded him much pleasure. Of Americans he used to say: "They are more alive than we are." During his long and busy life, as a doctor and as a man of letters, Dr. Brown was dearly beloved. His sweetness of disposition and charm of manner, his humor and his unfailing sympathy and encouragement, made one feel toward him as to a familiar friend. When you met him, he had some "good story" or some story of goodness to tell,—for both came alike to him, and his humor was as unfailing as his kindness. There was in his face a singular charm, blended, as it were, with the expressions of mirth and of patience. He was keenly sensitive to pain, as well as to pleasure. He did not bear easily the misfortunes of others, and the evils of his own lot were heavy enough. They saddened his life; but neither illness, nor his own deep anxiety for others, could sour a nature so unselfish. Wherever he came, "the beloved physician" was welcome; people felt glad when they met him in the streets,—the streets of Edinburgh, where almost every one knew him by sight. He was as cordially received by the children and the dogs as by the grown-up people of every family.

The following lines, for example, are a revelation of childish psychology, and probably may be applied, with as much truth, to the childhood of our race:

"Children are long of seeing, or at least of looking at what is above them; they like the ground, and its flowers and stones, its 'red sodgers' and lady birds, and all its queer things; *their world is about three feet high*, and they are more often stooping than gazing up. I know I was past ten before I saw, or cared to see, the ceilings of the rooms in the manse at Biggar."

In his essay on his father, Dr. Brown has written lines about a child's first knowledge of death, which seem as noteworthy as Steele's famous passage* about his father's death, and his own half-conscious

* I remember I went into the room where my father's body lay, and my mother sat weeping alone by it. I had my battledore in my hand, and fell a-beating the coffin and calling 'Papa,' for, I know not how, I had some slight idea that he was locked up there."—Steele, "The Tatler," June 6, 1710.

grief and anger. Dr. Brown describes a Scottish funeral—the funeral of his own mother—as he saw it with the eyes of a boy five years old, while his younger brother, a baby of a few months old; “leaped up and crowed with joy at the strange sight,—the crowding horsemen, the coaches, and the nodding plumes of the hearse. * * * Then, to my surprise and alarm, the coffin, resting on its bearers, was placed over the dark hole, and I watched with curious eye the unrolling of those neat black bunches of cords, which I have often enough seen since. My father took the one at the head, and also another much smaller, springing from the same point as his, which he had caused to be placed there, and unrolling it, put it into my hand. I twisted it firmly round my fingers, and awaited the result; the burial men with their real ropes lowered the coffin, and when it rested at the bottom it was too far down for me to see it. The grave was down very deep, as he used afterward to tell us, that it might hold us all. My father first abruptly let his cord drop, followed by the rest. This was too much. I now saw what was meant, and held on and fixed my fist and feet, and I believe my father had some difficulty in forcing open my small fingers; he let the little black cord drop, and I remember, in my misery and anger, seeing its open end disappearing in the gloom.”

In one of his very latest essays, “On Thackeray’s Death,” Dr. Brown told us how good, kind, and thoughtful for others was this great master of fiction. Some of these lines he wrote of Thackeray might well be applied to himself: “He looked always fresh, with that abounding silvery hair, and his young, almost infantine face”—a face very pale, and yet radiant, in his last years, and mildly lit up with eyes full of kindness, and softened by sorrow.

In his last year, Swinburne, the English poet, wrote to Dr. Brown this sonnet, in which there seems something of the poet’s prophetic gift, and a voice sounds as of a welcome home—

“Beyond the north wind lay the land of old,
 Where men dwelt blithe and blameless, clothed and fed
 With joy’s bright raiment, and with love’s sweet bread,—
 The whitest flock of earth’s maternal fold.
 None there might wear about his brows enrolled
 A light of lovelier fame than rings your head,
 Whose lonesome love of children and the dead
 All men give thanks for; I, far off, behold
 A dear dead hand that links us, and a light
 The blithest and benignest of the night,—
 The night of death’s sweet sleep, wherein may be
 A star to show your spirit in present sight
 Some happier isle in the Elysian sea
 Where Rab may lick the hand of Marjorie.”

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

(ABRIDGED.)

I have to apologize for bringing in "Rab and his Friends." I did so remembering well the good I got then, as a man and as a doctor. It let me see down into the depths of our common nature, and feel the strong and gentle touch that we all need, and never forget, which makes the world kin; and it gave an opportunity of introducing, in a way which he cannot dislike, for he knows it is simply true, my old master and friend, Prof. Syme, whose indenture I am thankful I possess, and whose first wheels I delight in thinking my apprentice-fee purchased, thirty years ago. I remember as if it were yesterday, his giving me the first drive across the west shoulder of Corstorphine Hill. On starting, he said, "John, we'll do one thing at a time, and there will be no talk." I sat silent and rejoicing, and can remember the very complexion and clouds of that day and that matchless view.

I need hardly add that the story of "Rab and his Friends" is in all essentials strictly matter of fact.

OCTOBER 30, 1858.

POST PREFACE.

I have to thank the public and my own special craft cordially for their taking to their hearts that great old dog and his dead friends,—for all which the one friend who survives thanks them. There is no harm and some good in letting our sympathy and affection go forth without stint on such objects, dead and homely though they be.

When I think of that noble head, with its look and eye of boundless affection and pluck, simplicity and single-heartedness, I feel what it would be for us, who call ourselves the higher animals, to be in our ways as simple, affectionate, and true, as that old mastiff; and in the highest of all senses, I often think of what Robert Burns says some-

where, "Man is the god of the dog." It would be well for man if his worship were as immediate and instinctive—as absolute as the dog's. Did we serve our God with half the zeal Rab served his, we might trust to sleep as peacefully in our graves as he does in his. When James turned his angry eye and raised his quick voice and foot, his worshipper slunk away, humbled and afraid, angry with himself for making *him* angry; anxious by any means to crouch back into his favor, and a kind look or word. Is that the way we take His displeasure, even when we can't think as Rab couldn't, we were immediately to blame?

It is, as the old worthy says, something to trust our God in the dark, as the dog does his.

A dear and wise and exquisite child, drew a plan for a headstone on the grave of a favorite terrier, and she had on it the words "WHO died" on such a day; the older and more worldly-minded painter put in "WHICH:" and my friend and "Bossy's" said to me, with some displeasure, as we were examining the monuments, "Wasn't he a who as much as they?"

OCTOBER 13, 1859.

NOTE TO THE FIRST AMERICAN EDITION.

The author of "Rab and his Friends" scarcely needs an introduction to American readers. By this time many have learned to agree with a writer in the "North British Review" that "Rab" is, in all things considered, the most perfect prose narrative since Lamb's "Rosamond Gray." A new world of doctors, clergymen, shepherds, and carriers is revealed in the writings of this cheerful Edinburgh scholar, who always brings genuine human feeling, strong sense, and fine genius to the composition of his papers. Dogs he loves with an enthusiasm to be found nowhere else in canine literature. He knows intimately all a cur means when he winks his eye or wags his tail, so that the whole barking race,—terrier, mastiff, spaniel, and the rest,—finds in him an affectionate and interested friend. His genial motto seems to run thus—"I cannot understand that morality which excludes animals from human sympathy, or releases man from the debt and obligation he owes to them.

Dr. Brown is an eminent practising physician in Edinburgh, with small leisure for literary composition, but no one has stronger claims to be ranked among the purest and best writers of our day.

RAB AND HIS FRIENDS.

Four and thirty years ago, Bob Ainslie and I were coming up Infirmary street¹ from the high school, our heads together, and our arms intertisted, as only lovers and boys know how or why.

When we got to the top of the street, and turned north, we espied a crowd at the Tron church. "A dog fight!" shouted Bob, and was off; and so was I, both of us all but praying that it might not be over before we got up! And is not this boy nature! and human nature too? and don't we all wish a house on fire not to be out before we see it? Dogs like fighting; old Isaac² says they "delight" in it, and for the best of all reasons; and boys are not cruel because they like to see the fight. They see three of the great cardinal virtues of dog or man—courage, endurance, and skill—in intense action. This is very different from a love of making dogs fight, and enjoying, and aggravating, and making gain by their pluck. A boy—be he ever so fond himself of fighting, if he be a good boy, hates and despises all this, but he would have run off with Bob and me fast enough; it is a natural, and a not wicked interest, that all boys and men have in witnessing intense energy in action.

Does any curious and finely-ignorant woman wish to know how Bob's eye at a glance announced a dog-fight to his brain? He did not, he could not see the dogs fighting; it

1. There are several local references in this sketch to places in and about the city of Edinburgh which will explain themselves.

2. Old Isaac.—The reference is to the familiar verses of Isaac Watts, the great author of religious hymns, "Dogs delight to bark and bite," etc.

was a flash of an inference, a rapid induction. The crowd round a couple of dogs fighting, is a crowd masculine mainly, with an occasional active, compassionate woman, fluttering wildly round the outside, and using her tongue and her hands freely upon the men, as so many "brutes;" it is a crowd annular, compact and mobile; a crowd centripetal, having its eyes and its heads all bent downwards and inwards, to one common focus.

Well, Bob and I are up, and find it is not over; a small thoroughbred, white bull-terrier,³ is busy throttling a large shepherd's dog, unaccustomed to war, but not to be trifled with. They are hard at it; the scientific little fellow doing his work in great style, his pastoral enemy fighting wildly, but with the sharpest of teeth and a great courage. Science and breeding, however, soon had their own; the Game Chicken, as the premature Bob called him, working his way up, took his final grip of poor Yarrow's throat,—and he lay gasping and done for. His master, a brown, handsome, big young shepherd from Tweedsmuir, would have liked to have knocked down any man, would "drink up Esil, or eat a crocodile,"* for that part, if he had a chance; it was no use kicking the little dog; that would only make him hold the closer. Many were the means shouted out in mouthfuls, of the best possible ways of ending it. "Water!" but there was none near, and many cried for it who might have got it from the well at Blackfriars Wynd. "Bite the tail!" and a large, vague, benevolent, middle-aged man, more desirous than wise, with some struggle got the bushy end of Yarrow's tail into his ample mouth, and bit it with all his might. This was more than enough for the much-enduring, much-perspiring shepherd, who, with a gleam of joy over his broad visage, delivered a terrific facer upon our large, vague, benevolent, middle-aged friend,—who went down like a shot.

3. In connection with the text read a good description with anecdotes of these two breeds of dogs from some of the many interesting books on dogs.

* A familiar phrase meaning ever ready to drink strong liquor or eat anything set before him. Like the more common Scotch expression, "to drink the river Clyde dry."

Still the Chicken holds ; death not far off. "Snuff! a pinch of snuff!" observed a calm, highly-dressed young buck, with an eye-glass in his eye. "Snuff, indeed!" growled the angry crowd, affronted and glaring. "Snuff! a pinch of snuff!" again observes the buck, but with more urgency ; whereupon were produced several open boxes, and from a mull⁴ which may have been at Culloden,⁵ he took a pinch, knelt down, and presented it to the nose of the Chicken. The laws of physiology and of snuff take their course ; the Chicken sneezes, and Yarrow is free.

The young pastoral giant stalks off with Yarrow in his arms,—comforting him.

But the bull-terrier's blood is up, and his soul unsatisfied ; he grips the first dog he meets, and discovering she is not a dog, in Homeric phrase, he makes a brief sort of *amend*,* and is off. The boys, with Bob and me at their head, are after him ; down Niddry street he goes, bent on mischief ; up the Cowgate like an arrow—Bob and I, and our small men, panting behind.

There, under the single arch of the South bridge is a huge mastiff, sauntering down the middle of the causeway, as if with his hands in his pockets ; he is old, gray, brindled, as big as a little Highland bull, and has the Shaksperian dewlaps⁶ shaking as he goes.

The Chicken makes straight at him, and fastens on his throat. To our astonishment, the great creature does nothing but stand still, hold himself up, and roar—yes, roar ; a long, serious, remonstrative roar. How is this ? Bob and I are up to them. *He is muzzled!* The bailies⁷ had pro-

4. Mull.—(Gælic *maol*, a promontory, point of land.) A snuff-box made of the small end of a horn ; a snuff-box of any kind.

5. Culloden.—A wide, moory ridge in Inverness county, Scotland: Famous for the total defeat of Prince Charles' army in 1746.

* Apology.

6. Dewlaps.—The fold of skin that hangs down from the throat of animals (as in oxen and cows) and which laps or licks the dew in grazing. Thus in Shakespeare :

"And when she drinks against her lips I bob,
And on the withered dewlap pour the ale."

7. Bailies.—Municipal officers or magistrates in Scotland. They have certain jurisdiction by common law as well as by statute.

claimed a general muzzling, and his master, studying strength and economy mainly, had encompassed his huge jaws in a home-made apparatus, constructed out of the leather of some ancient breechin. His mouth was open as far as it could ; his lips curled up in rage—a sort of terrible grin ; his teeth gleaming, ready, from out the darkness ; the strap across his mouth tense as a bowstring ; his whole frame stiff with indignation and surprise ; his roar asking us all round, “Did you ever see the like of this ?” He looked a statue of anger and astonishment, done in Aberdeen⁸ granite.

We soon had a crowd ; the Chicken held on. “A knife !” cried Bob ; and a cobbler gave him his knife ; you know the kind of knife, worn away obliquely to a point, and always keen. I put its edge to the tense leather ; it ran before it ; and then !—one sudden jerk of that enormous head, a sort of dirty mist about his mouth, no noise, and the bright and fierce little fellow is dropped, limp, and dead. A solemn pause ; this was more than any of us had bargained for. I turned the little fellow over, and saw he was quite dead ; the mastiff had taken him by the small of the back, like a rat, and broken it.

He looked down at his victim appeased, ashamed and amazed ; snuffed him all over, stared at him, and taking a sudden thought, turned round and trotted off. Bob took the dead dog up, and said, “John, we’ll bury him after tea.” “Yes,” said I, and was off after the mastiff. He made up the Cowgate⁹ at a rapid swing ; he had forgotten some engagement. He turned up the Candlemaker Row, and stopped at the Harrow Inn.

There was a carrier’s cart ready to start, and a keen, thin, impatient, black-a-vised little man, his hand at his gray horse’s head looking about angrily for something. “Rab,

8. Aberdeen granite.—A county in Scotland. Well known for its excellent granite. There is a flourishing city of the same name in the county.

9. The quaint, odd names of various sections of Edinburgh, as well as the names of localities in the other English and Scottish towns, strike our ears as something unique. Dickens delighted to locate his characters in these quaint-sounding sections of London.

ye thief!" said he, aiming a kick at my great friend, who drew cringing up, and avoiding the heavy shoe with more agility than dignity, and watching his master's eye, slunk dismayed under the cart—his ears down, and as much as he had of tail down too.

What a man this must be—thought I—to whom my tremendous hero turns tail! The carrier saw the muzzle hanging, cut and useless, from his neck, and I eagerly told him the story which Bob and I always thought, and still think, Homer, or King David, or Sir Walter, alone were worthy to rehearse.¹⁰ The severe little man was mitigated, and condescended to say, "Rab, ma man, puir Rabbie,"—whereupon the stump of a tail rose up, the ears were cocked, the eyes filled, and were comforted; the two friends were reconciled. "Hupp!" and a stroke of the whip were given to Jess; and off went the three.

Bob and I buried the Game Chicken that night (we had not much of a tea) in the back-green of his house in Melville street, No. 17, with considerable gravity and silence; and being at the time in the Iliad, and, like all boys, Trojans, we called him Hector of course.

* * * * *

Six years have passed—a long time for a boy and a dog: Bob Ainslie is off to the wars; I am a medical student, and clerk at Minto House Hospital.¹¹

Rab I saw almost every week, on the Wednesday; and we had much pleasant intimacy. I found the way to his heart by frequent scratching of his huge head, and an occasional bone. When I did not notice him he would plant himself straight before me, and stand wagging that bud of a tail, and looking up, with his head a little to the one side. His master I occasionally saw; he used to call me "Maister John," but was laconic as any Spartan.

10. In a mock-heroic way the genial author sympathizes with the enthusiasm of a school-boy who naturally associates the heroes of his studies with the sports of the street and playground. "Sir Walter," of course, has reference to Sir Walter Scott.

11. Minto House Hospital.—This is a leaf from the life of Dr. Brown. This story in the main is founded on fact. Dr. Brown was a student at this great Edinburgh hospital and studied under Syme, the famous Scotch surgeon,

One fine October afternoon, I was leaving the hospital, when I saw the large gate open, and in walked Rab with that great and easy saunter of his. He looked as if taking general possession of the place ; like the Duke of Wellington¹² entering a subdued city, satiated with victory and peace. After him came Jess, now white from age, with her cart ; and in it a woman, carefully wrapped up—the carrier leading the horse anxiously, and looking back. When he saw me, James (for his name was James Noble) made a curt and grotesque “boo,” and said, “Maister John, this is the mistress ; she’s got a trouble in her breest—some kind of an income¹³ we’re thinkin’.”

By this time I saw the woman’s face ; she was sitting on a sack filled with straw, her husband’s plaid round her, and his big-coat, with its large white metal buttons, over her feet.

I never saw a more unforgettable face—pale, serious, *lonely*,* delicate, sweet, without being at all what we call fine. She looked sixty, and had on a mutch,¹⁴ white as snow, with its black ribbon ; her silvery, smooth hair setting off her dark-gray eyes—eyes such as one sees only twice or thrice in a lifetime, full of suffering, full also of the overcoming of it ; her eyebrows black and delicate, and her mouth firm, patient, and contented, which few mouths ever are.

As I have said, I never saw a more beautiful countenance, or a more subdued or settled quiet. “Ailie,” said James, “this is Maister John, the young doctor ; Rab’s freend, ye ken. We often speak aboot you, doctor.” She smiled, and made a movement, but said nothing ; and prepared to come down, putting her plaid aside and rising. Had Solomon, in all his glory, been handing down the Queen of Sheba¹⁵ at

12. Duke of Wellington.—(1769–1852.) One of England’s greatest generals. Defeated Napoleon at Waterloo.

13. Income.—A quaint Scotch word. A disease affecting any part of the body which has no apparent cause ; as distinguished from diseases induced by accident or contagion.

“She had got an *income* in the right arm and could na spin.”—*Galt*.

* It is not easy giving this look by one word ; it was expressive of her being so much of her life alone.

14. Mutch.—Scotch word. A woman’s head-dress. A cap.

15. Queen of Sheba.—See 1 Kings, Chap. X ; and 2 Chron., Chap. IX.

his palace gate, he could not have done it more daintily, more tenderly, more like a gentleman, than did James the Howgate carrier, when he lifted down Ailie, his wife.

The contrast of his small, swarthy, weather-beaten, keen, worldly face to hers—pale, subdued, and beautiful—was something wonderful. Rab looked on concerned and puzzled, but ready for any thing that might turn up—were it to strangle the nurse, the porter, or even me. Ailie and he seemed great friends.

“As I was sayin’, she’s got a kind o’ trouble in her breest, doctor; wull ye tak’ a lookat it?” We walked into the consulting-room, all four; Rab grim and comic, willing to be happy and confidential if cause could be shown, willing also to be the reverse on the same terms. Ailie sat down, undid her open gown and her lawn handkerchief round her neck, and, without a word, showed me her right breast. I looked at and examined it carefully, she and James watching me, and Rab eyeing all three. What could I say? There it was that had once been so soft, so shapely, so white, so gracious and bountiful, so “full of all blessed conditions”—hard as a stone,¹⁶ a center of horrid pain, making that pale face, with its gray, lucid, reasonable eyes, and its sweet resolved mouth, express the full measure of suffering overcome. Why was that gentle, modest, sweet woman, clean and loveable, condemned by God to bear such a burden?

I got her away to bed. “May Rab and me bide?” said James. “*You* may; and Rab, if he will behave himself.” “I’se warrant he’s do that, doctor;” and in slunk the faithful beast. I wish you could have seen him. There are no such dogs now. He belonged to a lost tribe. As I have said, he was brindled, and gray like Rubislaw granite;¹⁷ his hair short, hard, and close, like a lion’s; his body thick set, like a little bull—a sort of compressed Hercules of a dog. He must have been ninety pounds’ weight, at the least; he

16. Hard as a stone.—The carrier’s wife was slowly dying of a cancer of the breast, commonly known as “rose cancer,” “stone cancer, etc Dr. Brown’s description is graphic and life-like.

17. Rubislaw granite.—A well-known granite quarry in Scotland Hercules was the god of physical strength.

had a large blunt head; his muzzle black as night, his mouth blacker than any night, a tooth or two—being all he had—gleaming out of his jaws of darkness. His head was scarred with the records of old wounds, a sort of series of fields of battle all over it; one eye out, one ear cropped as close as was Archbishop Leighton's father's;¹⁸ the remaining eye had the power of two; and above it, and in constant communication with it, was a tattered rag of an ear, which was forever unfurling itself, like an old flag; and then that bud of a tail, about one inch long, if it could in any sense be said to be long, being as broad as long—the mobility, the instaneousness of that bud were very funny and surprising, and its expressive twinklings and winkings, the intercommunications between the eye, the ear, and it, were of the oddest and swiftest.

Rab had the dignity and simplicity of great size; and having fought his way all along the road to absolute supremacy, he was as mighty in his own line as Julius Cæsar or the Duke of Wellington, and had the gravity¹⁹ of all great fighters.

You must have often observed the likeness of certain men to certain animals, and of certain dogs to men.²⁰ Now, I never looked at Rab without thinking of the great Baptist preacher, Andrew Fuller.²¹ The same large, heavy, menac-

18. Archbishop Leighton's father.—The reference is to Dr. Alexander Leighton, a noted Scotch Presbyterian minister, who, because he wrote a book which reflected on the bishops, was arrested in 1629 and condemned to a horrible punishment. Among other things, he was lashed mercilessly, branded on one cheek with a red-hot iron, had one ear cut off, and one side of his nose slit. He afterwards spent ten years in prison. His son Archbishop Leighton, an eminent divine, is still remembered for his masterly commentary on the First Epistle of St. Peter.

19. A Highland gamekeeper, when asked why a certain terrier, of singular pluck, was so much more solemn than the other dogs, said, "Oh, Sir, life's full o' sairousness to him—he just never can get enuff o' fechtin.'"

20. It is a matter of familiar observation that dogs often times bear a striking resemblance to their masters. How often does one who knows and studies dogs see the face of some acquaintance mirrored in that of a dog. No man ever studied dogs or loved them more than did Dr. Brown. Hence his insight into dog-nature as revealed in his various sketches is something wonderful.

21. Fuller was, in early life, when a farmer-lad at Soham, famous as a boxer; not quarrelsome, but not without "the stern delight" a man of strength and courage feels in their exercise. Dr. Charles Stewart, of

ing, combative, sombre, honest countenance, the same deep inevitable eye, the same look,—as of thunder asleep, but ready,—neither a dog nor a man to be trifled with.

Next day, my master, the surgeon,²² examined Ailie. There was no doubt it must kill her, and soon. It could be removed—it might never return—it would give her speedy relief—she should have it done. She curtsied, looked at James, and said, “When?” “To-morrow,” said the kind surgeon—a man of few words. She and James and Rab and I retired. I noticed that he and she spoke a little, but seemed to anticipate every thing in each other. The following day at noon, the students came in, hurrying up the great stair. At the first landing-place, on a small well-known black board, was a bit of paper fastened by wafers and many remains of old wafers beside it. On the paper were the words,—“An operation to-day. J. B., *Clerk.*”

Up ran the youths, eager to secure good places; in they crowded, full of interest and talk. “What’s the case? Which side is it?”

Don’t think them heartless; they are neither better nor worse than you or I; they get over their professional horrors, and into their proper work; and in them pity—as an *emotion*, ending in itself or at best in tears and a long-drawn breath, lessens, while pity as a *motive*, is quickened, and gains power and purpose. It well for poor human nature that it is so.

The operating theater is crowded; much talk and fun, and all the cordiality and stir of youth. The surgeon with his staff of assistants is there. In comes Ailie; one look at her quiets and abates the eager students. The beautiful old woman is too much for them. They sit down, and are

Dunearn, whose rare gifts and graces as a physician, a divine, a scholar and a gentleman, live only in the memory of those few who live and survive him, liked to tell how Mr. Fuller used to say, that when he was in the pulpit, and saw a *buirdly* man come along the passage, he would instinctively draw himself up, measure his imaginary antagonist, and forecast how he would deal with him, his hands meanwhile condensing into fists, and tending to “square.” He must have been a hard hitter if he boxed as he preached—what “Sporting men” would call “an ugly customer.”

22. Surgeon.—This was James Syme, an eminent Scotch surgeon, and dearly beloved by Dr. Brown,

dumb, and gaze at her. These rough boys feel the power of her presence. She walks in quickly, but without haste; dressed in her mutch, her neckerchief, her white dimity²³ short-gown, her black bombazine petticoat, showing her white worsted stockings and her carpet-shoes. Behind her was James with Rab. James sat down in the distance, and took that huge and noble head between his knees. Rab looked perplexed and dangerous; forever cocking his ear and dropping it as fast.

Ailie stepped up on a seat, and laid herself on the table, as her friend the surgeon told her; arranged herself, gave a rapid look at James, shut her eyes, rested herself on me, and took my hand. The operation was at once begun; it was necessarily slow; and chloroform²⁴—one of God's best gifts to his suffering children—was then unknown. The surgeon did his work. The pale face showed its pain, but was still and silent. Rab's soul was working within him; he saw that something strange was going on,—blood flowing from his mistress, and she suffering; his ragged ear was up, and importunate; he growled and gave now and then a sharp impatient yelp; he would have liked to have done something to that man. But James had him firm, and gave him a *glower*²⁵ from time to time, and an intimation of a possible kick;—all the better for James, it kept his eye and his mind off Ailie.

It is over; she is dressed, steps gently and decently down from the table, looks for James; then, turning to the surgeon and the students, she curtsies,—and in a low, clear voice, begs their pardon if she has behaved ill. The students—all of us—wept like children; the surgeon happed²⁶

23. *Dimity*.—A stout cotton fabric, often ornamented in the loom by raised stripes or fancy figures.

24. *Chloroform*.—The celebrated surgeon Dr. James Y. Simpson of Edinburgh, discovered the anæsthetic powers of chloroform and introduced it into his practice in 1847. Ether, more commonly used in this country as an anæsthetic, was first used to prevent the pain of a surgical operation in 1846, by Dr. Morton, a dentist of Boston.

25. *Glower*.—Scotch word. A hard stare.

“As lightsomely I *glower'd* abroad.”—*Burns*.

26. *Happed*.—Probably from the Anglo-Saxon, *heapian*, to heap up. To cover in order to conceal. To wrap up so as to protect from the cold, rain, or snow.

her up carefully,—and, resting on James and me, Ailie went to her room, Rab following. We put her to bed. James took off his heavy shoes, crammed with tackets, heel-capt and toe-capt, and put them carefully under the table, saying, “Maister John, I’m for nane o’ yer stryngie nurse bodies for Ailie. I’ll be her nurse, and I’ll gang about on my stockin’ soles as canny as pussy.” And so he did; and handy and clever, and swift and tender as any woman, was that horny-handed, snell,²⁷ peremptory little man. Every thing she got he gave her; he seldom slept; and often I saw his small, shrewd eyes out of the darkness, fixed on her. As before, they spoke little.

Rab behaved well, never moving, showing us how meek and gentle he could be, and occasionally, in his sleep, letting us know that he was demolishing some adversary. He took a walk with me every day, generally to the Candlemaker Row; but he was somber and mild; declined doing battle, though some fit cases offered, and indeed submitted to sundry indignities; and was always very ready to turn and came faster back, and trotted up the stair with much lightness, and went straight to that door.

Jess, the mare, had been sent, with her weather-worn cart, to Howgate, and had doubtless her own dim and placid meditations and confusions, on the absence of her master and Rab, and her unnatural freedom from the road and her cart.

For some days Ailie did well. The wound healed “by the first intention;”²⁸ for as James said, “Oor Ailie’s skin’s ower clean to beil.”* The students came in quiet and anxious, and surrounded her bed. She said she liked to see their young, honest faces. The surgeon dressed her, and spoke to her in his own short, kind way, pitying her through his eyes, Rab and James outside the circle,—Rab

27. *Snell*.—A common word in the Teutonic tongues, meaning short, quick, wiry, brisk or severe. A frost is spoken of as *snell*.

28. *First intention*.—Healing by “first intention” occurs when the lips of a wound knit together without the formation of “matter,” (pus), as when the parts cut by a sharp knife are brought into close contact and quickly heal without much inflammation.

* Over-ready to heal.

being now reconciled, and even cordial, and having made up his mind that as yet nobody required 'worrying, but as you may suppose *semper paratus*.*

So far well ; but four days after the operation my patient had a sudden and long shivering, a "groosin'," as she called it. I saw her soon after ; her eyes were too bright, her cheek colored ; she was restless, and ashamed of being so ; the balance was lost ; mischief had begun. On looking at the wound, a blush of red told the secret ; her pulse was rapid, her breathing anxious and quick, she wasn't herself, as she said, and was vexed at her restlessness. We tried what we could, James did every thing, was every where ; never in the way, never out of it. Rab subsided under the table into a dark place, and was motionless, all but his eye, which followed every one. Ailie got worse ; began to wander in her mind, gently ; was more demonstrative in her ways to James, rapid in her questions, and sharp at times. He was vexed, and said, "She was never that way afore ; no, never." For a time she knew her head was wrong, and was always asking our pardon—the dear, gentle old woman ; then delirium set in strong, without pause. Her brain gave way, and then came that terrible spectacle,

"The intellectual power, through words and things,
Went sounding on its dim and perilous way ;"

she sang bits of old songs and psalms, stopping suddenly, mingling the Psalms of David, and the diviner words of his Son and Lord, with homely odds and ends and scraps of ballads.

Nothing more touching, or in a sense more strangely beautiful, did I ever witness. Her tremulous, rapid, affectionate, eager, Scotch voice—the swift, aimless, bewildered mind, the baffled utterance, the bright and perilous eye ; some wild words, some household cares, something for James, the names of the dead, Rab called rapidly and in a "fremyt"† voice, and he starting up, surprised, and slinking off as if he were to blame somehow, or had been dream-

* Always ready.

† Querulous, trembling.

ing ne heard. Many eager questions and beseechings which James and I could make nothing of, and on which she seemed to set her all, and then sink back ununderstood. It was very sad, but better than many things that are not called sad. James hovered about, put out and miserable, but active and exact as ever; read to her, when there was a lull, short bits from the Psalms, prose and metre, chanting the latter in his own rude and serious way, showing great knowledge of the fit words, bearing up like a man, and doating over her as his "ain Ailie." "Ailie, ma woman!" "Ma ain bonnie wee dawtie!"

"The end was drawing on: the golden bowl was breaking;²⁸ the silver cord was fast being loosed—that *animula blandula, vagula, hospes, comesque*,²⁹ was about to flee. The body and the soul—companions for sixty years—were being sundered, and taking leave. She was walking, alone, through the valley of that shadow, into which one day we must all enter—and yet she was not alone, for we know whose rod and staff were comforting her.³⁰

One night she had fallen quiet, and as we hoped, asleep; her eyes were shut. We put down the gas and sat watching her. Suddenly she sat up in bed, and taking a bedgown which was lying on it rolled up, she held it eagerly to her breast—to the right side. We could see her eyes bright with surpassing tenderness and joy, bending over this bundle of clothes. She held it as a woman holds her sucking child; opening out her nightgown impatiently, and holding it close, and brooding over it, and murmuring foolish little words, as one whom his mother comforteth, and who sucks and is satisfied. It was pitiful and strange to see her wasting dying look, keen and yet vague—her immense love.

"Preserve me!" groaned James, giving away. And then she rocked back and forward, as if to make it sleep,

28. Cf. Eccles. xii, 6.

29. *Animula blandula*, pleasing life.

Vagula, hastening away.

Hospes, guest.

Comesque and companion.

30. Cf. Psalm xxiii.

hushing it, and wasting on it her infinite fondness. "Wae's me, doctor; I declare she's thinkin' it's that bairn." "What bairn?" "The only bairn we ever had; our wee Mysie, and she's in the Kingdom, forty years and mair." It was plainly true: the pain in the breast telling its urgent story to a bewildered, ruined brain, was misread and mistaken; it suggested to her the uneasiness of a breast full of milk, and then the child; and so again once more they were together, and she had her ain wee Mysie in her bosom.

This was the close. She sank rapidly: the delirium left her; but, as she whispered, she was "clean silly;" it was the lightening before the final darkness. After having for some time lain still—her eyes shut, she said, "James!" He came close to her, and lifting up her calm, clear, beautiful eyes, she gave him a long look, turned to me kindly but shortly, looked for Rab but could not see him, then turned to her husband again, as if she would never leave off looking, shut her eyes and composed herself. She lay for some time breathing quick, and passed away so gently, that when we thought she was gone, James in his old-fashioned way, held the mirror to her face. After a long pause, one small spot of dimness was breathed out; it vanished away, and never returned, leaving the blank clear darkness of the mirror without a stain. "What is your life? it is even a vapor, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."³¹

Rab all this time had been full awake and motionless; he came forward beside us; Ailie's hand, which James had held, was hanging down; it was soaked with his tears; Rab licked it all over carefully, looked at her, and returned to his place under the table.

James and I sat, I don't know how long, but for sometime—saying nothing: he started up abruptly, and with some noise went to the table, and putting his right, fore and middle fingers each into a shoe, pulled them out, and put them on, breaking one of the leather lachets, and muttering in anger, "I never did the like o' that afore"

31. Cf. James iv, 14.

I believe ne never did ; nor after either. “ Rab ! ” he said roughly, and pointing with his thumb to the bottom of the bed. Rab leapt up, and settled himself ; his head and eye to the dead face. “ Maister John, ye’ll wait for me,” said the carrier, and disappeared in the darkness, thundering down stairs in his heavy shoes. I ran to a front window : there he was, already round the house, and out at the gate, fleeing like a shadow.

I was afraid about him, and yet not afraid ; ss I sat down beside Rab, and being wearied, fell asleep. I awoke from a sudden noise outside. It was November, and there had been a heavy fall of snow. Rab was *in statu quo* ;³² he heard the noise too, and plainly knew it, but never moved. I looked out ; and there, at the gate, in the dim morning—for the sun was not up, was Jess and the cart—a cloud of steam rising from the old mare. I did not see James ; he was already at the door, and came up to the stairs, and met me. It was less than three hours since he left, and he must have posted out—who knows how—to Howgate, full nine miles off ; yoked Jess, and driven her astonished into town. He had an armful of blankets, and was streaming with perspiration. He nodded to me, spread out on the floor two pairs of clean old blankets, having at their corners “ A. G., 1794,” in large letters in red worsted. These were the initials of Alison Græme, and James may have looked in at her from without—himself unseen but not unthought of—when he was “ wat, wat³³ and weary,” and after having walked many a mile over the hills, may have seen her sitting, while “ a’ the lave were sleepin’ ; ”³⁴ and by the fire-light working her name on the blankets, for her ain James’ bed.

He motioned Rab down, and taking his wife in his arms, laid her in the blankets, and happed her carefully and firmly up, leaving the face uncovered ; and then lifting her, he nodded again sharply to me, and with a resolved but

32. In the same position.

33. Wet.

34. All the rest were sleeping.

utterly miserable face, strode along the passage, and down stairs, followed by Rab. I followed with a light; but he didn't need it. I went out, holding stupidly the candle in my hand in the calm frosty air; we were soon at the gate. I could have helped him, but I saw he was not to be meddled with, and he was strong, and did not need it. He laid her down as tenderly, as safely, as he had lifted her out ten days before—as tenderly as when he had her first in his arms when she was only "A. G."—sorted her, leaving that beautiful sealed face open to the heavens; and then taking Jess by the head, he moved away. He did not notice me, neither did Rab, who presided behind the cart.

I stood till they passed through the long shadow of the College, and turned up Nicholson Street. I heard the solitary cart sound through the streets, and die away and come again; and I returned, thinking of that company going up Libberton Brae, then along Roslin Muir, the morning light touching the Pentlands and making them on-looking ghosts; then down the hill through Auchindinny woods, past "haunted Woodhouselee;" and as daybreak came sweeping up the bleak Lammermuir, and fell on his own door, the company would stop, and James would take the key, and lift Ailie up again, laying her on her own bed, and, having put Jess up, would return with Rab and shut the door.

James buried his wife, with his neighbors mourning, Rab inspected the solemnity from a distance. It was snow, and that black ragged hole would look strange in the midst of the swelling spotless cushion of white. James looked after everything; then rather suddenly fell ill, and took to bed; was insensible when the doctor came, and soon died. A sort of low fever was prevailing in the village, and his want of sleep, his exhaustion, and his misery, made him apt to take it. The grave was not difficult to reopen. A fresh fall of snow had again made all things white and smooth; Rab once more looked on, and slunk home to the stable.

And what of Rab? I asked for him next week at the new carrier who got the goodwill of James's business, and was

now master of Jess and her cart. "How's Rab?" He put me off, and said rather rudely, "What's *your* business wi' the dowg?" I was not to be so put of. "Where's Rab?" He, getting confused and red, and intermeddling with his hair, said, "'Deed sir, Rab's died." "Dead! what did he die of?" "Weel, sir," said he, getting redder, "he didna exactly dee; he was killed. I had to brain him wi' a rack-pin; there was nae doing' wi' him. He lay in the treviss³⁵ wi' the mear, and wadna come oot. I temptit him wi' the kail³⁶ and meat, but he wad tak naething, and keepit me frae feedin' the beast, and he was aye gur gurrin',³⁷ and grup gruppin'³⁸ me by the legs. I was laith³⁹ to make awa wi' the old dowg, his like wasne atween this and Thornhill,—but, 'deed, sir, I could do naething else." I believed him. Fit end for Rab, quick and complete. His teeth and his friends gone, why should he keep the peace and be civil?

MORE ABOUT "RAB."

OF Rab I have little to say, indeed have little right to speak of him as one of "our dogs;" but nobody will be sorry to hear anything of that noble fellow. Ailie, the day or two after the operation, when she was well and cheery, spoke about him, and said she would tell me fine stories when I came out, as I promised to do, to see her at Howgate. I asked her how James came to get him. She told me that one day she saw James coming down from Leadburn with the cart; he had been away west, getting eggs and butter, cheese and hens for Edinburgh. She saw he was in some

35. Stall.

36. Kail.—A vegetable commonly used in soup by the Scotch. Hence, any soup may be called kail.

37. Growl, growling.

38. Grab, grabbing.

39. Loath, reluctant, "I wad be *laith* to rin an chase thee."—Burns.

trouble, and on looking, there was what she thought young calf being dragged, or, as she called it, "haurled," at the back of the cart. James was in front, and when he came up, very warm and very angry, she saw that there was a huge young dog tied to the cart, struggling and pulling back with all his might, and as she said "looking fearsom." James, who was out of breath and temper, being past his time, explained to Ailie, that this "muckle brute o' a whalp" had been worrying sheep, and terrifying everybody at Sir George Montgomery's at Macbie Hill, and that Sir George had ordered him to be hanged, which, however, was sooner said than done, as "the thief" showed his intentions of dying hard. James came up just as Sir George had sent for his gun; and as the dog had more than shown a liking for him, he said he "wad gie him a chance;" and so he tied him to his cart. Young Rab, fearing some mischief, had been entering a series of protests all the way, and nearly strangling himself to spite James and Jess, besides giving Jess more than usual to do. "I wish I had let Sir George pit that charge into him, the thrawn brute," said James. But Ailie had seen that in his foreleg there was a splinter of wood, which he had likely got when objecting to be hanged, and that he was miserably lame.

So she got James to leave him with her, and go straight into Edinburgh. She gave him water, and by her women's wit got his lame paw under a door, so that he couldn't suddenly get at her, then with a quick firm hand she plucked out the splinter, and put in an ample meal. She went in some time after, taking no notice of him, and he came limping up, and laid his great jaws in her lap; from that moment they were "chief," as she said, James finding him mansuete and civil when he returned.

She said it was Rab's habit to make his appearance exactly half an hour before his master, trotting in full of importance, as if to say, "He's all right, he'll be here." One morning James came without him. He had left Edinburgh very early, and in coming near Auchindinny, at a lonely part of the road, a man sprang out on him, and

demanded his money. James, who was a cool hand, said, "Weel a weel, let me get it," and stepping back, he said to Rab, "Speak till him, my man." In an instant Rab was standing over him, threatening strangulation if he stirred. James pushed on leaving Rab in charge; he looked back, and saw that every attempt to rise was summarily put down. As he was telling Ailie the story, up came Rab with that great swing of his. It turned out that the robber was a Howgate lad, the worthless son of a neighbor, and Rab knowing him had let him cheaply off.

"Our Dogs* in *Spare Hours* (First Series).

* The young student will find some most delightful reading in this interesting essay by the genial Doctor Brown, on his favorite dogs.

TEST QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW.

1. When and where was Dr. John Brown born?
2. What can you say of his ancestors?
3. What famous school did he attend?
4. What noted men went to this school?
5. In what essay will you find a touching tribute to his father?
6. What famous man did Dr. Brown used to meet in his boyhood?
7. After leaving the High School what profession did he adopt?
8. In what hospital did he become a student?
9. With what famous surgeon did he begin a life-long friendship?
10. What tribute of affection does he pay to this surgeon in his writings?
11. How is Minto Hospital associated with Dr. Brown's most famous sketch?
12. Where did the young Doctor begin practice?
13. Mention the incident that Dickens told at an Edinburgh dinner.
14. Where did Dr. Brown next begin to practice?
15. What can you say of his subsequent professional career?
16. Was he successful as a physician, and why?
17. What kind of a man was Dr. Brown personally?
18. What can you say of his fits of depression?
19. Did they affect his life to any extent?
20. When did he die?
21. Under what title did he begin to publish his writings?
22. What two sketches established his reputation?
23. Tell in a general way the good Doctor's favorite themes.
24. Why do you suppose he liked to write of the old-time Scotch scholars?
25. Why was he able to write graphically and truthfully of dogs?
26. What evidence from his writings that Dr. Brown loved and knew children?
27. Have you read his "Pet Marjorie;" if so how do you like it?
28. What are some of its weak points? its strong points?
29. Why do you suppose that Dr. Brown loved and appreciated Thackeray's writings to the extent that he did?
30. John Leech, the artist, was another favorite. Why?
31. What charming descriptions of Scottish scenery may be found in Dr. Brown's writings?
32. Did he excel in this respect, and why?
33. What is his most famous sketch?
34. Why does "Rab" keep its hold upon the public during these many years?
35. What traits of Scottish character does it illustrate?
36. It is apparently merely an incident in the life of a lowly Scotch family; why does it fasten itself upon the memory and appeal so strongly to our feelings?
37. Mention the marked characteristics of the dog, Rab, as delineated by the author?
38. Do the occasional Latin words and phrases mar the style of the author?
39. By what words would you describe the author's style of writing?
40. Was "Rab and His Friends" founded on fact?
41. What was one object the author had in writing the sketch?
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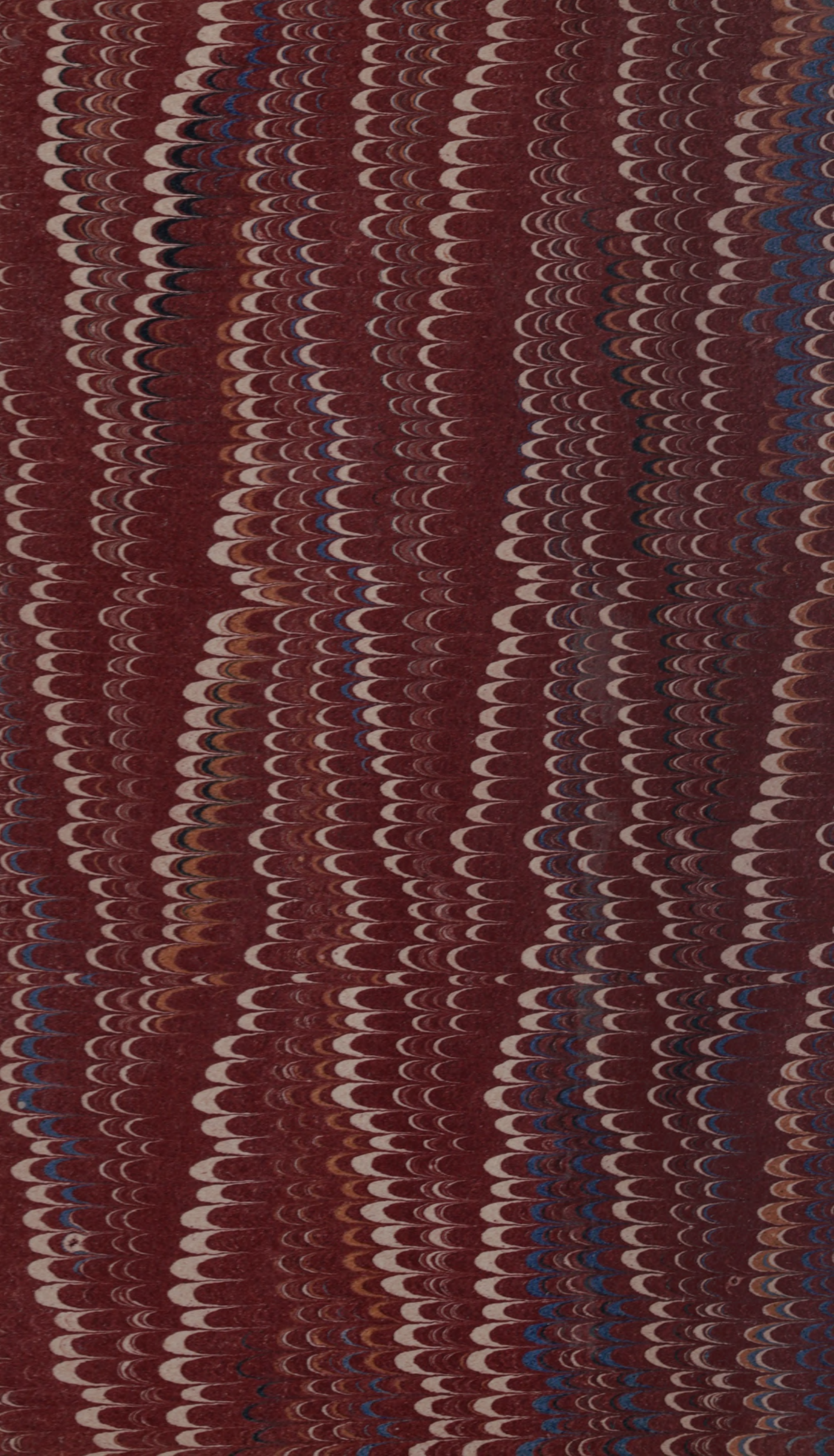
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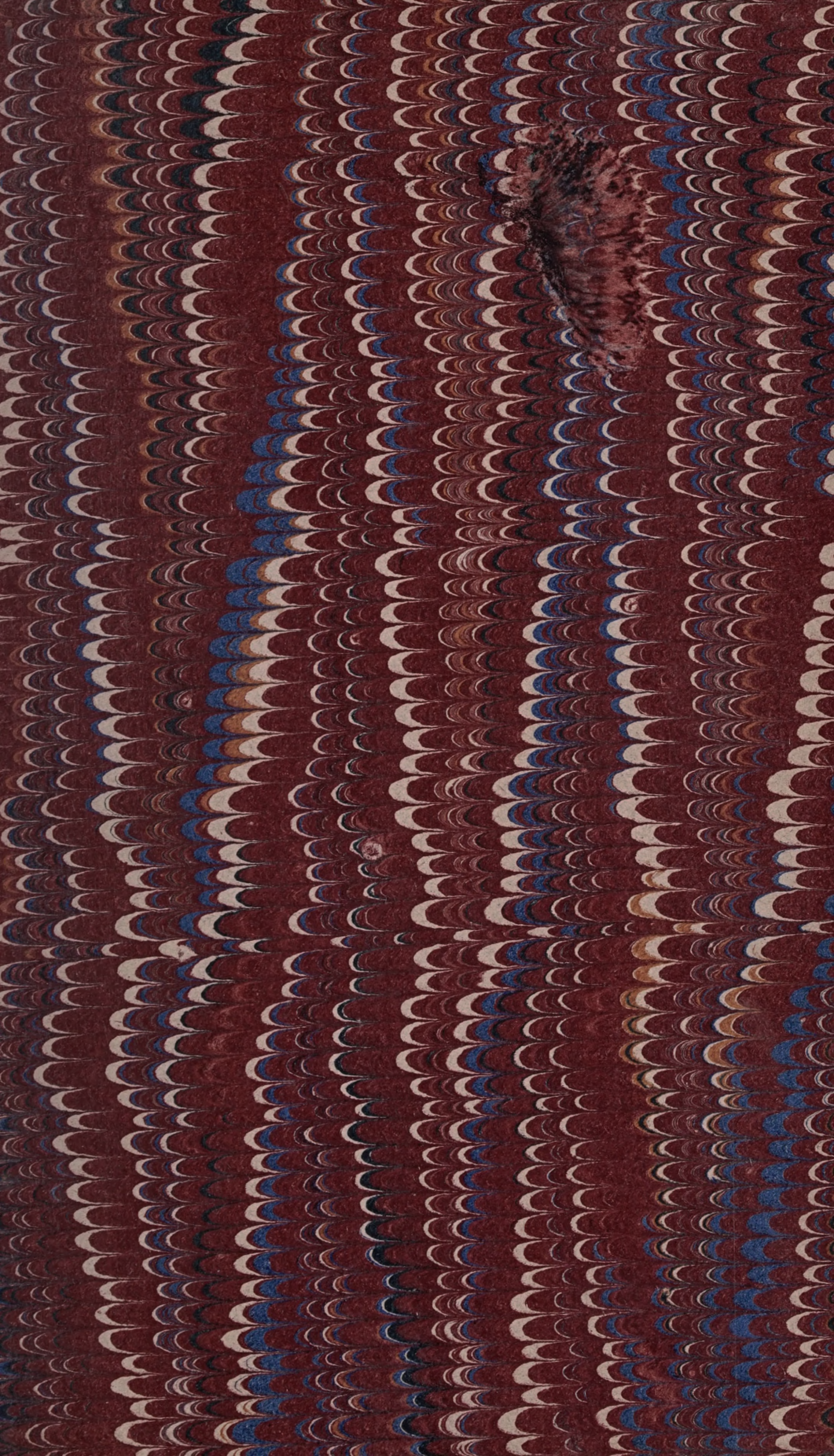
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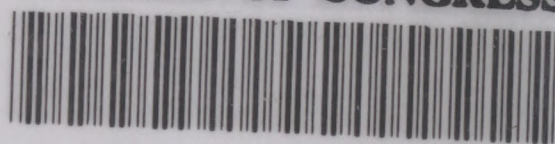
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