

# ADAM LINDSAY GORDON

AND HIS FRIENDS  
IN ENGLAND AND AUSTRALIA





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ADAM LINDSAY GORDON

DEDICATED TO THE  
AUTHOR OF "RODNEY STONE"  
IN WHOM  
THE POET OF THE AUSTRALIAN BUSH  
(THE PUPIL OF JEM EDWARDS, THE EARYWIG)  
WOULD HAVE FOUND A MAN AND A WRITER AFTER HIS  
OWN HEART



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ADAM LINDSAY GORDON ON HIS FAVOURITE STEEPLECHASER 'CADGER.'

*Drawn by an officer in the 14th Regiment at St. Kilda, Melbourne.*

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ADAM LINDSAY  
GORDON

*AND HIS FRIENDS IN ENGLAND  
AND AUSTRALIA*

BY  
EDITH HUMPHRIS  
AND  
DOUGLAS SLADEN

*WITH SIXTEEN SKETCHES BY GORDON AND NUMEROUS  
OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS*

LONDON  
CONSTABLE & COMPANY LTD.

1912

THE ARMS OF  
ADAM LINDSAY GORDON  
THE AUSTRALIAN POET



GORDON OF HALLHEAD AND ESLEMONT

Windlesham,  
Crowborough,  
Sussex.

DEAR SLADEN,

I am proud to accept your kind dedication of this Life of Adam Lindsay Gordon, both as a proof of your personal friendship and on account of my feelings towards the subject of your memoir. Gordon was a fine poet and a fine sportsman, and it is curious that in a sporting nation like ours his great merits have not been more generally recognised. As a sportsman he could hardly be beaten in his own line. As a poet he had a Swinburnian command of rhythm and rhyme without ever letting the music of words overlay the sense as the great master was so often tempted to do. In his racing and hunting poems you can hear the drumming of the hoofs, and he took his rhymes flying, like his hedges. Then behind this robust, open-air Gordon there was another man revealed in the poems, a proud, lonely, sensitive man with something Byronic in his view of life. Most precious also was that power of sudden pathos which he possessed, an emotion which is so much more effective when in a virile setting. Gordon was a true sportsman in that he conceived sport to be the overcoming of difficulties, the hard ride across country, the yacht in a breeze, the man against the savage beast. He had a horror of pseudo-sport, the wholesale purposeless killing of small birds or beasts, the persecution of the badger, the otter, or any of the other pretty wild things which give beauty and variety to the countryside. We need in this country a more healthy public opinion upon this point. I love that verse of Gordon's—I am quoting from memory and may not be word-perfect—

“ But you’ve no remorseful qualms or pangs  
When you kneel by the Grizzly’s lair,  
On that conical bullet your sole chance hangs ;  
’Tis the weak one’s advantage fair.  
And the slaggy giant’s terrific fangs  
Are ready to crush and tear ;  
Should you miss—one vision of home and friends,  
Five words of unfinish’d prayer,  
Three savage knife stabs, so your sport ends  
In the worrying grapple that chokes and rends ;—  
Rare sport, at least, for the bear.”

Yours sincerely,

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

*July 16, 1912.*

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# THE PREFACE

(BY DOUGLAS SLADEN)<sup>1</sup>

AT this moment every Australian is subscribing for a national monument to Gordon, the poet of the Australian Bush. It is well that this Gordon should rise in bronze from the heart of Melbourne, as his boyhood's friend, General Gordon, rises from the heart of Africa in the Public Gardens of Khartum. But Adam Lindsay Gordon, like Charles George Gordon, has, in the words of Horace, created for himself a monument more enduring than bronze by his life-work, and his life-work forms the subject of this book.

The Gordon Highlanders as a regiment are *nulli secundus* in reputation for military valour. And these two Gordons, who were educated at the Royal Military Academy<sup>2</sup> together, and whose friendship in their boyhood is a matter

<sup>1</sup> The chapters signed by Mr. Sladen are written entirely by him. He solely is responsible for the opinions expressed in them.

<sup>2</sup> General T. Bland Strange, R.A., who was at the R.M.A., Woolwich, with both of them, and to whom I owe some of the most valuable information about the poet's youth, wrote to me a few months ago—

“As to the two Gordons, they were the antitheses—of their generation—one a grim, conscientious Puritan, the other a sensuous, pleasure-loving poet and sportsman. Charlie, squat and unhandsome; Lindsay tall, slight, active and wiry. I never heard anything to his discredit in his military career. I heard he had to leave the Service because he had promised to ride a horse at a race meeting for a friend. The owner (his friend) became bankrupt and his creditors seized the horse. Lindsay Gordon stole him out of the stable, rode and won the race, as he had promised. Both Gordons came of the military caste. Charlie's father was a General of Artillery, and all his brothers were in the Service; Lindsay's was an officer of the Indian Army and a great shikari: he became a Professor of Military Subjects (really Oriental languages, D.S.) at Cheltenham College. His mother was also a Gordon, his father's cousin, which perhaps accounted for Lindsay's eccentricity! He was very short-sighted, which perhaps accounted for the desperate jumps he would put his horse at. He was a very lovable man, especially to women. I think Charlie Gordon owed much of his stern character and success in life to constitutional indifference to women. He had a smooth, almost hairless face, but a desperate virility of valour.”<sup>3</sup>

of history, are above all things proverbs for reckless bravery. Neither of them had ever seen fear. Both had defied Death times without number.

It is difficult to believe that the wild Bushman had been brought up in the same iron Christianity as "The General with the spirit of a martyr." But it is a fact.

Unfortunately, in the poet's case the iron had entered into his soul, and something of his wildness seems to have been due to the longing of the merry spirit of his boyhood to escape from the greyness of its surroundings. All true poets are insurgents against Convention, whether they wield a broad humanity like Shakespeare, or run amok like Byron, Gordon's prototype. Even Wordsworth had his dowdy unconventionality.

Gordon was very Byronic. He began with escapades and eccentricities of dress. From a boy he loved to use his fists, and, if he did not get into the School XI like Byron, he had won steeplechases at an age when most boys are absorbed in the sports of Public Schools. Like Byron, he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Like Byron, the shades of gloom closed in round his manhood until he sank into an early grave. The phoenix rose from the ashes of both. And, if Gordon's fame is not as world-wide as Byron's, he has this to console him, that, while Byron's hold on his countrymen is now intellectual only, Gordon enjoys the passionate love of Australia. He is Australia's hero, as well as her poet. Perhaps no poet ever enjoyed such a personal devotion.

This book is written with absolute candour. Others might have felt an inclination to suppress the poet's letters to Charley Walker, which form the most important contribution to the study of Gordon's character ever published, because they tell us in his own words that the rumours of the wildness of his youth were true. I had no hesitation in publishing them, though I knew what a profound sensation their publication must cause in Australia, where Gordon's personality is a personal matter with almost

every intelligent person. For they prove his sincerity, that the remorse for sowing the wind, which is the keynote of his more serious poetry, was genuine, and not the affectation of a morbid spirit.

And their publication does more than that. They show the evolution of the character, which was to stamp itself not only on Australian poetry, but on Australian manhood. In connection with Miss Humphris's brilliant chapters about the life of Gordon and his sporting friends in the nineteen years he spent in England, they help us to complete the map of his life.

In England, as in Australia, he won the attention of every one by his fearlessness; and he won the affection of all who were in his immediate circle by his merry spontaneous nature. But his lightheartedness led to his sowing wild oats, and they seemed to his father so wild that he shipped him off to Australia, not, we must believe, so much with the idea of ridding himself of a nuisance, as with the idea that his son's courage and adventurousness might be turned to good account in the lawless atmosphere of the Great Gold Rush. We may think this, because he procured for him a commission for which the poet never applied, in the South Australian Mounted Police. Gordon preferred to enlist in the same corps as a constable, and from that moment the steady improvement in his character began.

Gordon had many misfortunes and hardships in Australia, but every year he grew more manly and respected, and in his last days, when he was broken by accidents and poverty, we find him the valued and intimate friend and a favourite guest in the houses of the most prominent men in their respective colonies, like the Riddochs and the Powers.

I do not in the Preface purpose to go further into the character of Gordon than to emphasise the fact that the splendid fight he fought with hardships in the old Colonial days made a hero of him, and a writer of heroic poems second to none in our language.

This book is written to prove that Gordon, whatever his faults, was a hero. The world has known for half a century how manful his poems are.

But the object of a preface is to set forth the character of the book itself—to tell the reader if this is the book he has been looking for. So I must briefly indicate its contents. It contains of course a life of Gordon, and a chronological table of the principal events in his short life of thirty-six years, and a study of his poems. The reader will take them for granted and wish to know the special features of the book.

One of the most important of them will be found just after the list of Gordon's sayings which have become proverbs and household words—*Mrs. A. L. Gordon's Reminiscences of her Husband*. After a silence of forty-two years she has, for the first time since his death, told the world what she remembers of her famous husband. She told it in a talk with Mr. C. R. Wilton, M.J.I., by whose kindness and that of Sir J. Langdon Bonython, editor-proprietor of the (South Australian) *Advertiser*, I am able to give it here.

What Mrs. Gordon does for the Australian portion of his life Miss Frances Gordon does for the English. She was the daughter of the favourite uncle to whom Gordon always turned when he was in trouble. She saw him every day for a year and a half, while he was living in her father's house to attend the Worcester Grammar School. She remembers all his home circle. She has preserved many relics, including that admirable letter of A. L. Gordon to his uncle, which is given in this volume in facsimile to show what Gordon's thoughts looked like in his own handwriting. It is to her too that we owe the picture of Esslemont, the baronial mansion which played such a great part in the culmination of the Gordon tragedy; it is also through miniatures lent by her and reproduced here, that we become acquainted with the beautiful and aristocratic face of Gordon's father, the Cheltenham Colonel



Newcome, as beautiful as the Miss Linley who married Sheridan, and the noble and dignified face of the uncle to whom he owed so much. It is to her that we are indebted for the daguerreotype of himself which Gordon sent home at the time of his marriage to her father, the most authentic portrait of Gordon in existence. It is to her that we are indebted for his coat of arms (to be compared with that of the Gordon of Gicht who became Lord Byron's mother); it is to her that we are indebted for Gordon's earliest long poem, that on the death of Nelson, preserved in Gordon's own handwriting in an album belonging to her, and never before printed. It is to her and her nephew, Captain W. A. Gordon, D.S.O., and Colonel Wolrige Gordon, the present owner of Esslemont (who has chivalrously written of the poet as at one time the heir-apparent to the estates), that we owe the table of the descent of the Gordons of Hallhead and Esslemont. To the illustriousness of this descent I shall allude lower down.

The letters to Charley Walker mentioned above, were written most of them just before he left England, but a few were written during his first years in Australia. Their chief value lies in the fact that Gordon wished to conceal nothing from his boyhood's friend, and the fact that they relate partly to the wild oats which led to his leaving England, partly to the spirit with which he commenced life in Australia, in which he grew ever manlier from the day that he landed, to that fatal dawn of Midsummer Day 1870. I am enabled to give the letters and the pencil sketches by the courtesy of Charley Walker's daughter, Miss Henriette Walker.

As I am not competent to offer any opinion on Gordon as a rider, I quote in "How Gordon rode in Australia," the opinions of critics in the *Australasian*, the *Field* of Australia, and the reminiscences supplied by his friends, such as Mr. George Riddoch, Mr. F. Vaughan and Sir Frank Madden. I have established the fact that Sir Thomas Durand Baker, the Major Baker whose horses

Gordon rode most in his steeplechasing career, was, like Gordon, educated at Cheltenham College. They might well have been there together in two of those years of Gordon's early life of which the record has been lost. Questions like this are discussed in the "Key to the Principal Allusions in Gordon's Poems," which is one of the most important features of the book. In the family allusions and the classical allusions the key is fairly complete. But there are still various names of horses and sporting personages, which have defied identification, and Miss Humphris and I will be very grateful for any additions to, or corrections in, the glossary which our readers send us. I can imagine that this key to the allusions in Gordon's poems will be much studied and closely criticised on stations all over Australia, as well as by the students of Gordon in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide, and desire every improvement which can be suggested for subsequent editions.<sup>1</sup> With such help the key can be made reasonably complete.

Of the various poems included in this volume, but not included in the collected edition of Gordon's works edited by his first recogniser, the late Marcus Clarke, by far the most important is "Argemone," written for Miss Riddoch, and given to me for publication by Mr. George Riddoch of Koorine Station, South Australia, one of the best friends Gordon ever had and one of the most intimate of his surviving friends. The poem on the Death of Nelson is a youthful poem given to me by Miss Frances Gordon. "The Feud" was given to me for publication by the late Patchett Martin. "I am weary, lay me low," and "At night I've heard the marsh-frog's croak," were given to me for publication in my anthology, *Australian Poets*, and appeared in that volume. "Gordon's Last Poem" was sent to me

<sup>1</sup> Addressed to Douglas Sladen, c/o Archibald Constable & Co., 10 Orange Street, London, W.C. Information as to the whereabouts of any unpublished poems, letters or sketches, and the lost letters written by Gordon to John Riddoch, and by Gordon's father to various correspondents, will also be gratefully received, as will materials for a bibliography of books and articles which have been written about Gordon.

by the *Queenlander*; the original draft of "Finis Exoptatus" and "Lindsay the Lanky" by the editor of the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*; and three witty stanzas, which will be much quoted, come from Gordon's letters to Charley Walker.

Miss Humphris collected the material for Chapters VII to XVII, which form the backbone of the book inasmuch as they describe the sporting career and sporting friends of Gordon in England. The accident of Miss Humphris's living at Cheltenham, where her grandfather had been one of the principal architects of the College, put her into a position to ferret out the details of a most interesting period of Gordon's life, which Mr. Howlett Ross, the author of that fascinating memoir which made him the pioneer of Gordon biographers, and Messrs. Turner and Sutherland, whose *Development of Australian Literature* makes them the Leslie Stephens of Australia, were from their residence in Australia unable to gather. I owe my old friend Henry Gyles Turner, the historian of Australia, who was the chief Australian critic in the days when I lived in Melbourne, my deepest thanks for placing his materials unreservedly at my disposal.

The present volume deals mainly with Gordon among his English sporting friends, such as Jem Edwards, the famous Middle-Weight Champion, who was never beaten in any of his great fights, and who made Gordon such a magnificent boxer; Tom Sayers, the immortal prize-fighter, who often boxed with him; Black Tom Oliver, the great trainer at Prestbury, who rode the winner in three Grand Nationals, and gave Gordon his first mount on a race-horse; William Archer, whose son, the great Fred, was born at Prestbury; George Stevens, who rode five winners in the Grand National, and still holds the record for that race; and Tom Pickernell, "the Mr. Thomas" who rode three Grand National winners and was Gordon's school friend at Cheltenham College. To him more than any one else Miss Humphris owes her knowledge of the episodes

of Gordon's steeplechasing career in England. Miss Humphris's discoveries and the letters of Charley Walker import an element of humour into Gordon's biography which was never there before, and the people who, like General Strange, knew him as a boy, all except the lady with whom he was in love, refer to him as a merry boy full of high spirits.

To these materials I have been able to add fresh reminiscences of Gordon in Australia written by some of his most intimate friends—such as Mr. George Riddoch, a member of the great South Australian family who were Gordon's best friends in his misfortunes; Mr. F. Vaughan, P.M., who was his intimate friend for many years in the early days; Mr. George Gordon Macrae, himself one of the best Australian poets; and Sir Frank Madden, Speaker of the Parliament of Victoria; while Mr. C. D. Mackellar, author of *Scented Isles and Coral Gardens*, has described the extraordinary Gordon country of South Australia, the home of the legendary Bunyip.

It used to be thought that Gordon had no love romance in his youth. But we know now that he was so attached to the beautiful Jane Bridges that, after all arrangements had been made for his going to Australia and his ticket taken, he went to her to offer to throw over the whole thing, if she would promise to marry him, or bid him stay. But the lady, to her honour, refused, and by her kindness, supplemented by Gordon's own letters, I am able to give the chapter on the romance of Adam Lindsay Gordon.

Another phase of Gordon's life which has hitherto not received adequate attention, is the historical eminence of his family, so ably set forth by Mr. John Malcolm Bulloch, editor of *The House of Gordon*, for the New Spalding Club, in his Gordon pedigrees and his chapters on the Gordons of Hallhead and Esslemont, and Gordon's famous great-grandmother, Lady Henrietta. Mr. Bulloch has long been recognised as the ablest historian of the Gordons, and is one of London's chief editors.

He had a fine subject to write on, for the Hallhead Gordons, of which the poet was at the time of his death the head in the direct male line, were, like the Dukes of Gordon, the Marquesses of Huntly and the Earls of Aberdeen, lineal descendants of Edom (Adam) of Gordon, and Gordon was by intermarriage connected with the most celebrated scions of these noble houses. He was through his grandmother, Lady Henrietta, daughter of the fourth Earl of Aberdeen, a lineal descendant of that George, Marquess of Huntly, the Cavalier Leader, who was captured by an abuse of safe conduct and beheaded by the Covenanters. They offered him his life and his lands if he would turn against the King, but he answered them just as one can picture Adam Lindsay Gordon answering them in a like situation.<sup>1</sup> And, through Lady Henrietta, he sprang from her great-grandfather, Charles Mordaunt, the famous Earl of Peterborough, a commander as dashing on land as Nelson or Cochrane at sea, the capturer of Barcelona, whose exploits inspired one of Macaulay's Essays. The fiery Peterborough is just the ancestor one would have imagined for Gordon. Lord George Gordon of the no-Popery Riots was Lady Henrietta's cousin. Less appropriately, Adam Ferguson the philosopher, and

<sup>1</sup> The reply of George Gordon, second Marquis of Huntly (having been made prisoner when under safe conduct to certain noblemen of the Covenanters), dated April 20, 1639—

“To be your prisoner is by much the less displeasing to me that my accusation is for nothing else but loyalty, and that I have been brought into this estate by such unfair means as can never be made appear honourable in those who used them. Whereas you offer me liberal conditions upon my entering into your covenant, I am not so bad a merchant as to buy it with the loss of my conscience, fidelity and honour, which, in so doing, I should account to be wholly perished. I have already given my faith to my Prince, from whose head the crown by all laws of nature and nations is unjustly fallen, and will not falsify that faith by joining with any in a pretence of religion, which my judgement cannot excuse from rebellion, for 'tis well known that in the primitive church no arms were held lawful being lifted by subjects against their lawful prince, tho' the whole frame of Christianity was then in question. . . . For my own part I am in your power and not resolved to leave the foul title of traitor as an inheritance on my posterity. You may take my head from my shoulders, but not my heart from my sovercign.”

Thomas Bowdler, who Grundyised Shakespeare, come into his pedigree, and so do the Gordon who died at Pinkie, and the Gordon who was out in the Forty-Five.

I must not conclude without expressing our thanks to those not already mentioned, who have given us such valuable help in the preparation of this book—many of them, like Gordon, Mr. Pickernell and myself, O.C.'s, that is, men educated at Cheltenham College. These O.C.'s include Mr. A. A. Hunter, O.C., Bursar and Secretary of Cheltenham College, known to all Cheltonians as the chief benefactor of the school, who is the authority I have consulted on all points connected with Gordon's residence at the College; the late Lord James of Hereford, O.C.; Lord Morley of Blackburn, O.C.; Lord Loreburn, O.C.; Col. Arthur Lang, R.E., O.C. and Col. Kendal Coghill, O.C., two of the stormers of Delhi in the Mutiny; Col. Cuncliffe Martin, C.B., O.C. and Mrs. Cuncliffe Martin; Mr. H. H. Hornby, O.C.; Mr. W. de S. Filgate, O.C. and Mrs. Filgate; General Cardew, R.E., O.C.; Capt. Vaughan, O.C.; the late Archdeacon Robeson, O.C.; Mr. W. L. Newman, O.C.; the Rev. Reginald Broughton, O.C.; Mr. R. W. Raper, O.C., of Oxford.

To these must be added Commander Baker, R.N.; the Marquess of Ailesbury; Lord Coventry; Lord Beauchamp; Lord Tredegar; Lord Fitzhardinge; Lady Massarene and Ferrard, Whyte Melville's daughter; Mr. Leslie Balfour Melville; the late Frederick Marshall of Cheltenham; his daughter, Mrs. Villars; Mr. George Stevens of Derby, son of the great steeplechase-rider; Mr. A. Holman, the well-known trainer of Prestbury, and his brother; Mr. Stephen Miles; Mr. Andrew Page; the Rev. Robert Tanner and Miss Mary Tanner, and Mr. Charles Jessop of Cheltenham; Mr. Whittard; Miss Sidebottom of Worcester; Mr. Baker and Mr. Maddick of the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*; the Editor of *Baily's Magazine*; the Editor of the *Badminton Magazine*; the Editor of *The Graphic*; Sir J. Langdon Bonython,

editor of the (*South Australian*) *Advertiser*; Mr. W. J. Sowden, editor of the (*South Australian*) *Register*; the Editors of the *Argus* and the *Australasian* at Melbourne; the Editors of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Sydney Bulletin* and *The Lone Hand*; Mr. Bertram Stevens; the Editor of the *Queenslander*; Mr. T. S. Townend, Mr. Gough and Mr. Gullett of the London offices of the *Melbourne Argus* and *Australasian* and *Sydney Morning Herald*; Mr. W. E. Robinson of the London office of the (*South Australian*) *Advertiser*; Mr. George Norman, late editor, and Mr. Sawyer, the present editor of *The Cheltenham Examiner*; Mr. Crawford, editor of *The Cheltenham Looker-On*; and the Editor of the *Worcester Herald*, all of whom have given untiring help; Mr. Dunn of the Free Library at Cheltenham; Mr. Duckworth, librarian of the Victoria Institute at Worcester; Mr. W. Scarth Dixon, Mr. Finch Mason and Col. Yardley, the well-known sporting authorities; Mr. Chomley, editor of the *British Australasian*; the Hon. J. G. Jenkins, late Premier of South Australia; the Hon. Sir John McCall, Agent-General of Tasmania; Sir Henry Geary; Lieut.-Col. C. H. Owen; Col. Ashbourne; Mr. C. E. I. Esdaile; the Rev. Mr. Esdaile of Battersea; Mr. Arundell Esdaile; Mr. Andrew Kerr; Mr. Russell Kerr; Mr. John Randall and Mr. Bentley of Worcester; Mrs. Lees of Worcester, who inspired Gordon's one romance; Miss Shenton and Mrs. Turk of Cheltenham, connected with Gordon's acting in amateur theatricals; Mrs. Austen, a daughter-in-law of Black Tom Oliver; Mr. Clifford Canning, a master at Marlborough College; Monsignor Nolan, cousin of the Captain Nolan of Balaclava fame; Father Thomas of Cheltenham; the late Mr. Holland of Prestbury, who knew Tom Oliver and the other great steeplechasers, and often noticed Gordon going to Tom Oliver's house; Mr. J. R. Boosè, Secretary of the Royal Colonial Institute; Mr. P. Evans Lewin, librarian of the Royal Colonial Institute; Mrs. Slade, relative of Mr. Etienne de Mestre, the famous race-

horse owner in Australia; Mrs. M. M. Lovegrove; Mrs. E. W. Boake; Mrs. MacDougall; Mrs. E. A. Lauder, who, as Elizabeth Bright, was one of Gordon's oldest and most intimate friends, and had at least one poem written to her by him, and gave the wattle-tree which is planted over his grave; Mrs. Makin of Mount Monster, South Australia, who knew him in his horse-breaking days; Miss Annie Höltze of Wornop Avenue, Adelaide, South Australia; the Rev. Edward Isaac of the Cecil St. Baptist Church, Williamstown, Melbourne; Mrs. Wilfred Blacket; Mrs. W. Hey Sharp; Mrs. J. A. Fergusson, whose husband was A.D.C. to his brother, Sir James Fergusson, in South Australia at the time of Gordon's death; the Head Masters of the Royal Grammar School at Worcester and the King's School at Canterbury; Mr. John J. Harding; Dr. Pollard of Worcester; Mr. C. S. Jerram; Capt. Mackay, adjutant of the R.M.A., Woolwich; Mr. Charles Marshall; Mr. Elwes; Mr. Barron; Mr. Harry Webb, and Mr. Gordon Bridges of Adelaide, a kinsman of the poet.

A portrait of Capt. Nolan, who brought the order for the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava, is given with a good deal about his connection with some of Gordon's sporting poems, and the illustrations generally form a very important feature in the book. They include several portraits of Gordon himself, among them the inimitable caricature of Gordon on "Cadger," which forms the frontispiece, drawn by one of the officers in the 14th Regiment, when he was staying with them in their barracks at Melbourne, and stolen by him in such an amusing way (see p. 449); the daguerrotype of Gordon which he sent home at the time of his marriage, from which most of the clean-shaven portraits of Gordon have been faked; the famous portrait with a beard, drawn by Sir Frank Madden on the racecourse at Flemington; and several sketches of Gordon on horseback, drawn by himself. There are in all a dozen or two of Gordon's sketches, which, if not of great value from the artistic point of



view, are some of them rich in humour, and others admirable in catching the attitudes of a steeplechasing horse.

Australians will welcome the unique series of photographs of the Knoverton steeplechase course, the real scenery of "How We Beat the Favourite," with the brook and the wall and the fence with stone-coping, taken to accompany the description of the course, which forms one chapter. Boxers will be interested in the photograph of the mantelpiece into which Gordon knocked Jem Edwards, stunning him.

There are pictures of Gordon's homes in Cheltenham and Gordon's homes in Adelaide and Dingley Dell; of Mrs. Gordon, given for the first time in any book; of Jane Bridges; of Miss Frances Gordon and Gordon's father and uncle; of Gordon's Leap and Gordon's grave; of Sweet St. Mary's and Trinity Church, Cheltenham, where all his relatives were buried; and of Cheltenham College, where he became a pupil on its opening day and his father a master five years afterwards. There are portraits of the great steeplechasers who were Gordon's friends when he was learning to ride in the Cotswolds; of Tom Oliver and Hard-riding Bob (Chapman); George Stevens and "Mr. Thomas"; and a photograph of the famous letter which Black Tom Oliver wrote to George Stevens to tell him how to ride "The Colonel" in the Grand National—advice which is given almost identically in Gordon's poem, "How We Beat the Favourite," though it was published before Stevens rode "The Colonel" to victory. Bushmen will feel inclined to tear this letter out and frame it, as they well might the reproductions of the speaking oil-paintings of George Stevens on "The Colonel" and Tom Oliver on "Birmingham." But none exceeds in interest the reproduction in his own handwriting of Gordon's letter to his uncle, a letter full of his life in Australia in his happy, hopeful days.

The more one writes about Gordon the more one loves

him. He was so sincere, so imbued with the stern heroism which distinguished his immortal namesake and classmate. Wild liver that he had been in his boyhood, dashing steeplechase-rider that he was in his prime, he too had in his veins the *sanguis martyrurum*. Familiarity with death is the birthright of those Cocks of the North, the Gay Gordons.

DOUGLAS SLADEN.

*The Avenue House,  
Richmond, Surrey.  
July 9, 1912.*

## PRINCIPAL DATES IN THE LIVES OF ADAM LINDSAY GORDON AND HIS FATHER

### PRINCIPAL DATES IN THE LIFE OF CAPTAIN A. D. GORDON

(Taken from advanced proofs of Constance Oliver Skelton's great book, *The Gordons under Arms*, p. 15.)

Adam Durnford Gordon, son of Captain William Gordon, R.E.  
Born Aug. 22, 1796, and baptized at Ardersier, Inverness. Educated at Sandhurst. His military career ran thus—

1814. July 28. Ensign 3rd West India Reg. and 47th Foot.  
1816. March. On half-pay.  
1817. Nov. Applied to the War Office for permission to live in the East Indies for an unlimited period; and petitioned the East India Co. for the Bengal Cadetship to which he was nominated by the Hon. Hugh Lindsay.  
1818. Ensign 20th Native Infantry.  
1819. Sept. 28. Lieutenant 12th Native Infantry.  
1820. Jan. 12. Granted twelve months' leave to study in the College at Fort William.  
1821. Jan. 28. Granted twelve months' leave to remain at the College.  
1822. D.A.Q.M.G. until Nov. 4; appointed Adjutant to 1st battalion, Dec. 9.  
1823. Jan. 15. Exchanged to Interpreter and Quartermaster, having obtained Medals of Merit for Native Languages.  
1824. July. Examiner at the College, Fort William.  
1827. April 7. Went to England on sick leave in charge of invalids.  
1829. Sept. 12. He married at Paris, his first cousin, Harriet Elizabeth, only child of Robert Gordon, Governor of Berbice.  
1831. Jan. 12 and July 20. Requested to make immediate application for extension of leave of absence. Aug. 31. Requested permission to resign. Sept. 7. Accepted. 1831. Went to reside at Fayal in the Azores.  
1831. Nov. 12. His half-pay in the 47th Foot (in which his grandfather, David, had served at Prestonpans) was cancelled, and he got the commuted allowance of £300.  
1840. Returned to England and settled in Cheltenham.  
1844. June. Applied for an appointment as Barrack Master, and, on the recommendation of his distant kinsman, Lord Aberdeen, his name was added to the waiting list of candidates.  
1846. Professor of Oriental Languages at Cheltenham College; where he compiled a Hindustani grammar.

1857. June 16. He died at Cheltenham.

In a letter to Colonel Lord Fitzroy Somerset, dated Worcester, Aug. 29, 1831, he states, "My father, grandfather, brothers, six uncles and all their sons, twenty of us, have all been brought up for the Army, and half of these have been killed or died in foreign countries or on foreign service." Only seven of these soldiers, however, have been identified. Captain Gordon may, however, have included relatives with other surnames than that of Gordon.

PRINCIPAL DATES IN THE LIFE OF ADAM LINDSAY GORDON

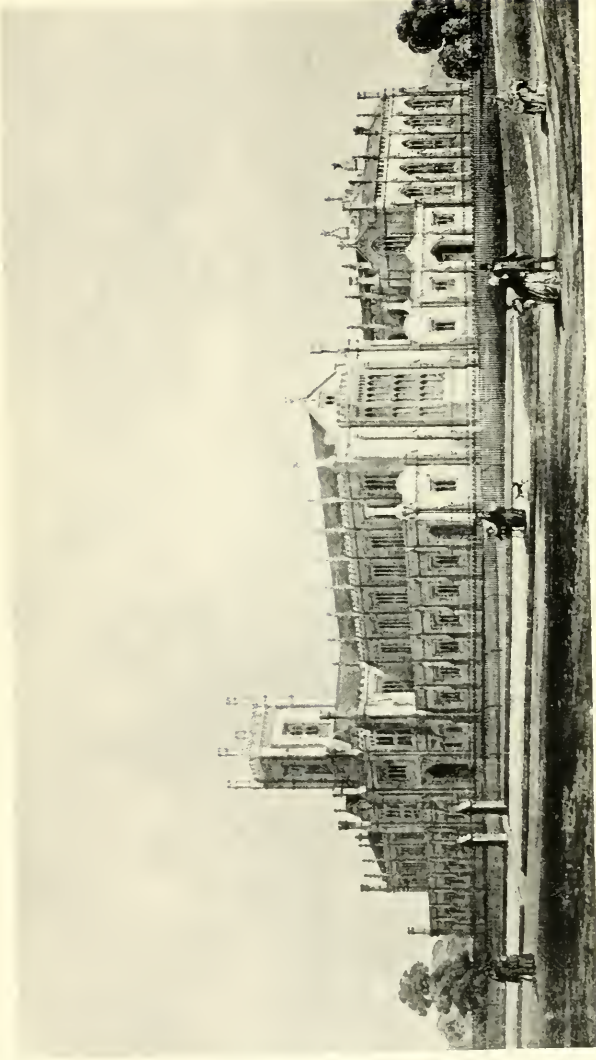
(Compiled by Douglas Sladen)

1815. His father A. D. Gordon went to West Indies as Ensign. Changed to E.I.C. service; fought in Burma, etc.; invalided back to England 1825. Married his cousin Harriet 1829.
1833. Lindsay Gordon born in the Azores, Oct 19th.
1841. Cheltenham College founded. Lindsay one of the first boys.
1842. Lindsay left the College.
1848. At age of 15, Lindsay learns to ride from George Reeves.
1848. Lindsay goes to Woolwich till 1851.
1852. Meets Jane Bridges, now Mrs. Lees.
1852. Forces Lallah Rookh's stable.
1852. March 25. Rides her in the Berkeley Hunt Cup.
1852. Sept. 23. Wins a race on Louisa, late Lallah Rookh.
1853. Aug. 7. Lindsay goes to Australia after parting with Jane Bridges.
1853. Wrote "Across the Trackless Seas I go" (To my Sister) and "The Ocean Heaves around us still" (An Exile's Farewell).
1853. Nov. 14. Lindsay arrives in Adelaide.
1853. Nov. Joined South Australian Mounted Police.
1855. Nov. Resigned from it.
1855. Becomes a horse-breaker and shares hut with William Trainor.
1855. Meets Tenison Woods, who lends him books.  
Between 1855 and 1862, begins to win a few races on his own horses.
1859. Aug. 6. The *Admella* wrecked, near Cape Northumberland.
1862. Oct. Gordon marries Maggie Park.
1864. Inherits £7,000.
1864. Publishes "The Feud" in book form at Mount Gambier.
1865. Jan. 5. Receives a deputation asking him to stand for Parliament.
1865. Jan. 12. Gives his first address at Mount Gambier.
1865. March 16. Elected to Parliament for the Victoria District of South Australia.
1865. April. Third on Ballarat to Ingleside and Blueskin in Great Western Steeplechase, Coleraine.
1865. May 23. Takes his seat in Parliament. Rents a cottage at Glenelg.
1865. Commences his friendship with John Riddoch.  
June 6. Makes a speech in Parliament about the renewals of the annual leases.

1865. Wrote "Visions in the Smoke from my old Clay Pipe."  
 1865. Aug. 1 to Sept. 9. Trains Mr. J. C. James's Cadger.  
 1865. Sept. 20. Wins the Adelaide Grand National on Premier.  
 1865. Dec. Makes a trip to Victoria and wins the Ballarat Steeplechase on Ballarat.  
 1866. Jan. 1. Takes Cadger to Melbourne. Does not win the steeplechase.  
 1866. April. Beaten twice at Ballarat on Cadger. Third on Cadger in Great Western Steeplechase at Coleraine.  
 1866. Sept. 18. Second on Hector in Adelaide Annual Steeplechase.  
 1866. Oct. Writes Fytte I, "By Wood and Wold," and Fytte II, "By Flood and Field," of *Ye Wearie Wayfarer*.  
 1866. Nov. Wrote Fytte III, "Zu der Edlen Jagd," and Fytte IV, "In Utrumque Paratus," of *Ye Wearie Wayfarer*.  
 1866. Nov. 10. Published Fytte V, "Lex Talionis," and Fytte VI, "Potter's Clay."  
 Nov. 17. Wrote Fytte VII, "Cito Pede Preterit Ætas."  
 1866. Nov. 24. Brought out Fytte VIII, "Finis Exoptatus."  
 1866. Nov. 28. Resigns from Parliament.  
 1866. Published two pieces of *Hippodromania*—"The Fields of Coleraine" and "Credat Judæus Apella."  
 1866. The *Australasian* was founded. Gordon published "The Old Leaven" in it anonymously.  
 1867. Jan. Wrote "Thy Voice in my Ear still Mingles," at first called "Frustra," afterwards introduced as a song into *Ashtaroth*.  
 1867. Gave up his cottage at Glenelg and went back to live at Mount Gambier, on literature and the wreck of his means.  
 1867. April 20. Published the "Banker's Dream."  
 1867. April. Second on Cadger to Ingleside in Grand National Steeplechase at Ballarat.  
 1867. Aug. 3. Wrote "Ex Fumo dare Lucem."  
 1867. Aug. Contributed to the *Australasian* "Whither Bound?" afterwards called "Quare Fatigasti."  
 1867. Sept. Published the volume called *Sea Spray and Smoke Drift* (George Robertson, Melbourne). 1867, or early in 1868, published *Ashtaroth* in book form (Clarson and Massina).  
 1867. Oct. Third on Merrimac, Hunt Club Handicap. Second on Cadger, Great Metropolitan Steeplechase, Flemington.  
 1867. Took the livery stables of Craig's Hotel, Ballarat.  
 1867. Dec. Third on Cadger, Ballarat Steeplechase.  
 1868. May. Nowhere on Viking in the Ballarat Steeplechases.  
 1868. July. Has his head smashed in against the post at the door of his stables.  
 1868. Joins the Ballarat troop of Light Horse.  
 1868. Sept. Third on Maude, Hunt Steeplechase, Ballarat. Won Selling Steeplechase on Cadger.  
 1868. Oct. 10. Wins three steeplechases in one day at Melbourne.  
 1868. Nov. Won V.R.C. Steeplechase on Viking.

1868. Oct. and Nov. Gordon stays with Robert Power. He begins to take a dislike to racing.
1868. Oct. or Nov. Gordon writes "A Song of Autumn."
1868. Dec. "Doubtful Dreams" published in the *Colonial Monthly*, edited by Marcus Clarke.
1868. The *Colonial Monthly* prophesies Gordon's fame as a poet.
1868. Dec. Stays with Major Baker, and the officers of the 14th Regiment in their barracks.
1868. Dec. 5. Wins the Ballarat Steeplechase with Babblor.
1868. Receives a letter from England to tell him that he is heir to Esslemont.
1869. Jan. 1. Third on Babblor to his own (or R. Power's) horse, Viking, and Ballarat in Grand National at Flemington.
1869. Jan. Goes to stay a month with the Riddochs at Yallum.
1869. Jan. Writes at Yallum "The Sick Stockrider," published a year later; "How we Beat the Favourite," published a month later; "From the Wreck," and "Wolf and Hound."
1869. Feb. 14. Wrote "A Basket of Flowers" for Miss Riddoch to send with flowers to her aunt.
1869. March 27. Wins Autumn Steeplechase (Flemington) on Babblor; second next day on Babblor to Ingleside.
1869. March. Nowhere on Union in Geelong Steeplechase, won by Ingleside.
1869. In the winter goes, with his wife, to lodge at Middle Brighton, with Mr. Higginbotham's gardener, Kelly.
- 1869 or 1870. "The Sick Stockrider" (and "Doubtful Dreams") published in the *Colonial Monthly* and copied into the *Australasian*.
1869. June. Won Maiden Steeplechase at Caulfield on Maid of the Warman.
- 1869 or 1870. Gordon joins the Yorick Club.
1869. Oct. Fourth on E. G. Blackman's Launcelot for first Hunt Club Cup in Adelaide.
1869. Nov. Nowhere on Prince Rupert, V.R.C. Spring Steeplechase; second on Prince Rupert in Ballarat Steeplechase.
1869. Gordon begins to take steps to assert his claim to the Esslemont estate.
1869. Gordon writes his poem "Argemone" for Miss Riddoch's album.
1870. Joins the Brighton Artillery Corps and takes up rifle shooting.
1870. Jan. Gordon receives news that the entail has never been broken.
1870. March 12. Gordon is twice badly thrown from Major Baker's Prince Rupert at Melbourne, in steeplechase won by Dutchman.
1870. A strong friendship springs up between Gordon and Kendall.
1870. News comes that the Esslemont entail has been swept away.
1870. June 23. *Bush Ballads and Galloping Rhymes* are printed off. Gordon is shown the proof of Kendall's two columns in the *Australasian*. Gordon spends the day till tea-time with Kendall.
1870. June 24. Gordon goes out at daybreak and shoots himself in the scrub at Brighton.





CHEIKENTHAM COLLEGE, AS IT WAS WHEN GORDON WAS AT SCHOOL THERE.  
*Drawn by the late D. J. Humphris, architect of the old College Chapel shewn on the right, etc., grandfather of Miss E. M. Humphris.*



## CHAPTER I

### THE LIFE OF ADAM LINDSAY GORDON

(By Douglas Sladen only)

ADAM LINDSAY GORDON, the Byron of Australia, is one of the most romantic figures in Literature. A Scottish gentleman, belonging to an ancient and illustrious family, he went to Australia in the wild old Colonial days and extorted the admiration of the wildest by his splendid horsemanship and dauntless courage. He was the most famous steeplechaser as well as the most famous poet that Australia has known. His exploits were such that any of his poems might be autobiographical and, to end everything, he died by his own hand before he was thirty-seven—the age fatal to Genius.

Everything we know of him was appropriate to the poems he wrote. He was qualified to write about horses because he had been a horse-breaker, and was the most noted amateur steeplechaser in Australia. He was qualified to write about the Bush because he had been a Bushman for years in the old pioneering days; he was qualified to write in a heroic vein because from his boyhood he had been willing to fight any man with his fists, or take any risks. He was qualified to write in the Byronic vein because of his attitude to life. And he was qualified to write their philosophy for the grim, manful Australians, because he was such a grim, manful man as years advanced.

Romance was Gordon's birthright. He was sprung from the *false* Gordon, who perhaps gave this lordly race their ballad epithet—the Adam of Gordon in Berwickshire, who founded the fortunes of his house; the trusted

henchman of King Edward the First, whose timely desertion to the Bruce was rewarded with the broad lands in Aberdeenshire which have remained the patrimony of the Gordons.

This was at the dawn of the fourteenth century, and most heads of the family from that day to the poet's bore the fine old name of Adam. The Adam of Gordon of the ballad—Edom o' Gordon—was a brother of the then earl of Huntly, who in 1571 burned a lady of the house of Forbes in her castle for refusing to surrender. Many an ancestor of Gordon laid down his life for the Scottish crown. One ancestor died at Pinkie, the fatal battle before the gates of Edinburgh where the English routed the Scotch early in the same century. Another, the second Marquess of Huntly, went to the block for his King more finely than the great Marquess Montrose himself. Another was out in the Forty-Five and lost his lands for Prince Charlie, though they were restored. His great-grandmother was the notorious Lady Henrietta Gordon, the wild daughter of the second Earl of Aberdeen, and cousin of the yet wilder Lord George and Lord William Gordon. His father had been a famous horseman and sportsman in India. His mother, daughter of the Governor of Berbice, was heiress to a vast estate till the abolition of slavery destroyed the properties of the Spanish Main.

When she first comes into our ken, before she was married to Gordon's father, she was living with the Hon. Hugh Lindsay and his wife, who received a thousand a year for her maintenance and education. Miss Gordon tells us that she had two governesses and was indulged in every extravagance—and also that Mrs. Gordon of Hall-head, the wife of the head of the family, had been asked first to take charge of her when she was left an orphan. Hugh Lindsay was a son of the fifth Earl of Balcarres, and a director of the East India Company and a China merchant. He married the daughter of Lord Rockville, a Lord of Session, who was the brother of Lady Henrietta Gordon,

grandmother of both the father and mother of the poet. So that Mrs. Lindsay was a first cousin once removed of her charge. Adam Lindsay Gordon was doubtless named Lindsay after Hugh or his wife. Very likely one of them was a sponsor at his baptism. It would be interesting if it were Hugh Lindsay, and it would have been still more interesting if it could have been his sister, Lady Anne Lindsay, who married Andrew Barnard, for that would have made Gordon the godson of another poet, since Lady Anne was the author of "Auld Robin Gray." She, too, was connected with the Colonies, for she was one of the first members of the aristocracy to settle in them. She and her husband lived in Cape Colony, and she has left us delightful memoirs on the subject.

Lady Henrietta, Gordon's great-grandmother, daughter of the second Earl of Aberdeen, who married the Laird of Hallhead, was famous for her escapades, but they were nothing to the escapades of her cousins Lord George and Lord William Gordon. Lord George's chief escapade, the No-Popery Riot, is a matter of history. Lord William, son of the Duke of Gordon, ran away with the married daughter of the Duke of Richmond (the two titles have since coalesced), Lady Sarah Bunbury.

Lady Sarah Bunbury (born Lady Sarah Lennox) was one of the most romantic figures in history. She was so beautiful as a girl that King George III used to pay clandestine court to her to be his Queen. But he was persuaded into a more constitutional courtship and in due time Lady Sarah married Sir Charles Bunbury. Lord William Gordon, brother of Lord George, persuaded her to bolt with him, but she was so lovely that her stooping to folly did not extinguish her socially. She married for her second husband one of the Ettrick Napiers, the Hon. George, and by him became the modern Cornelia—the mother of the Napiers.

Lady Henrietta inherited her name, and probably her adventurousness, from her grandmother, who was the

daughter of that Paladin of the eighteenth century, the great Earl of Peterborough, who immortalised himself by his victories in Spain. He was thus the poet's direct ancestor.

One more noble kinsman of Adam Lindsay Gordon must be mentioned—Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon, who became Lord Stanmore. He was very well known in Australasia, having been Governor of Fiji 1875–1880, and New Zealand 1880–1882. Being son of the fourth Earl of Aberdeen he was a Scotch cousin of the Adam Lindsay Gordon who was not considered sufficiently a gentleman to ride for the Ladies' Purse at Penola—or some smaller place.

But beyond having a common ancestor, a Gordon of Gicht in the early Middle Ages, Gordon does not seem to have had the responsibility of being related to Lord Byron, though the arms and mottoes of the Gordons of Gicht and Hallhead show a closer connection than is usual for Gordons.

That was his breeding, the son of an ancient Scottish house, who should have been born to great wealth; born, therefore, with extravagant, aristocratic instincts.

The place of his birth was not less romantic. Out in the Atlantic, like the outposts of a lost continent, for half the length of Africa, ride little groups of fortunate islands, perhaps the Fortunate Islands or the Hesperides of the Ancients. At any rate the orange, the golden apple of the Hesperides, floods them with its groves—the Azores even more than the sister groups of Madeira, Cape de Verde and Grand Canary.

At Fayal in the Azores Captain Gordon had gone to live, for wounds and fever in him, some constitutional infirmity in his wife, demanded the anodynes of rest and an Elysian climate. We have a picture of the home into which Adam Lindsay Gordon was born, and of his childhood, taken by Turner and Sutherland, in *The Development of Australian Literature*, from his father's letters. It was in 1830, when

they rented a "roomy and quaintly-furnished house amid the vineyards of Fayal."

"A most lovely spot this must have been wherein to pass a childhood. From the sunny windows of the house, set upon a hill, could be seen the whole of the island—for nowhere is it six miles long—a mass of verdure, whose undulating vineyards were marked with clumps of darker green, where myrtles and orange trees half hid and half revealed the snowy walls of Spanish cottages. All the lanes and roads of the island are described in the captain's letters as bosomed deep in luxurious roses. Here and there a jutting crag of naked rock fronted its ruddy face to the sun, which set among the grey haze that showed where sister-islets were lifting up their cliffs and their hill tops far away on the western Atlantic. In one of his letters Captain Gordon bursts forth: 'The distant hills and valleys seem to me like the blessed regions of holiness, never blighted by frosts nor withered by the too fervid sunbeam, but fragrant with verdant pastures and everlasting roses.' In the evening, when, from the nunnery in the little white-washed village down below, the Angelus rose amid the still and perfumed breath of the tropic, the twilight shades must have very gently gathered round the bright little boy as he was sung to sleep in an airy nursery, whose windows overlooked the broken cliffs and the splash of ocean."

In the third year his father's letters give this passing glimpse of him: "A sweet little fellow he is: indeed, I think him almost too pretty. Very slight and upright, carrying his little curly head well back, and almost swaggering along. He talks with a sweet, full, laughing voice, and a face dimpled and bright as the morning. He is seen here, perhaps, to too great an advantage, in very light clothing, scampering amid the large and airy play-rooms. We have just finished the joyous vintage, after a summer of extraordinary beauty, and the delicious baskets of grapes have rained upon us for these two months."

What a contrast to his wild youth, and the stern struggles of his manhood in Australia! How almost impossible to picture that sunny child, thirty-three years later, just as the massed guns of France and Germany were preparing to devastate the vineyards of the Rhine with the great war, lying with his face to the sky, the victim of his own rash hand as he had anticipated in "De Te."

"We heard the hound beneath the mound,  
 We scared the swamp hawk hovering nigh—  
 We had not sought for that we found—  
 He lay as dead men only lie,  
 With wan cheek whitening in the sky,  
 Through the wild heath flowers, white and red.  
 The dumb brute that had seen him die,  
 Close crouching, howl'd beside the head  
 Brute burial service o'er the dead."<sup>3</sup>

In such a spot, cut off from all the cares of the world, wealthy for such an environment, one might have prophesied for him, even if he were blasted with poetic fire, the placid meditative existence of a Wordsworth or a Browning. But his mother, who was brought up as a spoilt child and remained one to the day of her death, insisted on moving first to Madeira, where they had another home as lovely, and, when Lindsay was seven years old, to Cheltenham, renowned among veterans retreating from the East for its soft climate, and its eastern luxuriance of green. That was about 1840.

Those were great days in Cheltenham. The veterans, who had gone there to spend the evening of their days, after conquering provinces in India, had made up their minds to found a school for boys of gentle birth, to obviate their sending their boys to the great old public schools, from Winchester, founded in 1387, to Dulwich, founded in 1619. Captain Gordon put his boy down for the new school, though he was only seven years old, and the County, and the cider counties round, sent their quotas including a little boy called Henry James from Hereford, who made a mistake and arrived a day too soon, and who was thus



ADAM LINDSAY GORDON AT THE AGE  
OF 30.

*From a daguerriotype sent by him, at the time of  
his marriage, to his uncle, Miss Gordon's father.  
Given by permission of Miss Frances Gordon.*



MISS FRANCES GORDON, DAUGHTER OF  
CAPT. R. C. H. GORDON, SCOTS FUSILIER  
GUARDS, AND COUSIN OF THE POET.





the first boy to enter Cheltenham College, as he was the first Englishman many years after to refuse the *dishonour* of being Lord High Chancellor, against his principles.

Lindsay only remained about a year at the college then. Perhaps his father saw that a boy of his tender age was rather out of place and had better be sent elsewhere for a time. It was not now, but after he left Cheltenham a second time in 1851, that Lindsay lived for a year or more with his uncle at Worcester and went with his cousins to receive private tuition from Canon Temple, who was at that time headmaster of the Royal Grammar School. Lindsay was never on the books of this school.<sup>1</sup> Canon Temple was evidently a man of discrimination, for he has left it on record that he considered the boy a genius, and certain to make his mark in the world. Lindsay was a cadet at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich from 1848 to 1851.

That stay at Worcester had important results, because it was there apparently that the Lallah Rookh episode happened, and there that he made the acquaintance of two of the people whom he loved best before he went out to Australia,

<sup>1</sup> The present headmaster of the Grammar School says that this is a mistake.

“Royal Grammar School,  
“Worcester,  
“June 22nd, 1912.

“DEAR SIR,

“Lindsay Gordon was here when Canon Temple was headmaster. He was an ordinary member of the school but not on the Foundation. The H.M. in those days was paid *en bloc* for educating fifty boys on the Foundation and allowed to take as many other pupils as he liked at fees—these additional members of the school being sometimes called the H.M.’s private pupils, but they attended in the same way as the boys on the Foundation and were under the same discipline and were members of the school.

“Yours faithfully,  
“J. A. HILLARD, Headmaster.”

And adds, in a letter dated July 5th, 1912—

“I can find no record of Gordon having been expelled from the school. It is probably apocryphal in view of and (?) in support of his later escapades.”

Charley Walker, the friend to whom most of the letters quoted in this volume were written, and Miss Jane Bridges, who comes into most of them, and was the romance of his life. His stay in Worcester is also of great importance to this book, because the people whom he knew there, Miss Bridges, for whom he offered to give up going to Australia; the Misses Sidebottom, very pretty girls, who were the favourite playmates of Captain R. C. H. Gordon's family, and Miss Frances Gordon herself, who was a child when Lindsay lived with her family, are all alive and have lively recollections of the poet's youth, and Charley Walker's daughters kept a dozen or two of Lindsay Gordon's letters to their father which they have allowed to be reproduced in this volume. One or two business men in the city of Worcester, who do not wish their names to be mentioned, have also supplied valuable reminiscences. The poet is better remembered in Worcester than in Cheltenham.

In that period,<sup>1</sup> between 1842 and 1848, the inevitable had happened. Mrs. Gordon had grown tired of Cheltenham and had taken to spending most of her time on the Continent, narrowing Captain Gordon's means by her extravagances till he was constrained to go into harness again. A place was found for him at the College in 1846 as Professor of Oriental Languages. And this he continued to hold till his death, more than ten years later.

Captain Adam Durnford Gordon, father of the immortal Adam Lindsay Gordon, is a pleasant figure to contemplate. He was very tall, very aristocratic-looking, very gentle, proof against the heartlessness, the restlessness, the tempers and the freaks of his wife, just as he continued to love his son and be proud of him in spite of the escapades that half-disgraced his name and half-emptied his pockets. All the boys who worked under him and still survive, give descriptions of him which suggest that he was just such

<sup>1</sup> This is the period of the poet's life of which we have no record. But as he told Tenison Woods that he had spent some time in France, that may account for part of it.

another as Thackeray's Colonel Newcome. Yet in his salad days, before his mother, to keep him at home in England, had made him marry Harriet, the great heiress of the family, he had established in India a name like his son's, for dashing sportsmanship and daring.

Cheltenham's Colonel Newcome, the husband of the gloomy and troublesome heiress, the father of that precocious scapegrace, who led the fast life of a man about town while he was a boy at school, is a romantic, even a pathetic figure for some future novelist to handle. Somewhere in the world there may still exist those charming letters of which little bits crop out in biographies of his famous son. Captain Gordon died before his son had rewarded him by winning fame. But if the spirits of the departed follow events in the scene of their worldly existence, he would probably be well content with his erratic son's achievement in the world. For Lindsay Gordon's life as well as his poetry was illuminated with heroism.

With Cheltenham the town Gordon's connection was longer and stronger than with Cheltenham the Great Public School. He was taken there as a child before he was eight years old, and his home was always there till he left for Australia in August, 1853. The Gordons lived first at Pittville, but afterwards they went to 25, Priory Street.

His Cheltenham friendships come a good deal into other chapters. It is worthy of note that the only College boy with whom we know that he was intimate was Thomas Pickernell; the famous "Mr. Thomas," who rode three winners in the Grand National, and even he is not mentioned directly in any of Gordon's letters.

At the same time as the poet's father went to the College to be a master, Thomas Durand Baker entered the College as a boy. He grew up to be the Major Baker who in Australia gave Lindsay the mounts which made his fame as a steeplechaser, and the fatal mount on Prince Rupert which led to the fall that may have been indirectly the cause of his<sup>7</sup> death.

The Lallah Rookh episode, happening at Worcester or Woolwich, cannot have led to his being expelled from Woolwich, because he had already left Woolwich in 1851, and it happened in 1852. In spite of this there is a tradition in Australia given by Mrs. Lauder in the *Melbourne Record* of June 25, 1910.

“ It is not generally known why Gordon left Cotswold, England, to live in Australia, but the following is absolutely true, being told by himself to the Bright family. He was attending a military college and often took part in amateur race meetings. On one occasion he was first favourite and his colleagues (or many of them) were backing his mount; but as the day drew nigh the horse’s owner gave orders that the animal was not to be taken out of the stable. Young Gordon was disappointed and rather sore for his friends’ sake, and listening to unwise counsel, went to the stable, took the horse, rode and won the race, only to find the owner and a policeman watching for him as he dismounted after passing the winning post. It was with some difficulty his father kept him from the clutches of the law, but it ended in Gordon being sent out to South Australia. It is evident that he never got over the humiliation. That he considered he was harshly treated is seen in these lines to his sister—

“ My parents bid me cross the flood, etc.”

We know more of Gordon’s cadet days than we know of his college days, for in the many chapters which relate to his life at Cheltenham there is hardly a word of what he did inside the walls of the school. We know that he was on the Modern side during his second sojourn there, and that there was a chance which was not realised of his being given a nomination to Addiscombe, an institution similar to the Royal Military College at Sandhurst to-day. We know that there is no record of his having paid any fees after he was readmitted to Cheltenham College in 1851, and we know that he was not expelled from Cheltenham, because Mr. A. A. Hunter, the Bursar and historian of

the College, has been carefully through all the minutes about boys who have been expelled and finds no mention of his name.<sup>1</sup> This is negative information enough about the alumnus, whose name may last longer than any other Cheltonian's. But the scantiness of record about his actual career at the College is to some extent compensated by the fact that we know so much of his doings and his circle on Cheltenham steeplechase courses, and in connection with the noble art of self-defence in the town, and because he was not only a Cheltenham College boy, but the son of a Cheltenham College master, who was one of the most picturesque figures in the history of the school. Adam Lindsay Gordon's youth belongs to Cheltenham.

We are none the less grateful that we know more about his cadet days at Woolwich. Most of our information there comes from one source. One of the best volumes of military reminiscences which has appeared during the last generation, was *Gunner Jingo's Jubilee*, the story of an Artilleryman's service all over the Empire, written by General Thomas Bland Strange, the "Long Tom" of cadet days at Woolwich. By a singular piece of good fortune General Strange was at Woolwich both with Charley Gordon, the future hero of Khartum, and Lindsay Gordon, the future laureate of Australia. Both were his friends and he recorded his reminiscences of both.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gordon told Tenison Woods that he had been expelled from some educational institution, but the priest could not remember its name.

<sup>2</sup> General Gordon, the hero of Khartum, and Adam Lindsay Gordon, who were at Woolwich together, were great friends, and the General at any rate believed the poet to be related to him in the liberal Scottish way.

I have seen this in the General's own handwriting. He presented a copy of Lindsay Gordon's Poems to General Sir Andrew Clarke, R.E., who was so long Agent-General for Victoria in London, with the inscription "From Charley to Andrew. He was a kind of cousin of mine."

A contemporary of both of them at Woolwich says that Charles, the hero of Khartum, was "a sulky little devil at *the Shop*."

General Strange remembers Lindsay Gordon very well—he describes him as a bright, amusing, popular boy. Both Lindsay Gordon and Charles Gordon, the future hero of Khartum, who were friends as well as contemporaries, were fond of private theatricals. General Strange himself was deprived of his swabs, *i. e.* shoulder-straps, for hitting Gordon on the head with a long ruler—to wake him out of a reverie, which he supposes to have been a *poetic* reverie. Unfortunately he drew blood and a foreign master reported him to the authorities. Gordon himself nearly lost his own swabs as the result of a breach of discipline described by General Strange. “Gordon was a long time at the ‘Shop’ and had many contemporaries. I was senior to him. After I left Gordon was a corporal, and was nearly dismissed for insubordination. The cadets had a habit of rushing out of study to secure places in the racquet court. A corporal was put on duty at the bottom of the stairs to prevent this rush. Gordon charged him head down and upset him. He was brought before the Commander and severely spoken to and told that he would never be fit to be an officer. Gordon tore off his (swabs) corporal’s shoulder straps and threw them at the feet of the Commandant, who was too wise a judge of character to turn Gordon out of the service.”

It was from General Strange that Major Guggisberg derived his description of Gordon at the “Shop”—

“Adam Lindsay Gordon, the Australian poet and stock-rider,” Gunner Jingo says, “was the exact opposite of Charles Gordon—a dreamy lad, with a far-off look in his eyes, indicative perhaps of the touching and semi-philosophical ballads, so dear to every Australian heart (redolent as they are of fatalism and wattle-blossoms), though scarcely indicative of the man who beat ‘the Favourite.’”

One is interested in that Governor of the R.M.A. who refused to degrade Gordon when he had incurred the penalty of degradation; who saw the latent greatness

of that wild boy, and had the courage of his convictions. Khartum Gordon remembered Lindsay all his life, though his fame was by no means so recognised as it is now.

General Strange's contrast of the two famous Gordons opens up a point of great interest. Here for the first time since he was a little child in the Azores we get comment upon Lindsay's character, and see him a jolly, dashing, merry boy, a great favourite with his fellows. That is the view we get of him from every source except one up to the time of his leaving England, and that one was the woman he loved and who would not accept him or give him any hopes—a sufficiently good reason for his not being over-cheerful with her.

It has been stated that Gordon was either expelled from the Royal Military Academy or that his father was asked to remove him. There is no means of ascertaining the reason because the archives of the "Shop" during that period have been destroyed by fire. It has even been stated that the Lallah Rookh episode happened while he was at Woolwich and led to his having to leave. Major Guggisberg suggests that, but he also says that Gordon returned to Scotland and came to an untimely end on a Scottish moor; so his testimony is not altogether to be relied on.

Colour is, however, lent to the theory that Gordon had to leave Woolwich by the fact that he certainly never had a commission in the Royal Artillery or the Royal Engineers. The records of the Royal Regiment and the Corps of Royal Engineers prove that, and one does not need much intuition to feel sure that Gordon would have loved to go into the army like nearly all the men of his family.<sup>1</sup>

In those days the authorities of the great Public Schools did not give themselves such airs as they do now-a-days. Lindsay Gordon was eighteen years old. He had been

<sup>1</sup> Mr. John Malcolm Bulloch has prepared a table of the positions held in the Army and Navy by Lindsay Gordon's family, which will be found on p. 386.

three years at Woolwich and not improbably had been compelled to take his name off the books.<sup>1</sup> He had been notorious ever since he was a boy of fifteen for frequenting boxing saloons and training stables. He was certainly of a very insubordinate nature, and it is not at all likely that his habits of work were regular. Yet he was readmitted as a pupil at Cheltenham College, though the school fee-books do not seem to indicate that he remained there very long. This was in the year 1851.

It is stated, presumably correctly, that during his second stay at the College, he was on the Modern side. If this was so he must have learnt all he ever knew from the headmaster of the Worcester Royal Grammar School, because there is no evidence in his poems of any education except a classical one, though he is said to have known French and Spanish. But this he might have learned from

<sup>1</sup> Mr. A. A. Hunter, the present Bursar, whose name is identified with Cheltenham College to every old Cheltonian who loves his old School, went to the College with me in August 1869 (to the same House, Beaufort House, on the same day), about a year before poor Gordon shot himself, so he has given me his help in solving the Gordon question *con amore*. He writes—

“MY DEAR SLADEN,

“I'm glad to hear your life of Lindsay Gordon is nearing completion. It is, of course, impossible now to say how they came to re-admit him to the College at the age of eighteen, but doubtless they were not so particular in those days.

“In J. Howlett Ross's book on Lindsay Gordon he says, ‘His name was erased from the list of pupils at Cheltenham for insubordination and other acts as culpable, etc., etc.’ This I believe to be pure fiction, as I have looked up the Council Minutes of those days in which they kept a record of any boys who were expelled, and the reasons for their expulsion, but the name of Lindsay Gordon does *not* figure anywhere.

“How long exactly he stayed at College after returning in August 1851, one cannot say, but it does not seem for long, for there were no fees put against his name under ‘Fees for the Midsummer term, 1852,’ in the Fees Book, so he possibly left at the previous Christmas, as the year was divided into ‘halves’ as in our time down to 1873.

“I don't know that he was expelled from Woolwich either. I have some recollection of writing there about him some time ago now, and fancy I must have given Miss Humphris all the information I got at the time.”



his mother, who had spent much of her life abroad, though one can hardly picture her taking so much interest in him.

Except for the couple of races in which he rode Lallah Rookh (later Louisa), there is not much to fix the dates of Gordon's career as a boy man-about-town at Cheltenham. It seems to have gone on from the time that he was fifteen till he went to South Australia at the age of nineteen. He must have spent some of his time in Cheltenham even when he was at the Woolwich Academy, because one of his contemporaries tells us that, when he was only seventeen, he was as strong and full-grown as a man and ready to box with all comers in the booths at race-courses. Boxing he learned from the middle-weight champion of England, Jem Edwards, the famous Earywig, who had a boxing saloon at the Roebuck Hotel in the old part of Cheltenham. Riding he first learnt from George Reeves, a livery-stable keeper at Cheltenham, who was also one of the chief backers to find the money for Tom Sayers, the great prize-fighter, in his contests. Tom Oliver, the trainer of horses, who trained a Derby winner in George Frederick, was also a trainer of men, and Tom Sayers, I suppose to be near his backer, trained with him for one of his great fights. Before this Reeves had introduced Gordon to Oliver, who took a great fancy to him and gave him mounts, sometimes even a noted steeplechaser which had to be ridden with hounds to qualify it for a Hunt Cup. Gordon on various occasions put on the gloves with Tom Sayers both at Prestbury, where he was training with Oliver, or in the boxing saloon of Jem Edwards, who was a great friend of Tom Sayers. It is recorded that he was "no mere chopping block for Tom Sayers," though he was still only a boy. What a boy of eighteen can do has been shown by the marvellous Frenchman Carpentier, who has beaten the English champion of his weight this year.

The central fact of the foregoing remarks is that Gordon in the last four years of his life at Cheltenham, during one

of which he appears to have been a College boy, was a person of no small consideration in the boxing saloons and training stables of a great sporting centre, though we know from the late Fred Marshall that in steeplechases he was a by-word for his spills.

Perhaps the earliest of the verses of Gordon which have come down to us may be found in the doggrel stanza he wrote alluding to this—

“ There’s lots of refusing and falls and mishaps.

Who’s down on the Chestnut? He’s hurt himself p’raps.

‘ Oh its Lindsay the Lanky,’ says Hard-riding Bob,

‘ He’s luckily saved Mr. Calcraft a job.’ ”

His having been in the thick of all the sporting life at Cheltenham had a great influence on the poems he wrote in Australia, for nearly all his best sporting poems relate to his Cheltenham days.

The dozen or two of letters from Gordon to Charley Walker, which are printed in this volume, form valuable evidence of the life which Gordon led in his last boyhood’s years. Their value would be much enhanced if they were dated, but none of the English letters are dated. It may be true that Gordon in his last years<sup>1</sup> at College used to absent himself from school in order to ride in steeplechases. But I find it difficult to believe that he ever came into class wearing a jockey’s silk under his overcoat, for the simple reason that at Cheltenham College there were hundreds of pegs in the lobbies, one belonging to each boy in the school, on which he was compelled to hang up his hat and overcoat when he entered the building, so that if a boy persisted in keeping on his overcoat the master would want to know why, and there would have been a visit to the Principal’s caning-cupboard when it was discovered that he was wearing a jockey’s silk shirt, breeches and top-boots under his overcoat. But I knew

<sup>1</sup> Gordon told Tenison Woods that he had been expelled from a Public School for absenting himself to ride in a steeplechase.



BLACK TOM OLIVER. (*See Chapter IX.*)

*From a photograph in the possession of the late  
Edward Holland of Prestbury.*



THOMAS PICKERNELL, ESQ. THE MR. THOMAS  
WHO RODE THREE WINNERS IN THE GRAND  
NATIONAL.

*Reproduced from "Bailey's Magazine."*



a clergyman who was detected with his hunting kit under his surplice, at an early morning week-day service in Lent.

We are now approaching one of the most interesting periods of Gordon's life, because to this belong all the chapters which relate to his English circle.

It is only charitable to suppose that Gordon was bored at home. From the fact that his parents worshipped and were buried at Trinity Church, Cheltenham, it may be presumed that they were strict Evangelicals. It is possible that they had been brought up as Presbyterians and attended Evangelical services as the nearest type of religion they could get to their own Church in Cheltenham. It may be that the atmosphere of the household was so strict that the future poet sought relief in the dissipations of sport. Such things have happened before now. But the probable truth is that Lindsay had a natural love of boxing and riding, and merely went where he could get them, which happened to be at the Roebuck Inn, and at Oliver's stables, and at local race-meetings.

With regard to Gordon's boxing we have the evidence of a living contemporary and another not so long since dead, "Mr. Thomas," the famous Grand National steeplechase rider (whose real name is Mr. Thomas Pickernell), and the late Fred Marshall, who was secretary to the Cheltenham Staghounds and a well-known solicitor of the town. Mr. Pickernell, who oddly enough had never heard of Gordon's being on a horse in England, was a Cheltenham College boy, the only one of his school-fellows with whom we know Gordon to have been intimate. Their link was not riding, though in after-life both passed into history as among the most famous of steeplechasers. But, then, all the time Mr. Pickernell was in Tasmania steeplechasing, he was never aware that his old friend was just across the strait in Australia, also steeplechasing.

Boxing was, however, a different matter. Mr. Pickernell remembers going with Gordon to Jem Edwards's saloon frequently, and it is he who tells the tale of Gordon, though

only a boy, knocking the Earywig senseless on an exhibition night. And as he was a boxing man himself he was not likely to relate what could not have happened. It is he who tells how Gordon would challenge all comers in the boxing-booths at race-courses, he who tells us of the weight of Lindsay's fist, Lindsay who could give a drive from the shoulder like a pile-driver, Lindsay who could not be persuaded to guard a blow in those days, but simply stopped it with any part of his body. Fred Marshall used to own to having cheeked people and let them settle with Gordon, who was undoubtedly fond of fighting in those days, and his letters show that he had not lost the habit in his early days in Australia.<sup>1</sup> But he steadied down afterwards, because Mr. George Riddoch, who was one of his greatest friends for many years, does not remember ever to have heard of his fighting any one from the time he knew him.

Mr. George Reeves gave him his first riding lessons. Old Tom Oliver gave him his first mount on a race-horse when he was quite a lad, and from that time onwards he gave many of his spare hours to visiting Old Tom's training stables at Prestbury, a village just outside Cheltenham. There he became acquainted with others of the most famous steeplechase riders of the day, such as George Stevens (the Stevens of "How we Beat the Favourite"), who still holds the record as the most successful jockey who ever rode in the Grand National, and Bob Chapman—"Hard-riding Bob."

<sup>1</sup> "I have not fought much lately, but it may amuse you to hear that I did hit out a few weeks ago. Our blacksmith was the victim, a strongish chap but no science; he was rather the worse for liquor too, and I was sober, but in a d——d bad humour. He hit me a chapping blow in a scuffle and roused my monkey. I got clear of him and returned the spank with interest, cutting his eye. He came at me three times and each time I met him with the *right* and twice took him clean off his legs, so he dropt it altogether. They were straight, fairish spanks, each left a *clean knuckle gash*. *My left I never used*. We are good friends now. "L. G."

(In a letter to Charley Walker written from Penola, South Australia, October 1855.)

And he did more than ride and box out at Prestbury, for Tom Oliver enjoyed hearing him recite, which no one else is recorded to have done, though Miss Bridges allowed him to recite to her so as to advise him in the matter of the pieces he should choose. The hours which Tom spent in hearing Gordon's recitations undoubtedly played a great part in keeping alive the poetic spark in Gordon, who had no one else to help him in that direction at that time. It is not recorded that Gordon's affectionate and appreciative father, to the day of his death, was aware that his son had ever written a line of poetry.

Many of the experiences of this part of his life must have happened during the vacations of the three years he spent at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. But I know of no single allusion to the fact, though we may imagine that an unbroken boy like Gordon must have exhibited many of the cadet points of honour, the cadet manliness, the cadet mannerisms and the cadet fopperies when he came home on vacation.

"Wigorn," who knew Gordon well, says—

"I cannot trace that Gordon lived at Worcester earlier than 1852. At that date his uncle, Captain R. C. H. Gordon, mentioned in your letter, occupied a house situated at Greenhill, London Road, Worcester, and I believe Lindsay Gordon resided there during his stay at Worcester, a period of about eighteen months only.

"In 1852 Gordon was one of the pupils at Worcester Royal Grammar School, founded by Queen Elizabeth in the third year of her reign, and the following is an extract from the School Magazine of an account written by the headmaster (1852) of the then state of the school.

"I also taught private pupils in the school, the most distinguished of whom was Lindsay Gordon, who was really a most extraordinary genius. He afterwards went abroad and took an appointment in the Australian Mounted Police, where he was known as the Poet of Australia.'"

“Wigorn” adds—

“I remember the mare called Louisa (late Lallah Rookh) In colour she was black. Her racing performances are recorded in the Steeplechase Calendar of that date.”

It is, as I have pointed out, a most unfortunate thing that there are no dates on the letters he wrote to Charley Walker, while he was in England, for it is so difficult to determine the exact time at which they were written except by the fact that a few of them contain allusions to his father having decided that he should go to Australia. For they contain not a single allusion to Jem Edwards and the boxing set, or to Prestbury and the steeplechasing set. Gordon never even mentions riding or boxing beyond talking about thrashing this or that person. His talk in them is of love and clothes and skylarking, of debts and differences with his father, and of leaving England. The most athletic touch in these letters is the habit alluded to of walking from Worcester to Cheltenham, a distance of twenty-six miles, apparently to save the railway fare.

I take it that this was the least satisfactory period of his life. His mind seems to run on dissipation instead of sport, he is oppressed with debts, he talks of picking quarrels, of eluding tradesmen, of hoodwinking his father; he paints a life of wildness generally; he betrays aimlessness and apathy; he gives one the idea that if he had had the misfortune to remain in England, instead of going to a newer, more vigorous and more adventurous atmosphere, he would have developed into a mere hanger-on of sport, one of the loafers on small allowances who hang about places like Cheltenham.

But on the other hand it must be remembered that Gordon, conscious perhaps of the poetic fire within him, was at this time, as Miss Gordon herself tells us, in the throes of a Byronic pose, and was writing to the boy who shared his sprees with him. In trying to appear “a blood” to Charley he may have made himself out a naughty-boy-





CAPTAIN R. C. H. GORDON, SCOTS FUSILIER  
GUARDS, A SCOTCH POET.

*From a miniature lent by his daughter, Miss Frances Gordon.*



CAPTAIN ADAM DURNFORD GORDON, THE CHEL-  
TENHAM COLONEL NEWCOMB—FATHER OF THE  
POET AND FOR 11 YEARS HINDUSTANI MASTER AT  
CHELTENHAM COLLEGE.

*From a miniature lent by Miss Frances Gordon.*



Lothario on very slender materials. The odds are that before he dished up his experiences with Byronic sauces for Charley Walker's consumption, they were most of them only the silly pranks of a larky boy driven into mischief by the oppressive solemnity of his home. And if the adventures have to be taken literally, they would most of them have been considered very trivial if he had been the son and not the Scotch cousin of the Duke of Richmond or the Marquis of Huntly.

It would hardly be consistent for a man who wrote poems like Gordon to be "a plaster saint" in real life, however much one would like to gloss over certain incidents. The letters to Charley Walker could not be omitted from this volume, however much Mrs. Grundy might have been gratified by the omission, because they allude in almost every page to the one romance of his life about which any information has come down to us—his hopeless love for the beautiful Jane Bridges.

Jane's father, Mr. Bridges of St. John's and Broughton Hackett, was a large farmer near Worcester. During his last year or two in England Gordon and his friend Charley Walker were constant visitors at Broughton Hackett, and Charley eventually married a younger sister, Sally Bridges. But Jane refused to accept Gordon or give him any hope, and was twice very happily married, first to Mr. Matthews, father of Mr. J. B. Matthews, one of the present leaders at the Bar, and second to Mr. Edwin Lees, an eminent naturalist, over whose grave Sir Joseph Banks planted a *Wellingtonia* from the National Collection.

She seems to have been an excellent influence in Gordon's life in those salad days; for she was very severe on foolish escapades or attempts to take liberties, while she showed her interest in the serious side of the boy by letting him recite his favourite pieces to her, and helping him to choose the poems which he should study as models, though she did not know that he had tried to write poetry.

But she was very pretty, and Gordon was falling in love

with her all the time, and when his father had made all the arrangements for his going to Australia, and he went to say good-bye, his heart failed him and he felt that he could not leave Jane Bridges if she would promise to marry him.

But fortunately for him she bravely refused to accept him or give him any hope, or bid him stay in England. She tells the story in her own words on page 357.

Nature designed Australia and Lindsay Gordon for each other, though the years of his pilgrimage were not many in the Promised Land, and some "with his sweat were sodden and some were salt with his tears." Australia made a man of him. Australia made an immortal of him. And he gave Australia the grim gospel of manliness which is to the Bushman what his *bushido* is to the Samurai of Japan—the code by which he must not be found wanting. Had he not been the mighty horseman, the dauntless fighter that he was, Australia might never have inclined an ear, though he proclaimed his message from the house-tops. At first she listened to him as a man rather than as a poet. She has never listened to her other chief poet, Henry Kendall, though she is proud of his position in English Literature.

Gordon's voyage to Australia was uneventful; he wrote a farewell to his family which is among the most widely-remembered of his poems ("To My Sister"), and he wrote verses in the album of a fair fellow passenger ("The Ocean Heaves Around us Still"), assuring her that they were the first verses he had ever written, though the letters he wrote to Charley Walker before he left certainly contain some verse—rather brilliant verse—and at least two sets of sporting rhymes written before he left England have been preserved, and are printed in this volume. But Lindsay, whether he was as good an actor as they say in private theatricals or not, was certainly fond of imagining himself in interesting poses. In one of his early letters from Australia he says that when he is riding through the

Bush after the cattle he feels like one of the old moss-troopers. He had moss-trooper blood in him, for his ancestors before Adam of Gordon lived in the two villages of Gordon (which still confer a title on the Duke of Richmond and Gordon), on the Scottish border, where moss-trooping and cattle-reiving were the principal forms of farming. It has been stated<sup>1</sup> that he was only an imaginary partaker in the ride, "From the Wreck," as well as in the fight with the Bushranger in "Wolf and Hound." The romance in "No Name" is considered to have originated in Browning's poems, not in his own life: and Mr. Holman, the trainer at Prestbury, not Gordon himself, is shown to have been the winner in "How we Beat the Favourite."

Compared with these it was a slight thing to picture himself making his debut as a writer of verse in that pretty girl's album. The verses were altogether superior to "The Feud,"<sup>2</sup> which he wrote some years later, to be sold with some of Sir Noel Paton's engravings at a charity bazaar at Mount Gambier.

Almost from the day that he set foot in Australia the improvement in his character began. In England he had been a wild boy with nothing much in his favour beyond being indomitable in spirit and endurance as a boxer, and a plucky beginner in steeplechasing. Debt, dissipation and apathy were dogging him. In Australia he at once began to throw off the trammels, though his early letters from Australia to Charley Walker still exhibit some traces of the old Adam.

Gordon's youthful wildness, real or exaggerated, soon ceases to appear in his letters. At the very beginning of his career in Australia he gave evidence of his intention to be a man. He took out with him introductions to the Governor and other highly-placed persons in South Austra-

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Lauder gives circumstantial details, which seem to prove that he did ride from the wreck himself, and his wife says that he did.

Given on page 335. Gordon's earliest long poem which has been preserved would seem to be his poem on the Death of Nelson, given on p. 329.

lia. The Governor was doubtless expected to find him a post in the Government Service, a sinecure for a choice, since he was a man of good and influential family. But Gordon did not even deliver his introductions. He arrived in Australia on November 14, 1853, having left England on August 7. On November 17 he applied for an appointment as a constable in the Mounted Police, and in November he was gazetted. And thus began his acquaintance with the stern realities of life, his immortal connection with the Australian Bush. A point to which attention has never been drawn, is a sentence in a letter written to Charley Walker, before Gordon left England. "The governor has got an offer of an appointment as officer in (what should you think!) the Mounted Police in Australia, devilish good pay, a horse, three suits of regimentals yearly and lots of grub, for me of course, I don't mean for himself, and he wanted me to take it. I think I shall, in fact it's no use mincing the matter, I know I *must*."<sup>1</sup>

It appears from this that Gordon had the opportunity of entering the South Australian Mounted Police as a commissioned officer, instead of enlisting in it as a private, but simply did not take the trouble to present his credentials. He might have found an officer's life in that adventurous profession so congenial that he might have stuck to it and gone down to posterity as Chief Commissioner of the Police.

It is only barely possible that Gordon ever rode in the Gold Escort, because it was discontinued almost immediately after he joined the force. He remained in the force for two years, and then resigned, because he resented being ordered about by a sergeant of common birth who liked to be a Jack-in-Office over a gentleman. It is said that the actual occasion arose from the sergeant ordering him to black his boots. But it is hardly possible for such an order

<sup>1</sup> Gordon was not the first of his family to go to Australia. It is clear from a letter which he wrote from Australia in June 1863, to his uncle, Captain R. C. H. Gordon (quoted on p. 422), that this uncle had been to Australia.

to have been given in the Australia of those days, especially to a fire-eater like Gordon.

It is just as likely that he left the force because he wished to be his own master, and felt that he had now sufficient Colonial experience to start in a profession after his own heart, that of the wandering horse-breaker, who goes from station to station to break in the young horses. He almost says as much in one of his letters.

“The truth is, I was in too great a hurry to be independent, and did not wait till I had accumulated sufficient capital to carry out my projects, chancing too much to Fortune, which, till latterly, had not been so very unkind. The old fault, Charley; make up your mind to win, and if you lose, shift for yourself as best you may” (A. L. Gordon, writing to Charley Walker from Adelaide, January 1857).

Before he left the police force an incident occurred, mentioned in a letter to Charley Walker. It reads to me as if Gordon, who at no time was a lady killer, had won Mrs. Saxon's affections without knowing it or intending it, and that she, a humbly-born woman married to a humbly-born man, could not but feel the impending loss of the heroic and chivalrous gentleman, whom his official duties had made the sharer of their cottage.

Gordon, if he had been sent to Oxford, as previous biographies have asserted, would have been there at the time at which this episode happened. But the late Warden of Merton, the College to which tradition assigns him, as it apocryphally assigned Dante and Chaucer, had the College records examined and found that he never was on the books of Merton.

The story, therefore, of Gordon, *while he was at Oxford*, having stolen valuable books from his father to sell them for a friend's debts, is *ipso facto* incredible. It could not have happened if he never was at Oxford.

Gordon was twenty-two when he started business as a horse-breaker and remained in the business for seven years.

He rode from station to station, spending days or weeks according as his services were required. When he was at home he shared a cottage a few miles from Mount Gambier with another horse-breaker named William Trainor. Mr. Riddoch says that he was never, as has sometimes been asserted, a boundary-rider (stock-rider—stockman), and he never lived in the men's hut. Occasionally he would be asked to stay in the squatter's house, but generally he camped by himself, so that he could read after he had turned in.

Gordon's first meeting with Trainor, as described by Sir Frank Madden, the present Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament in the State of Victoria (in a chapter written for this book), is very amusing and characteristic.

"I remember his account of his first meeting with one of his humble but most devoted admirers, 'Billy Trainor.' It was when Gordon was in the Police, and stationed at Mount Gambier. There was a circus performing in the town and Trainor was one of the company. He had been cast for the usual 'drunken man' who intrudes into the circus during the performance. Gordon was on duty, and not realising that Trainor was not drunk but only shamming, arrested him and took him to the lock-up. Trainor protested that he was one of the company, but Gordon would not believe him until at the lock-up he threw off the old clothes he was wearing over his tights and spangles, when he was allowed to depart to fulfil his engagement. Gordon was so delighted with Trainor's daring and horsemanship, that, when he left the police soon after, he and Trainor became fast friends and they went away breaking horses together."

Trainor afterwards became the trainer of steeplechasers for one of the principal race-horse owners of South Australia for a while, but did not retain the position.

It was in his capacity of policeman also that Gordon, according to Mr. Howlett Ross, first made the acquaintance of Tommy Hales, one of the most famous jockeys in the



history of the Australian turf. "This was while the poet was at Penola. 'Tommy' was about ten or eleven years old, and in one of his mischievous moods had brought down upon himself the strong arm of the law, the result being that he was conveyed to the lock-up for safety. Gordon heard of the affair, and doubtless remembering his own wild doings on the Cotswold Hills, and full of sympathy for boyish exuberance, released the repentant 'Tommy.' Long after, the then two famous horsemen met at Lake Hawdon Station, where Gordon was breaking in some young colts, and spent many happy weeks together."

Tenison Woods has told us that Gordon, when he was in camp at a station for horse-breaking, did not pitch his tent near the station buildings, but about a mile on. He liked the solitude of the bush, at night surrounded by the darkness and a silence only broken by bush sounds like the creaking of the She-oaks, the flapping of the bark on the White-gums, and the night-calls of beast and bird. There was the cramped Bushman's tent feebly illuminated by the light of a sludge lamp—made of the bottle-brush of a honeysuckle, or a rag-wick, thrust into a broken pannikin of mutton fat. If you peeped inside, you would have seen lying on his back on the shakedown bed, a tall strong man "with an honest pair of dark grey eyes, and a noble type of resolute features round which the dark brown hair clustered in short curls"; you would be surprised to find him studying by that feeble light a Horace or a Browning, and to find the same man out at daybreak still with the smartness of the trooper evidenced in his well-fitting cord breeches and top boots, dark blue jersey showing his wiry figure, and jaunty cabbage-tree hat. That was the young Gordon still of the age when he might have been at Oxford, enjoying the liberty and excitement of a colony that extended across a continent. Here and there a squatter offered the hospitalities of his home to him for his own sake. No one knew that he was one of the best-born men in Australia.

The man with whom he shared his hut is still alive, and has given this interesting picture of their life together. He told Gordon's biographer that when they were working near home, they had tea together after dark, and then if it was winter went to bed for the sake of warmth and lay there smoking, and that, when they had had a bit of a yarn, Gordon would produce a novel, generally by Scott, Dickens, Kingsley, Mayne Reid, or Whyte Melville. Whyte Melville was his favourite. He had no book of poetry there, until he met Tenison Woods and could borrow one from him, except Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*, and he knew them by heart from end to end. Mr. Sutherland says that "at this period of his life his early fancy for rhyme seems to have died out. There is no record that he wrote verses and it seems certain that for years he read very little."

Turner and Sutherland quote Trainor as saying—

"Gordon was a great reader, and amongst other things was fond of a good story. He would often read a book through without putting it out of his hands. On one occasion he suggested that I ought to read some of these books. I replied that it was useless, for I should forget all that was in them immediately afterwards, as he no doubt did himself. Then he told me it was not so. He rarely forgot any story he had once read. He asked me to open one of the books on the table and read him a line or two anywhere. This I did, and he went on to the end of the page almost word for word as it was printed. I tried him in different parts of the book, always with the same result. . . . There was something," he says, "so generous and noble about him, he was so upright and conscientious amid all the whims of his most peculiar nature, that I felt him to be of a stamp quite superior to the men around him, and the closer our acquaintance grew, the deeper became my feelings of respect and admiration.'"

The same observer noticed Gordon about this time indulging in the habits which afterwards marked his

method of composing, the scribbling on scraps of paper after a long day's ride, the musing fits when it was quite useless to try to draw him into conversation, followed by a secretive jotting down of verses; the Sundays spent in dreaming on the cliffs above the neighbouring coast.

About now we have a date with a shadowy tale attached to it. Turner and Sutherland mention a desperate flirtation which Gordon had in 1860 somewhere in the Mount Gambier district which they hint may have been a Byronic pose. But I have information which had not transpired when their book was published about the illegitimate daughter who is still alive, and living in a small way in the Mount Gambier district.

Gordon did not lose much time about starting on his favourite pastime in the new country. He only landed in Adelaide in the middle of November 1853, and in November 1854 he wrote to Charley Walker from Penola, South Australia: "I have a horse for the steeplechase next meeting which comes off in a few months. I have ridden with some success since I have been out here, but do not take the same interest in it that I used to."

It was not, I think, till he had left the police force for the comparatively more aristocratic profession of horse-breaker, that the incident of the Ladies' Purse Race at some small South Australian township which comes into various accounts of Gordon's life, took place. There are genuine rumours attaching to this incident. The Ladies' Purse, in the words of Mr. Tenison Woods, "was a bag of fancy work, containing a very extensive and valuable assortment of articles, which the ladies of the district used to make up. It included all kinds of fancy work and embroidery, such as smoking caps, slippers, belts, purses, etc. Only gentlemen riders could contend for it, and these must be accepted by a ladies' committee formed of those who had worked for the bag. Gordon applied for permission to ride for this prize at one meeting, and was refused. He was much insulted at the refusal, but I

don't think he said a word on the subject except to myself, and what he did say was very characteristic of the man. He remarked that I used to blame him for not mixing more with the people of the district, and said ironically that this would show how little he would gain by consorting with such society. It happened, moreover, that the coveted prize fell that year to the son of a squatter, who, a few years previously, had been a publican. It was quite a disappointment to the ladies' committee, who expected the bag to fall into the hands of one who was better known and much more admired. They gave a practical effect to their dissatisfaction by taking the most valuable things out of the bag before it was given to the winner. This Gordon knew, and his comments upon it were very cynical."

What these lady-like ladies did not know was that the horse-breaker to whom they refused the right of competing was as well-born as any man in Australia—heir to the lairdship of Hallhead and the barony of Esslemont, and before he died, head of the family.<sup>1</sup>

There were many of these small race-meetings on both sides of the Victorian and South Australian border as was natural when people had to take a horse where they now take a train, and every one rode, and almost everybody had the use of a horse. Jumping (on horseback) too was a useful accomplishment where it might save you a detour of miles. If a stockman was a good rider and had a pretty good horse he would put in for these little races, and Gordon as a horse-breaker ran a far better chance of having a good mount. The Rev. J. E. Tenison Woods, the Roman Catholic priest who had a mission parish of the twenty-two thousand square miles in this part of South Australia, known as the New Country, and was so good to Gordon,

<sup>1</sup> An ironical touch about this incident is that Gordon's cousin, Colonel Gordon-Gilmour, son of the lady whom he failed to dispossess of the Esslemont estate, married Lady Susan Lygon, sister of Earl Beauchamp, who was for a time Governor of New South Wales.



RAI-CATCHING WITH VARIATIONS. A SKETCH, TO WHICH HE GAVE THIS TITLE, BY ADAM LINDSAY GORDON.  
*Reproduced by permission of Miss H. Walker.*



says: "It was in the year 1857 that I first made the acquaintance of Adam Lindsay Gordon—over this area Gordon was roving when I met him. He had a reputation as a skilful horse-breaker, and did a little dealing in horses, and was well known at all stations, and used to ride in steeplechases and hurdle-races at the Bush township meetings."

A little lower down, Tenison Woods, who afterwards gave up his charge and became a well-known writer on Natural History, gives a more detailed account of their meeting.

"He was tall and slim, with stooping shoulders, induced, no doubt, by a habit of leaning forward to assist his very defective eyesight. His walk was very awkward. He had a good-shaped head, with short, curly, brown hair. His features were small, while the contour of his face reminded me of Byron's; his beard was thin and scanty, while his complexion was pale, despite his outdoor life."

At that time, says Father Woods, "I met him on a cattle station near Guichen Bay where he was breaking in some horses for Mr. Harry Stockdale. He was at work in the stockyard with a colt which was trying hard to throw him. At last the girths broke, and Gordon landed on his feet. Again, at supper, I saw him, when master, man and guest all met and mingled at the same board. Gordon scarcely spoke until after supper, when he found me on the verandah and talked for an hour, not on the usual topics at such places, but about poetry and poets.

"I was much interested and inquired who he was. Mr. Stockdale said he was a good, steady lad and a splendid horseman. He had been a mounted policeman, but had resigned and taken to the employment in which I found him. Mr. Stockdale recognised something uncommon in Gordon. He never drank or gambled—he was too moody to be regarded as a favourite; and did not associate much with those about him.

"The next morning, as I resumed my journey, he

overtook me. He rode a colt half broken in, so that we conversed little. He was going to a station forty miles away, and the same road I was following. He wore the usual bush costume—a slouch hat, a blue jumper, with a pair of riding cords tucked into common Wellington boots. He was always neatly dressed, and carried the air of a gentleman.

“He plunged into poetry again, and amazed me by reciting quotations at length from Virgil, Homer, and Ovid. His Greek pronunciation was so strange I could hardly understand him. He said he had never been able to learn much Greek, and most of it he had acquired in the bush. This so interested me that I offered to lend him any books he might want; he thanked me, but borrowed few of them.

“He questioned me about French authors, reciting long passages from Racine’s *Athalie*, and Corneille’s *Cid*. His pronunciation was defective, though he had spent some time in France. After a pleasant day we parted our ways at sundown; it is twenty-six years ago, but I remember how much impressed I was with him, his knowledge, his memory, and his literary tastes. His way of reciting poetry was odd, and his delivery monotonous, but his way of emphasising the beautiful parts was charming from its earnestness. It was a puzzle to me how he managed to get books and carry them about and get time to read them. His only leisure would be in the evening, generally by a pannikin lamp—that is, a honeysuckle cone stuck in clay in a pannikin, surrounded with mutton fat—this with his defective eyesight.

“After this we had many and many a long ride together. The horses travel better in company and two heads are better than one at crossing difficult country. . . . I remember him telling me that he knew very little of Horace, and I gave him a small pocket edition. When next I met him he had learnt a good many of the odes and recited them for me as we went along. Horace’s *De Arte Poetica* charmed him exceedingly, and I often heard him quote the



passage, 'si vis me flere,' etc. I should say, from all I knew of Gordon, that no one ever formed his taste so completely on classical models, though certainly one would not gather this from his writing. . . . In those days squatters used to try to keep up appearances and a distinction was made between visitors and station hands. At one place in particular where we arrived at night Gordon did not tell me until I had dismounted that he was going some six miles farther. I had some duty to perform at the station or I would have gone on, though we were both jaded from a fifty mile ride amid heavy showers of rain. I met him by appointment two days afterwards. He then told me why he had ridden on farther. On a former visit to the station he had been sent to the men's hut instead of being asked into the house. Then he recited Burns's, 'A man's a man for a' that,' yet I must say he took the thing in good part and said he would not blame them for not asking a horse-breaker into their parlour. 'I'm as well born as any of them and perhaps better educated, but then they don't know that.' It was then that he first volunteered to give me some history of his early career. He said that his father was a gentleman of property in England, and that he had been at a public school, or at one of the Universities, I forget which now. He said he had been expelled for breaking rules and absenting himself in order to ride in a steeplechase. He was remarked as being unsociable in his habits; he would prefer riding by himself unless he would meet with a congenial companion, and when alone used to saunter along slowly, very seldom putting his horse out of a walk. I believe now that it was at these times he was composing his poetry. He hinted at this to me, but I never could get him to show me any of his compositions. I think I may say that for five years I was the only intimate friend he had in the Bush, but I never could get him to shake off that shyness and reserve which kept him locked up as it were within himself. Readers of his poetry will not fail to remark

that sad tone of disappointment which runs through many of his pieces. There was little or none of this in his conversation, in fact, unless on the subject of poetry he did not speak much at all; though passionately fond of horses and thrown amongst horsey people he never talked about them except to make a necessary remark. . . . a quiet, shy, polite young man of gentlemanly bearing . . .” (quoted from memory). It was to Father Woods in 1860 that Gordon recited the *Tempest* scene from *King Lear* when they were overtaken by a storm. They were on a journey from the sea coast to Mount Gambier and sheltered under a tree, soaked to the skin and shivering with cold. They could not light a fire and were very miserable altogether. “He was much amused when I asked him whether he would not like a nice drink of cold spring water after his exertions. We got to a station about midnight and had to share the same room, but Gordon would not go to bed. The warm tea we had at supper had revived him, and he kept walking up and down the supper room reciting *Childe Harold* till near morning.”

Meeting Tenison Woods made a profound change in Gordon's life. He was the first really intellectual man the poet had met since he left England. With his own writings on Natural History the priest afterwards earned a permanent place in English libraries, and he had a store of good books, which he was willing to lend Gordon in spite of their value and irreplaceability in the Bush, and Gordon's hard wear of them. It was, as I have said, he who lent Gordon the pocket Horace, which the poet carried about with him on his long rides in the Bush, and studied so intently that he knew the whole of the *Ars Poetica* and nearly the whole of the *Odes* by heart (proving that he must have known enough Latin to be able to translate them loosely, since otherwise it would have been impossible to know them by heart); and it was he who lent Gordon Browning's poems, the contents of which the poet threw into the odd melting pot of his brain. The influence of

Browning is very marked in his poems, though as a rule they are as different from Browning's in form as Gordon himself was from Browning.

The next considerable event in Gordon's life was his marriage.

His wife, Maggie Park, was a Glasgow girl who had come to Australia with her father and sister. Gordon met her at the Caledonian Hotel at a little coast town called Robe, on Guichen Bay, when he was horse-breaking for Mr. Edward Stockdale of Lake Hawdon Station in the neighbourhood. She was, I understand, the niece of the hotel keeper's wife and was helping her aunt. Small Australian hotels are generally worked by a family.

It has always been said that Gordon broke several bones in a heavy fall and was confined to his bed in this inn for a long time, nursed by Maggie, and seeing what a good, handy girl she was, thought she would make his home more comfortable. The story has recently been confirmed by his wife in her talk with Mr. C. R. Wilton.

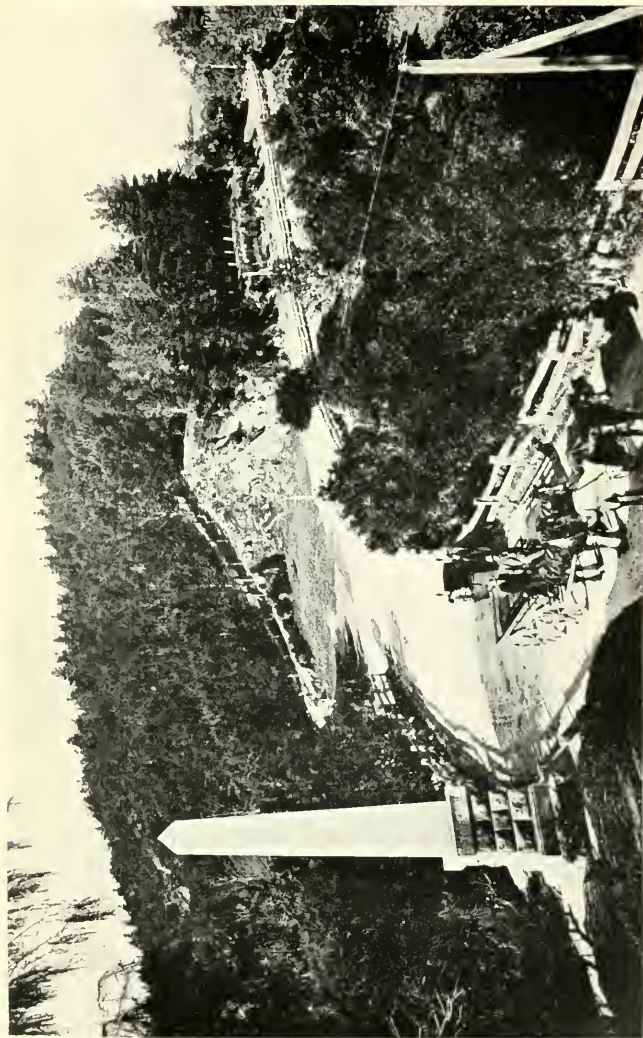
I have noticed nothing in Gordon's poetry or Gordon's letters to show that he studied women closely, or thought about them much, or imagined himself in romances with them. That Gordon had poses was undeniable—he was even fond of them, but the romantic pose was not one of them, in spite of his fondness for Byron. The few allusions to love affairs in his poems—in "No Name" and the "Road to Avernus," as well as in the half-baked "Ashtaroth"—seem really to be literary exercises.

Tenison Woods says: "In 1864 he told me that a relative had died and left him a considerable sum of money. I think he inherited it on the death of his father, but of this I am not quite sure. As usual in such cases the amount was much exaggerated and Gordon was everywhere talked of as a millionaire. He told me, however, that the amount was not very large, but that he would henceforth give up horse-breaking and buy or rent a small station.

He said with great satisfaction that he would have more time to himself now, and I wondered how he would be more to himself than he was.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after this I heard that he was married. Nothing ever surprised me so much. Of all my acquaintance he was least like a marrying man. When I met him subsequently he told me it was true that he had become a married man and had taken to housekeeping. He had rented a small cottage in the township of Robe, Guichen Bay; he smiled in his quiet way as I told him of my surprise, and said there was no romance about his love-making. He had met his wife at a place where he stayed frequently, the hotel at Kingston, I think, but I am not sure; he said he had noticed that she was a very respectable and industrious girl who would make him a good housekeeper. A few days before he married he said as he was leaving, 'Well, girl, I like your ways, you seem industrious and sensible. If you like I will take a cottage at Robe, and we will get married next week, and you shall keep home for me' (*See Howlett Ross's Memoir*). The girl consented and they were married a few days after. I am sure Mrs. Gordon was to him the thrifty housekeeper he expected her to be; a companion to him she would hardly be, as the differences in their position and education were so great. When I called upon them some time afterwards, I was introduced to a small, slim, rather good-looking lassie, in appearance about fifteen years of age. Gordon had a strange habit of addressing her as 'girl,' which sounded a little odd before visitors, though it was appropriate in one sense."

In 1887 a monument was erected at "Lindsay Gordon's Leap," Mount Gambier, one of the two sites assigned to Gordon's wonderful feat on Red Lancer. Mr. John Riddoch, J.P., of Yallum (an old friend of Gordon's), laid the foundation stone, and in his speech said: "Gordon

<sup>1</sup> This is incorrect. Gordon inherited the money in 1864, but he was married in October 1862.



THE TRADITIONAL SITE OF GORDON'S LEAP AT MOUNT GAMBIER. (See pages 36-39.)  
*Reproduced by permission of the "S. A. Register."*



was necessarily thrown much into the society of sporting men, many of whom were his friends, but at the same time the conviction was forced upon him that many of that class were most undesirable companions, and he was led to fear that through their influence he might be led into some act that his conscience and high sense of honour would not fully approve. During the last years of his life, when his popularity as a steeplechaser was at its highest, when he, as a rider, was backed and not the horse he rode, and when he was not in affluent circumstances, many temptations were put before him, temptations that to many, similarly placed, would be irresistible. But those who knew Gordon best, however, would know that he was far above being tampered with, and that those who might try to tamper with him would not go unscathed away."

This is South Australia's monument to Gordon. Melbourne, the city where he died, has erected a monument over his grave in the Brighton cemetery. But Gordon needs no monument in the Southern Hemisphere, for there his memory is graven on the hearts of men.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It was while Gordon was living in the Mount Gambier district that he made his famous leap over a fence on the edge of a precipice, though the exact place and the exact date seem to be in dispute. Mr. Howlett Ross quotes "Bruni" of the *Australasian* with reference to the fact. "Following the metalled road about a quarter of a mile further, I reach the path trending to the right which leads to the summit of the Mount. It was near this spot that the late A. L. Gordon is said to have jumped his horse in and out of the fence that runs round the Blue Lake. The fence, though of a good height and strongly made, is one that any ordinary hunter could clear with ease, but the feat is rendered extremely dangerous owing to the small space on the lake side of the fence for a horse to land and take off again. The slightest mistake would have hurled horse and rider into the lake two hundred feet below. It is just such a thing as Gordon would have done in those days." The poet and some sporting friends from Victoria were riding in the neighbourhood, and the conversation turned on feats of horsemanship witnessed in the vicinity. Gordon was immediately inflamed with a desire to perform a feat that he felt sure none of his friends would dare emulate. He carried Red Lancer over the fence, and, by leaping from rock to rock, cleared a chasm more than forty

Mr. George Riddoch here draws attention for the first time to the reason which prompted Gordon to make his mad leap at Mount Gambier.

*About Gordon's Leap.*

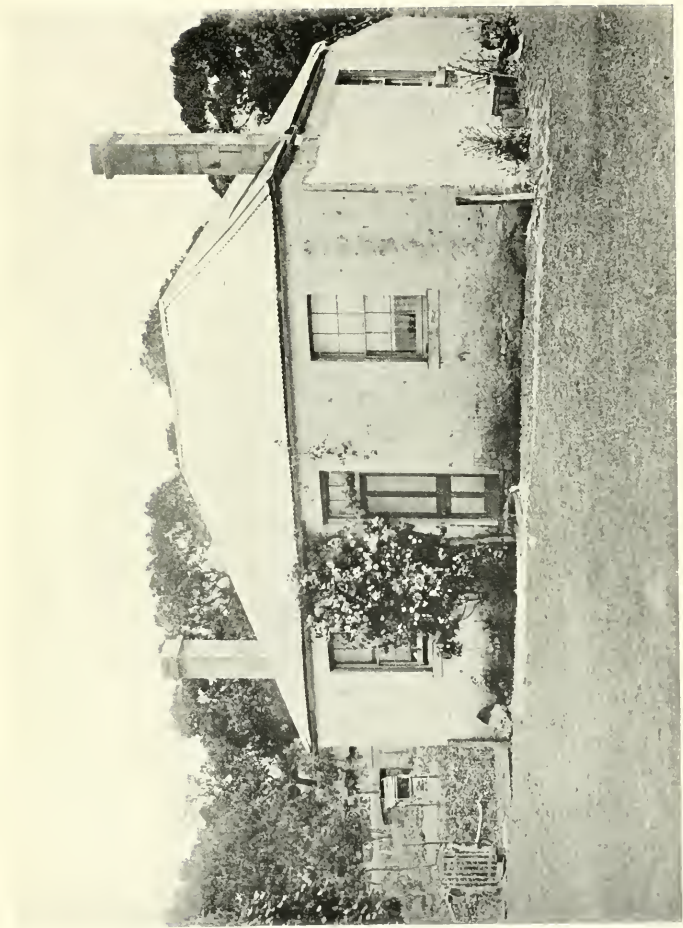
“Gordon and a number of other men were out kangaroo hunting near Mount Gambier, and on the way back some of the hunters from the Hamilton District of Victoria having their horses trained to it, jumped over cattle. Gordon's horse would not, and to show what he and his horse could do, he put it at a high fence round the Blue Lake, where the landing was very narrow, and if he had made a mistake horse and rider would have gone down a rough almost perpendicular bank 300 or 400 feet high into the Blue Lake, which is very deep. The obelisk put up to commemorate the act was erected near the spot.”

After his marriage, Gordon went first to live at Penola, forty miles inland, in furnished lodgings. But he could not rest away from the sea, so they changed to a cottage in a valley near Mount Gambier, and within half a mile of Cape Northumberland, the scene or inspiration of so much of his writing. “The two years spent therein were very happy,” say Turner and Sutherland. “He never repented of his choice, and his subsequent letters breathe a mingled admiration and attachment for his wife. She made the little home comfortable, and had a cheery way which was like a tonic to a brooding mind. And she had the tact not to intrude needlessly when a spell of meditative silence fell upon him. For in truth no small share of his mother's gloom was gathering over the sunshine of those pleasant days. His verses show how his soul was filled with a melancholy that mused in vain on the mystery of life and the universe; when the futility of its fitful struggles, and the enigmas that lie beyond its final bourne oppressed

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feet wide, the noble horse seeming to be inspired with the fearless courage of its rider. Among the friends who were present was Mr. W. Trainor of Coleraine.





“DINGLEY DELL,” GORDON’S COTTAGE NEAR PORT MACDONNELL, SOUTH AUSTRALIA.  
*Reproduced by permission of the “S. A. Register.”*



him and wrapped him in a far-off silence." Of his marriage, Tenison Woods wrote: "Shortly afterwards I was much surprised to hear of his marriage. He had rented a cottage in Robe township, South Australia. He said there was no romance about his marriage. His home was furnished like any working man's might be; the house was so placed, you could see the sea and a small salt-water lake. He enjoyed it, but said he found life monotonous."

This cottage was not the famous Dingley Dell, for the purchase of which as a State Gordon Museum, negotiations are now on foot in Adelaide. Mrs. N. A. Lord, daughter of the Vicar of Mount Gambier in Gordon's time, who married a business man in that town, thus describes Dingley Dell in an article incorporated by Mr. Howlett Ross in his delightful little memoir of Gordon—

"Leaving the coast (at Port MacDonell) when about half a mile from a rocky headland whereon is planted a noble lighthouse, we struck inland and were soon passing through a dense grove of wattles just bursting into bloom, box shrubs which were not yet clothed with their creamy-white plumes (so like the English meadowsweet), and another tall shrub which the boy called tea-tree, but is not the tree usually known by that name, and here at once I recognised the sights and sounds which Gordon so constantly described.

"At last we emerged on a bush road, at one side of which a brush fence guarded a pleasant-looking homestead—a white-walled cottage with its side to the road, and facing what (if the building had been more pretentious) we should have called a wide, well-kept lawn, vividly green, surrounded by knolls, on which were groves of wattles, and here and there the beautiful flowering gum, a small tree, or tall shrub, which I believe is rare. It has three distinct varieties—creamy-white, deep crimson, and pale pink, the blossom being about three times the size of the ordinary gum flower.

“‘ There, sir,’ said the boy, ‘ that is Dingley Dell.’

“ Yes, there was the roof which had sheltered the active form, the restless brain of the poet; from here he used to wander afoot through the pretty dells or on the range, whence, through and over a waving sea of tree-tops, the blue Southern Ocean flashes in the distance, or, on one of his good steeds, scouring beaten tracks, gates and slip-panels, across country to Allandale and Mount Gambier; but very often his steps turned to the coast, and there some of his best lines were roughly jotted down. There are, I fancy, few Australians, at all events few Victorians, who do not know ‘ Visions in the Smoke.’ The first stanza points to the life, the scene which met our eyes when, with many lingering looks backward cast at Dingley Dell, we followed our young guide up the steep road, and at last came in view of the sea, where he wrote—

“ ‘ Rest, and be thankful ! On the verge  
 Of the tall cliff, rugged and grey,  
 By whose granite base the breakers surge,  
 And shiver their frothy spray,  
 Outstretched I gaze on the eddying wreath  
 That gathers and flits away,  
 With the surf beneath, and between my teeth  
 The stem of the ‘ ancient clay.’ ”

\* \* \* \* \*

The neutral tint of the sullen sea  
 Is flecked with the snowy foam,  
 And the distant gale sighs drearily,  
 As the wanderer sighs for his home;  
 The white sea-horses toss their manes  
 On the bar of the southern reef,  
 And the breakers moan, and—by Jove, it rains !  
 (I thought I should come to grief).’ ”

Here he might have lived in satisfied content writing poems and breaking horses and doing a little dealing in horses, but for the bolt that suddenly dropped from the blue in the shape of a legacy of seven thousand pounds, which had been awaiting him under his mother’s settlement for five years, the trustees being unable to attract his notice. This legacy was the turning point in his life

for better and worse, and opens up various questions and reflections. The first is that with the exception of what we can gather from letters written in October 1855, from Penola to Charley Walter, and in June 1863, to his uncle Robert at Worcester, there is no evidence of Gordon having had any communication with his family between his landing in Adelaide in November 1853, and receiving this intimation of his legacy in 1864. We have his cousin's, Miss Frances Gordon's, authority for stating that Captain Gordon, who was deeply attached to his wild son, had been in the habit of transmitting sums of money to Australia for him with letters addressed to the care of a certain agent. It would seem that the agent embezzled the money and suppressed the letters to cover his tracks. Gordon, hurt at not hearing from his father, ceased at length to write to him, that is the story; there has not yet been any certain confirmation of it, but it accounts for a good deal, including the difficulty of his mother's trustees in ascertaining his whereabouts, to send him his legacy. One of them, Sir Alexander Trotter, liked the boy well enough to persist in the search and was at length rewarded with success.

That brings us to a second point—why did Gordon receive only seven thousand pounds. His mother's portion after all the losses by the abolition of the slave trade was estimated at twenty thousand pounds, and even supposing that it is divided equally between her surviving children, we only know of two of them, Lindsay and Inez Ratti (who has issue still surviving). That problem is never likely to be cleared up.

Was Gordon's legacy a blessing or a curse? If he had been content to stay at Cape Northumberland, buying and adding to his cottage, acquiring enough land round it to breed and deal in horses, he might have developed into a happy and prosperous horse farmer. The South-east of the Colony in those days did a very good trade with horses in India, and Gordon could have collected

drafts for shipping from Robe Town and could have done some quiet race-horse training and steeplechasing into the bargain. But the world might have been the loser, for his poems might have rested obscurely in a notebook, shown deprecatingly to visitors and perhaps never to the right one who could make the contents known to the public.

Undoubtedly Gordon parted with peace by leaving his quiet home and allowing other people to persuade him into politics and speculation. It is said that he lent money carelessly and prodigally; it is said that his unlucky speculations were forced upon him by sharper acquaintances. It is easy to make unfortunate speculations without the intervention of knavery. With his legacy Gordon did buy sundry small properties in his own district and did take up land in West Australia, which of course had to be managed for him, as he could not live there. The country he took up proved to be infested by the lobelia, whose poisonous foliage is the bane of West Australian horse farmers and sheep farmers. It is not certain that the man who sold him the property was aware of this.

The partner who shared his West Australian vicissitudes was Mr. Lambton L. Mount, who is still alive, a brother of Mr. Harry Mount, who was his partner in the Ballarat livery stable.

He was not yet known as an author, though he had already printed "The Feud," a ballad of no real value, but of considerable length, alluded to above, but he was very well known in the district, as he had wandered from station to station, breaking horses. When, therefore, it was necessary for the Squatters' Party to find a good candidate to oppose the Attorney-General, Mr. Randolph Stow, in an election at the end of 1864, because the Government were inaugurating a policy to break up the squatters' runs, eyes were naturally turned upon Gordon. His legacy made him comparatively a man of leisure, able to give up the time to be a member of Parliament: he



THE COTTAGE AT GLENELEG, ADELAIDE, WHERE GORDON LIVED WHILE HE WAS A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT.

*From a photo by the late S. Milbourn, Junr., given by him to Mr. Sladen for reproduction.*





was known to most people in the district and personally popular, and could be relied on to take a view of things fair to the squatter without being himself identified with the squatting interest. His Parliamentary speeches and an outline of his election campaign are reserved for a later volume. Here I need only mention that he did get returned by three votes, and that the failure of his opponent to defeat him led to a break-up of the Ministry. Gordon was elected a member of Parliament for the Victoria district of South Australia as a colleague of John Riddoch, who was to be his life-long friend, in March 1865. The Blythe Cabinet as a consequence of the defeat of its Attorney-General resigned on March 16. Gordon took his seat in Parliament on May 24. Turner and Sutherland give us the following picture of his life in Adelaide.

“Meantime he had rented a cottage at Glenelg, a rambling, one-storey building, in Penzance Street, close to the sea, for which the poet had much affection. It was a weather-board place but roomy, and it stood in about three acres of land, partly occupied by an old orchard, and partly adorned by a number of large and much contorted gum-trees. He was able to ride or walk into town without difficulty, and regularly started off about nine in the morning for the Parliamentary buildings. The House never met till late in the afternoon, but in Gordon’s eyes the good library to which he now had access was a strong attraction. So soon as the room was open he used to settle himself down for a long day’s enjoyment. He read the poets with untiring zeal, but made likewise long incursions into the realms of history. A good book of travel or exploration would keep him absorbed with outstretched legs beside a window, while the lengthening spring days went by, in that silent room of which in the forenoons he was the only frequenter.

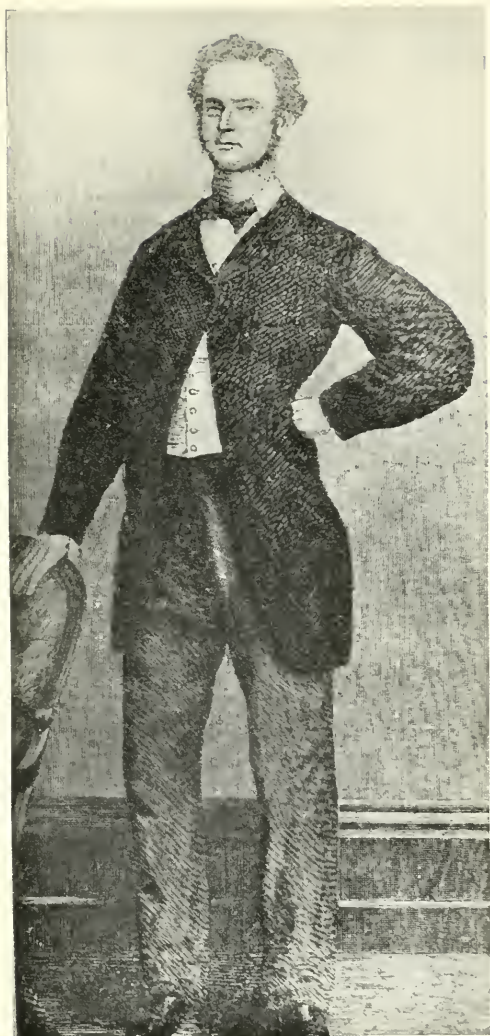
“Then it was a pleasant change when the members began to drop in, to take their places in the chamber of the House of Assembly. It was then, as it still is, I believe, the

custom in that House for members to have small writing tables in front of their seats. Each pair of members has such a table with drawers and writing conveniences. Gordon and his colleague for the district, John Riddoch, of Yallum, shared a table in this fashion, and an intimacy thus sprang up which was one of the few lucky features of the poet's life; for in this way he secured a sincere, sensible, and warm-hearted friend, whose influence was always favourable throughout the rest of his life."

The *Advertiser*, a great South Australian paper, much interested in Gordon, has preserved a few of Mr. Riddoch's reminiscences of the poet.

Mr. Riddoch often used to ride out with Gordon. "He would mumble away in the saddle with his thoughts far away, and it was absolutely impossible to get anything out of him then. I remember when he wrote 'The Stockrider' at Yallum. He climbed up a gum-tree near my house, as he often did when he wanted to be quiet, and composed it there. He generally went out after breakfast when he had a poetical fit and evolved his verses. Of course, he was a highly educated man, notwithstanding his joining the police force and going in for horse-breaking. His eyesight was remarkably good at night; in fact he could read the smallest print by moonlight. I remember on one occasion he inscribed the Lord's Prayer on a fourpenny bit. Of course, that was in the daytime."

As for his political experiences, he was not in Parliament very long. He stood as a candidate for legislative honours in 1865. He was immensely popular everywhere he went. He had a remarkable memory, and after listening to a speech could repeat it all off almost word for word. He used to amuse himself when the House was sitting in writing verses and making sketches, but he did not find the political atmosphere particularly congenial. Immediately after he resigned his membership he went over to West Australia, where he did a little exploring and he took up some land there. He bought sheep and put them on it, but



A. L. GORDON WHEN HE WAS AN M.P. IN SOUTH  
AUSTRALIA.

*Reproduced by permission of the "Sydney Bulletin" Co.*



the country was unsuitable, and the man he left in charge knew nothing about sheep-farming, the result being that Gordon lost all he put into the venture. He often used to tell me at the time he was riding, and he was a scrupulously straight rider, how the public used to follow his mounts, and he would smile sadly as he said, "They would not be so eager to do so if they knew how often I hoped for a fall."

In his first session of Parliament Gordon never missed a sitting. He found the proceedings very dull, but he enlivened them by drawing caricatures. He spoke nine times, but without any real success, though his views on the land question were sound and are now incorporated in the South Australian system. But in the recess he covered himself with real distinction. For he trained a little horse called Cadger, which he afterwards owned, for the Adelaide steeplechases and rode him himself in the big race on September 20. Cadger won, thanks to Gordon's nerve and judgment and perhaps not a little to his knowledge of the animal, which he had acquired during the training. He had long had a reputation as a steeple-chaser in the South-Eastern part of the colony, and now it spread over the whole of South Australia.

Yet this may, as Turner and Sutherland point out, have been the beginning of Gordon's downfall. He bought Cadger, though he had already two riding horses in his stables and certainly could not afford it, and his mind began to turn to racing in Melbourne, the Magnet of the Australian turf, which he had never yet visited. He was so magnetised with the racing in Victoria that in the second Parliamentary vacation, 1865, he took a trip to Ballarat. He bought a black horse called Ballarat, bred by a western district squatter, Mr. Neil Black of Glen-Ormiston, put finishing touches on the horse's training as usual, and entered him for a handicap steeplechase. Riding steadily and cautiously he came in an easy winner against an excellent field and established his name as a steeple-chase rider in Victoria. This inspired him to take Cadger

to Melbourne for the New-Year's Day races of 1866. Gordon rode him himself, but the horse was not of sufficient calibre to win a first-class event at Melbourne, and came in nowhere. So Gordon went back to his Parliamentary duties in South Australia in a chastened frame of mind. He persisted with them until November 20, though he grew more and more bored, and then sent in his resignation. His station property, which had at first brought him in a large return, had gone from worse to worse and he did not care enough for politics to continue in Parliament when he could not afford it.

He had also hopes of making an income by literature. *Bell's Life in Melbourne* had, in August 1865, published a poem called "Visions in the Smoke," which forms the first part of his "Hippodromania, or Whiffs from the Pipe," one of Gordon's best racing poems, and this had been followed in October and November, 1865, by seven Fyttes of the series, called "Ye Wearie Wayfarer," the sporting poems with an English background, full of Gordon's picturesque and proverbial sayings, which are more quoted than anything else he ever wrote. The last Fytte does not seem to have been published until a year later, about the date of Gordon's resignation from the South Australian Parliament. And the same year he published two more parts of "Hippodromania," which Turner and Sutherland justly characterise as "purely racing pieces, with no pretence of poetry in them, though they have a certain cleverness of their own."

In Adelaide, Tenison Woods had several long talks with him. Gordon seemed somewhat desponding and at a loss to employ his time. He hinted that his fortune was not what it was thought, and said he could not afford to be idle; he spoke of trying to get a literary appointment on a newspaper and had made up his mind to resign his seat in Parliament and go to live in Melbourne.

"He had at this time published more verses, made quite a name. He was very proud of these efforts, and I noticed more self-assertion and, if I may use the expression,

more personal vanity about his talents than ever I observed before. He said among other things that he was sure he would rise to the top of the tree in poetry, and that the world should talk about it before he died" (quoted from memory).

Gordon said to Father Woods that most good talkers were great drinkers. He was extremely temperate. This was the last time Mr. Woods ever saw Gordon, but he heard from him repeatedly until "the dreadful news reached me of the manner in which he had put an end to his career. I must say, however, that it did not surprise me. In my intercourse with him of late years I had noticed a morbid melancholy growing more and more upon him. My own opinion is that he had kept up appearances until pecuniary and legal embarrassments came upon him, and then gave way to despair." Father Woods remarks that Gordon's difficulties could not have been great, but he could not bear that any one should know his real position.

As soon as he resigned from Parliament, Gordon went to look at his purchase in West Australia. He could do nothing for it, but it cured him of his old dream of settling in West Australia till much later in his life, when he began to contemplate it again, chiefly to get rid of the undesirable associations he had formed in racing. His wife had presented him with a son,<sup>1</sup> just before he started. He spent several weeks in West Australia, camping out, and on his return in the beginning of 1867 gave up his cottage at Glenelg and went to live again near Mount Gambier, hoping to find enough to subsist on in the remains of his fortune and what he could make out of literature. He did not begin promisingly. The first poems he published were the two remaining parts of "Hippodromania." "Banker's Dream" appeared on April 20, 1867, and "Ex Fumo Dare Lucem," which appeared on August 3, 1867. This last did contain some touches of poetry, but

<sup>1</sup> According to Mrs. Gordon, a daughter, Annie Lindsay Gordon. The child died at Ballarat, and the tombstone, I believe, is erected to a daughter.

as a whole not up to his best standard. "Banker's Dream" was a mere racing piece. He had previously in the first days of the *Australasian*, which was founded in 1866, published a poem called "The Old Leaven," about on a level with "Ashtaroth." Mr. Sutherland sees in the piece called "Frustra," published in January 1867, the first proof that Gordon "could rank with the masters in the music of his lines."

In August 1867, "Whither Bound," now called "Quare Fatigasti," appeared in the *Australasian*. Metrically, it is an advance on the fine poems in "Ye Wearie Wayfarer," but it appears to me less original and less interesting. A month later, in September 1867, he collected the poems he had published into a thin paper volume entitled, *Sea Spray and Smoke Drift*, at his own expense. Mr. Sutherland says that the five hundred copies cost him about fifty pounds to produce, which was outrageously dear considering that they were unbound. Less than a hundred were sold, and with the exception of *Bell's Life*, he tells us, none of the Australian journals took any notice of the slender volume except that in one or two cases a contemptuous paragraph appeared. There were some fine poems in the volume besides those which had already been printed. "Podas Okus," on the death of Achilles, is a poem of which Swinburne himself might have been proud. "From Lightning and Tempest" is a little gem which ought to find its way into every anthology. "The Last Leap" is graceful and pathetic; "The Song of the Surf" contains some magnificent lines. "Wormwood and Nightshade" is the equal of "Quare Fatigasti," mentioned above. But apart from these, any volume which contained the eight Fyttes of "Ye Wearie Wayfarer," "Visions in the Smoke," "Ex Fumo Dare Lucem," and "The Roll of the Kettledrum" ought to have been assured of the warmest welcome from a horse-loving community like the Australians. They are like the Book of Proverbs to the Australians now-a-days. A



few months later, Gordon published "Ashtaroath," and I think it was small blame to the Australians that hardly a copy was sold. "Ashtaroath" ought never to have been written, and ought never to have been published when it was written. Gordon was not capable of carrying out such a conception. It was this year, 1867, which at its close saw Gordon making a fresh attempt to stem the inevitable tide of bankruptcy. Craig's Hotel, the principal hotel in Ballarat at that time, had fine stables and a good livery stable business in connection with it. This part of the concern was to let, and Gordon, knowing that it had a large turnover, and trusting to his local popularity and large connection with horsey people, determined to lease it for eight pounds a week. He moved his family into a six-roomed cottage out near Lake Wendouree and took over the business. Though he had to buy some new horses, food was cheap and the business might have been made to pay well if Gordon had kept his accounts properly and induced people to pay them, but he was careless on his side and his customers were remiss on theirs, so money did not come in sufficiently fast to meet current expenses. After a while, Gordon took into partnership, not a steady man with a good banking account and business habits who could have kept the books on a proper basis, while Gordon kept the customers in a good humour, but a young man as unbusinesslike as himself, with no qualifications for the business except that he was one of the best amateur horsemen in the Colony. To make matters worse, in the middle of 1868 a horse smashed Gordon's head in against one of the gateposts of his own yard, an accident from which he took a long time to recover.

It was while he was at Ballarat that his child died. On October 6, 1868, he wrote to John Riddoch—

"I wrote you a short note a few days ago, and promised you a longer one. Mrs. Gordon went away by the steamer *Penola*. She was anxious to get a change, and I was glad for many reasons that she should go away for a time.

“ I gave up the stables on the first of this month. I have paid altogether £350 for rent. Let me tell you some good news now before I go to the bad. I have had some money left to me by the deaths of my father’s first cousin, and of my grandmother. I ought to have received it long ago. It is not much, but it will set me straight.

“ I heard last mail from ——. He wants me to go home to England. It seems I am the nearest heir to an entailed estate called Esslemont in Scotland. He thinks it a certainty, but I fancy there is a flaw in the entail. Huntly Gordon, the last owner, left it by will to his daughter, and as the flaw in the entail has not been proved, —— wants me to go home and appeal against the will.

“ I do not think I shall go, even if I could get the estate; having no male heir, it would be of no use to me beyond my lifetime, and that is very uncertain.

“ I have been awfully bothered about money difficulties; but I think I have now paid off everybody but you and Lawson (mortgage). Getting in the money that is still due to me here is very difficult. But I have sold off everything, and though many things were sacrificed, I did not do so badly after all.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ The stables have been very badly managed, and Mount, though a well-meaning fellow, has a head worse, if possible, for business than mine. But after that bad fall of mine, I was bound to leave the books entirely in his hands, and a pretty mess he made of the accounts. I could hardly have done worse myself.

“ Since that heavy fall of mine I have taken to drink. I don’t get drunk, but I drink a good deal more than I ought to, for I have a constant pain in my head and back. I get so awfully low-spirited and miserable, that if I had a strong sleeping-draught near me, I am afraid I might take it. I have carried one that I should never awake from.

“ You will perhaps be awfully shocked, old fellow, to see



GORDON ON VIKING, THE HORSE ON WHICH HE WON SEVERAL STEEPLCHASES. (See pages 100-104.)  
*Given by the late S. Milbourn, Junr., to Mr. Sladen for reproduction.*



me write in this strain; but I am not exaggerating, in the least. If I could only persuade myself that I am a little mad, I might do something of that sort. I really do feel a little mad at times, and I begin to think I have had more trouble than I can put up with, I could almost say more than I deserve, though this would probably be untrue."

In August 1868, the arrival of some money from home had enabled him to clear out of the livery-stable business, and he again had to face the problem of how to make a living. The only way that presented itself outside of literature was riding in steeplechases combined with a little training, and at this he had considerable success. In this he owed much to Major Baker, afterwards Sir Thomas Durand Baker, one of the heroes of Kandahar, who was at this time Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General for Australia and New Zealand.

It was on October 10, 1868, that he won his first great race in Melbourne, the Melbourne Hunt Club Cup, on Major Baker's Babbler, and he made the day the most successful day of his life, by winning two other steeplechases, the Metropolitan on his own horse, Viking, and the Selling Steeplechase on his game little horse, Cadger. He had not a single fall in either race. The only fly in the ointment was that he sell the faithful Cadger for the highest bid—£40.

Concerning this day's meeting the *Melbourne Argus* wrote—

"Saturday, October 10, 1868.—The Melbourne Hunt Club Steeplechase was run on the Melbourne Course. The Meeting, though not quite so largely attended as usual, was a successful one, and no serious accidents occurred. . . . Some of these races were very closely contested, though the principal event, the Hunt Club Cup, was won easily by Babbler. Standard-bearer, a perfect outsider, won the Hurdle race; Viking, the Metropolitan Steeplechase, and Playboy the Military Cup. The Selling Steeplechase was

won by Cadger; his owner, Mr. Gordon, was extremely successful, riding the winning horses in three out of the five events which composed the programme. . . . in point of fact, everybody seemed to be really tolerably satisfied; Mr. Gordon, we should think, most of all. To win three races, one of them the big thing of the day, in one afternoon does not happen very frequently to a man in his lifetime."

It was Gordon's misfortune that his victories as a steeple-chaser did not come soon enough for him to enjoy them properly, much as he may have been delighted by the first of them. Once more a career was open to him if he could have grasped it. For this triple victory at the Melbourne steeplechases on October 10, 1868, made him the most popular steeplechase rider in the country, and it was the custom in those days for the winning owner to halve the stakes with the amateur rider who took no fee; he had a great reputation as a trainer for putting the finishing touches on a steeplechaser, and the *Australasian* was eager to take sporting reports from him as well as sporting poems. He was also in an exceptionally good position for making money by betting on himself. For as rider and trainer combined he knew if his horse could win, and if the horse had it in him, Gordon was almost invincible in a steeplechase. Even his readiness, his almost eagerness to die, gave him some sort of an advantage. But early in his career in Melbourne he began to take a strong dislike to steeplechasing, not for the terrible accidents he saw in it because he was singularly fortunate for a long while in avoiding them himself, from the habit learned from old Tom Oliver of picking a panel where the other horses did not get in his way, and humouring his horse over the jumps, while his rivals put themselves out of the running. Gordon for all his recklessness rode with great patience and judgment.

The part he hated about steeplechases was the company and the temptations into which they forced him. As people grew into the habit of backing Gordon's mount for

his riding and not this or the other horse for its speed or jumping, the black sheep of the betting fraternity began to make overtures to him to sell himself.

In a letter to John Riddoch in the *Autobiographical Letters*, quoted in the *Australasian* from the *Adelaide Advertiser*, and written about this time, he says: "I ride for money now, and if I were to stop a little longer at this game I should not be so particular as I ought to be," and he goes on to say: "If you could find me any sort of work that I could earn enough to live by and keep my wife in clothes and bread, I will swear against ever going near a race-course again, if you like. I am heartily sick of the life I have been leading, and I do not even care for riding. The only ride that I have really enjoyed since my last fall was the hunt in which Mrs. Gordon rode so well alongside of me.

"I ought to have made some money lately, for fortune, as if tired of persecuting me, has given me a turn in many ways, but I have not done nearly so well as I ought to have done. I have had no heart to back my luck, and I might not have such an opportunity again. If I made a little money I should be quite contented to leave this gay and festive scene, which I find awfully wearisome. I am better than I was, though I have been ailing on and off with headache and pains in the back, but I am getting used to these, and they come and go pretty much as they like. I am certainly stronger in some ways than I was. Physically I am not weak; as far as muscular action goes I can take as much exercise as ever when the fit is on and the headache off. I have been very temperate lately, and do not smoke quite so much, though I do it more than I ought. I am rather a good groom when I choose to work, which is not always. I am much better than I was; having some occupation is a great thing, and I write for the *Australasian* in my spare time, though I have not finished a single article yet. I am not fit for much study yet, though I take lots of exercise, walking several miles

before breakfast alongside of the horses, and swimming in the Yarra.

“I am awfully sick of the life I have been leading, and the society that I have not been able to escape from. I can assure you that my chief reason for making that rash venture in West Australia was a desire to escape from all my sporting associates and begin a new life in the bush. Still I have done no worse than I should have done if I had kept away from here, and killed myself with running after lost sheep and nursing doomed ones in West Australia.”

West Australia, then and for long afterwards a *terra incognita* occupying a third of the continent with one city, two ports, a pearling station and a prison for black convicts, had been Gordon's will-o'-the-wisp-land. He had paid it two visits. On the first, when he had held property in the colony for years, he camped out in the bush for several weeks trying to find more suitable country, for his own property was worthless: he had been induced to buy it by an interested party. He had tried stocking a small station in West Australia with sheep, but the country proved to have the poison-weed and the man he left in charge of the station was incompetent, so he lost all his money invested there.

Mr. Riddoch has recorded that in his last year he thought of West Australia again from a desire to escape from the racing lot by whom he was surrounded in Victoria. He had grown to hate all the riff-raff connected with the sport and we find him writing despondently of the sport itself: “You do not understand much about these things, but you would hardly be stupid enough to do what I did—*enter a horse to be sold for £30, and ride him 7lb. overweight.* I got rather a nasty fall last Saturday riding a hack of P.'s that he had lent to Lieutenant Simons for a small steeplechase not worth winning. This was *not* my fault. I did not want to ride the brute at all, but did not like to refuse. Major Baker said it was a shame to make me ride



a horse that couldn't jump, but P—— said, 'Oh, he won't fall with Gordon, and if he wins I shall be able to sell the brute.' Simons rode the same horse in a hurdle race, and he fell at the first hurdle, and again at the second, and kicked Simons and left him for dead. It is getting near post time, so I must finish this scrawl.

"On Thursday night I was so tired that I could hardly walk to the telegraph office, as you may suppose, and on Friday after the race I was not much better, though I did not feel it, having imbibed too freely. Every one that was with me swears that I was as sober as a judge, by which I infer that every one who was with me was as drunk as a lord. On Saturday I was very bad. The terrible reaction, consequent upon the fatigue of that awful journey, which excitement had kept off for a time, set in, and I could hardly move. I went to see a poor boy who was in the hospital, having crossed the course and been run down by me. I am glad to say that he is all right, having only broken the small bone of his leg. I gave him what money I could afford, and the Stewards of the meeting promised something more. Moore also will do the same; so he is better off than he deserves, and has expressed his intention to get run down again on the earliest opportunity. A fine plucky boy he is, too, the son of a miner, I believe. Of course, not the least blame is attached to me. It was in the straight running at the finish of the race, and finding the mare beat I was pulling her up but only three or four lengths behind the two leaders. Several men and boys watching the first two horses and not noticing me, ran between them and me. I did all I could to pull off them, and did avoid some, but knocked down two only, one of whom was hurt. Maud was beastly fat—as fat as your horse Tommy. I did not want to ride her when I saw her, but the leaps were all new and very high, and I thought the other horses would fall or refuse, as Ingleside was not expected to start. I think I could have beaten Peter Simple, and none of the others could get once round."

But I must go back a little to show how extraordinary Gordon's success in steeplechasing had been from the day that he began to ride for Major Baker, on the Melbourne Race-course on October 10, 1868.

Yet it was of this very 10th of October, 1868, that he had written to his friend John Riddoch: "You have no idea how awfully sick of steeplechasing and horse riding I am now, but when a man gets so deep into the mire it is hard to draw back. I have to ride three races next Saturday in Melbourne, and I am not fit to ride a donkey now. I do not fancy I shall have any luck, but my luck cannot possibly be worse than it has been. I would like never to see a horse again, let alone to ride one. . . ."

"I shall miss the steamer if I write any longer, but you shall hear from me by the next if I get through Saturday's work. I am going to send you the *New Colonial Monthly*. It is a very good magazine. Marcus Clarke, the editor, is a very nice young fellow."

It was in the *Colonial Monthly* that "The Sick Stock-rider" appeared first, and Marcus Clarke wrote that eloquent preface to his collected poems which has told nine English readers out of ten all they know about Gordon.

An article in a number of the *Colonial Monthly* towards the end of 1868, written presumably by the editor, Marcus Clarke, said: "Gordon is the most Australian of our literary aspirants, a genuine unconscious tone gives life to his work. We look forward with some pride and much hope to the day when it will be a boast to have discerned his genius in 1868."

He left Ballarat and his livery stable business in the autumn of 1868 and spent October and November of that year as the guest of Mr. Robert Power at Toorak, superintending the horses which Mr. Power had in training. At the spring meeting of the Victorian Racing Club he had a notable victory on Viking, but he did not clear as much as he might have because he had just sold his share in the horse for £75, but his affairs were gradually

straightening themselves, for he wrote a letter to Mr. Riddoch about this time in which he said: "I am taking exercise now and doing work, and I sleep pretty well and eat fairly and only drink one glass of grog when I go to bed. Though I smoke nearly as much as ever I never touch opiates in any shape now, really I had so much trouble and anxiety for a long time that I gave in at last and got careless. I was ill, too, and all my pluck and spirits are, I know, purely animal. I never had any moral courage, and though I could bear up when I felt well and strong, I had no heart when weak and ailing, and at one time I had so many troubles pressing on me at once, that it seemed almost impossible for me to weather them. I do not even now realise the fact that I am so nearly clear of debt. I do not take much pleasure in riding now, and none at all in racing. I did not go near the race-course on the 'Cup' day, nor yet on the Friday, and after the Steeplechase was over I locked myself in one of the empty horseboxes in the saddling paddock, and smoked a pipe while the other races were being run, for which I have been chaffed a good deal since by some of my acquaintances." While he was staying with Mr. Power he wrote for his host's little daughter one of his most popular poems, called "A Song of Autumn."

"Where shall we go for our garlands glad  
At the falling of the year."

His next move was to go and stay with the Officers of the regiment which was at that time garrisoning Melbourne at their barracks, while he was superintending the training of Major Baker's Babbler for the Ballarat steeplechases. He spent the month of December there, very popular with the officers for his feats of horsemanship and skill with the gloves. Babbler, owing to Gordon's excellent judgment in handling him, won his race, his most formidable opponent being the handsome Ingleside, which Gordon himself trained at one time. It was while he was staying with

them that he saw the sketch made by one of them of him as he finished the selling steeplechase on the victorious Cadger. Mr. George Riddoch has told in his chapter of reminiscences of the stratagem by which he captured it. It now forms the frontispiece of this volume.

At the New Year's meeting at Melbourne Gordon had the choice of riding Major Baker's Babbler; Ballarat, which had once belonged to himself and now belonged to Mr. George Watson, and Viking, another horse which the poet had formerly owned, now belonging to Mr. Robert Power. He chose Babbler, but Viking won an easy victory.

Having made a little money off his racing successes he once more thought of West Australia, and was on the point of going off there to take up land for sheep farming, when the late John Riddoch asked him to spend the summer at Yallum Park till his racing engagements began again. The January and February he spent there gave him his last real glimpse of happiness and prosperity and he made use of it to write some of his best poems, "The Sick Stockrider," "How we Beat the Favourite" and "From the Wreck." When he went back to Melbourne he had the offer of becoming a sporting Reporter of the *Australasian*, but as Turner and Sutherland say, "it was a position that would have taken him to every race meeting in the country, to live in hotels, and to be thrown more than ever into the company of those who hang round racing-stables and betting-rooms. He knew that a weakness for stimulants was growing upon him, and he had to fight also against a tendency to use opiates in order to sleep at night. He distrusted himself, and refused the offer, hoping to find some means of earning a living which should be to him less perilous."

Once more, on March 27, 1869, he won a notable victory on Babbler; and he made a little by contributions to the newspapers and horse-dealing. His wife joined him as the year advanced and he established himself in what was to prove his last home, the lodgings which he took at

Brighton till he found a suitable piece of land for settling on. The late Mr. Justice Higginbotham, then one of the leaders of the Melbourne Bar, lived at Brighton,<sup>1</sup> and his gardener's wife, Mrs. Kelly, was able to accommodate a married couple. It is conceivable that Mr. Higginbotham himself suggested that the Gordons should lodge with the Kellys; at all events he showed his gardener's lodgers many kindnesses, including the all-important one of lending the poet any book from his library. Gordon spent long hours in the garden on a seat below some bushy shrubs reading them. His own library at the time he describes in a letter to John Riddoch: "I once had a decent little library. My present stock comprises a *Turf Register*, a *Victorian Ruff*, about half of a religious work which came into my hands I don't know how, a dilapidated dictionary—the odd pages of which serve as occasional pipelights—*David the Shepherd King* (with the author's compliments), which no one will borrow or steal, and a volume of my own verses, which I can't get rid of. I am laid up to-day with influenza. I walked to Toorak and back on Sunday and got a chill, and yesterday I stayed too long in the sea. I can't stand swimming in the cold weather now like I used to, in fact, I'm getting such an infernal old cripple that I shan't be able to stand anything soon."

Although I have found no positive statement on the subject, I presume that his income now arose chiefly from

<sup>1</sup> " *Relics of Gordon*.—Some interesting mementoes of the poet Gordon were secured last week by Mr. W. Farmer Whyte, a Sydney resident, who visited Brighton, Victoria, where Gordon died, in 1870. These had been in possession of the lady with whom Gordon lodged at the time of his death, and include the poet's bank-book (which, contrary to general belief, shows that he was at one time possessed of considerable means), some of Gordon's verses that have never been published, and portions of the original draft of his 'Rhyme of Joyous Garde.' It is possible that some of the manuscripts will be exhibited in the Mitchell Library, Sydney. Included among the interesting mementoes secured is a greenhide riding-whip, said to have been made by the poet himself, and used in some of his steeplechase rides made famous in his verses." (From a Sydney paper, February 1912.)

training horses. At all events, we know from Turner and Sutherland that he did spend his mornings in exercising his horses, and it seems that until quite the close of his life, though he was so very badly off, he continued to attend the hunts outside Melbourne. According to the same authority he had a long swim the first thing in the morning, and in the afternoon walked the eight miles into Melbourne and sometimes the eight miles back as well. He also joined the Brighton Artillery Corps, which was an important step, because the rifle with which he shot himself was served out to him as a member of the corps.

Meanwhile he was writing poetry. The fine poem "De Te," which was almost prophetic of his suicide, belongs to this period.

It was one of Gordon's chief misfortunes that whenever he seemed to be settling down to a period of comparative peace and prosperity, something fresh, which looked like very great good fortune, occurred to fling him back into the toils of desperation. This time it was the seeming certainty of having inherited a fine estate.

He had for some little time past been head of the important and distinguished Scottish family of Gordon of Hallhead and Esslemont, but the cousin whom he had succeeded as titular head of the family had broken the entail and settled the estate on his niece, taking advantage of a change in the Scottish Law of Entail.

"That barony of Esslemont, which his great-grandfather had bought a century before, and strictly entailed, in the hopes of founding a landed family," say Turner and Sutherland, "was the direct cause of Gordon's death in 1870. It was a fine estate, now worth two thousand a year, and had for a long time been in the possession of a Mr. Huntly<sup>1</sup> Gordon who, on his death, bequeathed it to his daughter,

<sup>1</sup> The spelling of the names has been corrected. It was not Huntly (Robert) Gordon, but his half brother, Charles Napier, who succeeded him, that broke the entail and left the property to Ann Wolrige, according to the Gordon pedigree drawn up by Miss Frances Gordon. Bulloch concurs.

a certain Mrs. Wolrige. If the entail was still valid this bequest was beyond his power, for none but male heirs, however remote, could succeed to it. . . . Nevertheless, the lady had occupied the estate for four years ere the poet heard anything of the matter. It was in October 1868 that he had a letter from England advising him to assert his claim as being beyond all doubt the nearest heir. The letter came as he was leaving Ballarat, but he built no hopes upon it. He wrote back in answer, that as the lady had held it so long, he would be disinclined to disturb her in possession; but he learnt, in reply, during the course of 1869, that she was very wealthy without this estate. . . . Gordon then threw himself into the matter with some little zeal. Truly for him an unfortunate thing as the matter turned out, for, to a mind entering on the downward course of melancholia the utmost quietness and freedom from feverish excitement should have been prescribed. It was almost fatal at that time to enter on the frets, the perplexities, the restless exhilarations and the deep disappointments of litigation.

“Gordon had in one regard no delusions. He did not believe that if he should gain the estate he would have long to live in its enjoyment. He had no son to inherit after him, and his wife could not succeed if the estate were truly entailed. But there were four years of accrued income due, and if he held the estate for only a few years he would be able to leave his wife well provided for at his decease. He accordingly asked the advice of George Higginbotham as to the most suitable firm of solicitors to whom he could refer the matter. He was told that as it was a case of Scottish law he had better apply to J. C. Stewart, of the firm of Malleon, England, and Stewart, who was the chief authority of that kind then in Melbourne. With the help of letters from relatives of the Gordon connection, Mr. Stewart stated a case to be submitted to a leading advocate in Edinburgh, one especially cognizant of the laws of entail.

“ Until this time Gordon refused to permit himself the luxury of day-dreams. He discouraged any tendency to sanguine hopes; but in January 1870 there arrived news which gave him every just reason to anticipate a successful issue. The learned advocate had caused an exhaustive search to be conducted among the registers of Edinburgh, whereby it became clear that the entail had never been broken, nor, indeed, interfered with in any way. The opinion he gave distinctly declared that Gordon’s case was sound, and that in all probability he had only to proceed to make the estate his own.

“ Gordon’s letters now show a change of feeling. He is quite sure of success. ‘ My title,’ he says, ‘ seems clear enough. All that the other side have to go upon is an Act of 1848 which made entailed estates subject to the debt bonds of the holders. Stewart has gone over the papers and believes that they are wrong. However, the news by next mail ought to put the matter straight.’ ”

The news by the next mail seemed altogether satisfactory, and Gordon had now to think of starting the necessary litigation.

“ That would require money, but when the matter seemed so sure he had no hesitation in borrowing the necessary sum for a time. He applied to Mr. Riddoch, and promptly received what he asked for. But it disappeared in preliminary expenses. Meanwhile his wife received news that her father was dying in South Australia; he had to provide money to take her round to see him. In a couple of months all he had borrowed was gone, and he was ashamed further to trespass on his friend’s generosity. He now began to let his debts grow; paid his landlord in promises, and ran up bills at the local shops. He was so sure that in a very short time he should be able to pay everybody. ‘ However,’ he says, ‘ I take little personal comfort from the hopes of the property. It will come too late in the day to do me any good; and I am growing sick of everything. And, after all, having more money than



you know what to do with may be only a little better than having none at all.'

\* \* \* \* \*

“Cheered up by the receipt of one or two English reviews and papers containing favourable notices of *Sea Spray and Smoke Drift*, he worked along at his book through all the month of May (1870), waiting impatiently for further news as to Esslemont. But the June mail, with one fatal touch, brought down the castles of his dreams. It had been all along known that the Act of 1848 had abolished certain classes of entail, but every lawyer seemed to have taken it for granted that it in no way affected the barony of Esslemont. Now came the news that by a recent decision of the Scotch law courts, sustained by the Privy Council, it had been settled that the class of entail to which Esslemont belonged was included in the category, and had been swept away.

“The matter was now settled beyond a hope, and Gordon was left stranded with his debts accumulated round him. In Brighton he owed about £100; he owed the money-lender £50; he would shortly have to pay £30 for his new book, then nearly printed, and he owed Mr. Riddoch £200.”

To raise some money for immediate expenses Gordon agreed to ride Major Baker's choice in the Melbourne Steeplechases on March 12, 1870. Babblers, the horse he had ridden so often to victory, was entered for the race, but the Major pinned his faith on a new purchase, Prince Rupert. Prince Rupert took the second jump, which was a log-fence, “a little too eagerly” and threw Gordon over his head. In spite of the seriousness of the fall Gordon jumped to his feet, remounted, recovered his ground and was actually leading again when Prince Rupert fell at the third fence, probably because Gordon was still dazed with his fall. Gordon was again thrown very badly. Mr. Blackmore, the Librarian of the South Australian Parliament, an old friend of Gordon's who had come to Melbourne

to see him ride, managed to get him home to Brighton, but it was evident that he was very badly hurt, so on the Monday Major Baker drove him into Town to get the best medical advice. The doctor pronounced that he had internal injuries, but Gordon felt his head more severely, and after lying in bed for several days, as he could not sleep and the rest did not seem to be doing him any good, he got up again and resumed his usual habits. We have his own authority in one of his letters written not long after this for saying that he was sleeping pretty well again and eating fairly, only having one glass of grog a day and never taking opiates. He enjoyed talking literature at the Yorick Club and derived a good deal of pleasure from the society of Henry Kendall, the other great poet of Australia, whose acquaintance he made at this time, an acquaintance that resulted in a mutual respect for each other's works. In May 1870 he seems to have received the highly appreciative notice of his first volume, *Sea Spray and Smoke Drift*, which had been contributed to *Baily's Magazine* by Major Leveson, the Old Shikarri.

About this time he wrote to John Riddoch—

“ If I last I shall come into that place, I feel sure, but I could not stand going through the court or being otherwise exposed. If I've been a great ass I have gone through as much trouble in one way as I can bear. Indeed, had it not been for my wife I should have got out of my trouble somehow before this. I don't think the next world is worse than the present, and if I got a little more desperate I'm sure my wife would be better without me. You, who are differently constituted altogether, cannot perhaps understand how a man who has always been naturally reckless feels when he gets in a hole, especially if the man is also naturally vain. If I had just enough to keep my head above water now I can see my way to make a little, though I am not sure that I could do it. I find my head failing me sometimes, and cannot write sometimes when I want to do it. There is not much to be made with the pen, but

I could have made something if I had not been worried so. I enclose you a letter of Kendall's (in fact two, as I have them both by me). He is *reckoned* the best critic of poetry here, and he is certainly the best poet. A. C. Swinburne has sent him a most complimentary letter upon a work of his which went home—indeed, a sort of rhapsody. I have no great opinion of Kendall's judgment myself, but he certainly writes well.

“ I got Kendall's letters back. The English magazine *Baily* of last arrival had a very favourable review of one of my old works, *Sea Spray*, but I have made a mess of this present publication which is now in type. I expected to get it done cheaper, and did not try to dispose of it in time. Writing verse spoils one for writing prose. You can't do the two things together, so I have not been able to write for the *Australasian*. Indeed, I have had no humour, and I can't write when I don't feel inclined.”

Turner and Sutherland tell us that he worked hard at the production of his last volume, *Bush Ballads and Galloping Rhymes*, all through May 1870, though he was impatiently awaiting the verdict of the Edinburgh authorities about Esslemont, “but the June mail with one fatal touch brought down the castles of his dream.”

Gordon was prostrated by the news. It was not that his debts amounted to a very large sum of money. Mr. John Riddoch, far from pressing for his two hundred pounds, would certainly have helped Gordon through his difficulties generally, if Gordon had given him the opportunity. Mr. George Riddoch, equally generous, has told me himself that he was unaware that Gordon owed any money, though he knew that he was in poor circumstances. He would have been only too glad to put him straight. But Gordon took no one into his confidence.

I have not been able to discover the precise day on which Gordon received the bad news about Esslemont, but from

Mr. George Riddoch I gather that it must have been a very short while before his death. He did not tell me this in so many words, but implied it in what he told me about the reception of the news at Yallum. "I was living at Nahang station at that time," said Mr. Riddoch, "and I went down to visit my brother, the late John Riddoch of Yallum Park. Something was said about Gordon, and my brother mentioned that he had just got the news that the Esslemont business had been decided against Gordon. On the morning that he shot himself, I said to my brother, 'Don't you think I ought to ask Gordon up, it is not safe for him to be in Melbourne after this.' My brother said, 'It's no good your asking him, he's promised to come up here soon.' When this conversation was taking place Gordon was dead, having shot himself early in the morning, and a little later, John Riddoch got a telegram from Robert Power from Melbourne saying that Gordon had shot himself that morning."

"Dispirited by chronic bodily ailments," said Mr. F. Marshall in the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, "which more or less affected him from his salad days, he gave way to the black feelings of despair which had at times clouded his existence, and at last, imitated the 'Viking Wild' in Longfellow's 'Skeleton in Armour'" (a favourite theme of his, he may have recited it in his Prestbury Nights' Entertainments at Tom Oliver's), "and put an end to his own existence with a rifle bullet . . . having previously written a Prose Essay on 'The Propriety and Benefit of Suicide.' . . . In Gordon's case, it is certain that his stomach had a great deal to do with his evil tempers and recklessness, for he suffered intermittently from hypochondria, resulting from a complication of disorders existing from the date of his youth. He was never free long from inconvenience and pain, although he tried to ignore the symptoms.

"To a man of his heroic mould and temperament, the very consciousness of such a serious rift in the lute was

more than dispiriting, it was exasperating; and the initiated can, with this terrible indicator to guide him, easily detect one of the *Causae Causantes*, of his recklessness, hopelessness, and despair. Was he for a little while elate, and unoccupied? 'Adsum' whispered his Incubus, freezing his hilarity and bonhommie, dimming his vision, and rousing the devil in him."

"Ah! sad, proud Gordon! crossing swords with Care,  
 And touching hands so many times with Death,  
 That Death at last came, kissed him unaware,  
 And laid him sleeping with one quick-drawn breath.  
 In that green grave upon the sunny slope  
 Facing the seas he loved, whose simple stone  
 Looks out upon the world that held his hope  
 And back upon the bush he made his own." (*Will Ogilvie.*)

It was an extraordinarily dramatic end to a dramatic life, that Gordon should have carefully corrected the proofs of his last book and attended to the last business in connection with its publication, and then, without waiting a day, should have put an end to his existence. I think he must have meant to live just long enough to make sure that the book would come out, as he desired, and then desired not to live any longer. He did enjoy one fascinating draught of criticism, for Kendall, his generous rival, had written his review from the proofs of *Bush Ballads and Galloping Rhymes* for the *Australasian*, and Gordon had been shown a proof of the review, two columns long.

Dramatic, too, is the ordinarily received account of the way he spent the last day of his life. First he went to his publishers and asked for the bill for the publication of his book. He knew about what it would be, but he felt prostrated when he saw it. Then he met Marcus Clarke, who was full of congratulations, and invited him to have a drink. Both cheered him up as did the sight of Kendall's review. Soon afterwards Gordon met Kendall, and the two, who had hardly any money, went into the Argus Hotel bar, where they had a drink together and sat down

to talk till about five o'clock—the two chief poets of Australia, both of them almost penniless. While he was with Kendall, Gordon felt buoyed up by the excitement and the stimulant, but as soon as he was alone again in the train he recalled all his misfortunes and was attacked by a raging headache. He spoke little to his wife at tea and was a prey to gloom till they went to bed. Next morning, June 23, 1870, he rose at daybreak—June is mid-winter in Australia—dressed very quietly, and went out, but his wife remembers the sensation of being kissed by him as she lay dozing. Some fishermen saw him walking off into the scrub with his rifle. He did not speak to them or to any one else on the earth. The next person who saw him found him lying with his face to the sky.

Such was the end of Adam Lindsay Gordon as it has come down to us from tradition. Except that one account says that on his way to take his own life he went into the Marine Hotel to see the proprietor, a man named Prendergast,<sup>1</sup> who was a friend of his, and suggests that if Prendergast had seen him he would have dreaded some rash act and would not have allowed Gordon to proceed with his rifle.

I have, however, recently received a chapter on Gordon specially written for this book by Sir Frank Madden, Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament in the State of Victoria. Sir Frank, who was a very intimate friend of Gordon, says: "I think the story of his seeing Kendall on the evening before he shot himself is also doubtful, as

<sup>1</sup> "He left the house about half-past seven, called at the Marine Hotel, and asked for the landlord, his friend Mr. Prendergast, who, unfortunately, was not up. Unfortunately, because Mr. Prendergast would have noted something strange in Gordon's manner, and would in all probability have influenced him to return home. But it was not to be.

"He passed down Park Street, and the last man to see the poet alive was a fisherman named Harrison, who bade him 'good-bye,' to which salutation poor Gordon, absorbed in his own terrible thoughts, made no reply. He shortly after turned into the thick scrub. He must then have loaded his rifle, seated himself on the ground, placed the butt of the rifle firmly in the sand between his feet, put the muzzle to his mouth,



ADAM LINDSAY GORDON IN HIS RACING COLOURS.

*From a sketch by the Honble. Sir Frank Madden, Speaker of the Parliament of Victoria, made after a race at Flemington, and reproduced by his permission.*

*"That tilt of the peak of the racing cap was quite characteristic." — Sir Frank Madden.*





I met him a little after four o'clock on that winter's day and walked with him as far as St. Kilda. In justice to him I should say that the most unlikely thing he would do was to spend his last few shillings in drink, as he never cared for it, and so far as I knew seldom took it at all. He shows his contempt for it in his verses. Of one thing I am clear, that when I left him at St. Kilda, he was absolutely sober, but very much depressed and melancholy. He told me he had asked a friend to lend him £100 to enable him to get to England, but his friend had refused to make the advance and he was most downhearted and despondent.

“He told me he had finished reading the proofs of his poems and that he would be glad if I would go to Messrs. Stillwall & Knight's, his publishers, obtain the manuscript and keep it as a present. I did not think when he said present he meant memento.”

One of the friends who was most prostrated by his

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and with a forked tea-tree twig pushed the trigger. The bullet passed through his brain. But about nine o'clock in the forenoon,” say Turner and Sutherland, “a man named Allen, while hunting up a cow that had gone astray, was riding among the scrub at the Picnic Point, when he saw a long form, clad in a velvet jacket, lying in a little open glade. He was riding past, thinking the man asleep, when by chance the open stare of the blue eyes startled him, and he hastily dismounted, only to discover that it was a still and rigid body which lay there with white and upturned face. The rifle rested with its muzzle on his breast, and beside it a forked branch of tea-tree with which, when the muzzle was in his mouth, he had contrived to push the trigger. Near him were melancholy proofs of his last meditative minutes. His soft felt hat lay with the brim uppermost, and in it were a shilling and his pipe. As he had sat with the wall of foliage concealing him all round, he had drawn a few last consoling whiffs from his old friend the black pipe, and mused upon the last of his coins. Apparently, whatever might have shaken his over-night resolution had dissolved before that melancholy token of financial bitterness, and he had hesitated no more, but stretched himself back for the fatal push. That instant all was over, for the bullet had passed through the brain, carrying out with it a piece of the skull, round as a shilling. The body was conveyed to the Marine Hotel.”

death was his old friend, Mr. Blackmore, the Clerk of the Parliaments in Adelaide. His sister-in-law said that she should never forget the look of utter consternation on his face when he heard the news. He seemed stunned. It was he who took Gordon home after his accident on Prince Rupert. Gordon is buried in the Brighton Cemetery near Melbourne, and his tomb is the Mecca of Australian Literature.

Forty-two years have passed since that fatal bullet in the scrub at Brighton cut short the career of the most famous Australian at the early age of thirty-six. For Gordon must be counted an Australian though he was born ten thousand miles away and never touched the shores of the great island continent till he was twenty. He became absorbed in Australia like the Roman veterans were absorbed by the Gaul which they were garrisoning. No one ever thought of him as a new chum. He was a voice from the Bush. He was the Bushman's type, the Bushman's pride.

The forty-two years have only enhanced his fame. If the uncritical no longer make absurd comparisons between his poems and those of the standard poets of the language, the critical have discovered that there is much more in his poems than they were at first prepared to allow; that he was no mere rhymer dashing off ringing ballads about racing and hunting and bush life, but a strong man (of the kind who generally leave only their deaths or their victories as memorials of their lives) wrestling with the enigmas of life, not as literary exercises, but as problems to decide whether it was worth while continuing to live.

Adam Lindsay Gordon's poems, if they had no other, would have a high value in Psychology, as the philosophy of one who committed suicide.

But they have the supreme value of being the voice of Australia. They are full of the grim philosophy which makes the Australian type so indomitable. They are the

Bushman's Bible. They are the foundation of the Bushman's code.

Gordon's fame will never go back. Each year will see it more firmly established. No harm will be done to it by the publication in this volume of letters from the Poet which have hitherto been held back, and which show how wild he had been in England. Their suppression had caused a good deal of controversy, a good deal of misconception. Half the public had thought that the twenty-year-old boy who landed in Adelaide in November 1853 was a martyr and half had thought him a villain. He was neither. He was only a boy "full of beans" kicking against the dulness of a conventional and ultra-religious home. Being a poet, and at that time a would-be Byron, writing to a boy admirer, it is likely that he made himself out much more of "a rip" than he really was. In any case no Bushman will wish the poet of the wild Bush of Australia to have been a plaster-saint in his school-days. Every properly constituted Bushman will be more interested in Gordon than ever when he learns that from fifteen onwards Gordon had been practising fighting in a champion prize-fighter's saloon, and going across country or over a steeplechase course under the tuition of men who were to win the Grand National at Liverpool several times apiece, whenever they let him have a mount; and they will understand that a boy who at seventeen could give Tom Sayers, in training for one of his big fights, a decent practice with the gloves, and who could win a couple of steeplechases on his own horse before he was twenty, was likely to have got into a bit of wild company among the patrons of the prize-fighter and the training-stable.

There we have the whole thing in a nutshell, an exceptionally adventurous and courageous boy going to Jem Edwards's and Tom Oliver's to escape from the dulness of his home. To the backers he met at either the dissipations which leave a bad taste in our mouth, as we read of them in his letters to Charley Walker, would be the ordinary

incidents of amusing themselves, and, whether he went in for them himself much or not, in reality, it was natural for a boy to write about them in a Byronic pose to his boy chum and admirer.

I confess that I am more disgusted by the way in which he speaks of the father, who was affectionate, liberal and forgiving to him. It was caddish to deceive such a white-souled Colonel Newcome as Gordon's father.

Australia was the making of Gordon. While he was still in his early twenties we find a trace or two of the old Adam in his letters to Charley Walker, but even here their effect is discounted by his repentance over the dissipations of his boyhood and his exultation over the manliness and vigour which the healthy open-air life of the Bush is giving him. And very few years afterwards, when he had exchanged the occupation of policeman for that of horse-breaker, we find Mr. Stockdale the Squatter writing: "All he knew was that he was a good, steady lad, and a splendid rider. He had been a mounted trooper when he came to the district, but after serving a short time had resigned, and taken to the employment in which I found him engaged." Mr. Stockdale further remarked "that there was something above the common in Gordon. He never drank or gambled—two ordinary qualifications of bush hands in those days. He was not exactly a favourite, because he was rather moody and silent, and did not associate much with the men working with him, but, being quiet and obliging, was liked."

From that time forwards we hear no more of Gordon's dissipations. His reputation for recklessness he carried with him to the grave. But we find the man, who was valued and respected as a horse-breaker, and was pressed, as soon as he had the means, to become a candidate for Parliament in the interest of the landowners, with such a man as John Riddoch for a colleague, when monetary difficulties drove him out of Parliament into the occupations of amateur steeplechase rider and trainer, always enjoying the respect and admiration of the community.

This feeling which he inspired is most remarkably demonstrated in his last year or two, while he was living in Melbourne. He was a broken man, broken in health as well as in pocket, but we find him staying with the officers of the British regiment in garrison—an honoured and highly popular guest, and received on terms of real affection for long stays in the households of John Riddoch and Robert Power, men in the very best society of South Australia and Victoria respectively, and writing poems for their little daughters which have been treasured as heirlooms in the families—"A Basket of Flowers" for Miss Riddoch, and "A Song of Autumn" for Miss Power.

We also find him elected a steward of the Melbourne Hunt Club, a high testimonial to his position in the community.

At the same time the few literary men there were in Melbourne came forward to recognise that a real poet had arisen in their midst, and place on record their confidence in his future fame.

Contrast his position when he was taking leave of life with his position when he was taking leave of England.

In 1853, though his family may not have been ashamed of him or hostile to him, his own letters quoted in this volume prove that his father was anxious for him to go to Australia for two years at any rate until his neighbours had forgotten his escapades. His achievements in England beyond learning to box and to ride were nil, and he seemed unable to keep out of mischief.

In his seventeen years in Australia he taught one of the manliest communities in the world to look up to him for almost everything except the capacity to make money. To every one alike, to the richest squatter and the humblest boundary rider in that squatter's employ; to the family of the Anglican clergyman, and to the Roman Catholic priest in the district where he had spent most of his time; to the horsebreaker with whom he shared a hut; to the stewards of the Victorian Racing Club; to the most educated

men in Melbourne; to the editors of the great newspapers, and the family of the Governor of S.A., Scottish aristocrats like himself, he seemed the soul of honour, the embodiment of courage. He had long been recognised as the bravest and most skilful steeplechaser in the Colonies, he was a steward of the Melbourne Hunt Club and an honoured figure in the hunting field; though he was known to be desperately poor, he was recognised as a gentleman who had come unscathed in manners and reputation through all sorts of occupations which would have demoralised most men, and the ordeal of having married into the working class; and finally every educated man in Melbourne admitted that he was not only the best poet who had yet published in Australia, but a genius whose works would live. Gordon's combination of claims on the admiration of his Australian fellow-countrymen as a magnificent type of manhood, as the Bard of the Bush and the Race-course, and the most daring steeplechase rider the Colonies had ever known, has left him without a rival in their hearts.



THE MECCA OF AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE—GORDON'S TOMB IN THE BRIGHTON CEMETERY NEAR MELBOURNE.

*Given by the late S. Milbourn, Junr., to Mr. Sladen for reproduction.*





## CHAPTER II

### FAMOUS SAYINGS OF GORDON WHICH ARE PROVERBS AND HOUSEHOLD WORDS IN AUSTRALIA

“ No game was ever yet worth a rap  
For a rational man to play,  
Into which no accident, no mishap,  
Could possibly find its way.”

“ And sport’s like life and life’s like sport,  
‘ It ain’t all skittles and beer.’ ”

“ And, whatever you do, don’t change your mind  
When once you have picked your panel.”

“ Look before your leap, if you like, but if  
You mean leaping, don’t look long,  
Or the weakest place will soon grow stiff,  
And the strongest doubly strong.”

“ Mere pluck, though not in the least sublime,  
Is wiser than blank dismay.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“ Yet if once we efface the joys of the chase  
From the land, and out-root the Stud,  
Good-bye to the Anglo-Saxon Race !  
Farewell to the Norman blood ! ”

“ God’s glorious oxygen.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“ Life is mostly froth and bubble,  
Two things stand like stone,  
Kindness in another’s trouble,  
Courage, in your own.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“ Why should he labour to help his neighbour  
Who feels too reckless to help himself ? ”

\* \* \* \* \*

“ This night with Plato we shall sup.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“The world, the flesh, and the devil,  
Are easily understood;”

“And the song that the poet fashions,  
And the love-bird’s musical strain,  
Are jumbles of animal passions,  
Refined by animal pain.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“Yet if man, of all the Creator plann’d,  
His noblest work is reckoned,  
Of the works of His hand, by sea or by land,  
The horse may at least rank second.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“And the fool builds again, while he grumbles,  
And the wise one laughs, building again.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“Snort! ‘Silvertail,’ snort! when you’ve seen as much danger  
As I have, you won’t mind the rats in the straw.”

“We labour to-day, and we slumber to-morrow,  
Strong horse and bold rider!—and *who knoweth more?*”

\* \* \* \* \*

“I’ve had my share of pastime, and I’ve done my share of toil,  
And life is short—the longest life a span;  
I care not now to tarry for the corn or for the oil,  
Or for the wine that maketh glad the heart of man.  
For good undone and gifts misspent and resolutions vain,  
’Tis somewhat late to trouble. This I know—  
I should live the same life over, if I had to live again;  
And the chances are I go where most men go.”

“Let me slumber in the hollow where the wattle blossoms wave,  
With never stone or rail to fence my bed;  
Should the sturdy station children pull the bush flowers on my grave,  
I may chance to hear them romping overhead.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“I would that with sleepy, soft embraces  
The sea would fold me—would find me rest  
In luminous shades of her secret places,  
In depths where her marvels are manifest;  
So the earth beneath her should not discover  
My hidden couch—nor the heaven above her—  
As a strong love shielding a weary lover,  
I would have her shield me with shining breast.”

“A little season of love and laughter,  
Of light and life, and pleasure and pain,  
And a horror of outer darkness after,  
And dust returneth to dust again.”

“Though the gifts of the light in the end are curses,  
 Yet bides the gift of the darkness—sleep!”<sup>22</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

“For he may ride ragged who rides from a wreck.”<sup>23</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

“No life is wholly void and vain,  
 Just and unjust share sun and rain.”<sup>24</sup>

“No man may shirk the allotted work,  
 The deed to do, the death to die;”<sup>25</sup>

“Say only, ‘God who has judged him thus  
 Be merciful to him, and us.’”<sup>26</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

“Real life is a race through sore trouble,  
 That gains not an inch on the goal,  
 And bliss an untangible bubble  
 That cheats an unsatisfied soul,  
 And the whole,  
 Of the rest an illegible scroll.”<sup>27</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

“For nothing on earth is sadder  
 Than the dream that cheated the grasp,  
 The flower that turned to the adder,  
 The fruit that changed to the asp.”<sup>28</sup>

“The soft grass beneath us gleaming,  
 Above us the great grave sky.”<sup>29</sup>

“Though we stumble still, walking blindly,  
 Our paths shall be made all straight;  
 We are weak, but the heavens are kindly,  
 The skies are compassionate.”<sup>30</sup>

“Is the clime of the old land younger,  
 Where the young dreams longer are nursed?  
 With the old insatiable hunger,  
 With the old unquenchable thirst.”<sup>31</sup>

“Vain dreams! for our fathers cherish’d  
 High hopes in the days that were;  
 And these men wonder’d and perish’d,  
 Nor better than these we fare.”<sup>32</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

“ Let us thank the Lord for His bounties all,  
 For the brave old days of pleasure and pain,  
 When the world for both of us seem'd too small—  
 Though the love was void and the hate was vain. ”

\* \* \* \* \*

“ And how the Regiment roared to a man, ”

\* \* \* \* \*

“ Yet th<sup>3</sup> Elysian halls are spacious,  
 Somewhere near me I may keep  
 Room—who knows?—The gods are gracious;  
 Lay me lower—let me sleep ! ”

## CHAPTER III

### A TALK WITH GORDON'S WIDOW

By C. R. Wilton, M.J.I.

BY the kindness of Sir John Langdon Bonython, Editor and proprietor of the (*Adelaide*) *Advertiser*, who from the very first detected the greatness of Gordon and was the original publisher of much of the most important information which we have about him, and of the author, Mr. C. R. Wilton, M.J.I., I am able to give the latter's "Talk with Gordon's Widow," which is in many ways the most human document which has yet appeared about Gordon.

This is the first time that any account of Gordon by his widow has appeared in a book, and peculiar interest attaches to everything which she has to say about him. There is no doubt that to her we owe, more than to any one else except the poet himself, Gordon's poems. Her prudence kept a roof above his head; her tender care and soothing influence prolonged his life. When he was in the mood for composing she effaced herself and devoted her attention to ensuring for him the quiet that he needed. She was his companion in the field—as daring a horse-woman as he was a horseman, as we know from Gordon's own letters. "I could get a long price for him, but do not like to sell him for two reasons; firstly, Margaret (my wife) has taken a fancy to him and wants him for a hack, and then I would like to see him go in a steeplechase, as he is fast and capital bottom, and it would surprise the Melbourne man so to see him go well over fences. Margaret is a good horsewoman. She and I rode out from Adelaide to Mount Gambier and six days on the road, a distance more than three hundred miles, which made an average of

fifty miles per day. This sounds strange, but it is a fact, and she was not very tired either. She rode a little white pony mare, an Arab called Fairy, a great pet of hers, and I was on my favourite hack, Ivanhoe, the winner of two steeplechases (at Guichen Bay and at the Mount), a fine horse and a beautiful jumper, but bad bottom."

How much Gordon depended on her is shown by a letter he wrote to John Riddoch on October 6, 1868, about their life in Ballarat.

"Mrs. Gordon and I did all the work between us. Indeed, she did a great deal more than I, all through the troubled time. She has worked like a trump; although I never told her how desperate things were looking with me, she suspected that much was wrong, and she tried hard to cheer me up and keep me straight, and did not worry me. She has more pluck in her little finger than ever I had in my whole body.

"When I lost the Ballarat Hunt Cup on Maude, I thoroughly gave in, and refused to ride Cadger for the Selling Steeplechase, saying that it was no use. She said, 'Don't give in like that, old man; you've gone too far to back out now, and no one else can ride the horse. It's only a small stake, but every shilling is of consequence to us now. I was always against racing, but you've taken your own way, and now you must carry it out.'

"So I rode Cadger and won. Then Viking won the hurdle race. So I didn't do so badly.

"You have no idea how sick of horse-racing and steeple-chasing I now am; but when a man gets so deep into the mire, it is hard to draw back. I have to ride three races<sup>1</sup> in Melbourne next Saturday though I am scarcely fit to ride a donkey at present.

\* \* \* \* \*

"When I parted from my wife on the pier and saw the steamer take her away I felt sure I should never see her again; and when I got back to Ballarat, and went into

<sup>1</sup> He won them all, October 10, 1868.



MRS. ADAM LINDSAY GORDON.

*Given by the late S. Milbourn, Junr., to Mr. Sladen for reproduction.*





the empty house, I was very low-spirited. I used to smoke all night long. I could not sleep, and had to take a stiff nobbler in the morning. But I got through my work somehow, and settled up all my business."

And in a letter written to Mr. George Riddoch from North Brighton on July 21, 1869, he says: "Mrs. Gordon was out once on Badger, since sold for £80 to a Ballarat man. She rode him very well; she was out once since on a mare, but she did not follow on the second occasion." Mr. C. D. Mackellar, a large Australian landowner, and others who have met her since Gordon's death, testify to her refinement and charm, and what is even more gratifying, to the undying veneration which she and the members of her second family cherish for Gordon. Indeed, Mr. Mackellar says that he was informed locally that in announcing the births of her children she always described herself in the newspapers as, "wife of Peter Low and widow of Adam Lindsay Gordon," as peeresses in England who are left widows retain their titles if they marry again to a man of lower rank.

In the (*Adelaide*) *Advertiser*, March 23, 1912, Mr. Wilton says

Although Adam Lindsay Gordon, the greatest of Australian poets and the most famous, died in June 1870, his widow survives. She is a pleasant-looking and cheerful lady. Although barely five feet high she is well proportioned and alert. Gordon was six feet high, although he only scaled ten and a half stone. His widow carries her years extremely well, and might reasonably be taken from her appearance to be twenty years younger than the calendar proves her to be. She was born in Glasgow, and came out to South Australia as an infant. Her father was Mr. Alexander Park, who when he landed originally in Victoria carried on a baker's business in Melbourne, but shortly afterwards crossed the border and accepted an engagement on the station of the late Mr. W. Hutchinson, near Robe. It was at that salubrious seaside resort about

the year 1863 that Miss Maggie Park first met Gordon, who was then residing at Mount Gambier, but who travelled all over the South-East with his racehorses. Mr. David Mack, caretaker of the Government Offices, relates that when he entered the mounted police thirty years ago Sergeant Campbell, who was then in charge of the Adelaide barracks, and who was a comrade of Gordon's when he joined the force shortly after his arrival in this city in November 1853, told him that the poet was the most fearless horseman he ever saw. When he was given a summons to deliver or a warrant to serve Gordon scorned to travel on the road. He went straight across country, and put his unschooled troop horse at the barraek yard fence and the posts and rails round park lands with as much sang-froid as though he were mounted on the most expert steeplechaser. He was sent to Mount Gambier as a police trooper, and his horsemanship there was as reckless as it had been in the city. The discipline of the police was not congenial to him, and he resigned after about two years' service. He then gave himself over entirely to his horses, and he loved to tackle the fiercest buck-jumper which came in his way. His delight was to ride at a headlong pace in steeplechases or hurdle events. He would not compete on the flat. He had many bad falls, and an accident of a particularly serious nature occurred to him at Robe just after he met Miss Park. She herself was a daring horsewoman, and she enthusiastically admired the firm seat and the intrepid riding of Gordon. When he was injured she tenderly nursed him, and soon after he was convalescent he asked her to marry him.

*Gordon and his Child Wife.*

“I was just eighteen years when we were married,” said the lady in an interview on Friday. “Mr. Gordon was then riding horses at Robe, and among the best remembered of them were Cadger, Viking, and Ingleside. In the well-known picture in which he is seen clearing a big

fence (see p. 50), the horse is Viking. We were married in 1864, and I first met him about twelve months before that. I stayed with Mr. Bradshaw Young, then sergeant of police at Mount Gambier, for a little while before the wedding, which took place at the residence of the Rev. John Donn, a Presbyterian Minister, who performed the ceremony. Mr. Gordon and I lived for a time in Mount Gambier. Shortly after our marriage Mr. John Riddoch induced my husband (he had just previously inherited about £7,000 from his mother) to stand for Parliament. He took little interest in political affairs, but he consented to the invitation, and he started on his election campaign. He had many friends in the district, and on March 1, 1865, he was returned at the head of the poll, with Mr. John Riddoch as his colleague."

*Poetry and Politics.*

The defeated candidate on the occasion, it may be mentioned, was the late Hon. Randolph Stow, then Attorney-General, and afterwards a judge. The election created the utmost interest. Among the gentlemen who canvassed the district for Gordon and Riddoch was Mr. J. H. Mack (father of Mr. David Mack). The constituency of Victoria then, as now, included the whole of the country between the River Murray and the Victorian border, and there was a wide area to be travelled over. Mr. W. Trainor, the well-known cross-country rider, who had long been an intimate companion, rode with Gordon during the greater part of his election campaign, and they often had to camp out at night, for settlement was not so thick nor were the means of communication so facile as they are to-day. Instead of thinking of serious public affairs, however, Gordon was as usual scribbling poetry most of the time. He used to throw one leg over the saddle while he was riding, in order to rest his paper upon it, and while he was engaged in composition it was no good speaking to him. He would give no reply. At the best of times he was

uncommunicative, but under such circumstances he was deaf to outside affairs. There were stirring times during the struggle, but they were the result of the enthusiasm of Gordon's friends. When the counting was over, and Gordon was accorded the post of honour at the head of poll, Penola, where he was especially popular, gave itself over to revelry.

*The Home at Dingley Dell.*

“While we were living at Mount Gambier,” the lady went on, “we often visited Dingley Dell, a pretty little cottage in a beautiful position near Port McDonnell, which Mr. Gordon had bought. There was a nice piece of land there, but he did no farming, although he kept racehorses at the place. We made a summer residence of the little cottage, which is now so well known as a tourist resort. We stopped there a week or two at a time, and then returned to Mount Gambier. We both liked the place, because of the attractiveness of its surroundings.

“Just before the sitting of Parliament began on March 31, 1865, we removed to Adelaide, and took a house formerly occupied by a doctor, in what is now Penzance Street, New Glenelg, and we continued to live there until Mr. Gordon grew tired of Parliament, and resigned. The building has long since disappeared. There were scarcely any houses at Glenelg then, and he travelled backwards and forwards to Adelaide by coach. He soon became weary of public life. He was too quiet and reserved for that kind of existence, and the necessity of attending regularly at the sittings of the Assembly was very irksome. He stood it until November 10, 1866, and then he resigned, and we went back to Robe. We stayed for some time with Mr. Bradshaw Young, who then had charge of the gaol at Robe. Mr. Gordon always retained his love for horses. He never betted, and he never rode for money, but he trained and raced horses, and that is an expensive pastime. When he lost a race he lost money also.

*The Death of his Daughter.*

“From Robe we went to Ballarat, and Mr. Gordon bought Craig’s livery stables, which were adjacent to the well-known hotel. He rode a little also, but not much at that time. It was while he was at Ballarat that his heaviest misfortunes occurred. He had a bad fall from a young horse which he was riding, and he was so seriously injured that he was confined to his bed for many weeks. While he was lying ill his baby daughter, who had been christened Annie Lindsay Gordon, and was then ten months old, died. He was passionately fond of her, and this had a great effect upon his spirits. She lies buried in a cemetery near Lake Wendouree, and there is a marble slab over her grave, but there is nothing in the inscription to tell that she was his daughter. About this time, too, the stables were burnt down, and several valuable horses and a number of vehicles were lost in the flames. The death of his child was a great blow, for he had a very affectionate nature. He was always too good to others, and he never thought enough of himself. Yes, if he had a fault, it was that he was too good, too open-handed, and too generous.

*Death at Brighton.*

“The sorrow which visited us at Ballarat caused Mr. Gordon to leave that city. We went to Brighton, about eight miles from Melbourne, where he had resided for eighteen months, when on June 23, 1870, the end came. After Mr. Gordon was dead Mr. John Riddoch, of Yallum Park, who had always been his greatest friend, came over to Brighton and brought me back to the South-East with him. My husband was always a welcome guest at Yallum Park, and the family had many of his manuscripts. He often drew sketches or wrote poetry for the young ladies there. He used to go out in the paddocks to compose poetry; “Sea Spray and Smoke Drift,” “Ashtaroth,” and “Bush Ballads and Galloping Rhymes”<sup>1</sup> were all published

<sup>1</sup> The two former in 1867, the last in June 1870.

just before his death. I had the copyrights of all the books, but I sold them about thirty years ago for a very small sum, much less than they were worth, and since then I have had no advantage from the sale of the books. I have often regretted parting with the rights, but it is too late to trouble about that now. The reviews of the poems, which were very favourable, were published in the Melbourne papers before Mr. Gordon died."

*A Loving Husband.*

Asked to say what manner of man the poet was, the widow replied, "I didn't take much notice of his poetry," and she confessed that she felt more interest in his horses and his riding. "He never spoke much of his family," she went on. "Indeed, he did not speak much about anything. He was very reticent, and he did not like any one prying into his affairs. He was of a happy disposition, however, and a most loving and considerate husband. He wrote to his relatives in England often, and especially to his uncles, and he sent our photographs<sup>1</sup> to them when we were married. He thought he ought to have had the Esslemont estate in Scotland, but the property was locked up in the Chancery Court, and he did not get the money he considered was due to him. He believed he was the heir, but the court decided that there was a cousin before him. He had intended to go to England, but this disappointment stopped him. He was a 'gentleman rider' always, and he never took money for his services. The horses he owned which I remember best were Cadger, Viking, Ingleside, Modesty, Prince Rupert, and Ballarat. Although he was so near-sighted he always competed in steeplechases or hurdles, and never rode in flat races. He was well to do when we were married, but he lost money in racing. The melancholy and depression from which he suffered at the end were caused by a succession of bad falls, his baby's death, and the loss of his property. While we were at Brighton he was

<sup>1</sup> The actual photograph sent by Gordon to Capt. R. C. H. Gordon is reproduced opposite p. 6.

writing poetry every evening, and in spare moments during the day. It was always the same wherever we were."

*The Joy of Horsemanship.*

Mrs. Gordon and her husband both followed the hounds at the hunts in Melbourne, and her favourite mount was a horse named Johnny Raw. Gordon kept the hounds at Ballarat for a year. "I followed wherever he went," she said proudly, "and I never had a fall, although he had a good many, because of his defect of vision. Once while we were hunting at Ballarat his horse slipped on the crumbling bank of a creek, and both horse and rider fell into the stream. Mr. Gordon was nearly drowned. I got over all right and wondered where he had gone to. He could not see, and had to trust to his horse to take off at the proper distance. He had many bad falls, both in the hunting field and while racing, but he had many good wins also. He was always ready to do what he could to help others, and it was he who rode from the wreck of the *Admella* to the nearest township just as he describes in his poem 'The Ride from the Wreck.'"

*Gordon's Leap.*

Questioned as to the famous leap across the fence protecting the road traffic from a descent of one hundred and fifty feet into the Blue Lake, near Mount Gambier, the lady said: "I generally went out with him when he was riding, but I was not with him that day. It was a 'pounding' exhibition. The party had been challenged to jump all the obstacles he cleared. Up till that jump the other riders had done as well as he did. When he came to the spot now marked by an obelisk, erected in 1887, he, in a spirit of emulation, cleared the fence on the edge of the lake and then jumped out again. He must almost have turned his horse in the air, for the landing was very narrow. No one followed him in that leap. I cannot remember the name of the horse he rode on that occasion nor who was with him." Mr. Bradshaw Young was one

of the party, and he saw Gordon leap back into the road, although he did not see the first jump. However, there was no way to get the horse in except by jumping, and his attention had only been distracted for a minute.

*A Wonderful Woman.*

Three years after Gordon's death his widow married Mr. Peter Low, and she and her present husband are now living on a farm, which forms part of the old station, near Bordertown, which once belonged to Mr. George Riddoch. Mrs. Low is very popular in the South-East, and she has the reputation of being an energetic and enterprising woman. She has seven sons and daughters living. She is still a great lover of horses. Mr. David Mack has known her all his life. About thirty-seven years ago he was riding with her after kangaroos on the Yallum Park estate, when his horse put its foot in a wombat hole and came down heavily. He broke his shoulder and sustained other serious injuries, but small as she is, Mrs. Low got him home. "She saved my life on that occasion, I reckon," said Mr. Mack yesterday, and he added, "I have frequently seen her and her husband riding in Yallum Park from Monbulla, an out-station formerly belonging to Mr. T. Scott, on Mr. Riddoch's station, each of them carrying one of their twin children on the saddle-bow in front of them. All the sons and daughters," he went on, "are expert pipe players. Miss Jessie Low was the first lady pipe player in South Australia. She is married and is living in the South-East." Mr. Mack claims to be the youngest man living who has seen Gordon ride. His memory of the poet is that he was a silent man, very near-sighted. He saw Gordon ride at Penola in 1868 and 1869. He also saw Gordon mount a pony imported by Mr. John Riddoch and exhibited at the Penola Show. The horse had bucked every one off who had attempted to sit him, but Gordon mounted it barebacked and stuck to the animal despite all its violent efforts to dislodge him.



*Gordon's Tree.*

Mr. Mack, to whose introduction I was indebted for my meeting with Mrs. Low, who came to Adelaide with her husband for the Autumn Show, and is returning next week, well remembers "Gordon's tree," at Yallum Park. Here it is believed "The Sick Stockrider," "Wolf and Hound," and "The Ride from the Wreck" were written. It was a gnarled old gum-tree that stood in a paddock not far from the house. After breakfast he would climb up to a natural arm-chair formed by a crooked limb. There he would fill his clay pipe, and while he smoked he would scribble with pencil on a paper spread on a branch, or sometimes resting on his hat. While he was so engaged meal-times would come and go without his taking any notice. That was about a year before the poet's death.

*A New Life of Gordon.*

Mrs. Low states that her son, Mr. William Low, has for some time been collecting materials for a life of the poet Gordon, which he intends to publish. He has many of the poet's manuscripts, some of poems not yet published. All her children have learnt Gordon's poems and love them. She has had repeated requests for information concerning Gordon. Letters have come to her from all over the Empire, but she had hitherto declined to respond to the invitations. Naturally she has reserved all her reminiscences for her son's book, which, she says, will contain a faithful story of Gordon's career in Australia, and of his literary work. Mr. William Low lives with his parents on the farm near Bordertown. Another of her sons resides at Renmark, and her twin daughters were recently married.

*Longing to See the Grave.*

"I have never seen the grave of Mr. Gordon," she said, "since he was laid in it nearly forty-two years ago. Photo-

graphs of his monument have been sent me, and messages on the anniversary of his death, telling of visits to the spot by his admirers. He is now more popular than ever. I have a great desire to go to Brighton and see the grave again."

## CHAPTER IV

### HOW GORDON RODE IN AUSTRALIA, AS TOLD BY HIS FRIENDS

“If once we efface the joys of the chase  
From the land, and out-root the stud,  
Good-bye to the Anglo-Saxon Race!  
Farewell to the Norman Blood!”

*Ye Wearie Wayfarer. Fyfte VII*

“They came with the rush of the southern surf,  
On the bar of the storm-girt bay;  
And like muffled drums on the sounding turf,  
Their hoof-strokes echo away.”

*Visions in the Smoke.*

A MORE “dare-devil rider” says Mr. Hammersley, “never crossed a horse. As a steeplechase rider he was, of course, in the very first rank, and his name is indelibly associated with many of the most famous chases run in Victoria, although, in my opinion, and I think in that of many good judges too, he was deficient in what is termed ‘good hands,’ and when it came to a finish was far behind a Mount<sup>1</sup> or a Watson.” “And, considering his short-sightedness, which Mr. Woods designates as painful, this is not to be wondered at.”

Mr. Desmond Byrne says of Gordon: “In his character as a sportsman and a rider there is an element of the ideal which largely helps to commend him to the majority of Australians. Though his liking for horses and the turf became a destroying passion, there was never anything sordid in it. He was not a gambler, for long after he had won recognition as the first steeplechase rider in a country

<sup>1</sup> Harry Mount, Gordon’s partner in the livery stable business at Ballarat.

of accomplished riders, he declined payment for his services on the race-track. . . . And the distaste with which he had always viewed the meaner associations of the turf became, at last, dislike and scorn. In the period of disappointment that preceded his death he refused a remunerative post on the staff of a leading Melbourne journal because he wished to dissociate himself completely and finally from everything connected with the professionalism of sport. As a bush-rider he became noted for the performance of feats which no one else would think of attempting. The Australians often speak and write of it as complete absence of fear, but it surely had a large admixture of pure recklessness. . . . There is a touching and significant story of an acquaintance which he formed with a young lady at Cape Northumberland and how he ended it. We are delicately told that having become a warm admirer of his dashing horsemanship, the lady used to walk in the early morning to a neighbouring field to see him training a favourite mare over hurdles. Something more than a mutual liking for horses and racing is plainly hinted at as existing between them. But after they had met thus a few times Gordon asked abruptly whether her mother knew that she came there every morning to see him ride. She replied in the negative, adding that her mother disapproved of racing. 'Well, don't come again,' said he, 'I know the world, and you don't. Good-bye, don't come again.' Surprised and wounded, the lady silently gave him her hand in farewell. He looked at it as if it were some natural curiosity and said, 'It's the first time I have touched a lady's hand for many a day—my own fault, my own fault—good-bye.'"

In his letters to Charley Walker and his uncle quoted on pages 387 to 426 Gordon has much to say about riding and racing. Some of his friends' comments are strangely like those of the Cheltenham sportsmen he rode with in earlier days. Mr. Frederick Vaughan says: "Gordon was always either scribbling or riding and training horses, of whom he

was passionately fond, and he understood horses, their nature, etc. Very long in the thigh, he had not a pretty seat on a horse, but he was a marvellous rider—could ride the rowdiest horse in the world; he was made for buck-jumper riding, and steeplechasing *was* his forte, he could *make* horses jump or go through their fences, he had no fear and although short-sighted rode his fences with great judgment. I owe it to Gordon myself that from his teaching I was enabled to ride a buck-jumper, and consequently able to break in my own colts and fillies in after years.

“Gordon was no bushman, very short-sighted, and riding about appeared always dreamy, so on occasion he got off his road and got lost.”

Apropos of this remark is Gordon’s account of himself in “Banker’s Dream.”

“All loosely he’s striding, the amateur’s riding,  
All loosely, some reverie lock’d in  
Of a ‘vision in smoke,’ or a ‘wayfaring bloke,’  
His poetical rubbish concocting.”

“Gordon,” proceeds Mr. Vaughan, “had many good horses at different times; he would never ride a flat race, but would ride any one’s horse over fences for the love of it.”

“Gordon” (says a writer in the *Adelaide Register*, Saturday, July 1, 1911). . . . “set up in business as a professional horse-breaker. He had retained the delight in reckless riding that had landed him in more than one scrape in his reckless youth. On one occasion after impatiently watching a man make elaborate preparations to mount a notorious buck-jumper, he stepped up, threw the saddle off, jumped on the bare-backed animal, and darted away like a whirlwind. His perilous leap over a fence abutting on a precipitous declivity near Mount Gambier was the sensation of the district and is talked of to this day. He was with a party of kangaroo-hunters from

Victoria, and dared any of them to follow him over the fence. Needless to say none accepted."

"Mr. E. J. Locke, an old-time steeplechase rider, recounted a story of Gordon's powers as a rider of buck-jumpers. Mr. Locke's father in Gordon's time kept an hotel at Port McDonnell, the rendezvous of the sporting men of the district. One day Gordon rode over from his home at Dingley Dell leading a mare, a noted outlaw. The mare was soon the topic of conversation among the callers at the hotel, and her bucking capabilities were discussed. Gordon offered to wager a bottle of whisky, the favourite stake at that time, that no man present could ride the mare for three bucks. A man named Charlie Mullaley, who, although eighty years of age, is still said to be living near Condah, and there noted as a rough-rider, accepted the challenge. 'You can have my saddle or any other,' said the poet, 'but no top rail,' meaning no swag in front of the saddle. Mullaley exclaimed that he would ride her unless she 'slipped her skin.' The mare was saddled and Mullaley dug his heels in. The animal gave two terrific bucks. At the third she swerved in the air and the rider was thrown. He landed on the broad of his back. The mare bolted across the swamp to Dingley Dell. Gordon went after her. He returned soon and proceeded to the bar, and found the bottle of whisky and glasses on the table. 'Give me a cigar,' he said to Mr. Locke, the publican, and on receiving the article placed it in his pocket. The mare had been put in a loose box and after she had been given a good spell Gordon said he should ride her. She was saddled by him and led out into a paddock behind the hotel. The poet mounted and the mare began to buck furiously. Gordon, with perfect sang-froid, looped the reins loosely over one arm and, while the animal was still bucking, took out the cigar and lit it with a wax match. He rode the outlaw until she 'cased up' about a quarter of an hour, and then dismounted, and said, 'That's what I call riding a buck-jumper.' 'Some

might hardly credit this,' said Mr. Locke, 'but it is quite true.' Those who know Mr. Locke would not doubt his word." (*Adelaide Register*, December 16, 1911).

Mr. W. J. Sowden, editor of the *Register* (S.A.), says of the famous leap alluded to above, that "the obelisk is erected near to the brink of the Blue Lake at Mount Gambier which is justly celebrated as the spot where Gordon jumped his horse sideways over a panel on the margin of a steep declivity, a feat which was in recent years imitated by a well-known horseman. You are, of course, aware that the wonder of Gordon's riding was not that he did what many stockmen have done, but that he did it in spite of a near-sightedness which amounted almost to blindness." George Gordon McCrae says of Gordon's riding: "Of course, you will remember how Gordon took his jumps in hurdle-racing, with his feet jammed completely home in the stirrups and at the critical moment with the back of his head laid actually back on the crupper, from which position he returned easily and gracefully as the horse came over. He was very short-sighted, yet I never knew him to wear glasses. Once I asked him how he managed in steeplechasing. He replied 'Well enough, but I see through a mist and never beyond the ears of the horse.'"

Sir Frank Madden says of Gordon: "There is no doubt that he" (like Tom Oliver's jockey at Prestbury), "rated horses above men, and his love for them had become the ruling passion of his life, although he was by no means a good judge of a horse. . . . Gordon and Trainor went away breaking horses together. Horse-breaking in those days was no child's play. It was necessary in order to round up the cattle on the stations that they should have good horses, and on every station there was at least one thorough-bred stallion, often more. With horses of the class of King Alfred, Mariner, the Premier, Touchstone, Panic, etc., it was only to be expected that the stock horses, like the mare that Gordon rode 'From the Wreck,'

were bred nearly as clean as Eclipse, and such horses having been allowed to run wild until they were four or five years old, when they came in to be broken in took some breaking, particularly when it is remembered that the methods of those days were 'short, sharp and very decisive.' It was considered a waste of time if the colt was not ridden on the third day after he was caught.

"We were all horsemen then and looked upon steeple-chasing as the acme of sport. You are mistaken in saying that 'Gordon made a living as a jockey.' He never received a farthing for riding, and I find that the last time he rode a steeplechase was in March 1870, on Major Baker's Prince Rupert. He rode in those days as Mr. L. Gordon, 10 stone. We were very particular in those days, and if he had ever taken money for riding he would not have been allowed to ride as Mr. Gordon. For a man of his height to ride 10 stone showed how lean he was towards the end."

Speaking of Gordon as a rider, Mr. George Riddoch says that he never saw him ride in any of his great steeplechases, but he describes him as being a wonderful rider over jumps, though his short sight may sometimes have made him take off at the wrong moment. On the other hand, he was absolutely careless of danger, and had wonderful influence over a horse. He never knew any one who so dominated horses. And he could communicate his confidence to others. On one occasion a kangaroo hunt was got up at Yallum (Mr. John Riddoch's place).

"Over twenty-six horsemen were out, Gordon amongst the number, who was riding a very fine thorough-bred mare which had won a steeplechase on the previous day. There was also a sporting publican who was riding the winner of a steeplechase at the same meeting. We had several runs and kills, when we got into a rough stringy bark range, on the top of which was a fence made by felling trees and drawing them into line. This fence had been lately topped up, and I thought was an insurmountable



barrier. I tried to whip the hounds off but failed, and thinking no horse would jump it, I called to Gordon, who was next to me, that it was no use trying. He looked round, smiled and went on, followed by the rider on the steeplechase winner, who also got over. Stimulated by such an example I would not do less than try, and found myself on the other side of the fence, close to the heels of the other two. After killing four kangaroos we rode back to the fence where the other horsemen were, and as there was no gate for some miles on either side the jump had to be negotiated in cold blood. If Gordon had not been there the fence would not have been attempted and we would not have known the capacity of our horses, as the jump was certainly a very stiff one. . . .”

Gordon was not fond of talking horse. Everybody used to say that Gordon was an ungainly rider; he had very long legs and a very long neck, and used to lean forwards as shown in the caricature which forms the frontispiece of this book.

Gordon's leading steeplechasing mounts are mentioned in the table of the principal dates in his life (see p. xxx to xxxii).

You had only to dare Gordon to try a jump and he at once went for it. One day he and Mr. Riddoch and a friend went out for a ride. Gordon was on a nasty-tempered mare. The friends said something about jumping, and Gordon turned round and went at a fence. The mare slipped on the greasy road and threw him. Gordon landed on his back with his long legs in the air, still holding on to the bridle. He mounted again and put the mare over the fence.

The story of Gordon's rescue of the boy Tommy Hales from the lock-up is reminiscent of Gordon's own adventure at Worcester, when he slipped away from the Sheriff's Officer with the aid of Black Tom Oliver. It is said that the two great riders were firm friends in later years.

In an article on "The Turf, our Horses and our

Prophets" (*Australasian*, November 14, 18—), P. P. says that though the Sydney contingent's horses had been victorious on the Flat, "in one respect we can crow, and as the Yankees say, can lick creation. They have no riders like Mr. Gordon in Sydney, and no horses like Viking and Ingleside. Nowhere in the world could such a sight be seen as in the steeplechase when Viking, admirably ridden by Mr. Gordon, went over a course with leaps that would stop every horse and rider in Great Britain. They might go a little faster in the Old Country, but such a succession of big jumps is only to be met with in Victoria, and in Victoria alone can the men be found who have the nerve to go over them at racing pace. We wish the Sydney people would take to this kind of work as they do to the Flat. For a cross-country meeting in which the rival cracks would meet would create greater enthusiasm than even a Melbourne Cup."

In Cheltenham and among the Cotswolds one catches glimpses of Gordon in his habit as he lived, his bottle-green coat and his tan cut-away. In the British Museum out of the files of the *Australasian* his ghost walks again in the Gordon tartan riding-jacket, his racing colours in later days—and the ragged beard. Only passing glimpses one gets, but they bring the man clearly back out of the shadowy past. Here he is with his great friend Major Baker. "Actæon" goes to a Meet of the Melbourne Hounds in June 1868, Mr. Gordon was on a grey. The grey, Babbler, and three other horses got over an unyielding big fence with a ditch towards the riders. No one else tackled it. "Actæon" admires Mr. Gordon so much, but Mr. Gordon has a temper at times. He dashes off a letter to the editor of the *Australasian* blowing up the sporting correspondent sky-high for reporting a run with the Melbourne Hounds which "perhaps he never saw, and certainly he never saw the best of it. I have not the least idea who your correspondent 'Actæon' may be—nor

does it very much matter." The editor tries to pour oil on troubled water; he says "Actæon," generally a most reliable correspondent, appears "for once to be in error."—Again another sporting writer, "Aniseed," tells us about the Ballarat Hounds. "I only hope we shall have that rasper to-day," quoth Tompkins (Tompkins nine months ago was on a horse's back for the first time and spends his time in explaining the line the game meant to take and extolling his hunter, a wicked-looking mare with one villainous eye for ever on Tommy's boots). "Yes, I hope we shall have it—I've got the foot of you all and I mean to have it *first*." "Let the hounds have it first, Tommy," says I. "Don't stop him," remarked a saturnine man (Gordon) who was standing near us; "he'll be killed to a certainty, and if he's in front of the hounds, perhaps they'll eat him; they want bleeding badly. Harden your heart, sonny, and say—

"And none like me, being mean like me,  
Shall die like me while the world remains,  
I will rise with her leading the field,  
While she will fall on me,  
Crushing me bones and brains.'"

In April 1868, Gordon wrote and published his *Racing Ethics* in the *Australasian* under the *nom de plume* of "The Turf-Cutter."

The *Australasian* has a good deal to say about Gordon as a steeplechase rider. There are many descriptions of his great day when he won the three steeplechases in one afternoon. He writes just before the Race Meeting to Mr. Riddoch and says, "You shall hear from me by the next steamer if I get through *Saturday's work*." And a good afternoon's work it was. The first of these three was the Melbourne Hunt Club Steeplechase, where Gordon's mount was Major Baker's Babblor. Instead of "laying back from his horses" (as Stevens and Oliver would have recommended), Gordon took the lead at once, and "the Favourite sailed away in his usual lolling style," but "at

the riverside his admirers were put in a funk when he stuck Mr. Gordon up at a fence there. He refused twice, but Mr. Gordon forced him over the third time of asking, and he took it so slovenly that he came down on his nose, but his rider's fine horsemanship soon had him on his legs again." P. P. in "Sketches in Pig-Skin" says, "Had I been asked on Saturday last which horse to pick I would have chosen Acrobat" (same name as the horse in the "Sick Stockrider"), "but Babblers was in a good humour, and I should have lost my money. As it was I doubt if any one but Mr. Gordon could have won with him. Not that I think Mr. Gordon's riding is above criticism. He is too hot and too quick for my money, but his heart is undeniable. He means to win and he *will* win if he can, which means a great deal." Another writer says of this race: "Mr. Gordon gave the field two baulks with half a fall in and an easy licking. . . . His fine horsemanship when Babblers all but kissed Mother Earth going over the fence at the river side, deserves every praise, for nine out of ten men in the same predicament would have been over his head."

In the next event Gordon rode his own Viking. (Mr. Power afterwards had a half share in, and finally owned this horse altogether.) In the Selling Steeplechase Cadger and Canary (ridden by Downes) were the favourites. "Firetail led off, but baulked at the first obstacle. Cadger and Canary settled down to a sharp tussle, both clearing everything" (say Turner and Sutherland), "neatly and without an error. Downes kept a little way behind, waiting to make a strenuous rush at the end. But Cadger had been just as cautiously handled as Canary, and when the final effort was made Canary's nose could never get into a line with Cadger's tail, and again the crowd rasped their throats in a long, hoarse cheer, as Gordon in the last few yards of the race shot ahead with a length or two to spare. After this race Cadger was sold for £40."

Turner and Sutherland go on to say that perhaps part of Gordon's success was due to his utter recklessness,

and that it was hopeless for any rider with any regard for his neck to compete against a man who has a secret hope of being killed, "and that, as we know from his own words, was the state of Gordon's mind on the day when he rode a victor in the three steeplechases."

Of course Gordon as a rider had many faults. He leaned "far back in his saddle in galloping, and in jumping his shoulders might be seen almost to come in contact with the crupper of the horse." Another authority has said that Gordon rode and wrote his poetry with a rush, but he had not "the hands" for a fine finish. Yet he had two great advantages—no nerves and a "clear judgment. He 'picked his panel with care.' His horse gained confidence from him, knew what he wanted, and usually did it."

"Wear woollen socks, they're the best you'll find,  
Beware how you leave off flannel,  
And *whatever you do, don't change your mind*  
When once you have picked your panel,"

he wrote in *Ye Wearie Wayfarer*, Fytte II. "Moreover Gordon had the rare faculty of putting himself in full sympathy with his horse." Gordon remarks himself, in *Racing Ethics*, that "Equine hardihood and fearlessness have been often extolled and exaggerated by romancers and poets, but unless maddened by terror and pain *no horse will willingly rush* on a danger that is palpable and self-evident to brute instinct." Even the Knight of Rhodes had his work cut out to get his horse to look the dragon in the face. He used a sham dragon when practising dragon-slaying—

"Albeit when first the destrier spied  
The lordly beast he swerved aside."

Gordon cannot swallow the story of Quintus Curtius, nor yet Kingsley's "Knight's Leap at Altenahr," but seems to have some respect for Mrs. Browning's views on the matter when she makes Guy of Linteged coax his mare

up the stairs—and then mount and back him “by main force.”

“Back he rein’d the steed, back thrown  
On the slippery coping-stone.”

Probably this is the first and last time that Mrs. Browning will be cited as a sporting authority, and as opposed to Charles Kingsley too.

But all this is a far cry from Cadger and the Selling Steeplechase, and the great day when “Downes on Canary stuck to Cadger throughout and made his endeavour before coming to the last hurdles, but Mr. Gordon had lots in reserve and cantered in, an easy winner, this being his most successful mount during the day,” though his three victories were all accomplished without a fall.

Mr. Shillinglaw (Manager of the National Bank of Australasia), an Australian now in London, well remembers seeing Gordon ride. He was a very fine rider, but had an eccentric way of riding. He, too, points out that Gordon leant very far back in his saddle as the horse went over a fence. He did not interfere too much with his horses—left them alone as it were—but he had very good judgment. Mr. Shillinglaw’s brother was a literary friend of Gordon’s.

At the Melbourne Spring Meeting in November 1868, Gordon won the V.A.T.C. Steeplechase on Viking, overweighted under a handicap of 11st. 3lb. In a quotation from an article by “Peeping Tom” of the *Australasian*, at that time the chief racing writer in the Colony, it is recorded that “Mr. Power’s horse Viking never made a mistake; the way in which Mr. Gordon eased him over the more difficult of the fences, such as the three obstacles in front of the Grand Stand, clearly *exonerates that gentleman’s character from rashness*. Viking was considered an unlikely starter. On the evening before the event the odds were ten to one against him, but three to one when he and his rider appeared in the paddock fit and ready for the fray.” A remark of Gordon’s in a letter to Mr. Riddoch throws

some light on this last paragraph. "I did not make much money by the steeplechases which I won, hardly any at all by the last and best of them. It was bad management, for though I do not hold with betting as a rule, still it is not much more than speculation of other kinds, and a man is justified in risking five pounds when he has a good chance of making it a hundred. Besides, I've swallowed too many camels now to strain at a gnat. The truth is I made an awful mess of the whole affair. Power wanted me to keep my share, one half of Viking, but I preferred to sell it and get the £75 at once. About £15 of this I proposed to lay off at ten to one. Well, I got the horse down in the market by a justifiable ruse, but I left another man to get the odds on for me, and he failed to do this. I only got the half of that I had intended winning—£25. This only covered some double events which I lost. I think I will ride Babbler at Ballarat. Major Baker again offered to go me halves in the stakes, and pay the expenses if I would ride Babbler. The stakes are only £200, but that will be £100 to me if I win. Babbler is a good, lasting brute, and a very safe jumper. The four-mile course still suits him." Gordon *did* ride Babbler at Ballarat, and won after an exciting steeplechase in which Gordon and Mr. Orr on Ingleside got away from the rest of the field. Babbler, according to his pretty little custom, balked at the first sod-wall. Gordon coaxed him over and then "came two fences—too near together to make the second an easy obstacle. All the other horses wasted time in getting over this latter fence, but Gordon took Babbler over it neatly and without the loss of a moment." After this the race was between Babbler and Ingleside—they shot on side by side vainly pursued by the other horses—"while then Babbler slowly prevailed, a head, a shoulder, a length, in front, and ere they turned into the straight Mr. Orr, seeing how easily and freshly Babbler seemed to go. . . . pulled up in despair. Gordon soon after dropped down to a cool trot and passed the winning post with no

other horse in sight behind him, the first of the followers just rounding the corner as the victor turned away amid a wild ovation on the part of the crowd, who recognized that the victory belonged to the man rather than to the beast." To return to the *Australasian*—"Peeping Tom" says of this steeplechase in the issue of November 21, 1868—

"Owing a good deal to Mr. Gordon's being on Major Baker's horse he was made a 'Great Pot.' The race was ridden very patiently throughout, and there was plenty in him (Babbler) when his rider asked him to finish."

In January 1868, in the Grand National Steeplechase, Gordon was third on Babbler to Viking, so lately his own horse.

The last mention of Gordon in the last *Australasian* at the Museum, the one published on June 26, 1869, is an account of a run with the Melbourne Hounds. "Mr. Gordon was on Gaylad—his mount cannoned by a refuser, jumped short and hung on the fence, and his rider dismounted leisurely enough, and after expressing some very warm wishes as to his horse's future welfare in the lower tropical regions, hauled him over somehow."

On March 27, 1869, Gordon "once more bestrode the heavy Babbler to oppose a field in which Ingleside and Ballarat were his chief opponents. The newspaper reports of the following Monday declare that Gordon only played with them during the early part of the race, and that whenever he pleased to put his horse to its best, he shot easily forward and came in at the post far ahead of all pursuers.

Gordon won one other steeplechase and rode in two more before he wore colours (Major Baker's straw and black) for the last time, on the "big black<sup>1</sup> Prince Rupert." Gordon's first recorded steeplechase was on the black Lallah Rookh—his last on Prince Rupert. "I remember Lindsay at Prestbury riding a black horse and wearing, I think, a light blue jacket." So he

<sup>1</sup> The *Argus* report of the race, which is absolutely reliable, proves that Prince Rupert was a chestnut gelding.



lives in an Englishman's memory, while Australasians conjure up his ghost on a black horse in the straw and black of Major Baker. His own racing colours were the Gordon Tartan.

"It was in the afternoon of Saturday, March 12, 1870, that Gordon rode his last race. . . .

"After the start two of the horses, named Rocket and Skipper," (say Turner and Sutherland), "got away with a rush to the front, but Gordon brought Prince Rupert steadily up behind them, till at the sheds he had reached them. Then up came a fourth horse, named Reindeer, while a fifth, Rondo, also by putting on a spurt approached. At the first jump all five horses went neatly over, very nearly together, but at the second Prince Rupert and Reindeer had the lead, and breasted the air side by side, while Skipper and a new-comer named Dutchman strode eagerly behind to share the lead. There was a big fence ahead, and as they all steered for this Prince Rupert was a little in advance of the rest. But he took the leap too eagerly, and struck. Gordon was thrown over the horse's head, and fell in a dangerous way. He jumped to his feet again, and was at once in the saddle. But the blow had been a serious one and the rider was seen to reel in his saddle. We know from his own account that he was quite dazed and scarcely knew where he was or what was happening. And yet he recovered the lost ground and led all the way past the abattoirs. Then the rider's skill was seen to leave him. He swayed heavily, and his hand lost its firmness. Dutchman and Reindeer gained and then Dutchman secured the lead. At the third and last fence Prince Rupert fell and again threw Gordon heavily. This time the horse got away and the race lay then between Reindeer and Dutchman, which were, by that time, sorely distressed. Dutchman in the end by a strenuous effort secured a painful victory."

Gordon was internally injured by this fall, and worse still—the damage done to his head was serious and lasting.

In a kind of way Gordon owed his death to the sport he loved.

It was perhaps her splendid horsemanship that first called Gordon's attention to Maggie Park, who afterwards became his wife. Miss Gordon says Lindsay wrote home and told his uncle how they rode eighty miles to be married. It must have been no sinecure to keep house for this absent-minded eccentric poet with no idea of making or keeping money. The life of any poet's wife cannot all be beer and skittles, and Lindsay with all his affection for his wife and his charming ways was subject to moods and fits of depression. Though Mrs. Gordon appreciated her husband more as a horseman than as a poet, she was "always against racing." She loved horses herself, but probably saw that the sport was bad for Lindsay, body and mind. When Gordon was very poor she undertook to feed and look after the dogs of the Coursing Club, while Gordon was Secretary (at a small salary) to the Ballarat Hunt Club. Good sportsman as Lindsay was in this instance, at least his wife was the better man. Of the two she did not lie down and die pathetically and poetically like the Sick Stockrider, nor like the Voice from the Bush did she say—

"Well, I've cut my cake, so I can't complain,"

and knuckle under. She fed the Coursing Club's dogs and she kept Gordon up to the mark so far as in her lay. But Fate and that last ride on Prince Rupert were too much for her and him.

Lindsay may have admired many other girls—but when he had arrived at manhood he never would have married any girl who was not a rider—and a rider far above the average. That was almost all he ever asked of his friends, that they should *ride*.

In the Melbourne *Argus* of March 14, 1870, is the account of Gordon's last steeplechase.

The V.R.C. steeplechase meeting. A handicap steeple-

chase of 10 sovereigns each with 150 sovereigns added. About three miles over such course and jumps as the stewards directed.

Mr. Moran's Flying Dutchman, aged, owner.

Mr. F. C. Moore's Reindeer, aged, 12 st., Mr. Mount.

Mr. S. Harding's ch. g., 6 yrs., 9 st. 10 lb., Harding.

Mr. J. Collin's br. g., Bindo ?

Mr. H. Fisher's br. g., Skipper, aged, 10 st. 6 lb., Howell.

*Major Baker's ch. g., Prince Rupert, Mr. Gordon.*

Mr. G. Watson's, b. g. Rocket ?

Mr. S. Harding's ch. g., Tartar, 3 yrs., 9 st., Callahan.

Mr. W. P. Bones's<sup>1</sup> ? br. g., Babbler, aged.

Mr. J. Terry's Gipsy Girl.

Mr. J. W. Cowell's Young Mocking Bird.

*Betting*—3 to 1 against Reindeer.

4 to 1 against Dutchman and Skipper.

5 to 1 against Prince Rupert and ?

The paper remarks laconically—

“At the third fence Prince Rupert fell and got away from Mr. Gordon. . . . Several came to grief, Mr. Gordon amongst others, but none of them were much hurt.”

But the world knows that Gordon never got over that fall.

Gordon's riding is mentioned a great deal in *Sketches in Pig-Skin, by P.P., about Nothing in Particular*. From the *Australasian*, November 7, 1868—

“Larking is a most objectionable practice. It has always been accounted so by the best judges, and the thirst for unnecessary risking of life and limb has been frequently animadverted upon. But it is very enjoyable. Like a good many other wicked deeds, it is pleasurable. If a man has a stiff fence before him, and a good horse under him he will often risk his neck upon very slight provocation. Of such a stamp is my friend Reckless (Adam Lindsay Gordon). Reckless is a tall thin man who looks like an ancient Viking and rides like an Assyrian of old.

<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere given as still belonging to Major Baker.

“The other day I went out to ride with Reckless. There were four of us in all. Reckless had brought two friends, both of whom were admirers of his, and was prepared for any amount of falls. Both his friends were horsey—that is to say, both of them were interested in horseflesh, and each ‘fancied himself’ as a rider. All the way down to our destination Reckless was taking timber, and it was with much difficulty that we could dissuade him from attempting something like thirty feet of fly over a stone-banked gutter with a strong four-rail at each side of it. I believe, indeed, that he would have gone at it after all had we not all three agreed that the jump was impossible for anything four-footed. He is usually rather wild in his ways, but on this particular day he was wilder than ever. He had the misfortune to be mounted upon a ‘little mare,’ and we all know what an encouragement to folly that is.

“We were close to St. Kilda, where a broad drain runs towards the sea, faced on each side with bluestone, and with a high sawn fence on either side. We were looking at this obstacle and I hazarded the remark, ‘That’s a yawner; but I have seen horses in Leicestershire that I believe would fly the lot.’ Gordon was riding a little bay mare named Maude, and the words were hardly out of my mouth when he wheeled the mare round, and trotted a few yards with the intention of having ‘a go’ at the drain; and it was all Marcus Clarke could do to induce him not to make the attempt. That he would have tried and have killed the mare, and have probably broken his own neck, I am convinced; and it was not until he had jumped nearly every fence about the park that he seemed to calm down. . . . For my part I do not believe in wild exploits gratis, and as I happened to be mounted on a serviceable, though somewhat way-worn cob I declined to risk my valuable neck for the amusement of my friends. Not so Reckless. Name a jump and he was afire to ride at it. Curtius and his famous gulf were nothing to him.

“A man who owns an animal of the kind lives in perpetual danger. He never knows thoroughly well what his little mare is capable of, and is eternally jumping her or galloping her just to prove that she is what he represents her to be. A little mare is a dangerous thing. I heard of a man who was ruined by a present of a silver fish-slice. I believe that many men have been ruined in consequence of possessing a little mare. If she trots it is bad enough, then the unhappy possessor is compelled by some terrible and resistless fate to pass everything on the road, and to drive over metal as though sinews were not. . . . But the owner of a jumping mare is worse off. He risks his neck needlessly twenty times a day, and cannot pass a haystack without a desire to ram her at it. If you express a doubt as to the powers of the fetish he worships, you make him your deadly enemy, while to over-jump him would probably lead to pistols for two and coffee for one. In short he has lost his identity and has succumbed to a nightmare of a most terrible kind. My friend Reckless was in this condition. He has ridden many steeplechases and has won some of them, and is a man whom one might reasonably expect to have seen the folly of most things. But he hasn't. Riding is a passion with him; betting isn't. But such is his fondness for sport of some kind that having known him I can quite realise the notion of the gentleman on his death-bed, who stretched out one lean and ghostly hand towards his equally moribund friend and said in a voice broken by the death-rattle and husky with torment, ‘Jack, my ribs are broken, old fellow, and I can't live long. You must die too, Jack, in an hour or so, and though you win the race I won't give in—up there—old fellow, I'll f-fly you for a fiver!’ I am certain Reckless would ride against Death on the pale horse if the grim old fellow would only give him six pounds and a bit of a start. . . . He once lent me a horse—a good one too—and on leaving him said, ‘You can keep him, my boy, but be careful with him.’ I promised, and shortly afterwards

Reckless returned and said, ' Promise me one thing—one thing.' ' What is it ? ' I asked, thinking he would give me some special instruction as to carefulness. ' Let him take his fences at *his own pace*,' was Reckless's reply. . . . That there are such men in the world seems a special act of grace. I confess I like a bold horseman. A good rider is usually a good fellow, and I respect the old squire who, when a son-in-law was recommended to him asked ' What is his weight ? and can he ride well to hounds ? ' . . . I have never yet seen a man who enjoys a good stiff post and rail so much as Reckless does. After all I suppose it does not much matter, and a man with nerves must not grumble. I should *like* to be able to rattle a four-year-old at the St. Kilda Railway fence and get over it in safety without taking my pipe out of my mouth, but then I can't do it, so there's an end of it. . . . I intended to give you an account of our day's larking and how we saw ' the Doctor's Mare ' taking a little spin all alone by herself, and how the sharp eyes of one of our companions detected a saddle under the blanketing and drew his own conclusions therefrom. I meant to relate how Reckless sat down and jumped on to the railway corner, and then took hold of the little mare and sent her ' a cracker ' along the sandy turf; how we measured the gutter, opposite to the old Belle, and Reckless was on fire to jump it, and how we discussed racing and gave each other tips for all sorts of events. How we went in and had a look at Lantern and admired Blue Jacket " (both mentioned by Gordon in *Hippodromania*); " in short, I had intended to give you a pleasant, chatty account of our day's amusement and to have made myself and the little brown cob quite a feature in the entertainment."

In articles he contributed to the *Australasian* (April 18 and 26, 1868), Gordon contrasted steeplechasing in England with steeplechasing in Australia thus—

" There is one branch of our national sports which ought to be the connecting link between the race-course and the

hunting-field, and here, at least, some alterations may surely be effected. In England, steeplechase handicaps are often much too light, but there the courses are light also, and the weeds are able to carry their feathers at racing pace through the thin straggling hedges and low rotten fences with a comparatively small percentage of serious accidents. In England, too, steeplechasing is confined to the winter or the early spring, and the soft ground is favourable to the legs of the horses and the bones of their riders; here we have the evils of the home system without the advantages. Our handicaps are adjusted on such a scale that many of our steeplechasers have to carry light stable boys who are not strong enough to steady them, over ground nearly as hard as a macadamized road, and a succession of fences every one of which seems to have been constructed for the express purpose of throwing the horse that fails to clear it. Steeplechasing is of course intended to be a dangerous pastime, but the sport is scarcely enhanced by making it as dangerous as it can be made. ‘Faugh-a-Ballagh’ or ‘Market Harborough,’ or some other fire-eating bruiser may read this, and observe that the writer is evidently one of the soft division, and they may be right, but I confess I do not care to see an impetuous hard-mouthed brute overpowering a weak lad and rushing at stiff timber like a bull at a gate. This much at least will scarcely be gainsaid, our horses (to say nothing of their riders) seldom last long at cross-country work. The continual hard raps on heavy redgum or stringy bark rails, coupled with the constant jarring shocks caused by landing on a soil baked by an Australian sun, is enough to cripple the strongest knees, and wear out the toughest sinews in a very few seasons. I have nothing perhaps to suggest that can claim the merit of originality—for has not ‘The General’ already called public attention to these matters?—but if the scale of our cross-country handicaps was raised till the weights ranged say from 12st. 12lb., or 12st. 10lb. to 9st. 10lb., I think we should get a better and more respectable

class of riders, for there are gentlemen here that would ride their own horses if they could; and should the pace be a little slower, the race would be at least equally well-contested: also, if steeplechasing were contested at a proper time of the year, when the ground is springy and yielding or even heavy and sloppy, the advantages to horse and man are too obvious to need any comment. I should be sorry to see the impediments of a fair hunting country transformed into a series of wretched little obstructions that a donkey could surmount, and I do not dislike stiff timber more than some of my neighbours do. A few big posts and rails are almost indispensable, as no other fence necessitates such clean jumping; and besides, these are the obstacles most frequently met with in this country. But a steeplechase would be prettier to look at, and pleasanter as well as easier to the ordinary run of competitors if the line were varied a little, and interspersed with a few green hedges of gorse and acacia nicely clipped and trimmed, a wattle fence or two, and a stake and bound, besides a sprinkling of palings and walls, and a water-jump made to resemble a brook, with room for at least half a dozen horses to take it abreast, and not an impossible cross between a mud-hole and a man-trap stuck in the middle of a crowd. Alterations such as these might be made on a few of our principal courses with comparatively little expense, and would probably be found to give satisfaction. It may be objected that stiff timber is the orthodox hunting leap in these colonies, but in the hunting field there are plenty of soft places to be found, and brush fences and small log jumps are common enough; besides all this, a man riding to hounds can always get a pull at awkward places, whereas, in a steeplechase, anything like a steady pull is the exception. Under the present system it is no wonder that our jumping horses are either crippled or cowed prematurely, for we usually find that if their legs last long enough their tempers are ruined, and they take to baulking with even the best men



on their backs, which, considering the way in which they have been handled and schooled from the first, ought not to surprise us."

That is the verdict on Australian (mostly Victorian) steeplechasing by the most famous steeplechase-rider Australia ever knew.

## CHAPTER V

### GORDON'S CONNECTION WITH MAJOR BAKER (SIR THOMAS DURAND BAKER)

CHELTHENHAM has long loomed large in the life-story of Adam Lindsay Gordon. We know that he was not more than seven years old when his father settled in Cheltenham after their long wanderings. We know that before he was eight he had become a Cheltenham College boy at its opening in July 1841—the first of the new public schools, the forerunner of Marlborough, Clifton, Haileybury and Wellington. We know that his parents lived in Cheltenham till the day he left England in 1853. We know of the influence which Jem Edwards, the famous prize-fighter, who carried on his boxing school at Cheltenham, and Tom Oliver, George Stevens and the other great steeplechasers who lived at Prestbury, just outside Cheltenham, had in making Gordon the laureate of sport. But nobody has pointed out yet that it was another old Cheltonian, Major Thomas Durand Baker, who entered most into his racing life, who gave him the mount on Babbler which brought him the most fame, and who gave him that last fatal mount, which he only accepted because he needed to make money so badly—the mount on Prince Rupert in the Melbourne steeplechases, in which he sustained the injuries that he never really got over.

Thomas Durand Baker entered Cheltenham College in 1846, the year in which Captain A. D. Gordon, the poet's father, became Hindustani master at the College. Boys went to public schools young in those days. He was older than Lindsay had been when he entered the College, but he was only nine. He was only seventeen when he

went to the Crimea in the 18th Royal Irish, and won his first instalment of medals and fame. He was only ten years older when he went to New Zealand and, as Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General, played a great part in the Maori War, winning much personal distinction as a dashing and fearless soldier.

In 1866-1867 he became Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General for Australia and New Zealand. I have not ascertained the date on which he first took up residence in Australia and met Gordon, though this is important, because *Sea Spray and Smoke Drift*, the slim paper volume of poetry which Gordon published in 1867, contains poems which have magnificent passages about the Balaclava Charge and the Crimean War, which affected Gordon very powerfully about this date, and it would be interesting to learn that they were the outcome of his meeting the dashing soldier who had won medals at the fall of Sebastopol, and had fought in the Indian Mutiny and in the dangerous New Zealand War. Such a personality coming into his life was bound to have a profound effect on Gordon, one of the few males in his family who had not been a soldier or a sailor, and who, by his fighting qualities, was cut out for a soldier. Long after Gordon's death, Baker was at the fall of Kumassi, and became the general who won the battle of Charasiab and commanded a brigade in Lord Roberts's crowning victory of Kandahar. He died in 1893. One can picture Gordon trying to live the military life, which had been denied him, in his friend's experiences.

Their friendship lasted a longer time than is generally the fate of friendships with imperial officers serving in Australia. He won several of the great steeplechases of Australia for Major Baker with Babler, beginning in 1868, and it was on Major Baker's big horse, Prince Rupert, that Gordon received the two falls from which he never completely recovered, in the Melbourne steeplechases of March 12, 1870.

We know that in December 1868 Gordon went and stayed with the officers of the 14th Regiment and Major Baker at their barracks on the St. Kilda Road, and enjoyed himself immensely. One knows that Major Baker was one of the chief figures at the funeral of the great steeple-chaser who died by his own rash hand, and wrote to the family in England about his death.

The other point which specially interests us in the friendship of these two heroic men is, did they ever discuss, did they know, that they both were Cheltenham College boys? Was the friendship of Major Baker, who held the important post of Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General for Australia and New Zealand, inaugurated by the fact that they both learned their first lessons in the battle of life in the great Gloucestershire school.

In this instance it is difficult to think otherwise. Baker, going to the school as a boy at the same time as Gordon's father went there as a master, must have been struck by that tall, exquisitely courteous, military figure, and Gordon must sometimes have spoken of the father whom he admired so much though he treated him so badly. Thus it was that Gordon, to the very end of his career, was linked to Cheltenham College, the *Alma Mater* of so many who have cemented the stately edifice of the British Empire with their blood to the ends of the earth.

At the first meet of the Melbourne hounds in June 1868, Major Baker was hunting on Babbler, the horse with which Gordon scored his first Melbourne victory in October 1868.

Major Baker, Gordon on a grey, and three other men got over an unyielding big fence with its ditch towards the riders and weeded out the field, which was afterwards very select.

The *Australasian* of August 1, 1868, under the heading "Cricketers of the Season," writes, "Next in the list is Major Baker, a gentleman who 'came out' on the M.C.C. turf last year, and whose forte is batting. He is a likely man to get runs as he plays with a good straight bat.

His best place is in the slips, and he cuts in a pretty good form. He is very sweet on forward play, but weak on the off-side."

Major Baker, again on Babblers, and Gordon on Cadet, were out for the last hunt of the season with the Melbourne hounds on October 1868, a few days before the V.R.C. Spring Meeting. A wonderful poetical prophesy about this meeting appeared in the *Australasian*, October 10, 1868, by J. E. H.

"I shall name, though he has a great weight on,  
 Big Babblers and he should win the Cup;  
 If he happens to go pretty straight on  
 That day and the Major be up.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the next race I have a great liking  
 For Gordon. He rides without fear,  
 I like, too, the Danish name Viking,  
 And think he will be very near.

That finishes 3 in a telling  
 And rather remarkable style,  
 For the fourth I see is a selling  
 And Welter weight run for 3-mile.

I call out Canary and Cadger, etc.

Major Baker's colours were "straw and black."

Oct. 1868. Gordon won the Hunt Club Cup on Major Baker's Babblers at Flemington (the Melbourne Race-course).

Dec. 1868. Gordon won the Ballarat Steeplechase on Major Baker's Babblers.

Jan. 1869. Gordon third on Major Baker's Babblers at the Grand National at Flemington, won by Gordon's Viking.

Nov. 1869. Gordon nowhere on Major Baker's Prince Rupert in V.R.C. Steeplechase at Flemington.

Nov. 1869. Gordon second on Major Baker's Prince Rupert in the Ballarat Steeplechase.

March 12, 1870. His last mount. Gordon nowhere on Major Baker's Prince Rupert in the Melbourne Steeplechase. He had a bad fall.

This was on the Saturday. On the Monday Major Baker drove him into town to see a doctor, who pronounced his injuries to be very serious. And a few days after Gordon wrote to John Riddoch—

“ I got your letter this morning. I should have answered it before, but I have been bad. I got a very bad fall last Saturday; worse than usual, in fact, and I have not been able to do anything. Blackmore, who is out here now, got me to Brighton that night. On Monday, Baker brought me into town to see the doctor, but as I was there by myself I did not care much either way. I am up to-day, for the truth is I should croak if I had to stay in bed any longer. I don't think I shall get over this fall easily, and you know, old fellow, I'm not likely to complain more than need be; but I am hurt somewhere inside, I think. Power wants to take me to Toorak to-night. Perhaps I may go, but am not sure.”



ESLEMONT, THE SEAT OF THE GORDONS OF HALLHEAD AND ESLEMONT, NOW THE PROPERTY OF COLONEL VOLRIGE GORDON.

*Drawn by Miss Frances Gordon and her brother, and reproduced by Miss Gordon's permission.*





## CHAPTER VI

REMINISCENCES OF ADAM LINDSAY GORDON,  
BY HIS COUSIN, MISS FRANCES GORDON

MY niece, who had intended writing an account of my cousin Adam Lindsay Gordon, having passed away, it has been suggested that I should do so myself, particularly as I am probably the only person living who knew him well as a boy.

His father and mine were sons of Captain William Gordon, youngest son of Robert Gordon of Hallhead and Esslemont, and Henrietta, daughter of the second Earl of Aberdeen, and granddaughter of the second Duke of Gordon. Our grandfather was one of the first officers of the Corps of Royal Engineers, and distinguished himself in the defence of Malta. He married Frances, daughter of Captain Thomas Elrington, an officer who had fought against our Gordon ancestors at Culloden, and against the Americans at Bunker's Hill, where he was wounded and taken prisoner. I have heard he lived for two years with an Indian chief who wished him to marry his daughter, but he eventually made his escape, and returned to England, where being incapacitated by his wound for further military service, he was given the Governorship of Plymouth Citadel. Our grandfather died young (I believe about thirty), leaving his widow with three sons and very little money. All three boys were educated at Sandhurst as sons of an officer who died on duty, and as they grew old enough they were given commissions in the 3rd Fusilier Guards by the Duke of Gloucester. The Duke of Gloucester was always a great

friend to our family, our great-uncle, General Elrington, being the Master of his Household. It is not certain that Lindsay's father ever took up his commission, because he went out to his uncle Robert Gordon, who was Governor of Berbice, Demerara. After the death of his uncle he went to India, where he entered the East India Company's service. He was very clever and a great Eastern scholar, and I have an old paper which mentions his passing first in all his examinations. He came home on leave about 1830, and falling in again with his uncle Robert's only daughter, Harriet Elizabeth, he married her; and as she did not wish to go to India he retired from the Army. I remember my aunt well. She was very handsome, tall and graceful, with a very long neck. She was also very artistic in her tastes, but peculiar, and I remember when every one was wearing crinolines she would have none, and being six feet high and wearing a long, limp dress, she used to look very remarkable. She had the gentlest, most charming manners when she was in a good temper, but was absolutely unreasonable when she was not, and I believe thought nothing of throwing a knife or a poker at any one. I never saw her in one of her great passions, but I remember one time when she was staying with us it was a fast, and she would not touch anything all day. But as soon as every one was in bed she rang her bell and wanted gruel; then just when the cook had got up to make it, she rang again and said she was too wicked and would not have it. Then as soon as the maid was in bed again she rang to say she must have it, and so it went on for half the night, first she would and then she wouldn't. She was supposed to have an enormous fortune, and had been brought up by our cousins, the Hugh Lindsays, with every sort of extravagance, two governesses to herself and everything she fancied got for her; but (I believe greatly owing to the abolition of slavery) her money (which was mostly West Indian) decreased very much in value. She, however, continued recklessly extravagant. I remember hearing that after

having a room furnished and decorated in some very artistic fashion, she took into her head that she didn't like it, and insisting on having all undone and done all over again—and I remember seeing some of her boxes unpacked which were full of every sort of thing for which she had no use, from valuable lace to saucepans. My uncle, with a chivalrous idea of leaving her money entirely to herself to do as she liked with, took the Hindostani Mastership at Cheltenham College, and his son, Adam Lindsay, was, I believe, one of the first pupils after the school was established. He, Lindsay, had from a child had a fancy for horses which showed itself in playing with, and breaking our rocking-horse. I remember several times crying bitterly because he had knocked its head off in pretending to perform with it. When he was at school he took to real horses and riding steeplechases. On one occasion he went to school with a great-coat over his racing-jacket, had his horse brought to the College gates and went off to ride a steeplechase, and I heard when his parents were away he entertained a number of jockeys at supper, who, I believe, got very tipsy. He went from Cheltenham to Woolwich, passed through the Academy and was, I believe, gazetted to the Artillery, but on account of his absolute disregard of authority his father was requested to withdraw him.

About this time (*i. e.* when Captain Gordon withdrew Lindsay from Woolwich) my brother Hamilton gained a Cadetship at Addiscombe which Sir William Lushington had presented to Cheltenham College to be competed for, and as my cousin had already the promise of a nomination from our cousin the Hon. Hugh Lindsay, it was thought he might pass that on to our cousin Lindsay. Young men went to Addiscombe about two years older than they did to Woolwich, so Lindsay was not too old, and it was thought that when he had a second chance he would be wiser and more amenable to authority. But the arrangement was not carried out.

It was soon after this that he came to live with us <sup>1</sup> at Worcester, in order to go to a tutor with my brother Adam, who was about the same age, eighteen or nineteen. Lindsay was very handsome, tall and slight with dark curly hair, and he used to dress in a very horsey style, big plaid trousers tight at the knees and very wide at the bottom, and very horsey ties and pins. He used to jump and run races with my brother, and I remember he and my brother would run steeplechases with me and my youngest brother Dick on their backs. I remember his picking me up, jumping out of the window with me, running along the garden wall and tossing me down on a hedge, and another time he was chaffing me about my brother Hammy and said, "Who would have a boy's name ending in 'y'?" I said "Like Lindsay," and he caught me up with my dress tight round my ankles and held me topsy-turvy, of course all in fun, for he was very good-natured. He used to take my little brother and me out walks, and would tell us thrilling stories about vampires, etc. He was very fond of acting charades, indeed, and would act bits of *Bombastes Furioso* in the dining-room with me only as audience, and he would go singing about the house. One thing he was always singing was—

"There was an old nigger and his name was Uncle Ned,  
And he lived long ago, long ago,  
And he had no hair on the top of his head  
In the place where the wool it ought to grow."

Other things he used to be singing which I believe were his own were—

"Alack, alack and well-a-day,  
That ever youth from virtue's paths should stray,  
That ever they should bid their homes good-bye,  
As many have, and so, by Jove, have I."

I remember he chaffed my eldest brother who had taken Sabbatarian views, writing a supposed advertisement for a wife for him—

<sup>1</sup> Miss Gordon was a daughter of Captain R. C. H. Gordon, of 8, Green Hill Place, Worcester.

“Wanted by a young Lieutenant a respectable young lady.  
Looks are not at all the question. If the morals are not shady  
She shall have no cause whatever to regret her choice for one day.  
Please direct to G. H. Gordon. N.B.—Do not write on Sunday.”

I remember his being very busy about the candidature of Mr. Hudleston, afterwards Baron Hudleston. I believe he kissed the women and fought the men and brought a good many voters to the poll, and I remember the parody on *Bonny Dundee* he wrote for the occasion.

“To the Worcester Electors ’twas Lazelet who spoke,  
Your aid and assistance I hereby invoke,  
And let each ragged ruffian who is fond of free-trade  
Come and drink himself drunk and his shot shall be paid.

*Chorus.*

“Come fill up my cup, come fill up my can,  
I’ll manage to bribe every rate-paying man.  
Open the taverns and let them in free,  
For the drunker they get they’re the fitter for me.

Bill Lazelet is mounted, he rides up the street,  
With loud acclamations the radicals greet,  
Said the host of a beer tavern, tapping his barrel,  
The town is well rid of that humbug McGarrell.

*Chorus.*

Come fill up, etc.

Then give us three cheers for the white and the blue,  
[Lazelet’s colours  
If there’re Tories in Worcester there’re Radicals too,  
And the rats of the Severn in hundreds, I trow,  
Are squared for a trifle to kick up a row.

*Chorus.*

Come fill up, etc.

Then away to the haunts of the republicans red,  
To barter in turns for small beer and cheap bread,  
[I forget the next lines]

*Chorus.*

Come fill up my cup, come fill up my can,  
I’ll manage to bribe every rate-paying man;  
Open the prisons, and let ’em out free,  
For the worser the lot, they’re the fitter for me.”

The two Liberals, W. Lazelet and O. Ricardo were elected.

Mr. Lazelet, who was afterwards Conservative member for Worcester, was then standing in the Radical interest, and Mr. McGarrell had come to oppose him in the Conservative interest, but gave it up almost directly, and was replaced by Mr. Hudleston, who thanked Lindsay for his help.

Lindsay used to keep a horse jointly with a friend, while he was with us, unknown to his father or mine, though we used to see him riding it sometimes. At one time they were behindhand in paying its keep at the livery stables, and the owner of the place locked it up, which greatly incensed Lindsay, and he broke into the stable and brought it out, and afterwards had a great fight and thrashed the ostler, all of which I remember his describing to my younger brother and me when we were out walking. I remember his father coming over about it not long after, and though I think he was proud of his son's prowess, he did not think it satisfactory for that sort of thing to go on, and I think it was soon after that, that it was settled for Lindsay to go out to Australia, to join the mounted police. I remember knitting a purse for him before he went, and his giving me his racing-jacket to make pin-cushions of.

I fancy that some people in Australia had an idea that he was cast off by his family, perhaps a little because some of his verses may imply it, but nothing was further from the case. His father was devoted to him, and so was his mother, though she was such an extraordinary person, that she did not make home happy for him or any of her family. Lindsay rather liked to pose, at least in his poetry, as the devil-may-care scapegrace, but cut off by his family he was not.

One sad thing happened, however, and that was as his life was so roving in Australia his letters were sent to a friend, and when money was sent out to him by his father, the friend took it, and destroyed the letters. I remember years after, when Lindsay's father and mother were both dead, my father had a letter from him saying the friend

had confessed to him what he had done, and Lindsay added that though he could forgive his friend having taken the money, it was hard to forgive his having cut him off from his family. After that my father used to hear from him occasionally, and at one time he thought of coming home to claim the family estate in Scotland which, had the entail on male heirs held good, would have been his. There had, however, been a flaw in this entail which enabled his cousin to cut it off, and so the place went in the female line. Of Lindsay's life in Australia, Australians know more than I do. When living with us he was always very good-natured to me, and like an elder brother. He was very clever and recklessly brave, and it was sad that with so many gifts, he had not the steadiness that might have led him to success. He had a wonderful memory. I remember him going into a book-shop, picking up a Longfellow, looking through the "Skeleton in Armour," and repeating it all when he came out.

Miss Gordon clears up in her letters several points in Gordon's life as to which there have existed grave misapprehensions.

"Very many thanks for all the things you have sent me about Lindsay. I suppose it is the melancholy strain in Lindsay's poems that has made Australians imagine that he was thrown off by his own family, and *possibly* his friend having taken his money and burnt his father's letters may have made him feel neglected, but nothing was more untrue than to imagine that he was driven into exile or that his father's patience was exhausted. I can remember myself that his father was rather proud of his breaking into the stable and thrashing the ostler. I do not in the least believe his 'mother had come almost to dislike him,' nor do I think that she or any of the family were the least out of their minds, therefore I don't know what is meant by inherited melancholia. His mother was

passionate and selfish, and gave way to her passions and fancies to an extent that made her violently unreasonable, and which brought a great deal of unhappiness to her family, but I never heard she was out of her mind, and Lindsay's father was extremely clever and almost Quixotically chivalrous, and I don't the least think Lindsay had an unhappy childhood and youth; he certainly seemed happy enough. When he was with us he seemed extremely lively and so he always seemed when he was at Woolwich, and he used to be considered extremely clever though he did not go in for study."

In another letter Miss Gordon says—

"My cousin was almost like a brother to me when I was a little girl. He was sent out to the mounted police in Australia because he had a taste for a wild sort of life; but Lindsay had a great admiration for Byron, and liked to write *poetry* in that strain. As to his mother, I never heard *the slightest idea* of her being *out of her mind in any way*, but she was most awfully passionate and had no idea of controlling herself and consequently did not make her family happy, and then she had fits of penitence; she was very low-church. I know she was constantly going away for her health. I know one winter she went to Madeira, and other times she went to Italy, but I don't know how far she was really delicate or fancied she was."

And in another—

"I dare say it was quite a good description to say Lindsay's father was like Colonel Newcome, he was an excessively chivalrous person, extremely clever and very fond of the literature of the East and romance. He would, of course, have been most conscientious about doing his duty as master in the College, but I should not have thought the word *methodical* was at all the word to describe him and his wife. I should have called them most erratic."



## CHAPTER VII

### TABLE OF DESCENT OF THE FAMILY OF GORDON OF HALL- HEAD AND ESSLEMONT, SUPPLIED BY THE COURTESY OF MISS FRANCES GORDON AND COLONEL WOLRIGE GORDON

THOMAS GORDON of Rivare Dominus de Auchinveath  
14 . . . by his wife . . . daughter of Mr. Walter Jones  
of Inncomarkie had sons—the fourth son . . .

I. George Gordon, acquired the lands of Quisny or  
Cushnie. He married, first a daughter of Gordon of  
Craigelie without issue, second a daughter of Mortimer of  
Craigievar, by whom he had two sons and a daughter,  
Margaret Gordon (married to Leslie of Kinraigie). The  
eldest son Alexander, died in his father's life-time without  
issue. The second son,

II. John Gordon of Cushnie and Hallhead, had charters  
of his land in 1511 and 1526. (He died about 1550.) He  
married . . . and had two sons (from the younger of whom  
descended the family of Lillieangus). His elder son,

III. (See deed of 1557 *Aut. A. and B.*, vol. iv. p. 754.)  
John Gordon of Cushnie and Hallhead, was born in 1507  
and was killed at the battle of Pinkie in 1547 in *vita patris*,  
having married a daughter of Duguid of Auchinlero by  
whom he left a son.

*Note on . . . of Cushnie.*

1. George Gordon's second wife—Mortimer appears to  
have married after his death . . . Lumsden of Maidlare,  
ancestor of Cushnie, by whom she had a son Robert.

2. This Robert Lumsden appears to have had some  
rights over the lands of Hallhead and Conquwhanderand,  
as he assigns them to John Gordon, son of G. G. of Q.,

by a charter dated 1511 (*Aut. I. A. and B.*, vol. x. p. 335), another in 1526.

IV. Robert Gordon of Hallhead (*Note*.—Had seisin on June 16, 1554, February 10, vol. x. p. 754, witnessed a charter of Robert Innes of Invermarkie, January 12, 1579, *Aut. A. and B.*, iii. 35), who succeeded his grandfather before 1554. He married Janet, daughter of Innes of Touchs (now Pitfour) and left a son.

V. Patrick Gordon of Hallhead (*Note* on V., second son Robert, *see* Family of Leslie II. 94, and copy, fourth son Walter. On June 3, 1612. *Hist. S.C.*, vol. v. p. 86 . . . of Hallhead, etc., from John D. of Rothes) who married . . . by whom he had four sons (of whom the eldest, Patrick, left an only child, Elizabeth, in 1641, O.S.P.). Robert and Walter who died without issue and Robert succeeded 1620.

VI. George Gordon, who succeeded his brother in the estate of Hallhead in 1622. He married and was succeeded by his son.

VII. Patrick Gordon, of Hallhead (Patrick of Hallhead had charter in 1669, vol. iv. 337) had son John. He had special service as heir to his father 1683, ditto is included in list of commissioners of supply named in the Act of Supply passed by the Parliament in 1685. *Laws and Acts of Parliament*, vol. iii, p. 17; James VII. Ditto in Act of 1692 of William III and of Queen Anne 1704. His father built the house of Hallhead in 1686. Charles, the fourth son, mortified 1000 marks Scots for the price (or ) of Cushnie 1730, who had charter in 1669 and 1683. He married Margaret . . . (who was still living 1690), by whom he had issue.

First, John Gordon of Hallhead, who married Mary Ross of Auchlossan by whom he had three sons, William, Robert and Patrick, the last of whom having succeeded to the estate of Hallhead, made it over to his uncle Robert.

Second, Robert, of whom presently.

Third, Rev. Patrick Gordon.

Fourth, Charles Gordon, O.S.P.

1. Margaret married Major Ligertwood of Sillery.

2. Maria, married in 1795 Rev. Adam Fergusson, son of Baron Fergusson of Dunfellahty in Perthshire. The second son Robert.

VIII. Robert Gordon acquired the estates of Hallhead from his nephew Patrick as before-mentioned, and purchased the estate of Esslemont in . He married Isabella Byers, daughter of Yowley (?), by whom he had two sons. (*Note VIII.* This Robert Gordon is believed to have been a merchant at Bordeaux, where he acquired sufficient means to purchase the lands of Esslemont. Robert's second son Alexander was, by an unhappy mischance, the cause of the death of one of his children at Hallhead. While dancing her in his arms he struck her head against the ceiling, from which she died on the spot.)

First, George, who succeeded him.

Second, Alexander, who married Jean Grierson of Lugg without surviving issue. The elder son—

IX. George Gordon of Hallhead and Esslemont (*Note to IX.*) George Gordon was out in the '45, and his name appears in the list of those specially exempted when the Act of Indemnity was passed. Some years afterwards the estates appear to have been granted by the Duke of Cumberland by a "tack or factory" dated July 26, 1746, to James Chalmers, printer in Aberdeen, probably a friend of the family, as the lands appear in the possession of George Gordon's son Robert in due course. The disgraceful plunder of Mrs. Gordon's house in Aberdeen by the Duke of Cumberland and General Hawley in 1746, is fully detailed in *Jacobite Memoirs*, W. and R. Chambers, Edinburgh, 1834, where the statement is printed at length. Mrs. Gordon (*née* Anne Bowdler), was an Englishwoman, daughter of Thomas Bowdler, Esq. (the expurgator of Shakespeare), by whom he left issue.

X. Robert Gordon (*Note X*. This Robert is mentioned in the *Frasers of Philorth*, vol. ii (?), p. 214, as voting for . . . in the contested election for Aberdeenshire) of Hallhead and Esslemont, married in France the daughter of Count Rabotin, who died (I think leaving one daughter), and secondly, Lady Harriet Gordon, daughter of second Earl of Aberdeen, by whom he had three sons.

Colonel George Gordon.

Robert, who was Governor of Berbice and Demerara, and William, an officer in the Engineers who distinguished himself at the capture of Malta—and died at Malta about 1802. During the life of his second wife, Lady Harriet Gordon, he abandoned the old castle of Esslemont and built the older portion of the present mansion house.

XI. Colonel George Gordon succeeded his father, he married Miss Anne Baird of Newbyth by whom he had three sons and one daughter, Alicia Anne, who married John James Hope Johnston, Esq., of Raehills. His eldest son, Robert, succeeded him and one of the others, William, was killed at Toulouse. He married secondly Miss Napier, daughter of Captain the Hon. Charles Napier, R.N., and by her had three daughters, Frances, Georgina and Harriet, who all died unmarried, and one son, Charles Napier Gordon, who succeeded his half-brother and also died unmarried.

XII. Robert Gordon (married Miss Little Gilmour of The Inch, nr. Edinburgh. He died 1828, aged thirty-eight) had one daughter Anne, who married Henry Wolrige about 1855. The third son, George, died unmarried, 1816.

XIII. Charles Napier Gordon died unmarried about 1867. He broke the entail on male heirs, so was succeeded by his half-niece,

XIV. Anne Baird, married, 1855, Henry, son of Colonel John Wolrige. He assumed the name of Wolrige Gordon, and had issue,

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1. Robert, born 1857, Colonel Grenadier Guards, C.V.O., C.B. and D.S.O., assumed the name of Gordon-Gilmour on succeeding to the estates of Liberton and Craigmillar, Midlothian, married Lady Susan Lygon and has issue—

1. John Little Gilmour and

(i) Mary.

(ii) Margaret.

(iii) Grizel.

2. John, Colonel, late Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.

3. Walter, Major, late Black Watch.

4. Harry, Major, late Cameron Highlanders.

1. Mary.

2. Edith.

XV. Colonel John Wolrige Gordon,<sup>1</sup> who succeeded to the estates of Hallhead and Esslemont on the death of his father in 1906, married Isabel Hervey, only child of William Hervey Woodhouse of Irnham Hall, Lincolnshire, and has issue—

1. Robert, born 1890, 2nd Lieut. Grenadier Guards.

2. Edith.

3. Isabel.

(See *No. X.*) Robert Gordon's second son Robert (by his second marriage), married Miss Austin and had a daughter, Harriet Elizabeth, who married her first cousin, Adam Durnford Gordon.

His third son—William, married Frances Elrington, daughter of Captain Thomas Elrington, Governor of Plymouth Citadel, and had issue—

1. Adam Durnford, married his cousin, Harriet Elizabeth.

2. Thomas Rowley, married Catherine Freer.

3. Robert Cumming Hamilton, married Frances Freer, 1828, and had issue—

<sup>1</sup> By the more usually accepted numeration Colonel Wolrige Gordon is the XVIIIth of Hallhead.

I. Adam Durnford, married his cousin, Harriet Elizabeth Gordon, and had issue—

1. Amy Christian, died young.

2. Ada Mary.

3. Adam Lindsay (poet, died in Australia, leaving no issue).

4. Clara Francesca Inez, married Chevalier Ratti, and had issue—

(a) Henri Ratti.

(b) Cecilia Ratti.

5. Theodora, died young, and buried in Trinity (Cheltenham) churchyard.

2. Thomas Rowley, married Catherine Freer, and had issue—

1. Harriet Frances, died unmarried, 1904.

2. Robert Adam, died unmarried.

3. Caroline, died unmarried.

3. Robert Cumming Hamilton Gordon. Given commission in the Scotch Fusilier Guards, but exchanged later to the 48th and 95th Regiments; died, 1874.

His issue—

(a) George Hamilton Gordon, General, Royal Engineers, married Emma Blanche Beatrice Case, in 1860, died in 1896, and had issue—

1. Edward Hyde Hamilton, married, first, Maude Manders, by whom he had issue Estella Manders; second, Hilda d'Arcy Hulton, and had issue, Hermione Harriet.

2. George Vincent Hamilton, died unmarried, 1887.

3. William Alexander.

4. Mabel Annette, married Charles William Bennett, Rector of Wolstone, in 1909.

5. Lilian Blanche, died unmarried, 1909.

(b) William Elrington, Admiral, Royal Navy, married Emily Gorst in 1865, and had issue, Hamilton, Clerk in Holy Orders, and died in 1897.

(c) Adam Charles, Clerk in Holy Orders, and Rector

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of Fidlestone near Chester, married Georgina Anson, in 1866, died without issue, 1904.

(d) Hamilton Thomas, Lieut. in Bengal Engineers, E. I. Company's service, died unmarried in India, in 1861.

(e) Frances Freer, unmarried.

(f) Richard Goodall, Master, King's School, Canterbury, married Isabella Crawford, died without issue.

## CHAPTER VIII

### GORDON'S FATHER—A CHELTENHAM COLONEL NEWCOME

“ I remember some words that my father said  
When I was an urchin vain;—  
God rest his soul, in his narrow bed  
These ten long years he hath lain.  
When I think one drop of the blood he bore  
This faint heart surely must hold,  
It may be my fancy and nothing more,  
But this faint heart seemeth bold.

He said that as from the blood of grape  
Or from juice distilled from the grain,  
False vigour, soon to evaporate,  
Is lent to nerve and brain,  
So the coward will dare on the gallant horse  
What he never would dare alone,  
Because he exults in a borrowed force,  
And a hardihood not his own.”

*The Wearie Wayfarer* (“ Zu der Edlen Jagd ”).

GORDON wrote in his “ Racing Ethics ”—

“ The escape of the only Mameluke that survived Mohammed Ali's treacherous massacre, is only one instance among the many that may be cited of desperate feats actually performed on horseback. There may be men living in India at this moment who remember a certain officer of irregular cavalry (Captain A. D. Gordon); this man, furnished with a common boar spear and a sharp sabre, but with no fire-arms, and mounted on his favourite horse (probably not a pure Arab, but one of the purest of that breed that could be obtained in Hindostan), used to kill tigers single-handed on open ground.”

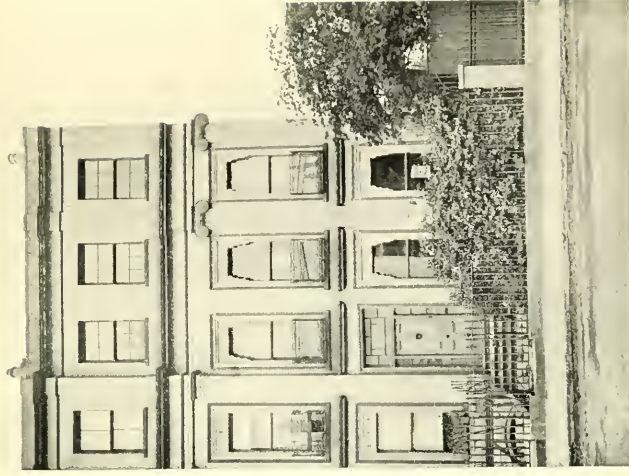
Adam Durnford Gordon “ served his country with distinction in the Indies. In 1825 he returned to England





NO. 4 PITTVILLE VILLAS, CHELTENHAM, WHERE GORDON'S FATHER RESIDED WHEN HE FIRST WENT TO CHELTENHAM.

*Photo by J. A. Williams, Cheltenham.*



NO. 25 PRIORY STREET, CHELTENHAM, WHERE GORDON WAS LIVING AT THE TIME OF HIS DEPARTURE FOR AUSTRALIA—THE HOUSE MENTIONED IN "AN EXILE'S FAREWELL."

*Photo by J. A. Williams, Cheltenham.*



and married his cousin, Miss Harriet Gordon. He stood a good deal over six feet. He was brilliantly clever. He came home on leave, and his mother was determined that he should not go out again, so when he fell in with his cousin Harriet again, he married her. (He had stayed with her father in Berbice.) It seems as if his mother rather made up the match between the two cousins. But Captain Gordon returned to India and was soon promoted to the Captaincy of a regiment of Cavalry. He quickly gained the love and admiration of the men for his daring horsemanship and courageous conduct. His health broke down and he left India in search of a better climate, and he and Mrs. Gordon travelled about for some time. It is said that the Gordons settled in Cheltenham when Lindsay was six months old, but from a letter of Captain Gordon's quoted by Mr. Howlett Ross, it would appear that he was much older when he left the Azores, and it is now agreed that he was seven when the family came to live at Cheltenham."

Captain Gordon became, in 1846, Professor of Oriental Languages at Cheltenham College, a post he held until his death in 1857. He lived at first at 4, Pittville Villas; at the time of Lindsay's second period at the College the family had removed to 25, Priory Street.

From Gordon's poems we gather his intense love for his father. Mr. Howlett Ross says that Lindsay "in later years would fondly recall with faltering voice his father's affectionate care, and recount with gleaming eye and animated gesture his father's deeds in India." From the fact that Gordon says in one poem—

“ My parents bid me cross the flood,  
My kinsfolk frowned at me,  
They say I have belied my blood  
And stained my pedigree.  
But I must turn from those who chide,  
And laugh at those who frown,  
I cannot quench my stubborn pride  
Nor keep my spirits down ”—

one infers that some of Lindsay's early scrapes must have been pretty considerable, so that even his father thought that his only son would be better away from his native land and early associations. Nevertheless, to the end of his life Captain Gordon loved Lindsay dearly. His adventurous spirit could sympathise with the son who so resembled him, though in Lindsay Captain Gordon's daring degenerated into recklessness.

In "Whisperings in Wattle-boughs" the poet says—

"O tell me, father mine, ere the good ship cross'd the brine,  
On the gangway one mute hand-clasp we exchanged,  
Do you, past the grave employ  
For your stubborn reckless boy,  
Those petitions that in life were ne'er estrang'd."

Mr. Pickernell says that Captain Gordon, like Lindsay, was "very tall with a long, narrow face."

Mr. H. H. Hornby recalls "that grand old man Gordon's father, the Hindustani Master," who was so much loved and respected, and Mr. W. de Salis Filgate remembers that Lindsay "caused his father a good deal of anxiety."

Captain Gordon loved horses as passionately as did Lindsay, and the Australian School of Poetry, founded by his son, may thank the quiet College Master for the fact that theirs is a Riding School of poets.

Captain Gordon did not live quite four years after Lindsay sailed for Australia.

Poor Lindsay seems to have got his own measure correctly. His father was his authority on sporting matters, but he took no one's advice on the serious affairs of life. He must have strained the ex-tiger-slayers' patience at last, though he never lost his love, and, at least in his father's life-time, we should have believed it Lindsay's own fault that he got out of touch with his family, but for the recent discovery about the villain who suppressed his father's letters.

Poor Captain Gordon—one imagines him starting off from Pittville Villas one summer's day, and taking his pretty little boy of seven to the College for the first time;

and nearly twelve years later there is that sad parting on the gangway of the *Julia*, when neither father nor son could speak—so utter was their misery. Yet Captain Gordon's death so soon after, only took him away from sorrows to come. His son's tragic end would have been the last drop in that already bitter cup. He had got his son out of scrapes like the one at Worcester, given him fresh starts, done everything he could, and then had to say good-bye to him for life.

In an old *Cheltenham Journal* of June 1857 is the following notice of Captain Gordon's death.

"On the 17th inst., at Cheltenham, Adam Durnford Gordon, Esquire, late Professor of Oriental Languages in Cheltenham College."

At the College prize-giving a few days later, Captain Robertson, father of the famous Rev. F. W. Robertson who prepared in Cheltenham for the Army, and years afterwards became curate of Christ Church, Cheltenham, in his speech thus referred to Captain Gordon—

"It is with much concern that I have to state that the College last week lost the most valuable services of Mr. Gordon, an accomplished Oriental scholar, who for many years has been the Oriental Professor of this institution; a gentleman, not only of noble family, but a man of personal nobility, of high moral worth, of exalted principles, of deep, unpretending piety; all of which must have had a silent influence on sixty or seventy pupils by whom he was much beloved, and which will be appreciated hereafter. Those who knew Mr. Gordon in humble confidence feel assured that he is now with the spirits of just men made perfect in the enjoyment of their rest, for which the soul of man so ardently yearns."

He might not enjoy that rest so very much unless somehow the wayward spirit of his son, purified by suffering and his father's prayers and tears, should join his in those higher regions where such adventurous souls as Lindsay Gordon's may have scope to develop and cast off earthly frailties.

There is a stone in Trinity Church, Cheltenham, beneath which lie Lindsay's father, mother and his two sisters, of which he might have written—

“ We remember the pangs that wrung us,  
 When some went down to the pit,  
 Who faded as leaves among us,  
 Who flitted as shadows flit.  
 What visions under the stone lie ?  
 What dreams in the shroud sleep dwell ?  
 For we saw the earth pit only,  
 And we only heard the knell.  
 We know not whether they slumber  
 Who waken on earth no more,  
 As the stars of the height in number,  
 As sands on the deep sea shore,  
 Shall stiffness bind them, and starkness  
 Enthral them by field and flood,  
 Till the sun shall be turned to darkness,  
 And the moon shall be turned to blood.”

The following inscriptions are on the Gordon grave in Trinity Churchyard, Cheltenham—

ADA MARY

daughter of

ADAM DURNFORD GORDON

and HARRIET ELIZABETH

born 15th of *March*, 1832

expired 29th of *November*, 1847.

“ Because I live ye shall live also.”—St. John, 18.

ADAM DURNFORD GORDON

born 29th of *August*, 1796

expired 17th of *June*, 1857.

HARRIET ELIZABETH GORDON

born 3rd of *August*, 1806

expired *April* 29th, 1859.

“ There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.”—Rev. 21.

THEODORA GORDON

Their infant daughter

born 3rd of *September*, 1841,

expired 31st of *December*, 1841.

“ They are without fault before the throne of God.”



TRINITY CHURCH, CHELTENHAM, WHERE GORDON'S  
FATHER, MOTHER AND SISTERS WERE BURIED.

*Lithographed from a drawing by Gordon's friend George Rowe,  
who also went to Australia and was an actor there.*





Colonel Arthur Lang, R.E., the hero mentioned in Lord Roberts's *Forty-one Years in India*, for two of the most dashing exploits in the capture of Delhi says, "I remember Gordon's father, Captain Gordon, and admired and liked him very much," and Major-General H. Cardew writes, "I recollect his father, Captain Gordon, who was Professor of Hindustani at the College. If I mistake not he was appointed to that office by my brother-in-law, Rev. T. A. Southwood, who was the Headmaster of the Modern Department in those days."

Captain Herbert Vaughan was a pupil of Captain A. D. Gordon's. He still keeps a silver pencil-case in his pocket which he says Captain Gordon gave him *not as a prize*, but by way of encouragement to do better. Captain Vaughan says that Captain Gordon was a very charming man and tremendously clever, and was said to talk Hindustani like a native. He would not call him a disciplinarian or very cut out for a school-master. He was a most thorough old gentleman and tried to manage the boys by kindness and trusting them to do their work—which does not always answer with such creatures. They were all very fond of him. Inez Gordon used very often to come and fetch her father home from the College. Captain Vaughan may have spoken to her, but he doesn't remember ever doing so. When asked if he thought her good-looking, he said, "No, at any rate her good looks didn't appeal to us boys; she was very, very tall and lanky—like a yard of pump-water, in fact." Gordon was never at the College while Captain Vaughan was there, and he never remembers seeing him. But he has heard a good deal about him from friends who were actually at the College with Gordon. He says that though Gordon was not formally expelled, he always understood that Captain Gordon was told he had better remove Lindsay. Captain Vaughan thinks this was because Gordon used to go off in school-hours to ride in steeplechases, and that he did this not once but several times. He was a rather wild sort of boy but

with no real harm in him. He has heard that Gordon was far gone in consumption, practically dying in fact, at the time he shot himself.

Mrs. Cunliffe Martin says: "Captain Gordon was a great favourite of my parents and used often to dine at their house. I have an idea as a small child that I was sent with a message to Captain Gordon's house, and that he was then living in Northwick Terrace to be near the College and to live economically, in order to be able to send all he could to his wife in Italy. Personally I cannot recall Captain Gordon, but my husband says *there is a great look of him* in the portrait at the commencement of the poems."

Colonel Cunliffe Martin said he was an old pupil of Captain Gordon's, who gave him a prize and taught him so well that he passed his exams. in languages six months after he went out to India. Colonel Cunliffe Martin said Captain Gordon always looked very sad and quite an old man even when he first remembered him. He said he expected he sometimes had a bad time at home, and that was why he looked old and sad. He was very tall and handsome with most charming manners, and was so clever that he ought to have been able to have done anything if he had stayed in India and "if Mr. Sladen wants to know what Captain Gordon was like, tell him he was exactly like Colonel Newcome."

Mrs. Cunliffe Martin's mother knew the Gordons well, and always got on with Mrs. Gordon. She says she has heard that Captain and Mrs. Gordon didn't always get on very well together, and that Mrs. Gordon was very extravagant. Mrs. Martin's mother had an olive-wood sort of camp-stool that Mrs. Gordon brought home from Italy, where she went very often. They called Captain Gordon "Hindustani Gordon" at the College. Neither Colonel nor Mrs. Cunliffe Martin remember Lindsay at all.

Another informant says: "Twenty-five years ago it would have been easy to look for information about Gordon. My father and mother must have known him

well, yet I never heard them speak of him; he was considered a scapegrace, I suppose they thought the less said about him the better. . . . I have often heard of the cousins of Lindsay, etc., but his name was *never mentioned*, and until Mr. Howlett Ross wrote his life he was almost forgotten. . . . On the other hand, his father was frequently spoken of with admiration and affectionate regard."

## CHAPTER IX

ADAM LINDSAY GORDON, O.C.

“ Oh ! tell me, ancient friend, ever ready to defend  
In our boyhood at the base of life's long hill,  
Are you waking yet ? or sleeping ?  
Have you left this vale of weeping ?  
Or do you, like your comrade, linger still ? ”

*From “ Whisperings in Wattle-Boughs.”*

WITH a brief record in the College Register, and a pamphlet about Gordon preserved in the Reference Department of the Public Library—Cheltenham dismisses this Old Cheltonian from her thoughts. Even so she is kinder to Gordon than were some friends, if it is true that they bought up all the manuscripts of his poems that they could lay hands on, and burnt them.

The late Mr. Holland, of Prestbury, had an old newspaper cutting which illustrates the saying, “ No man is a prophet in his own country and in his father's house.”

“ THE SPORTSMANLIKE VIEW.

“ To the Editor of the *Standard*.

“ SIR,—On reading your admirable article on the Football Jubilee, I could not help recalling some lines of poor ‘ Lindsay Gordon,’ now out of print, which express your opinions and sentiments on the sports of our land. You may possibly find space for them—

“ ‘ No game was ever yet worth a rap,  
For a rational man to play,  
Into which no accident, no mishap,  
Could possibly find its way.  
If you hold the willow, a shooter from Wills  
May transform you into a hopper ;  
And the football meadow is rife with spills,  
If you feel disposed for a cropper.

In a rattling gallop with hound and horse,  
 You may chance to reverse the medal,  
 On the sward with the saddle your loins across,  
 And your hunter's loins in the saddle.  
 In the stubble you'll find it hard to frame.  
 A remonstrance firm yet civil,  
 When as oft as "our mutual friend" take aim,  
 Long odds may be laid on the rising game,  
 And against your gaiters level.  
 There's danger even when fish are caught,  
 To those who a wetting fear,  
 And what's worth having must aye be bought,  
 And sport's like life, and life's like sport,  
 It ain't all skittles and beer."

"Though banished to the Australian Bush, the love of English sports and games, in which he excelled, was strong upon him, and no one could 'hymn their praises' with more manly vigour, more stirring description and more exquisite pathos, than the Australian poet, who sickened in a banishment for which he was socially and constitutionally unfitted, and whose end was so sad. *Why his beautiful poems were bought up and suppressed by his friends is best known to them, we are losers by their action.*

"I am, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"G. H. B.

"March 14."

This may account for the fact that so little trace of Gordon and his writings remains in Cheltenham.

"Gordon was, at this time," says Fred Marshall—"I am talking of him as a boy—very fond of all kinds of heroic poetry, and began rhyming by paraphrasing the poetry of those authors which he liked best. He despised Wordsworth and watery poetry, but revelled in Scott, Byron, Moore, Longfellow and all writers of manly verse. He used to repeat many passages of these authors; but he had a very monotonous way of reciting, which did not

please the general audiences, who, however, were lost in admiration at his powers of memory.

“‘The Skeleton in Armour,’ by Longfellow, ‘Harold the Dauntless’ and ‘Lylph’s Tale,’ by Scott were, I remember, our favourite pieces, for he seemed to have the grip of them better than of some of his sentimental selections, such as ‘The Corsair,’ ‘Lara,’ ‘Alp the Renegade,’ and several of Byron’s creations, which he evidently considered were types for special imitation. I particularly remember that he liked Frank Smedley’s books which were then being issued, particularly *Lewis Arundel, or the Railroad of Life*, and he made no secret of regarding the hero of the novel as his model. But the strangest kick in his gallop, or let me say, the queerest bee in his bonnet, for he doubtless was touched in his upper stories, was his fancy for Mr. Soapy Sponge, whose achievements not only made him envious but even induced him to order a hunting-coat on the same lines as the one so admirably depicted by John Leech in the never-to-be-forgotten book of *Mr. Sponge’s Sporting Tour*, which every sportsman who aspires to be thought worthy of the title ought to have in his library. He went to *Mr. William Draper* (see Gordon’s letters to C. P. Walker, ‘my creditors from Draper down to Clee,’ Clee was a tobacconist of Cheltenham), the tailor elect of those who rode to hounds or between the flags, and ordered a tawny, short, cut-away coat, which, if it made him in his own eyes an imitation of Soapy, certainly rendered him a ridiculously conspicuous figure.”

Other poets besides Gordon have lived in Cheltenham—Sydney Dobell for many years, Lord Byron for a time at 434, High Street, the same house in which Haynes Bayly, the forgotten author of the “Mistletoe Bough” once lived. Last but not least, Lord Tennyson wrote part of “In Memoriam” in a house with a portico, opposite to where the Great Western Station now is. Robert Stephen Hawker was at the Grammar School.

Gordon is said to have written "a sonnet to the landlady in the visitors' book at the Old Black Horse, now metamorphosed into a coffee-house." No one seems to remember now whereabouts in the town the Old Black Horse was. Mr. Fred Marshall had a painting of the old sign stuck into his Gordon—a very rampant black horse dancing on its hind legs on a red background.

Mr. George Norman remembers Gordon, though he himself was only a boy when he went away. He says Gordon managed to get into rather a fast set in the town. He wore very eccentric clothes, big checks and plaids and very sporting looking attire, generally. Mr. Norman says he thinks Gordon used to send his poems to Fred Marshall, and some of them were published in the *Examiner* in the sixties. The late Frederick Stroud also said he remembered that Gordon sent some poems to Fred Marshall.

Mr. Charles Jessop used to ride a great deal himself—he has often seen Gordon riding out at Prestbury, and is almost sure he saw him once *win* a steeplechase. He thinks he wore a light blue jacket, and remembers him on a black horse, very likely Lallah Rookh. He says that it's so long ago he doesn't remember very clearly. They were little scratch Hunt Steeplechases, mostly got up by the two la Terrières, Barnet, owner of Sir Peter Laurie, Gordon and a few more. Mr. Jessop saw the sketch that Gordon sent home to his uncle of himself on Cadger. He says it is quite a recognisable sketch of Gordon, but it makes him look too tall—he should say Lindsay was only about his own height, five feet eleven and a half inches. Gordon was a skylarking chap, and Captain Gordon rather an austere sort of man, and he used to have to lecture Lindsay pretty frequently. "Lindsay was not expelled from the College, but sort of rusticated, sent away for a time," says Mr. Jessop. Gordon and some of the others managed to get into the scrapes that Mr. Jessop himself just kept out of.

Mr. Harold Webb, in a letter to the *Cheltenham Examiner*,

says, "Gordon was capital company and very popular. Acrostics were then much the fashion, and my father (who was quite a good rhymester himself) always claimed to have set Gordon versifying—of course for the sake of some member of the fair sex."

Few of Gordon's early rhymes seem to have survived the attentions of his "friends"—and Mr. Fred Marshall preserved two of these.

Mr. Marshall says in his notes on Gordon, that "he also developed an ability to write poetry, some of it breathing the same spirit of rebellion and hopelessness which characterises his maturer efforts.

One of the earliest of Gordon's poems was an address to his companions on the eve of his departure from Cheltenham, which struck the keynote of the bitterness and despondency which pervade his writings. He was then hardly eighteen.

(From "Early Adieux")

"For I through folly's paths have run  
 My headlong goal to win  
 Nor pleasure's paths have cared to shun,  
 When pleasure sweetened sin.  
 Let those who will their failings mask.  
 To mine I frankly own;  
 But for them pardon will I ask  
 Of none save Heaven alone."

Mr. Wyndham Bryer, who practised in Cheltenham as a veterinary surgeon for many years, says that Gordon, his mother and sister, were all very tall and thin—there was only one sister at home when Lindsay sailed for Australia, and she did not even say good-bye to him.

(From "Whisperings on Wattle-boughs")

"Oh! tell me, sister dear, parting word and parting tear  
 Never passed between us. Let me bear the blame.  
 Are you living, girl, or dead? bitter tears since then I've shed  
 For the lips that lisp'd with mine a mother's name."<sup>1</sup>

And again—

<sup>1</sup> Miss Gordon thinks Mrs. Gordon and Inez were abroad when Lindsay sailed for Australia.



(From "Early Adieux")

"And thou from whom for aye to part  
Grieves more than tongue can tell,  
May Heaven preserve thy guileless heart,  
Sweet sister—Fare—thee—well."

A Cheltenham clergyman who was a neighbour of the Gordons in Priory Street, says that he was brought up to the Law, and once heard a lady give clearer evidence in a lawsuit than that of any other woman he ever heard. It was a case at Gloucester, and she was either Lindsay's married sister or his cousin.

A friend of Gordon's says that Mrs. Gordon resented the expense Lindsay often caused his father, and thought that the money would be better spent on herself and her daughters. Two of Lindsay's sisters were buried at Cheltenham, Ada Mary and Theodora. The one to whom he wrote the lines "To My Sister" was named Inez. She was married against the wishes of her family to an Italian named Ratti, and has children living.

Mrs. Gordon certainly did not spoil her only son, for he wrote of her in "Early Adieux"—

"My Mother is a stately dame,  
Who oft would chide with me;  
She saith my riot bringeth shame,  
And stains my pedigree.  
I'd reck not what my friends might know  
Or what the world might say  
Did I but think some tears would flow.  
When I am far away.  
Perchance my Mother will recall  
My mem'ry with a sigh;  
My gentle sister's tears may fall  
And dim her laughing eye;  
Perhaps a loving thought may gleam,  
And fringe its saddened ray,  
*When like a nightmare's troubled dream*  
I, outcast, pass away.  
Then once again, farewell to those  
Whoe'er for me have sighed;  
For pleasures melt away like snows,  
And hopes like shadows glide.

Adieu, my Mother ! if no more  
 Thy son's face thou may'st see  
 At least those many cares are o'er  
 So oft times caused by me.  
 My lot is fix'd ! The die is cast,  
 For me home hath no joy !  
 Oh pardon then all follies past,  
 And bless your wayward boy !”

There are still Gordons of the family living in Gloucestershire. Miss Frances Gordon of Wickwar, Gloucestershire, who has given great assistance in the compilation of this book, was Lindsay Gordon's first cousin.

It is said that at times Mrs. A. D. Gordon had fits of most diabolical, uncontrollable temper, indeed she seemed almost beside herself. She let her eldest child fall from her arms, and poor little Amy Christian was crippled and died very young. She sent Theodora (buried in Trinity Churchyard) out in a bitter east wind, and that was the end of her. Ada Mary only lived to be fourteen. “She was a very nice, pretty girl,” Miss Gordon says, “and very kind to me when I was a tiny child. She died of consumption. Lindsay never published the lines he wrote to Inez, and about Ada's grave. They were found after his death. He, like every one else, had a deep affection for this gentle and charming child who was only nineteen months older than himself. Inez married an Italian, Cavaliere Ratti. Her son Henri came to see Miss Gordon once—and told them about Inez's last years.

Gordon mentions 25, Priory Street, in one of his poems—

“How vivid Recollection's hand  
 Re-calls the scene once more !  
 I see the same tall poplars stand  
 Beside the garden-door.  
 I see the bird-cage hanging still  
 And where my sister set  
 The flower on the window sill,  
 Can they be living yet ?”

He also addresses one of his letters to Charley Walker from this house.

A Priory Street neighbour remembers "The poplars by the garden gate." There were three of them by the gate of a garden the Gordons had across the road opposite to their house. It was a piece of waste ground which Captain Gordon rented and turned into a garden. The poplars were cut down some years ago, though the ground is still a garden.

"Apart from these known causes for moodiness and melancholy," says Mr. F. Marshall, "Gordon had sorrows and trials which being domestic can hardly be told or even touched upon here." And again, "Gordon caused great anxiety to his retiring and methodical<sup>1</sup> parents, but they bore with him patiently until the last straw broke the camel's back in the form of fisticuffs." The late Fred Marshall in the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* says, "An escapade involving dangerous consequences which need not be particularised, helped to induce him to try his fortunes in Australia."

"It is well known to L. Gordon's friends and companions that although he retained to his penultimate days the physical vigour which marked his youthful efforts, and that daring spirit which is well described as 'cussedness,' he suffered intermittently from the consequences of his early life, and this forms the key to that bitter personal feeling which gives a dramatic touch to his writing.

"But apart from these known causes for moodiness and melancholy he had sorrows and trials which, being domestic, can hardly be told or even touched upon here. He never had the satisfaction which imaginative and talented men have so often experienced in the congenial society of friends. A well-built and blooded companion with *a mens sana in corpore sano* moved him, if not to positive jealousy, to excessive anger and disgust, for it was his aspiration to be everything that was noble, pure and true, and his inability to act up to his own standard of excellence infuriated him. In his life's path, calamity

<sup>1</sup> This epithet is grotesquely inapplicable to Mrs. Gordon.

appeared to follow calamity. Destiny not reason seemed the spinner of the web that was weaved for him. With Keats he might have exclaimed, 'Despair is forced upon me by habit.' But whatever be the inspiration, Lindsay Gordon's verses will be sure to attract attention."—(Quotation from *Examiner*, July 13, 1887).

The late Dean Close, when Rector of Cheltenham, campaigned most successfully against the once famous Cheltenham Steeplechases, so that at that time the town was called "Close Cheltenham." Gordon refers to this in his *Racing Ethics*, written in Australia.

The Gordons were buried in Trinity Churchyard, and probably attended the church which is under the sway of the Simeon trustees, and the incumbent of the daughter church held the same views as Dean Close. Mrs. Gordon is said to have been almost eccentric in her religious views, and one can imagine that Gordon's love of steeplechasing and boxing did not make his home life any happier.

In the Cheltenham College Register is the following reference to Lindsay: "GORDON—Adam Lindsay. Son of Captain Adam Durnford Gordon, Bengal Cavalry, 4, Pittville Villas, Cheltenham, born 19th of October, 1833. Day boy. Came to College July 1841. Left June 1842. Re-entered 1851. (It is not known when he left.)

"Was at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, 1848, but left before receiving his commission. For some time sheep-farming in South Australia, afterwards went to Melbourne, Victoria. Represented<sup>1</sup> *Victoria* in the South Australian Parliament 1865-66. Was considered the first of Australian poets and the best Amateur Steeplechase rider in the colony.

"Author of *Sea Spray* and *Smoke Drift*, *Bush Ballads* and *Galloping Rhymes*, *Ashtaroth* and *Dramatic Lyrics*, etc. Died at Brighton near Melbourne, 24th of June, 1870.

"For an account of his works see *Temple Bar* for February 1884 and October 1897, also J. Howlett Ross's

<sup>1</sup> i. e. the District of Victoria in South Australia.

*Life of Adam Lindsay Gordon*, published by S. J. Mullen, 29, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., and H. M. Walbrook's *Life and Writings of Adam Lindsay Gordon*, published at the *Cheltenham Chronicle Office*."

The first boy entered at Cheltenham College was the late Lord James of Hereford, who as a very little boy remembered being alone in the school and receiving the other new boys one by one "as a host might his guests." Gordon was also one of the first boys, though he was only a child of seven. "No one can appreciate his (Gordon's) works more highly than I do," said Lord James, "but I regret to say I never knew him. I have no recollection of his being at the College 1841-42, whilst I was at school there." And again, "I have the greatest admiration for Gordon's poems."

Mr. H. H. Hornby remembers Lindsay's looks well and those of "that 'grand old man' his father, who was so much loved and respected." He thinks Gordon was at a Preparatory School during some of the years between his first and second periods at the College. Mr. Hornby also says that he "had a very dreamy look, as became a future poet. He was a Day boy and in the Military and Civil Department, and I was a Boarder and in the Classical Department, he was also two years my junior, so that we did not come into very close contact."

Mr. W. de Salis Filgate, another old schoolfellow of Gordon's, like Mr. Hornby was on the Classical side of the College, or he would most likely remember Gordon better.

Mr. Filgate, who was Captain of the School XI, had not the same tastes; he did not care for the same sports as Gordon, who was "not fond of cricket and football, though very fond of horses."

What Mr. Filgate knew of Gordon he "always liked. Gordon was a general favourite—high-spirited and very amusing—and good company. He caused his father a good deal of anxiety through his love of adventure and generally boyish exploits, but never through any evil

ways. He was a very pleasant-looking boy with dark curly hair."

Mr. Pickernell (the "Mr. Thomas" of Grand National fame), who is generally considered to have been the "ancient friend" mentioned in the heading of this chapter, says, "I ought to remember Gordon, for I sat three places from him at the College—we were the greatest of friends." He says also that Gordon was considered "a stupid and unintelligent boy at the College."

Richard Goodall Gordon, Lindsay's cousin, was much younger than Lindsay, and came to the College after he had left. He was in 1868 an assistant master at the King's School, Canterbury. He died comparatively recently. He was the son of Lindsay's uncle at Worcester. Captain Robert Cumming Hamilton Gordon.

Richard Goodall's elder brother, Hamilton Thomas, who was born in 1836, was nearly three years younger than Lindsay. He seems to have been a clever, industrious boy, and no doubt Mrs. Gordon often called Lindsay's attention to the difference between his own school career and his cousin's. In 1851 Hamilton won the fourth class prize at the College Prize-Giving in June. In 1852 he won the Divinity Prize.

When in the first class (second Military Division), Hamilton Gordon won the Scale plan-drawing prize (Reid's Law of Storms). And the year before Lindsay sailed for Australia, Hamilton finished up his Cheltenham career with *éclat*. The *Cheltenham Journal* for December 11, 1852, has the following paragraph about him—

"A 4th India Cadetship presented to the College by Sir F. Law-Lushington, has been awarded after a severe competition to Mr. Gordon, a nephew of A. D. Gordon, Esq., the Hindustani Master of the Institution." At Addiscombe Military College, Hamilton Gordon won the 1st Prize for Military and the 2nd for Civil Training. He became 2nd Lieutenant in the Bengal Engineers in 1855, Lieutenant in 1857, and died on the Hoogly, off Calpee,

in 1861. Thus, at only twenty-five, his promising career was cut short.

Robert Adam Gordon, son of Thomas Rowley Gordon, Esq., Bengal, another uncle who lived in Cheltenham, was born March 6, 1832. He was a Day boy and left December 1849. He seems to have been very popular, and many old Cheltonians talk of him when questioned about Adam Lindsay. He was afterwards in the War Office, and died early of consumption. Captain Vaughan says that Lindsay was far gone with consumption when he shot himself.

Miss Gordon says "Robert Adam Gordon was the son of my uncle Tom (Thomas Rowley Gordon), his father was in the Guards—the Duke of Gloucester took him and my father both into his regiment. He (Thomas Rowley, married a sister of my mother's, so we were double first cousins, and we used to see a good deal of him. He was one of the first boys when the College was opened."

Mr. W. L. Newman, one of Dobson's most brilliant Cheltenham pupils, a Fellow of Balliol, who won the two great University Scholarships at Oxford, remembers walking home from the College with Captain Gordon, who was a tall, fine-looking man—but he looked very old and sad. Mr. Newman once went to a dance at 4, Pittville Villas, and sat next Captain Gordon at supper. That was the only time he met Inez—who was a remarkably nice-looking girl. With Robert Gordon he was much more intimate, indeed they became great friends. Robert was a very nice fellow.

Captain R. C. H. Gordon had a son Adam, brother of Miss F. Gordon, who was not at Cheltenham College at all, but was at Cambridge with Robert Adam.

It is not known when Gordon left the College, which he re-entered in 1851. Between 1841 when he left the College the first time, and 1848 when he entered Woolwich, Gordon is said to have been in Cheltenham or its neighbourhood. He re-entered the College with a notoriety in local sporting

circles which he could not have built up had he been away at a Boarding School. There is no record at the College that Gordon was ever expelled—though one local writer says that his fondness for riding and his desire to be conspicuous got him into serious disrepute with the College Magnates. . . . The fame which followed these “deeds of the brave and blows of the strong” proved his bane, for he was “scratched from all his engagements” at Cheltenham College.

Mr. Howlett Ross says that Gordon’s “name was erased from the list of pupils at Cheltenham College for insubordination or other acts as culpable. He himself admitted that he was expelled from another public school for absenting himself in order to ride in a steeplechase.” Mr. Hunter, who has for many years been bursar and secretary at Cheltenham College, denies this, and so does the present headmaster of the Royal Grammar School at Worcester where Gordon was a pupil for a year and a half (see p. 7). Other old Cheltonians have recorded their reminiscences of Gordon.

The records of the Royal Academy, Woolwich, contain the following entry —

“ADAM LINDSAY GORDON—

Appointed 29th May /48.

Age 14 yrs. 7 mths.

Joined 8th August /48.

Passed Probationer’s Exam. 12th Decem. /49.

Withdrawn 30th June /51 in pursuance of his Lordship the Master-General’s direction contained in Mr. Elliott’s letter of 14th June 1851.”

There is no trace of this letter at Woolwich, and it is probable that it was destroyed in the fire which occurred there in 1873.

From an extract copied from Major Guggisberg’s book *The Shop—The Story of the Royal Military Academy*, it would appear that Gordon’s love of sport led him into acts which were certainly unconventional.



“Of Adam Lindsay Gordon the Australian Poet and Stockrider ‘Gunner Jingo’ (Gen. T. Bland Strange) says, ‘He was the exact opposite of Charles Gordon, a dreamy lad with a far-off look in his eyes, indicative perhaps of the touching and philosophical ballads so dear to every Australian heart, redolent as they are of fatalism and wattle blossoms, though scarcely indicative of the man who “beat the Favourite.” He was a keen sportsman, however, even in those early days; so keen, indeed, that it led to his leaving the R.M.A. Passionately fond of animals and devoted to racing, he bought a horse, agreeing with the dealer to pay for it by instalments. As a local meeting was coming off he entered for one of the races, and spent his spare time in training his horse. Unfortunately, funds ran out, several instalments became overdue, and the dealer refused to let him take his horse out of the stable. Here was a predicament! Gordon stood to lose heavily if his horse did not start, so with his bosom friend among the cadets, he stole the steed from the stable the morning of the race, rode him gallantly to victory and paid the inevitable consequences by being summoned for horse-stealing. In Australia he wrote his beautiful, stirring, pathetic poems—who has not read them has missed much.’”

This story is almost identical with the Worcester one—Major Guggisberg thinks that Gordon did not steal two horses, but that tradition had merely transferred the locality from Worcester to Woolwich.

It is very strange that so little is known of Gordon’s three years at Woolwich. Mr. Frederick Marshall says that while there “from all accounts he displayed his athletic acquirements to some tune.”

Major-General Cardew says: “I recollect Adam Gordon very well, we joined the R.M. Academy together in August 1848; as near as I can recollect we were ninth and tenth in a batch of thirty-five cadets, and sat in adjoining desks during our studies for the first six months, and therefore knew one another well and became great

chums. I recollect being struck with his steady, assiduous character, we both had a rough time of it during our two first terms, but were none the worse for it. I rather think he was a sharper boy than I was. After the first examination we were not so closely associated and met only now and again, for we were in different buildings, both as regards living and studies. I am sorry I cannot give any further information about my (one-time) old friend, for we were destined never to meet again after leaving the Academy. I am sorry to think from your letter that my friend of early days is not now alive. . . . Thank you for sending me the photograph of my old friend Adam Gordon, poor fellow, his was a somewhat tragic history. He and I must have been at Cheltenham College together for a short time. I was there from 1845 to 1848, but he left the College before we went up for the Academy."

Miss Sidebottom says she thinks Lindsay got into rather hot water for keeping a horse at Woolwich, "which was against the regulations, and he could not afford it."

"I'm going to perform again the week after the races," wrote Gordon from Cheltenham to a friend in Worcester in 1853, "at the York Theatre in an amateur performance, having had my services strenuously requested to *contribute to the talent of the company*." Mr. W. J. Crawford (the Editor of the *Cheltenham Looker-On*) says, "As to Gordon's reference to the York Theatre, he must have meant the Lyceum Theatre, which in 1853 occupied, I believe, the site of the present Oddfellows' Hall in York Passage, High Street."

Mrs. Turk, daughter of the printer-actor, Mr. Shenton, remembers Gordon well, but as a lover of poetry rather than for his connection with her father in private theatricals. She was a very young girl in her father's shop and Lindsay used to come in sometimes with Fred Marshall and others, but often alone. "He would ask for my father, and I used to go and fetch him—and then he would talk to my

father for a long time. He never said much to me beyond asking if father was in or saying good-morning. But I always associate him with one particular corner of the shop. He used to sort of loll up against the wall at the end of the counter nearest the window. It is all very much altered but I can see him there now, very tall, with dark curly hair, loosely-built with no chest at all, and dressed in an extraordinary green coat, not bottle-green, exactly the colour of that aspidistra plant over there. He looked as if he had outgrown his strength and he stooped very much. My father loved poetry and was always reading and trying to educate himself more and more—I dare say this had given them the same tastes, and that was why they liked talking to each other so much.”

Colonel Kendall Coghill, C.B., a distinguished old Cheltonian who, like Gordon, went to Cheltenham College on its opening day and was present at the storming of Delhi, says : “ Though you have trenched down deep into my ‘subliminals’ you have not gone deep enough to enable me to recall Adam Lindsay Gordon. I attribute my failure to the fact that he could have been but a short time there with me, for though we were both in the College in 1841 I can find no trace of when he left so as to enable him to *return* in 1851. He, too, took a prominent part in private theatricals.”

One catches glimpses of Gordon’s life after he left Cheltenham, some of which do not seem to have been sketched even in Australian writings about him. A Cheltenham resident, Mrs. J. A. Fergusson, remembers seeing Gordon when she was a child on a station in South Australia. She says he was very tall with clear-cut features, and looked very fit, and had not an ounce of superfluous flesh on him. His hair was thinner and more closely cut than in his portraits. He had a very prominent Adam’s Apple in his throat, which feature impressed itself on her childish mind. Her husband, Colonel Fergusson, was, at the time of Gordon’s death, his brother’s aide-de-camp when the late

Sir James Fergusson was Governor of South Australia. She says she well remembers the general grief and consternation which the news of Gordon's death caused. One wonders if "the Sick Stockrider," when the evil days came on him, in which he said there was no pleasure in them, felt a longing for the prim, pretty town he had shocked so long ago. When he was in it he loved the country round, and felt as if he could only breathe up among the hills, but now it would do him good to see it all again; the little cheerful house in Pittville Villas, the gloomy high house in Priory Street; even all the old ladies in bath-chairs hurrying to hear the Elect of the Simeon trustees; or his dear Prestbury at whose church things are tending upwards. Or perhaps could he return he would wander into gloomy Trinity, in whose churchyard, beneath that cruel, hideous stone, slept all this Stockrider's dear ones, parents and sisters.

The folks in Trinity Church Parish in Cheltenham know next to nothing of Gordon. How should they indeed? It is only the parish where the seven-year-old commenced his long connection with Cheltenham, and where his parents and sisters were buried. Why, indeed, should he be remembered there? Yet an almanack was made up of the favourite quotations of the Parishioners of Trinity—and by some strange chance two stanzas of Gordon's got into it. So there is hope that Gordon's two great Cotswold poems may yet be read and loved in Trinity Parish, Cheltenham. People may ask who wrote them, and be told that they are "only raking up the disreputable past of a disreputable person." He is past their scorn. He called on them for pity—called on his dead in turn, and there was none to pity him—not one—

"All silent—they are dumb, and the breezes go and come,  
With an apathy that mocks at man's distress;

Laugh scoffers, while you may!

I could bow me down and pray,

For an answer that might stay my bitterness."



SWEET ST. MARY'S, THE PARISH CHURCH OF CHELTENHAM.

*From an engraving by H. Lamb.*

“Hark! the bells on distant cattle  
Waft across the range,  
Through the golden-tufted wattle,  
Music low and strange:  
Like the marriage peal of fairies  
Comes the tinkling sound,  
Or like chimes of sweet St. Mary's  
On far English ground.”

*A. L. Gordon, in "Faint Exoptatus."*



St. Mary's Parish Church, the "sweet St. Mary's" of Gordon's poem, is the subject of an excellent monograph by Mr. J. Sawyer, editor of the *Cheltenham Examiner*. The bells Gordon heard had lately a narrow escape of falling down, steeple and all. In the church is the monument to Lady d'Oyley. Warren Hastings wrote the inscription and used to come to Cheltenham to superintend the erection of the monument during the absence in India of his friend Sir John d'Oyley. Hastings and his wife stayed in Cheltenham several times—he was closely connected with Cheltenham and the Cotswolds. He lived a long time and was buried at Daylesford. There are Hastings's buried in the parish churchyard—possibly relatives, and before Warren went out to India the first time, he made over to his sister the piece of land where the Plough Hotel now stands.

But there was a remnant even in Cheltenham; Frederick Marshall, his faithful friend tried to keep Lindsay's memory green. The *Cheltenham Examiner* and the *Cheltenham Looker-On* welcome any discussion about Gordon, and Mr. H. M. Walbrook's pamphlet on Gordon appeared originally in the *Cheltenham Chronicle*.

George Stevens put away one of Lindsay's poems, which was found after his death among his letters, and old Mr. Holland kept two faded newspaper cuttings about the poet, whom he remembered as a school-boy.

## CHAPTER X

“THE KNOCK OUT OF EDWARDS BY LINDSAY GORDON”

“When with satellites round them, the centre  
Of all eyes, hard pressed by the crowd,  
The pair, horse and rider, re-enter  
The gate midst a shout long and loud,  
You may feel as you might feel just landed  
Full length on the grass from a clip  
Of a vicious cross-counter, right-handed,  
Or upper-cut whizzing from hip.

And that's not so bad if you're picked up  
Discreetly, and carefully nursed;  
Loose teeth by the sponge are soon lick'd up,  
And, next time, you may get home first!  
Still I'm not sure you'd like it exactly  
(Such tastes, as a rule, are acquired),  
And you'll find in a nutshell this fact lie,  
Bruised optics are not much admired.

Do I bore you with vulgar allusions?  
Forgive me, I speak as I feel,  
I've ponder'd and made my conclusions  
As the mill grinds the corn for the meal.  
So man, striving boldly but blindly,  
Ground piece-meal in Destiny's mill,  
At his best taking punishment kindly,  
Is only a chopping-block still.”

*A. L. Gordon in “Ex Fumo dare Lucem.”*

THEY walked down the High Street, two college-boys—a tall curly-haired boy of seventeen, and a boy about a year younger, with very blue eyes.

The Law of Opposites and the Love of Sport had drawn them together despite some difference in age and disposition. They passed the Town Clock—below the salt, so to speak, and beyond the Great Gulf. One half the world



in Cheltenham does not know how the other half lives. They went on, even to the region of fried-fish shops and tripe and such-like. Details like these troubled not the Earywig's votaries and of such were the twain.

They do not seem to have loomed largely in the College prize-lists, though one was the son of its Professor of Oriental languages, and both lads had relatives who preferred serious study to sport and would have liked to have kept them on the right side of the clock. The bigger boy was Adam Lindsay Gordon.

The other, Thomas Pickernell, a hero of the Sporting Press, won three Grand Nationals and countless other steeplechases. It was quite another sport that drew them hitherwards. They turned down an alley to the right of Lower High Street. This, again, had a sharp turn in it, and then there was an open door and a steep stair-case.

At the top of the stairs stood the great Earywig himself, for this was his innermost shrine—the Roebuck Inn—and now his admirers were coming thick and fast. Soldiers and sailors and lawyers (and some say magistrates), sporting men of all sorts and sizes, and College boys. It was a big room with two painted chimney-pieces and an old-fashioned wall-paper which gave it a homely appearance.

A great chandelier lighted it, and there were raised tiers of seats at the end near the door and a clear space at the top of the room.

It was a grand field-day of the Earywig's pupils, and to-night the College boys had turned up in force, for the last item on an attractive programme was a set-to between the Professor of the Fistic Science of "the classic Roebuck" and the son of the Professor of Oriental Languages at Cheltenham College.

Gordon was Edwards's show pupil, and Jem had grown quite proud of him and was generally glad to trot him out at these festive gatherings. As for Gordon, though of course the Roebuck was best of all, Mr. Pickernell says he "would go anywhere to get opportunities for boxing."

It is said that Gordon frequented Mops and Race-Meetings, and disdained no country-man as an antagonist. In booths at country fairs he challenged all comers to single combat and (*poor* Mrs. Harriet Gordon and *poor* College Master) handed round his hat afterwards for stray coppers wherewith to salve the bruises of his rustic opponents. For he was far too good for most of them. Only the great Earywig himself and Tom Sayers, who was training out at Prestbury, were much more than a match for Gordon in these parts.

“Gordon’s hobby was boxing,” says Mr. Pickernell, “and he used to go to Edwards’s place in High Street practising. Edwards was at this time the Middle-Weight Champion Fighter. I was very fond of boxing too, and used to go with him, but he was a year older and very grown up for his age. He seemed a man amongst men when I was only a boy. I seemed to occupy a much more important position than I really did when I acted as Lindsay’s bottle-holder while he sparred with Edwards.”

Well, on that particular evening the Professor of Pugilism was holding a sort of exam.—not exactly a *vivâ voce* one—what would one call it? At any rate it concerned itself as much with the outsides as with the insides of his pupils’ heads. There was, as has been said, a programme and Gordon was one of the star performers. More than this, Edwards had recently described the boy as “a mere target,” which remark had perhaps put his pet pupil’s back up a bit. At any rate it had spurred Gordon on to distinguish himself or perish in the attempt.

Mr. Pickernell says that Edwards’s description of Gordon was “a very true one. He was so stupid, he never tried to defend himself when he was boxing and never seemed to care where the other man hit him.”

Anyhow that evening Gordon attacked the Earywig fiercely, and although Edwards could easily have beaten him, if he had wanted to, he went on parrying Gordon’s blows and giving him every opportunity to show his skill.



JEM EDWARDS' BOXING SALOON AT THE ROEBUCK INN, CHELTENHAM. SHOWING THE MANTEL-PIECE WHICH CAUSED HIS KNOCK-OUT IN A ROUND WITH GORDON. (See pages 162-163.)

*Photo by J. A. Williams, Cheltenham.*



Suddenly some one complained that a thief was in the room and had picked his pocket. This momentarily distracted the attention of Edwards, who seems to have been his own M.C., and Gordon immediately got in a *blow* which sent Jem staggering against the mantel-shelf. He struck his head against it with such force that for some seconds the strong prize-fighter lay stunned and bleeding. "I can see that painted mantelpiece as if I were looking at it now," is "Mr. Thomas's" comment on the astonishment which he has not got over in sixty years.

Thus, by a mere fluke, Gordon was one too many for his Mentor and earned himself a spurious reputation as "the Conqueror of the unbeaten Cheltenham Champion." Thus happened what Mr. Pickernell calls the "Knock out of Edwards by Lindsay Gordon," in which he officiated as Master of Gordon's wardrobe so many years ago.

Says Fred Marshall—

"I knew Lindsay Gordon in his teens well. For more than three years I was his constant companion in many an escapade. I have held his clothes while he did a bit of fighting, and looked out for the police. He operated with his fists very often. He rather liked the ordeal of single combat, and generally got the best of it; construe this expression as you please.

\* \* \* \* \*

I was wont to wag my tongue and create disputes and difficulties when in mixed company, which Gordon had to adjust with his fists; I think he rather liked me to be with him to act as I did, the left-hand horseman to the wild huntsman who pointed the road to a row. As I was weak of body, I left him to do the fighting. He was like Jem Bludso, Colonel Hay's Fireman of the Mississippi.

"A careless chap in his talk was he,  
 A roughish hand in a row.  
 He never bragged, and he never funk'd,  
 I reckon he never knew how."<sup>23</sup>

He was gaunt and tall, gloomy and slightly savage-

looking (for he never smiled), and this precious coat<sup>1</sup> looked the most incongruous garment possible to conceive. However, no one ever ventured to poke any fun at him by reason of his get-up, for he told the truth when he said in his address "To my Sister"—

"But those who brand me with disgrace,  
Will scarcely dare to say,  
They spoke a taunt before my face  
And got unscathed away."

That was true for Lindsay! Those who tackled him were like the "Tarrier dawg who got hold of the wrong Tom Cat." "Small Hopes," in the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*.

George Stevens's son (Stevens, like Gordon, knew the Earywig well) said it was quite necessary to get a picture of the celebrated room at the Roebuck, as the moment when Edwards was knocked out by Gordon was probably the proudest moment in the life of the latter.

The picture has been obtained. It was taken in the presence of the old soldier who once carried the Earywig's love-letters to a lady in a neighbouring "Passage." Jem paid him a penny a letter.

With Mr. Bunce (Cupid's Messenger), was the Old Sailor who looks after Edwards's grave. He scrubbed the headstone very white when a photograph of the grave was taken. The inscription on the stone is very faint, and Mr. Miles often dilates on the cleverness of a North Country journalist who lay flat on the ground and managed to spell out every word of the lettering.

The old room at the Roebuck was rather dark when Mr. Miles and Mr. Bunce superintended the taking of its photograph. Cobwebs hung from the quaint old windows, but in the old-world atmosphere of gloom and mystery the tales of the old man who had known Edwards called up a mental picture as clear as any photograph. Already one seemed to see the rows of spectators, the denizens of Lower

<sup>1</sup> The Soapy Sponge coat.

High Street, a magistrate or so present unofficially (indeed these good sportsmen are said sometimes to have given a hint of an imminent police raid), perhaps Mr. Fred Marshall (the Sporting Lawyer who wrote so much and so lovingly of his friend Gordon), and Tom Oliver, George Stevens, William Archer and the college boys—Tom Pickernell, and very likely “big George Griffiths,” and his bigger brother Ned—and the rest.

One sees the prostrate prize-fighter and Lindsay and his second paralyzed with astonishment. But Mr. Bunce had other memories. During the photograph's long exposure and while in the darkened room one saw so clearly into the past, the old sailor suddenly turned round and dramatically pointed to the door: “I think I see him now,” he said, “standing at the top of that staircase, Jimmy Edwards with his curling ends of hair. And it was sixty years since the messenger of the gods had been in that room—and apparently a good many since any one else had. The heavy doorway (with the slit in it for Edwards's lady's love-letters), was jammed with mortar and dust and cobwebs; indeed, such was its massive strength and weight that even when unlocked it seemed built to defy scores of raiding policemen.

There was the steep staircase up and down which the feet of so many good sportsmen had passed. In the old room itself a phantom painter had left his paint-pots. He had put them even on the sacred mantelshelf itself. Perhaps he, too, had seen the presence at the top of the stairs, and had fled or ever he began to re-paint the “painted mantel-piece,” that Mr. Pickernell still sees in waking dreams.

Mr. Bunce is never tired of reciting his hero's deeds. The tragedy of Edwards is like a Greek play with Mr. Miles as the admiring chorus. But, unlike the Greeks, he makes the hero die on the stage. The chorus never knew the Earywig whose grave he tends so lovingly, but he has done a little in Edwards's line himself, and can speak as one having authority, and can sympathize to the full with the

middle-weight champion's occasional differences with magistrates and policemen (in other counties, be it said, for Edwards, unlike Gordon, was a prophet in his own country). Mr. Miles was once the possessor of Edwards's famous bird's-eye handkerchief which the Earywig wore round his waist when professionally engaged, and disposed gracefully across his knees when he had his best clothes on. It appears in at least two portraits of the middle-weight champion, and people of the last generation used to say of a peculiarly gay handkerchief "The Earywig would like this."

Mr. Miles put Edwards's handkerchief to baser uses—and *wore it out* to his present lasting regret. He was not a local man, and by the time he had learnt to worship Jem's memory the handkerchief was no more.

The late Mr. Holland of Prestbury knew Edwards well, and saw many of his fights. He could never find a portrait of Jem which really did him justice. He said he should have been taken quite side-face to show his profile, which was his strong point.

A writer of a quarter of a century ago says of the Earywig, that "he was never beaten on his merits, and his aquiline nose always presented an unbroken bridge, for none of his antagonists were ever allowed to hit it. (All the same it *looks* broken in Jem's later portrait.) Like Rob Roy (and Gordon himself) "he could touch his garters without stooping; and he was consequently too long in the reach to be tapped in a counter. The *nom-de-guerre* of Edwards was "Earywig." This was, perhaps, a rendering of Hairy Wig, for his Roman nob was covered with thick curly hair, which gave a finishing touch to his general Antinous-like conformation."

Tom Sayers, who trained for some of his earlier fights near Cheltenham, said of Edwards, that "he was the best man that ever stepped into a ring!" The two champions never met in real combat. "They often had a set-to with gloves, when, as a matter of course, they played light.





TWO PORTRAITS OF JEM EDWARDS THE EARWIG, THE MIDDLEWEIGHT CHAMPION, WHO HAD A BOXING SALOON AT CHELTENHAM AND TAUGHT GORDON HOW TO BOX. HE WON ALL HIS GREAT FIGHTS. HE HAS THE BIRD'S-EYE HANDKERCHIEF WHICH HE WORE ROUND HIS WAIST IN HIS FIGHTS SPREAD ON HIS KNEES IN THE LEFT-HAND PICTURE.

*Photo by Mr. Dunn, Free Library, Cheltenham.*



It has been said, and with much semblance of truth, that Sayers, with all his superiority of weight, could not have beaten Gordon's pugilistic preceptor; certainly Tom was not desirous to try."

But all this is a far cry from the old room where the photograph is being exposed, and the old sailor and soldier are fighting Edwards's battles over again.

"Arms and the Man," they sang as the sad old room, thick with memories and dust and cobwebs, played on their very heartstrings. And at the last they told how Jem was sent to prison for fourteen days owing to a difference of opinion with the magistrates "down in Nottinghamshire," as to whether or not gloves were a necessary part of Edwards's professional equipment in that county.

In Gloucestershire, among friends, such ceremony was not required, the local magistrates were prepared to see all the fun and be blind when it was convenient. Often they would give the wink which a blind horse feels in his bones and which meant a traitor in the camp, and as if with the wave of a magician's wand a prize fight became a respectable Queensberry Club sort of affair. Anyhow, the unappreciative Nottinghamshire magistrates caused Edwards's death. He caught a chill in prison and went into a galloping consumption, which, according to the old soldier and sailor, killed him within a fortnight of his release. If there is no mistake here Jem's last fortnight upon earth must indeed have been a crowded hour of glorious life. For in it he took part in an election riot, and tore off Colonel Berkeley's coat-tails. This was the last flicker in the socket. "Let me see this wonderful man," said a Gloucester magistrate. (No sportsman surely, or he would have seen the local idol before it was so shattered.) And Jem was wrapped in a blanket and carried into court. "Of course nothing was done to him," said Mr. Miles. During Edwards's brief illness he was seen about the town in a bath-chair, sadly altered from his pristine beauty. "The strongest of us has some weak spot," remarked the photo-

grapher, as he stood by his camera, watch in hand. Jem said in his last moments that he had fought many fights, but the last great fight with Death was the hardest one of all. Only the Angel who wrestled with Jacob until the day dawned prevailed against the middle-weight champion of England. He died at thirty-six, and they carried him over the way to the old cemetery. There he lies in company with Thomas Haynes Bayly,<sup>1</sup> and the "rank and fashion of the town," as Mrs. Haynes Bayly would have said.

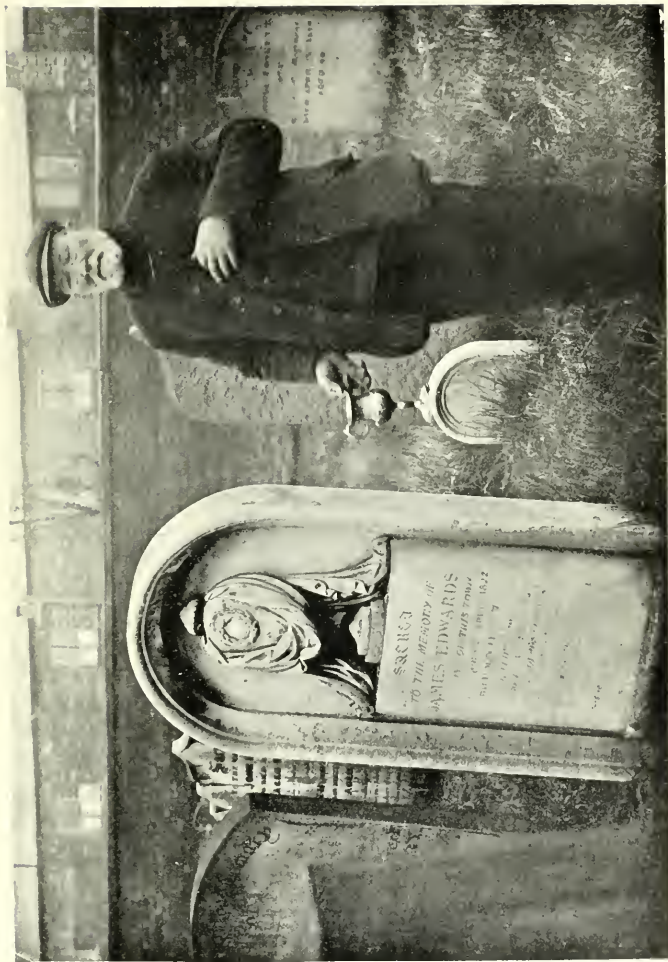
Edwards's memory is as green as his grave in the Lower High Street.

They put up a monument at the public expense to "One of the best conducted men of his class." And on the stone they graved the appropriate words "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." And Mr. Miles is going to scrape out the letters when the summer comes so that the Earywig's admirers will not have to emulate the Manchester journalist.

The railway has taken part of the old cemetery, and part has been made into a children's playground. It was all very well for Gordon to talk about "the sturdy station children pulling bush-flowers on his grave," and how "he might chance to hear them romping overhead." These things sound very well in print, but what *would* Haynes Bayly's devoted Helena say if she knew that her poet shared God's acre with the railway and a public playground, and was happy in that his ashes had not been moved altogether.

<sup>1</sup> Author of "The Mistletoe Bough" and the lines—

"Absence makes the heart grow fonder;  
Isle of Beauty, fare thee well."



JEM EDWARDS'S GRAVE IN THE CHELTENHAM CEMETERY. STEPHEN MILES, THE CARETAKER SHOWN HERE, WAS HIMSELF A HUMBLE FOLLOWER OF JEM EDWARDS.

*Photo by J. A. Williams, Cheltenham.*



## CHAPTER XI

### ANOTHER BOXING CHAPTER—"SUCH AS JEM EARYWIG CAN WELL IMPART"

"No game was ever yet worth a rap  
For a rational man to play  
Into which no accident, no mishap,  
Could possibly find its way."

*A. L. Gordon in "In Utrumque Paratus."*

ONE of Gordon's earliest surviving rhymes is a free translation of these words—

"*Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes  
Emollit mores, nec sinit esse ferus.*"

which Lindsay rendered into this—

"To rightly learn the pugilistic art,  
Such as Jem Earywig can well impart,  
Refines the manners and takes off the rough  
Nor suffers one to be a blooming muff."

Jem's lessons in boxing nearly came in usefully in Gordon's career as a mounted policeman (if the famous episode in "Wolf and Hound" is really autobiographical).

"Bang! and my pistol arm fell broke  
*I hit with my left hand then—*  
Hit at a corpse through a cloud of smoke,  
For I'd shot him dead in his den!"

says Gordon in his realistic account of his capture of a noted bushranger for which he is said to have received the Government reward of £500. His victim's name is said to have been Marshall.

"The boxing-boom was upon Gordon when he wrote 'Hippodromania,' for in it describing the feelings of a winning jockey as he rides back amid the shouts of the crowd he speaks of his own feelings after a bout with naked

knuckles." A writer in an old *Sporting Chronicle* tells how Jem's other pupil, Gordon's friend, put the Earywig's precepts into practice.

"The funniest experience Mr. Pickernell<sup>1</sup> ever had was in France. He had a dispute with the Duc de Gramont as to what constituted a gentleman, and, in true French fashion, the Duc thought the point could only be decided by a duel either with rapiers or pistols.

"Mr. Pickernell apparently had other views on the matter, but it was an affair of honour, and the man who could fracture his skull and re-appear smiling as soon as the doctors would permit him to get into the saddle again was not likely to be scared by a peppery French aristocrat. Early one morning the parties met in a lonely wood, and Mr. Pickernell won the toss for weapons. When he saw the 'louis' drop in his favour, Mr. Thomas astonished the Duc by squaring up to him in the orthodox English fashion, and while the Frenchman was volubly protesting that he did not understand boxing, the English rider sent him to mother earth with a lovely straight drive. That was sufficient for His Grace, who promptly decided that Mr. Pickernell's conception of a gentleman was the correct one, and the two became really good friends afterwards." But he called out Mr. Dillon, the editor of the *Parisian Sport* for telling the story in print, and shot him through the heart, with Mr. Pickernell acting as his second.

Mr. Pickernell is quite ready to this day to demonstrate the defects of Gordon's method of boxing. Whatever he has forgotten about him he remembers all about that.

Jem Edwards started out in life as "boy" in a public-house in Pittville Street. His master, an old prize-fighter, scolded Jem and riled him so much that the lad went for the landlord and gave him such a dressing down that Burge's father (did they say?) and other experts determined to give this infant prodigy his chance in life. Jem no longer blushed unseen, but was trained—and blossomed

<sup>1</sup> The "Mr. Thomas" of Grand National fame.



out into the unbeaten middle-weight champion of England.

"He had," said Mr. Holland, "a left-handed sort of way of fighting which was most disconcerting to his opponents." But perhaps his greatest asset was his unquenchable spirit. "He never knew when he was beaten, and so he never was."

One of Jem's most famous local fights was against a worthy named "Topper Brown." Two acquaintances met Jem in Red Lion Passage (like the Minotaur, Jem dwelt in tortuous alleys and passages), and one of them said by way of encouragement, "You've got to meet a younger man than yourself to-night Jem, don't be over-confident." "*No man* can beat me," said the prize-fighter solemnly, and no man ever did.

Tom Oliver and all Prestbury turned out by train one day to see one of Edwards's fights in London. They were nothing if not hero-worshippers, these Prestbury folks, in the brave days of old. They used to light bonfires on Cleeve Hill when Stevens won the Grand National, and they attended all the Earywig's fights without regard to time or space.

When the happy family got to London they all went to see the fight, engine-driver and all. It was somewhere Vauxhall way, and they came back as usual flushed with victory, and were all in the train ready to start Prestburywards, when lo! the train would not move. "Men came and looked in at the windows as if they wondered what school was in here;" there was a horrible pause, and even Tom Oliver must have lost his usual spirits. They had had a tiring day and seemed unlikely to reach their homes. Then word went round that the engine-driver had lost his watch at the fight and refused to start until he had found it. He had the measure of his passengers apparently, and said darkly, "that he knew it was in that train."

Finally they found the thief and compelled him to

disgorge his prey. The engine-driver was appeased, and they all went back to Cheltenham.

William Archer was a constant attendant at the Roebuck, and Gordon must often have met him there as well as at Prestbury.

At one period in Jem's career George Stevens and a sporting doctor used to find most of the money for his fights. Once his friends kept him hidden away on the banks of the Severn when a warrant was issued for his arrest for a breach of the peace. It is said that "Lindsay Gordon's fondness for riding and a desire to be conspicuous got him into serious disrepute with the College magnates, and caused great anxiety to his retiring and 'methodical' parents, but that the last straw broke the camel's back in the form of fisticuffs. . . . The fame which followed these deeds of the brave and blows of the strong proved his bane." Evidently his parents removed him from the College which he had re-entered after a three years' career at Woolwich. There, also, according to all accounts, he had acquired a considerable reputation as a smart and fearless boxer.

"Lindsay Gordon, like Lord Byron, whose mannerisms this Cheltenham Collegian imitated, was addicted to the noble art of punching heads. He was certainly well adapted for this pastime. There can be little doubt about his having been able at seventeen years of age to thrash his Byronic Lordship in his best day.

"I've something of the bull-dog in my breed,  
The spaniel is developed rather less,  
While life is in me I can fight and bleed  
But never the chastising hand caress."

wrote Gordon in his Cheltenham days.

He was a most determined antagonist, both with and without the gloves, being tall and strong for his age, and exceptionally expert in administering punishment, and a very glutton in taking it. Few trained pugilists cared to enter the mimic lists with him, for he never would consent to play light, and it did not conduce either to their

THE LATE GEORGE STEVENS, RIDER OF FIVE WINNERS  
IN THE GRAND NATIONAL (see pages 240-1), MENTIONED  
IN "HOW WE BEAT THE FAVOURITE."

*By permission of his son, George Stevens, Esq.*



GEORGE KEEVES, THE CHELTENHAM RIDING MASTER  
WHO GAVE GORDON HIS FIRST LESSONS IN RIDING, AND  
FOUND THE MONEY FOR TOM SAVER'S EARLY FIGHTS.

*From a photograph lent by the late Mrs. Miller, daughter of the late  
Fred Marshall.*





comfort or character to submit to his experimental hammering. “ For, even if they could have returned his favours in kind, it was not, according to professional etiquette, permissible to do so.”

Being near-sighted and devoid of the instinct of self-preservation, Gordon always insisted on getting close to his man; and as his blows were perfect pile-drivers he was a very awkward customer to deal with. “ Gordon never condescended to guard or evade a blow, but stopped every one by some portion of his person—his head especially.”

There is, perhaps, an allusion to some of Jem Edwards’s lectures in this little sermon of Gordon’s—one of the many moral discourses sprinkled about his poems.

“ Keep your powder dry, and shut one eye,  
Not both, when you touch your trigger;  
*Don’t stop with your head too frequently*  
This advice ain’t meant for a nigger.  
Look before you leap if you like, but if  
You mean leaping, don’t look long  
Or the weakest place will soon grow stiff,  
And the strongest doubly strong;  
As far as you can, to every man,  
Let your aid be freely given  
And hit out straight, ’tis your shortest plan  
When against the ropes you are driven.”

By the way Lindsay Gordon thought that St. Paul was an athlete of sporting tastes—very different from the small weak man of Church tradition.

He tells the Pharisaical Preacher Ephraim—

“ You had seemed more like a martyr  
Than you seemed to us,  
To the beasts that caught a Tartar  
Once at Ephesus;  
Rather than the stout apostle  
Of the Gentiles who,  
Pagan-like would cuff and wrestle,  
They’d have chosen you.”

Truly, St. Paul was all things to all men.

Through Mr. George Reeves, junior, “ that ’ talented

preceptor and sportsman, Gordon got acquainted with . . . Tom Oliver. Thus he made the acquaintance of the redoubtable Tom Sayers, the future champion of England, then training for one of his earlier fights under Tom Oliver's care, and the patronage of Mr. George Reeves, who was, at this time, a power in the sporting world. . . . Young Gordon, who was tall and well-knit, used to exercise Sayers with the gloves, and soon became more than a mere chopping-block. He also had the advantage of setting to with Jem Edwards . . . acknowledged to be the most scientific pugilist that ever stepped into a ring. With such *maîtres-d'armes* to instruct him, the apt pupil soon began to operate on occasional antagonists, and gave such severe lectures on heads as caused him to be regarded with respect as a delineator of the science of hitting, stopping, jobbing and getting away safe. . . . He delivered his blows straight from the shoulder like veritable pile-drivers." This last extract is from the writings of the late Mr. Frederick Marshall.

Gordon mentions Tom Sayers in "Hippodromania"—

"There's the Barb, you may talk of your flyers and stayers,  
All bosh, when he strips you can see his eye range  
Round his rivals with much the same look as Tom Sayers  
Once wore when he faced the big novice Bill Bainge."

Bainge's two fights with Tom Sayers took place after Gordon had left England, but he may have seen them sparring out at Tom Oliver's. He speaks as if he had done so, and the Barb's expression reminded him of Sayers's.

Pwll or Bill (Benjamin Bainge) was a Chepstow man, who afterwards became land agent to a Captain Carruthers, who had backed him to get into the eleventh round in his second fight with Sayers. He did so, and Bainge's patron remarked, "You can knock off now, Bill, I have won my money."

Mr. A. Page remembers the Earywig, he thinks, as well as any one now living. He thinks he must have seen

Gordon, and might remember him if he saw a picture of him. There were two or three boys that used to come down to Edwards's with Tom Pickernell. Edwards was backed by a man named Langham, who kept what is now the Nelson Arms in Lower High Street. Whenever Jem was short of money he went to Langham, who was a Conservative, and so, therefore, was Edwards, though most of the people who lived in that part of the town were Liberals.

Edwards's best known-fight (locally at any rate) was with Topper Brown, who, Jem said, was the best man he ever met. Langham said if Jem beat him he would give him a public-house, and so he did, in Rutland Street.

Jem kept some carrier-pigeons in a loft above the room at the Roebuck, and he took them to his various fights, and after the victory he loosed the pigeons and they went home with the news. They always had long streamers of blue ribbon tied on to them. Edwards was a very straight sort of man—a very quiet chap. If there was a row in his home, instead of turning out the disturbers of his peace he generally slipped out himself. He hated noise and quarrelling. I remember when I was about nine years old and was working in a market garden down near here I met Jem, who had been out shooting. He never liked to go home with his gun loaded. He said, “Do you want to earn a penny, little boy?” I said, “Yes,” and he said, “Well, fetch me a feather off that bird.” There was a sparrow sitting up in a tree and he pointed his gun at him and blew him all to pieces—there wasn't a sign of a feather left. Edwards was a splendid shot. I *was* disappointed at not getting that penny. I remember that day, the Earywig had on white duck trousers, a black velvet coat and a seal-skin cap. He was as pretty a man as ever I saw. He had curling hair, black as a sloe, and he wore it rather long. A wonderful fighter, very long in the reach, he was never beaten, though one man once gave him a pretty considerable dressing-down. They were sparring in a small room,

though, and Edwards always wanted plenty of space. Edwards was the Light-Weight Champion, but he challenged the Middle-Weight Champion. He came and he looked round the room and said, "Where is the man I am to fight?" and when he was shown Edwards, he said, "What—that *boy?*" *That boy* was a bit too much for him, though. Edwards had had to put on weight for this fight, and the Middle-Weight to train down.



## CHAPTER XII<sup>1</sup>

### GORDON IN THE COTSWOLDS

“ I remember the lowering wintry morn,  
And the mist on the Cotswold Hills  
Where I once heard the blast of the huntsman’s horn,  
Not far from the seven rills.  
Jack Esdaile was there, and Hugh St. Clair,  
Bob Chapman and Andrew Kerr,  
And Big George Griffiths on Devil-May-Care,  
And black Tom Oliver.  
And one who rode on a dark-brown steed  
Clean jointed, sinewy, spare,  
With the lean game head of the Blacklock breed,  
And the resolute eye that loves the lead,  
And the quarters massive and square—  
A tower of strength with a promise of speed  
(There was Celtic blood in the pair).<sup>22</sup>

*A. L. Gordon in “By Flood and Field.”<sup>23</sup>*

THE mist on the Cotswold Hills is raising itself gradually, and one by one the figures of Gordon’s old friends are emerging from it. These men mentioned in the poem were most likely all real people whom Gordon knew and liked. He lingers on Tom Oliver’s name as if he loved him best of all. Oliver seems to have been a very human sort of being with a good many failings and a lot of virtues. That Gordon liked to talk about him is certain, and now one could fill a book with the Prestbury people’s tales of Tom Oliver—and every one else’s tales as well. Just in Lindsay’s Cheltenham time he was a particular hero, for had he not twice won the Grand National already, and he won it a third time the year Gordon went abroad. That is a very charming picture of Oliver now in the Stork Hotel at Birmingham, and once in the old coaching inn, the Hen

<sup>1</sup> In these six chapters *Baily’s Magazine* has been constantly consulted.

and Chickens. The "brilliant and debonair steeplechase rider leans down from Birmingham's back with his engaging smile, and man and horse seem both alive"—as imperishable as Tom Oliver's memory.

"Here's a health to every sportsman, be he stableman or lord,  
 If his heart be true I care not what his pocket may afford;  
 And may he ever pleasantly each gallant sport pursue  
 If he takes his liquor fairly, and his fences fairly too.  
 He cares not for the troubles of Fortune's fickle tide,  
 Who like Bendigo can battle and *like Oliver can ride*.  
 He laughs at those who caution, at those who chide he'll frown,  
 As he clears a five-foot paling or he knocks a peeler down."

Does not the wise king say that a merry heart is a continual feast?—and Oliver's gaiety enlivens his old village still. Those who never heard of "Flood and Field" call him Black Tom Oliver—with the same lingering affection.

He was fond of poetry, too, and pleased when the tall College boy recited his heroic ballads at Prestbury long years ago. "I set Tom Oliver going across country" (says the celebrated Tommy Coleman in his *Recollections*), "he lived with Tyrwhitt Jones. I put him up on a mare and said, 'Let me see you take her over those three fields straight. I don't see why you shouldn't ride steeplechases.' She was a bay mare and a middling fencer. The Prince Consort admired her very much." C. Boyce, the only Blue-Coat boy that ever became a steeplechase jockey, lived with Tom Oliver for some time and was an excellent companion, having learnt from him the knack of telling an anecdote. But there were several more of them near the Seven Springs that morning. Even on a day like that there is something in the air up there that gets into one's head. There *we* say Father Thames sets out to see the world, but Lechlade, and the new geography books, say "No." It was a case of more than "Flood and Field" up here long ages ago if the geologists know anything. Noah's flood or one of that ilk washed over Leekhampton and the surrounding hills, and left shells and all manner of weird sea things fossilized up there.

Near here the bee orchid raises its brown and gold velvet head. The lily of the valley is in the woods beyond—and here we have wild guelder-rose berries and meadow saffron flowers, each in his season, and primroses and cowslips and all those flowers that Australia cannot grow. And so Gordon took up with wattle instead. It is rather queer to hear Gordon's fellow townspeople calling wattle "mimosa" as they buy bunches of it on the Promenade, and saying "It's a pity the scent is so overpowering."

Well, Gordon and the rest were all up near the Seven Springs and at a time of year when flowers are not out in England at any rate. "Small Hopes" thought Gordon used a good deal of poetic license in describing this day's happenings.

"This," he says, "is a rather hyperbolical account of a fox hunt on the Cotswold Hills." Gordon, it must be told, had very little experience with foxhounds, for he left England before he had reached maturity. He could not afford good mounts, and he seldom borrowed or hired a hunter on which he could see and learn the noble sport properly. Tom Oliver, the trainer and steeplechaser, used to put him up now and then; either on a rough young horse, to educate him by a short lesson with hounds or on a valuable steeplechase horse to "qualify."

The man who rode at the impossible jumps afterwards rode in that impossible ride at Balaclava. Hitherto the mists on the Cotswold Hills have obscured his name, yet slowly they are rising.

"I remember the laugh that all the while  
 On his quiet features played:—  
 So he rode to his death with that careless smile  
 In the van of the Light Brigade;  
 So stricken by Russian grape the cheer  
 Rang out while he toppled back,  
 From the shattered lungs as merry and clear  
 As it did when he roused the pack."

"Small Hopes" says, in the *Sporting and Dramatic*,

“ ‘ By Flood and Field ’ is a reminiscence of the Cotswold Hills,” wherein Lindsay had “ entered ” to hounds. I need not quote the verses to those who have the book. He speaks of Bob Chapman, who was then, as now, always to the fore; big George Griffiths, who does duty for his deceased brother, Ned Griffiths; the one evidently meant, Ned Griffiths the mellifluous, the silver-tongued (I speak, as Artemus Ward remarks, sarcastic), who rode a horse yeleft Boxkeeper, a steed which took a great deal of beating (dubbed by Gordon Devil-May-Care, for the sake of the rhyme), and Black Tom Oliver. I well remember these three and what good men they were to hounds. The latter was Lindsay’s preceptor, and all middle-aged sportsmen know that there never existed a more scientific and capable all-round rider than Tom Oliver, the *débonnair*. The locale is a slope of the Cotswold Hills, and here again, for the exigencies of verse, a country is described which does not exist. In no part of the Cotswold can I recall (a place ?) where a fox found on the hillside would go for the vale. Still less can I remember any Cotswold horseman talking like this—

“ Solid and tall is the rasping wall  
Which stretches before us yonder :  
We *must have it at speed* or not at all  
’Twere better to halt than to ponder.”

Now I have had great experience at wall-jumping on the Cotswolds, and I quite agree with the Duc de Chartres, who got an Imperial Crouner through riding fast at a five-footer, “ that to jump ze wall in ze fly,” as he observed while thrusting his hand into his hat, which resembled a concertina, “ is not ze proper way.” (It was not his fault, he explained, his horse was a vale hunter, and took “ ze bit in his teeth.”) Apart from the solecism in matters of wall-jumping, I have to add that in no portion of the Cotswolds will you find a high wall where—

“ A stream runs wide on the take-off side,  
And washes the clay bank under.”

Nor would there be marshy ground to splash through as you approach it, out of which it would be literally impossible for a horse to leap "with a stag-like bound." Lindsay was romancing a bit, playing to the desire of his Australian audience.

Lieut.-Colonel J. Watkins Yardley does not agree with this opinion. He says, "the best run I can recall with the Cotswold was with a hill fox that took to the vale." Mr. Holman also says that Gordon was right, and that hill foxes often take to the vale. Again, more modern sportsmen disagree with Fred Marshall. Colonel Yardley says, "There are several streams on the take-off sides of walls in the Cotswold country. Mr. Holman says, "There are still places like the one described here, near the Seven Springs. The ground gets very swampy as the source of the Thames widens out to a stream, and there are stone walls up there."

The account of this man's death almost exactly corresponds with the published accounts of Captain Nolan's death. The "shattered lungs," the extraordinary cry which seemed like the voice of an already dead man, "the van of the Light Brigade"—(Nolan was the first man killed) all are true to history.

Gordon evidently inclined to the idea that Nolan rode across before the advancing cavalry to cheer them on, though most writers think that he was trying to divert the Light Brigade into a less dangerous course by the *side* of the "Valley of Death."

Nolan was Irish; so was the hero of this poem.

"And one who rode on a dark-brown steed,  
Clean-jointed, sinewy, spare,  
With the lean, game head of the Blacklock breed,  
And the resolute eye that loves the lead,  
There was Celtic blood in the pair."

Gordon himself comes into the poem, out without leave, as usual—

" And between the pair<sup>1</sup> on a chestnut mare,  
 The duffer who writes this lay,  
 What business had 'this child'<sup>2</sup> there to ride?  
 But little or none at all;  
 Yet I held my own for a while 'in the pride  
 That goeth before a fall.'<sup>3</sup>  
 Though rashness can hope for but one result,  
 We are heedless when fate draws nigh us,  
 And the maxim holds good '*Quem perdere vult  
 Deus dementat prius.*'<sup>2</sup>  
 The right-hand man to the left-hand said,  
 As down in the vale we went,  
 'Harden your heart as a millstone, Ned,  
 And set your face as a flint,  
 Solid and tall is the rasping wall  
 That stretches before us yonder;  
 You must have it at speed or not at all,  
<sup>2</sup>Twere better to halt than to ponder,  
 For the stream runs wide on the take-off side,  
 And washes the clay bank under;  
 Here goes for a pull, 'tis a madman's ride,  
 And a broken neck if you blunder.'<sup>3</sup>

No word in reply his comrade spoke,  
 Nor waver'd nor once looked round,  
 But I saw him shorten his horse's stride  
 As we splash'd through the marshy ground.

\* \* \* \* \*

I remember one thrust he gave to his hat,  
 And two to the flanks of the brown,  
 And still as a statue of old he sat,  
 And he shot to the front, hands down;  
 I remember the start and the stag-like bound  
 Of the steed six lengths to the fore,  
 And the laugh of the rider while, landing sound,  
 He turned in his saddle and glanced around;  
 I remember—but little more,  
 Save a bird's-eye gleam of the dashing stream,  
 A jarring thud on the wall,  
 A shock and the blank of a night-mare's dream,  
 I was down with a stunning fall."<sup>3</sup>

Thus (says H. A. L., the old Shekarry, the late Major Leveson, in *Baily's Magazine*, three months before Gordon's death) in "Ye Weary Wayfarer by Flood and Field," a run with the Cotswold in which the author came to grief is

<sup>1</sup> Captain Nolan and another.

vividly described. . . . Major Leveson here reviews "Sea Spray and Smoke Drift," which, he says, is "the unpretending title of some very spirited and charming poems written by one of the best and boldest riders that this country ever produced and Australia matured.

"Twenty years ago the name of Lindsay Gordon was well known in the Cotswold district as one who rode straight and craned not; but, as the old country is not big enough to hold us all, he and many more of her stalwart sons—good men and true—prompted by love of adventure, made their way to the Antipodes (in the piping days of the great gold rush), and there helped to found Britain's second empire, that sturdy, off-shoot which, pray God, no demented statesman may ever sever from the parent stock.

"The innate pluck and manly bearing which carried him along in the van across country served him well during an uphill career, in a new land as he forged ahead in the hunt, so he took the lead and kept it amongst men of no common order. His sterling qualities gained him the good-will of all classes."

Three months after Major Leveson had written that review, Gordon had died by his own rash hand.

But this is all by the way. In *Baily's Magazine* for February 1870, Gordon's poem about the "Melbourne Cup" is quoted: "The Melbourne Cup of 1867, won by Tim Whiffler, which 'stands perfectly unique as a specimen of what racing poetry should be. No poet has drawn a poem more true to nature.' Two verses of this poem refer to Gordon's favourite topic 'The Charge of the Light Brigade.'"

"Did they quail, those steeds of the squadrons light,  
 Did they flinch from the battle's roar,  
 When they burst on the guns of the Muscovite,  
 By the echoing Black Sea's shore?  
 On! on! to the cannon's mouth they stride,  
 With never a swerve or shy;  
 Oh, the minutes of yonder maddening ride  
 Long years of pleasure outvie!

No slave, but a comrade staunch in this,  
 Is the horse, for he takes his share,  
 Not in peril alone, but in feverish bliss,  
 And in longing to do and dare,  
 Where bullets whistle and round shots whiz,  
 Hoofs trample and blades flash bare,  
*God send me an ending as fair as his*  
*Who died in his stirrups there!*"

Then comes a note, "Louis Nolan is here alluded to."

Lord Tredegar has been trying to recall the Christian names of his old comrades who fell in the Charge of the Light Brigade, but cannot recollect one called "Ned," who was a "sporting contemporary of Tom Oliver and Bob Chapman." He says that Captain Nolan, whose second name was Edward, may have been called "Ned" in his regiment, and that some old resident in the neighbourhood may know if he was among the riders to hounds here at that time.

Wigorn writes—"I have again read the 'Legend of the Cotswold,' and think it possible the late Captain Nolan is therein referred to, but more I cannot say. I notice, too, in the legend referred to, George Griffith is mentioned, *not* Edward (Ned). This, I should say, may be a mistake by Gordon in the names, for, if my recollection is correct, Mr. George Griffiths was a barrister and very short-sighted, in fact, not at all likely to have ridden to hounds at any time; but as to this, some of your friends at Cheltenham will know best."

Mr. H. O. Lord, the Cotswold M.F.H., remembers hearing that Captain Nolan's mother lived in Cheltenham in Gordon's time; and a "Mr. Nolan's" name occurs among the "Arrivals" to 12, St. George's Parade, given in an old Cheltenham journal.

Mrs. Nolan was then a widow, and Louis was one of three sons, all of whom were killed in battle. Therefore, if his mother lived in Cheltenham, the town was probably Captain Nolan's headquarters when in England. He was a very well-known rider, and would be likely to have hunted with the Cotswold (then the Berkeley) hounds when he stayed in the town. Captain Nolan wrote several books





CAPTAIN LOUIS EDWARD NOLAN, WHO BROUGHT THE ORDER FOR THE LIGHT BRIGADE TO CHARGE AT BALACLAVA, AND WAS THE FIRST TO FALL.

*Reproduced from "The Illustrated London News" of that date.*



about cavalry and horsemanship, and won some of the stiffest steeplechases that ever took place in Madras."

In Gordon's "Roll of the Kettledrum" is what seems a reminiscence of Nolan's death.

"One was there leading by nearly a rood,  
Though we were racing he kept to the fore,  
Still as a rock in his stirrups he stood,  
High in the sunlight his sabre he bore.

Suddenly tottering, backwards he crash'd,  
Loudly his helm right in front of us rung;  
Iron hoofs thunder'd and naked steel flash'd  
Over him—youngest when many were young—"

When Lord Cardigan came out of the Valley of Death grumbling because Nolan had "cheeked" him—he was told that he had better say no more, as he had probably just ridden over Nolan's dead body.

Gordon had very little imagination: he wrote "that he did know and testified that he had seen." From these references to Nolan it would appear that he not only knew his hero intimately, but actually was with him when he jumped over the wall and the rest.

Last, but not least, he mentions Nolan by name in "Ye Wearie Wayfarer," Fytte VII.

"Vain dreams, again and again re-told,  
Must you crowd on the weary brain,  
Till the fingers are cold that entwined of old  
Round foil and trigger and rein,  
Till stay'd for aye are the roving feet,  
Till the restless hands are quiet,  
Till the stubborn heart has forgotten to beat,  
Till the hot blood has ceas'd to riot.  
\* \* \* \* \*

But *Nolan's* name will flourish in fame,  
When our galloping days are past,  
When we go to the place from whence we came,  
Perchance to find rest at last.  
\* \* \* \* \*

Though our future lot is a sable blot  
*Though the wise ones of earth will blame us*  
Though our saddles will rot and our rides be forgot,  
Dum Vivimus, Vivamus!"

“The wise ones of earth” *did* blame Nolan at least for a time. He was at first thought to be the “some one” who “blundered.”

His ride “in the van of the Light Brigade” is indeed remembered, but his great jump up by the Seven Springs would have been forgotten, but for the hero-worshipping College boy who had no business there that day.

Even in his lifetime Nolan was looked on with some suspicion as a crank “who had written a book,” though he died at thirty-four a recognized authority on cavalry movements, and one who had written one or two standard works.

There was a great resemblance between these two adventurous spirits—reckless riders both, and not always too well appreciated by their contemporaries. Nolan’s death was the part of his life Gordon always envied him—

“Oh, the minutes of yonder maddening ride  
Long years of pleasure outvie!”

Monsignor Nolan, of 21, Oxford Terrace, W., who was asked if Captain Nolan was ever called Ned, says, “Some years ago I met Woods Pasha, then an old man, who recognized me, strange to say, by some likeness to Captain Nolan. *He spoke of him as ‘Ned.’*”

Monsignor Nolan’s letters prove that Nolan was called “Ned,” also that members of this Irish family live and have lived in Cheltenham and its neighbourhood for many years. Indeed, they may be said to prove that Captain Louis Edward Nolan was the real hero of Gordon’s “Legend of Cotswold.”

Lieut.-Colonel J. W. Yardley says, “I think Nolan was ‘Ned,’ the hero of the ‘Legend of Cotswold,’ or at any rate that Gordon meant that character.”

“Jack” Esdaile was the late Edward Jeffries Esdaile, Esquire, of Cothelstone, Somerset, born June 28, 1813, married, September 27, 1837, Eliza Ianthe, only daughter of the late Percy Bysshe Shelley (the poet) by his first wife, Harriette, second daughter of John Westbrook, Esquire, of London (*Burke’s Landed Gentry*).

The late Dr. Ker of Cheltenham remarks, in his reminiscences, that a greater contrast could not exist than there was between Shelley and his daughter Ianthe, as Shelley was, to say the least, an unbeliever, while Mrs. Esdaile held strictly evangelical views. Mrs. Esdaile was in no way remarkable, except as a good wife and mother. To her in her infancy Shelley wrote the beautiful little sonnet to Ianthe, beginning—

“ I love thee, Baby ! for thine own sweet sake ;  
 Those azure eyes, that faintly dimpled cheek,  
 Thy tender frame, so eloquently weak,  
 Love in the sternest heart of hate might wake ;  
 But more when o'er thy fitful slumber bending  
 Thy mother folds thee to her wakeful heart,  
 Whilst love and pity, in her glances blending,  
 All that thy passive eyes can tell, impart.”

Mr. Charles Edward Jeffries Esdaile (Jack Esdaile's and Ianthe's son) says of his father, “ He was a very fine rider, but gave it up from conscientious scruples about '52. He succeeded to this property in 1866 and died in 1881. . . . I cannot tell you more of his riding than what I have been told. My father would hardly ever refer to his unregenerate days, but occasionally the old Adam would peep out in such a way as this : Pointing to some hurdles which were the height of a deer park fence, once he said, ‘ Would your horse jump these ? ’ I replied that I should not dream of asking him such a question. He remarked, ‘ I had a little horse once that would think nothing of them.’ He had wonderful hands and could ride horses that very few would care to do. A famous jockey of those days who, I think, hunted with the Duke, observed to one of the field in a run in Somerset, ‘ no one could do that but Jack Esdaile.’ The feat referred to was nothing very unusual to a Somerset man. It was, I am told, a quick descent of a very sloping covert into a road.”

Hugh St. Clair, according to Lord Coventry, was a well-known name in Cheltenham at that time.

Bob Chapman, as a local sporting celebrity, runs Tom

Oliver hard. Many are the tales that are told of his romantic marriage, and of how King Edward VII used to pay private visits when Prince of Wales, to Mr. Chapman's house, the Oaklands. He (Mr. Chapman) hunted with the Cotswold Hounds comparatively recently—at any rate, compared with most of Gordon's other friends. Bob Chapman's old stables (now Mr. Alfred Holman's) are an ancient and picturesque landmark by the Prestbury race-course. Apparently Mr. Robert Chapman used to laugh at Gordon's many tumbles (he had one in the hunt described here)—

“There's lots of refusing and falls and mishaps  
Who's down on the Chestnut, he's hurt himself pr'aps  
Oh! it's Lindsay the Lanky says hard riding Bob  
He's luckily saved Mr. Calcraft a job.”

Robert Chapman was called “the pink of dealers and the pet of swells.” There was a story of how the “swell horse-dealer” (presumably Mr. Chapman) wrote to a friend something as follows—

“DEAR JIM,

“Can you let me have £500 on account? I can't get any money out of the Swells?”

“Yours truly,  
“BOB.”

To which came the prompt answer—

“DEAR BOB,

“Put me down among the Swells.

“Yours truly,  
“JIM.”

His runaway marriage with Miss Hogg turned out very happily.

Big George Griffiths on Devil-May-Care, says Mr. Marshall, “ought to be ‘big Ned Griffiths,’ who, by the by, never had a horse of the above name. ‘Box Keeper’ was the horse indicated, but that did not make so good a rhyme as the substitute; Mr. George Griffiths, well known as ‘the blind barrister,’ will bear me out.”

Gordon, however, was at school at least a year with Edward Goodall Stewart Griffiths and George Sumner Griffiths. They were the sons of Mr. Lewis Griffiths of Marle Hill, and were big boys when little Lindsay first went to college. They left in 1843. Lord James of Hereford thinks "George Griffiths, as mentioned in 'Flood and Field,' is correct." A stout young gentleman of that name, a son of Mr. Griffiths of Marle Hill, hunted with the Cotswold hounds during the fifties. He became a barrister on the Oxford Circuit. George and Ned Griffiths both rode in little scratch steeplechases at Prestbury with Gordon, and sparred with Jem Edwards.

One would think that Gordon would have known his school-friend's Christian names, though nearly every one who has been asked says *Ned* Griffiths is the one Gordon meant. He was a better-known rider in steeplechases and hunted much more than his brother. An old apprentice of Oliver's, however, says that Gordon meant *George*. There are legends of a great match on the Prestbury Park race-course, when Ned rode against the Duke of Hamilton, both on ponies. "Two big 'uns together." There is another legend that one of these brothers shared with Gordon the honour of "besting the Earywig," *Credat Judæus Apella*.

Andrew Kerr took part in the steeplechase when Gordon beat the favourite.

"Kerr made the running on Mermaid." He is said by a New Zealand correspondent of the Sydney *Lone Hand* to have been the father of Mr. Andrew Kerr of Great Bedwyn Manor, Wiltshire. Mr. Russell Kerr says this statement is incorrect, but he thinks Andrew Kerr of the poems is, perhaps, a distant cousin.

There are other cousins named Andrew who were in Australia at the same time as Gordon, and kept racehorses. Gordon may have known some of them in England.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE SCENE OF "HOW WE BEAT THE FAVOURITE"

We deck them in cream and in crimson  
In chocolate, tartan and blue;  
We flag them a course over fences  
And trust them to battle it through;  
We come with the best of our sportsmen  
And the fairest fair dames in the land  
To speed them away from the barrier  
And cheer them in front of the stand  
*But the riders, the steeplechase riders  
Go out with their lives in their hand!*"  
Will Ogilvie in "The Steeplechase Riders."

It was at Prestbury Park some sixty years ago that a College boy got off his horse after riding in the trials on the race-course. "There now, you young devil, *you've rode a race,*" said the kindly trainer who had given him his first mount. The boy was Lindsay Gordon, the trainer "Black" Tom Oliver.

Black Tom's words stuck somehow, as stray words will, in the memory of an old Prestbury resident who was young when he heard them. Thus is recorded the Poet's first attempt at steeplechasing.

Most likely the delighted school-boy never forgot those words either, and they pleased him more than all the cheering at the Melbourne Hunt Club Meeting in 1868 when he won his triple Victory: the Hunt Club Cup on Major Baker's *Babbler*, the Metropolitan Handicap Steeplechase on his own horse *Viking*, and the Selling Steeplechase on his own horse *Cadger*—these three on the same day without a fall.

Indeed, by the time of that Melbourne Hunt Club Meeting,



it was said that “ these races were ridden with a recklessness of danger that was simply intended to court death.”

But this utter recklessness was always Gordon’s leading characteristic, and Mr. Howlett Ross says in his Memoir of the Poet that “ Gordon loved the sport too well to seek his death by it.”

Most of Lindsay’s old friends in Cheltenham think that “ How we beat the Favourite ” is a *mythical* steeplechase.

But Mr. Stevens (George Stevens’s son), was hard to convince that this was a victory only by poet’s license. He stoutly maintained that “ Gordon wrote the poem after a real, and not an imaginary, steeplechase, and that it is by far too realistic for even a poet to have written out of his imagination,” and Mr. Finch Mason, a great authority, shares his opinion.

The late Fred Marshall thought it was a myth, and so does the late Editor of the Cheltenham *Examiner*, who published some of Gordon’s early poems, and remembers the gay attire and doings of Gordon in his latter days in the Garden Town.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Charles Jessop says that the two la Terrières and Gordon and the Griffiths and Mr. Barnet (owner of Sir Peter Laurie, the Holmans’ great pride) used to get up a sort of little scratch hunt steeplechases at Prestbury Park, and he is almost sure that he remembers that Lindsay won one with “ that black horse,” probably Lallah Rookh. It is not recorded elsewhere that Gordon won *any* steeplechase at Prestbury Park.

The poem is most likely an account of a real steeplechase which Lindsay saw when he was nearly fourteen, and would have given his eyes to have won. After all, of all people in the world, a *poet* need not be tied down to sober fact. To harness the Pegasus of the Centaurs’ Laureate were hard indeed.

Maybe Gordon in Australia, heard remarks anent Jackaroos on Buck Jumpers, and people who “ rode like

<sup>1</sup> Cheltenham.

English fox hunters," and straightway determined that no one in Australia should doubt that, whatever his Antipodean victories, he had gone one better in the Old Country. He was not going to have it believed that he had learned to ride in the Sunny South. Like his Sergeant Leigh who related his exploits "for the glory of God and of Gwendoline" Gordon, for the glory of Tom Oliver and of Prestbury Park took out a poet's licence and imagined such a steeplechase that it is *the* steeplechase of history—the Cross Country Rider's Classic.

He selected the most difficult course he had ever seen. The holder of the unbeaten record of five victories in the Grand National was good enough to start Lindsay off on his ride to victory with words of cheer which still ring down the ages in Australasia.

And, with himself, Lindsay immortalized Lallah Rookh, the heroine of most of his English racing adventures, turning with a wave of his magician's wand the black Louisa (late Lallah Rookh) into Bay Iseult.

The boy who won a hurdle race at Tewkesbury on Lallah Rookh, and *may* have won a steeplechase over the walls at Birdlip with the same mare, changed himself and his mount by a poet's dream into the deathless hero on Bay Iseult, who beat the Clown.<sup>1</sup> The Clown, who "gave Abd-el-Kader at Aintree nine pounds."

Once—and once only—the Cheltenham steeplechases were held at Knoverton, and the Prestbury authorities agree that the steeplechase won by the late Mr. William Holman on Stanmore, at the 1847 Cheltenham Meeting, was the race described in "How we beat the Favourite." Mr. Holland, who lately died in Prestbury, remembered every detail of this great event at Knoverton. Thus it can easily be understood how it was imprinted on the memory of Lindsay, who had seen comparatively few steeplechases. In every important detail the Knoverton course resembles the

<sup>1</sup> By a curious coincidence (mentioned elsewhere) Stevens met his death while riding a cob called the Clown.



KNOVERTON HOUSE, THE CHIEF FEATURE IN THE SCENERY OF "HOW WE BEAT THE FAVOURITE,"  
A TYPICAL COTSWOLD MANOR HOUSE. THE FACADE IS VERY BEAUTIFUL, BUT THE RACE PASSED  
ON THIS SIDE.

*Photo by J. A. Williams, Cheltenham.*



country described in, “How we beat the Favourite.” Prestbury Park race-course falls short of the poem by a stone wall if by nothing else. There never was a stone wall on the Prestbury Park race-course.

The Cheltenham steeplechases held at Knoverton in 1847 (and never there again, for the course was far too difficult for even the Prestbury men and horses) are described in the old Cheltenham *Journal*. “This meeting was unequalled in the annals of steeplechasing. The selection of the ground was splendid. Gordon’s “How we beat the Favourite” started in Perry Hill Field, near Prestbury.

They went through the lane to Knoverton House, and to the right of the latter over a stone wall into Mr. Turner’s orchard—over a stanked brook with gorse plants on the taking-off side—through Mr. Gyngell’s meadows to near Hewlett’s Hill. The turning flag was between Queen’s Wood and Cleeve.

The starting odds were 4 to 1 against Stanmore (W. Holman), 3 to 1 on Carlo and the Tramp.

Holman on Stanmore won by a short length. “Holman was,” says Mr. Finch Mason, “one of the most distinguished cross-country riders of his day.”

#### STARTERS

- |     |                                       |               |
|-----|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1.  | Mr. Smith’s STANMORE . . . . .        | W. Holman.    |
| 2.  | „ Evan’s Daddy Long Legs . . . . .    | W. Archer.    |
| 3.  | „ Tait’s Doctor . . . . .             | Owner.        |
| 4.  | „ Samuel’s Amazon . . . . .           | Ketton.       |
| 5.  | „ Wilmott’s Warwick . . . . .         | Boxall.       |
| 6.  | Captain Little’s Liberty . . . . .    | Jacobs.       |
| 7.  | Mr. Cornish’s Tavistock . . . . .     | Dalby.        |
| 8.  | „ Elliott’s Oppressed . . . . .       | Oliver.       |
| 9.  | „ Hutchinson’s Snipe . . . . .        | Bradley.      |
| 10. | „ P. W. Davidson’s Very Bad . . . . . | B. M. Walker. |
| 11. | „ Hall’s Tramp . . . . .              | Turner.       |

Tramp went away with a lead of a length and a half. Walker’s mare declined the first leap till all her companions had gone over, and lost fifty yards. Every one topped the

stone wall, but at the brook Daddy Long Legs rose too soon and dropped into it, and so did two others. Stanmore here wrested the lead from Tramp with Snipe third. So they rounded the flag at Hewlett's Hill, where one of Oliver's stirrup leathers gave way, and he finished the race without the use of it. (Another paper remarks that this was a great achievement on such a course.) The Snipe fell at the first fence returning home, Tavistock and Liberty soon keeping her company. After crossing the lane, Stanmore had a lead of two or three lengths. Holman led them at a good pace to the second extreme flag near Queen's Wood, and, as he came to the winning field, was followed by Daddy Long Legs, who, going at a rattling pace, had made up his lost ground wonderfully. At the brook again Very Bad tumbled in. On nearing Hewlett's Hill again, the Tramp joined Daddy Long Legs and went up to Stanmore and ran with him through a field. Here Tavistock fell. The orchard was then entered (a most dangerous place from the thickly growing apple and pear trees, of which two or three remain to this day), and, as he was passing through, Tramp hung, and ran with his head against a tree, inflicting such injuries as to cause his death, and at the same time his rider was severely hurt. Stanmore charged the stone wall into Knoverton lane three lengths before Daddy Long Legs, and the two were bearing too much to the right, but discovered their mistake in time to prevent being caught up by the Doctor and Carlo. Holman kept the lead over the remaining fences, and after a sharp but very pretty contest was winner by a length.

Lindsay Gordon actually rode in the Berkeley Hunt Cup steeplechase at the Cheltenham meeting at Prestbury Park on March 25, 1852. By poet's licence he seems to have made himself win this race, and made it take place at Knoverton, where stone walls and a superfluity of apple and pear trees added the extra spice of danger that his soul loved.

The steeplechase at Prestbury Park and the hurdlerace at Tewkesbury are the only races recorded in which Gordon rode. The steeplechase was “ of five sovereigns each, P. P. with silver cup added.” For horses that have been “ fairly hunted ” with any pack of hounds, twice round the steeplechase course about three miles. Gentlemen Riders. 4 year olds, 10st. 7lb. 5 year olds 11st. 6 years and aged, 11st. 7lb. Winner of steeplechase, hurdle or flat race, with twenty-five sovereigns or upwards, added, once 5lbs., twice 7lbs. extra.

1. Mr. T. Golby’s b. g. PLOUGHBOY, 11st. 7lb. . . . Mr. Holloway.
  2. „ B. Land’s br. h. General, 11st. 7lb. . . . „ Linden.
  3. „ Kitton’s ch. g. (h. b.) Linkboy, 11st. 5lb. . . „ I. Ward.
  4. „ G. F. Williams’s b. g. (h. b.) Conrad, 11st. 7lb. . A. Maiden.
  5. „ Harvey’s Libel, 11st. . . . . Capt. Mivers.
  6. Lord Hopetoun’s Cayenne, 11st. 7lb. . . . . Mr. Davis.
- Mr. Parker’s bl. m. (h. b.) *Louisa (late Lallah Rookh)* 11st. Mr. Gordon.<sup>1</sup>
- „ d’Arcy’s b. m. (h. b.) Guinare, 11st. 7lb. . . . Sir I. Malcolm.
  - „ White’s br. g. Spectator, 11st. 7lb. . . . . Capt. Haworth.
  - „ W. la Terrière’s ch. g. Cœur de Lion . . . . . Owner.

Ploughboy took the lead and maintained it throughout, winning in a canter; with the exception of the General, Linkboy and Conrad everything in the race was beaten at two miles, the old horse winning by seven lengths. A pretty contest took place for second place; General beating Linkboy by a head.

There is a very charming description of Prestbury Park Race-course in the old Cheltenham *Journal* of Saturday, April 9, 1853. It was written after the Cheltenham steeplechases of April 5 and 6, 1853. Gordon was most likely present and rode Louisa, and if so it was the last meeting he ever attended at Prestbury Park. His mare Louisa ran in the Berkeley Hunt Cup ridden by a jockey whose name is not given. She was disqualified because her rider had not been weighed.

Cheltenham has for many years been a well-known

<sup>1</sup> “Mr. Bolton” in the *Steeplechase Calendar*. “Mr. Gordon” in the report in the *Cheltenham Examiner* written by Fred Marshall and also in the *Cheltenham Journal*.

training centre, and such famous men as William Holman, George Stevens, Tom Oliver and William Archer have been connected with the town as trainers or jockeys. William Holman was settled in Cheltenham and was training and riding many winners about 1839. In 1841 he won two steeplechases at Andoversford, and on Xeno rode a dead-heat with Tom Oliver on Grayling at Cheltenham. In 1842, on Dragsman, he won the big race at Andoversford run over walls; and in 1843 the same race over a six-mile course, on The Page, both his own horses. In the same year he rode in his first Grand National; he never succeeded in riding the winner, though in 1852 he was third, and in 1850 fourth on Sir Peter Laurie. He trained Freetrader, the winner of 1856, in which year he also had engaged Sir Peter Laurie. In 1870 he trained The Doctor, when, with his second son George in the saddle, that horse was beaten by a head by The Colonel.

Mr. Alfred Holman, son of Mr. W. Holman, the actual winner of the steeplechase on which Gordon based "How we beat the Favourite" describes thus the course on which Gordon rode in the Berkeley Hunt Steeplechase.

"The old steeplechase course in Prestbury Park in the days of my father, W. Archer, Tom Oliver, G. Stevens, Bob James, etc., used to be a natural country, over natural hedge and ditch fences, ridge and furrow, round the country adjacent to the present course, and over a big natural brook on to the course again, and a straight run in; now it is continued to the inner part of the park, all regulation fences, stands, paddocks, etc., all beautifully built up to date and compares favourably with any steeplechase course in the Kingdom. It has one of the finest views of scenery if not *the* best, of any course in England, from off the elevated position having a beautiful and picturesque view of the Cotswold Hills all round, with the woods and fox-covers and newly-built houses dotted all the way up Cleeve Hill, and the pretty village of Prestbury close by. Of all sporting centres Cheltenham has a greater record,





MR. ALFRED HOLMAN'S (FORMERLY BOB CHAPMAN'S) TRAINING STABLES, A LANDMARK OF THE PRESTBURY RACECOURSE, ON WHICH GORDON RODE LALLAH ROOKII IN THE BERKELEY HUNT STEEPLECHASE, 1852. MR. W. HOLMAN WAS THE REAL WINNER OF THE RACE DESCRIBED IN "HOW WE BEAT THE FAVOURITE."

*Photo by J. A. Williams, Cheltenham.*



as regards sporting celebrities, and its ancient steeplechase meetings than any other in England, and I well remember Tom Oliver (when he lived at his stables at Prestbury), William Archer, when he kept the King’s Arms Inn at Prestbury, George Stevens, when he was in his zenith and also when he met with his fatal accident, Tom Pickernell, (whom my father used to train for), ‘Earywig’ (Jem Edwards, the then Champion Light-Weight of England), and hosts of others, and to finish I feel convinced the course at Noverton, where my father won on Stanmore and when Tramp (which he also trained) was killed, is the one and only course that could answer to the description of the poem of Lindsay Gordon, “How I Beat the Favourite.” If this brief memorandum is in any way interesting to you, I shall be only too pleased and I have no doubt I could tell you a lot more in connection with sporting Cheltenham, but perhaps not in connection with Lindsay Gordon. I trust this will arrive safely, with my best wishes for the success of your book,

Yours sincerely,

ALFRED HOLMAN.”

Mr. Holman, who belongs to a family which have been leading trainers in this part of the country for a long time, had a great deal to do with the laying out of the present steeplechase course at Cheltenham. Mr. Pickernell thinks him second to none as a sporting authority and *the* authority on this topography.

Mr. Alfred Holman’s stables are an ancient landmark by the race-course. They are just as they were in Gordon’s day, but then they belonged to the poet’s friend, the celebrated Bob Chapman. Though it is much altered the race-course is practically the same as that on which Gordon rode so many years before.

Then there was the Berkeley Hunt Steeplechase of three sovereigns each, with twenty added, for horses that have been fairly hunted with any established pack of hounds this season.

1. Mr. W. Barnett's DIANA, 10st. 7lb. . . . . Owner.
2. ,, Thompson's Melon, 11st. 7lb. . . . . *G. Stevens.*
3. Capt. Horton Rhys's Toll Bar, 11st. 7lb. . . . . Mr. Crymes.
- Mr. *Clarke's* Nimrod, 11st. . . . . Ablett.
- ,, T. Brown's Troy, 11st. 5lb. . . . . Price.
- ,, C. Symond's Experiment, 11st. . . . . Enreh.
- ,, T. Perrin's Phoenix, 11st. . . . . English.
- ,, Giles's Trout, 11st. . . . . Giles.
- ,, Cooper's Hazard, 11st. . . . . Owner.
- ,, B. Land's General, 11st. 7lb. . . . . Green.
- ,, C. Croome's Land's Scamperdown, 11st. 6lb. . . . . Owner.
- ,, D. Kitton's Linkboy, 11st. . . . . Wood.
- ,, Hawkins's Tophorn, 11st. 7lb. . . . . Hawkins.
- ,, *Oliver's* Telegraph, 11st. 7lb. . . . . *James.*

*Louisa (late Lallah Rookh), ran but improperly, her jockey not having been weighed.*<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Cartwright's *Thurgarton* (Mr. F. Berkeley) won the United Hunters' Stakes Handicap.

Tom Oliver was painted on *Thurgarton*, and there was (if there is not now) a print of this picture in the Inn at Andoversford, where Fred Archer was born.

<sup>1</sup> In the 1853 Easter Steeplechases it seems very probable that Gordon was Lallah Rookh's jockey who "had not been weighed," and therefore "ran improperly," which Mr. Holman says is rather an unusual expression. Colonel Yardley does not think either of these escapades, the Forfeit Job, the Easter Steeplechase or the Worcester horse-stealing, are necessarily at all serious, and says it was very sporting of Gordon to get the mare out of the stable.





## CHAPTER XIV

### THE RACE DESCRIBED BY GORDON

“Aye, Squire,” said Stevens, “they back him at evens;  
The race is all over, bar shouting, they say;  
The Clown ought to beat her; Dick Neville is sweeter  
Than ever—he swears he can win all the way.

A gentleman-rider—well, I’m an outsider;  
But if he’s a gent, who the mischief’s a jock;  
You Swells mostly blunder; Dick rides for the plunder,  
He rides too like thunder—he sits like a rock.

He calls ‘hunted fairly’ a horse that has barely  
Been stripp’d for a trot within sight of the hounds;  
A horse that at Warwick beat Birdlime and Yorick  
And gave Adb-el-Kader at Aintree nine pounds.

They say we have no test to warrant a protest;  
Dick rides for a Lord and stands in with a steward;  
The light of their faces they show him—his case is  
Prejudged and his verdict already secured.

But none can outlast her, and few travel faster;  
She strides in her work clear away from the Drag;  
You hold her and sit her; she couldn’t be fitter  
Whenever you hit her she’ll spring like a stag.

And p’rhaps the green jacket, at odds though they back it;  
May fall, or there’s no knowing what may turn up;  
The mare is quite ready, sit still and ride steady  
Keep cool; and I think you may just win the cup.”

WITH these words and “some parting injunction bestowed with great unction,” Stevens started Gordon off on this mythical steeplechase which has become history. And still you can hear his words from Thursday Island to the Leeuwin. What does it matter if Gordon ever won the Knoverton Steeplechase, or the Berkeley Hunt Cup, or *any* steeplechase across *any* English country?

While the world swings on its axis, these six verses are George Stevens's Monument under the Southern Cross. They were boys of nineteen then, these two of the great riders of two hemispheres. Both sat at the feet of Tom Oliver, who had already won two of his three grand Nationals. These six verses are the only record of their friendship—and quite enough too. But after Stevens's death his son found one of Gordon's poems among his father's papers.<sup>1</sup>

When one leaves Prestbury village behind, the road turns sharply round to Southam (where Stevens later met his death). Keep straight on and it is Knoverton Lane. Where these two ways part stood Tom Oliver's house, once the Mecca of Gordon's earthly pilgrimage. "The Hill" of the poem rises there in front, as one walks up Knoverton Lane. (*Nuvverton* as some of the older people call it.) "I could not live away from the hills," said the old sportsman, who remembered the Knoverton Steeplechase—as he looked at Cleeve, and Gordon could not be happy away from them or live long either.

And Gordon's home-sick spirit longing ever for "the mists on the Cotswold Hills," has saddened all Australian poetry. It is as much Heimweh for Cleeve Hill as any sadness of the Bush that set Gordon and his school singing in a minor key. At "the base of the hill" the happier Stevens met a death that would have suited Gordon well. Poor lads, they little thought when they rode steeplechases at Prestbury that the Angel of Death would meet Stevens on the hill above, and that across the world Gordon would run to meet that same angel long before either was forty years old.

To the right of Knoverton Lane is Hewlett's Hill—to the left is Queen's Wood on the lower slopes of Cleeve. Stone walls are on either side of the lane—the one on the

<sup>1</sup> Stevens had his first mount on Mr. Vevers's Volatile at Slough when he was seventeen.





THE WALL IN "HOW WE BEAT THE FAVOURITE," WHICH GORDON CALLS "THE FENCE WITH STONE COPING." IT STANDS ON A STEEP BANK.

*Both are photos by J. A. Williams, Chettenham.*



THE SCENE OF "HOW WE BEAT THE FAVOURITE." (KNOVERTON LANE.) THE STONE WALL THAT MAN-TRAP AND MERMAID REFUSED IS ON THE RIGHT, AND THE FENCE WITH STONE COPING ON THE LEFT.



left has a steep bank and a ditch below it. But Reginald Murray (who seems to be an imaginary person) has started them and Gordon and the rest have left Stevens in Perry Hill-field, and are away through the fields towards Knoverton. Gordon has tried to recall "Stevens's parting injunction," but has forgotten "it" like a dunce and is in "the furrows that led to the first stake and bound." There are springs in the bank below the house where one can easily imagine the floods lingering from last year. The old house itself, as has been said, is a poem in grey stone, a petrified dream of some old Cotswold architect. The porch is a gem, the windows have stone mullions—and over them are the projecting label mouldings with a deep hollow in them which are so characteristic of the Tudor period, specially among the Cotswolds. But little time has Gordon in the mythical or Holman in the real steeplechase to think of architecture.

The wall on the left of Knoverton Lane seems to have been a fence with a stone coping in Gordon's day—the "rise steeply sloping" is there all right. "A cruel place," said old Mr. Holland. Knoverton Lane stopped Lycurgus and Lancashire Witch—and the stone wall on the right was too much for Mantrap and for Andrew Kerr's mount Mermaid. The ploughed fields now are above Turner's orchard, which lies over the right-hand wall and to the right of Knoverton House.

There are springs in the bank below the house which no doubt helped to cause the "Floods" mentioned in the poem, and the ground is very heavy. The hazel-tree bough which knocked off the short-sighted Gordon's cap is evidently a reminiscence of the apple-tree which was fatal to poor Tramp in the real steeplechase.

Mr. Holman says Tramp's leg bone was in their harness-room—a gruesome relic—for many a year after 1847. "Where furrows looked lighter" is up Hewlett's Hill, where Gordon and Bay Iseult landed on turf with their heads turned for home. Furrows are there now, and it

was here that in the real race Tom Oliver broke his stirrup-leather. The brook looks just a silver streak, but doubtless it was swollen with flood-water in 1847, and at any rate it was stanked, if it was not sufficiently formidable already. At the brook Dick Neville and The Clown caught Gordon. Neville and his mount—both of whom Stevens did not think within the conditions of the steeplechase, though he acknowledged that Dick was a great rider, and as for The Clown—he “gave Abd-el-Kader nine pounds” at Liverpool! Abd-el-Kader was “the very famous horse” that old Mr. Holland loved to talk about. He won the Grand Nationals of 1850 and 1851, just at the time Gordon was riding about the Cotswold Hills. That was all Stevens needed to say about The Clown’s capabilities, “he gave Abd-el-Kader at Aintree nine pounds.” They are back through Turner’s orchard after the brook and over the wall on the right of Knoverton Lane, which Gordon forgets to mention this time. He is so taken up with the fence with stone coping (the wall and bank and ditch on the left) “We diverged round the base of the hill.” Neville’s “path was the nearer.” Did the short-sighted Gordon get out of his course as Holman and Archer did here in the real steeplechase? They are getting round towards Queen’s Wood and here (where *really* Stanmore beat Daddy Long Legs) the race is between The Clown and Bay Iseult. Here also one of Gordon’s old chroniclers finds fault with him, when after describing how he rode a punishing race on a generous and game mare Gordon says after he landed close to the favourite after the last jump, “I flogg’d up the straight.”

In “How we beat the Favourite” the result is given thus—

“Aye! so ends the tussle—I knew the tan muzzle  
 Was first, though the ring-men were yelling dead heat!  
 A nose I could swear by, but Clarke said ‘The mare by  
 A short head,’ and that’s how the Favourite was beat.”

John Francis Clarke, the famous racing judge, was

appointed to his office in 1852, the year poor Gordon sailed to Australia. He had, however, officiated as deputy for his father on various occasions extending over fifteen years, and he held his onerous and dignified post for many years. "From his naturally shy and retiring habits," says *Baily's Magazine*, "many persons (and good judges of racing among them too) predicted his failure, but he proved an extraordinary success." He was by profession an architect, and erected the Grand Stands at Newmarket, Goodwood and many courses of lesser note. His father occupied the judgment-seat before him from 1822 to 1854(?), and his grandfather from 1806 to 1822.

"The rhyme in question ('How we Beat the Favourite') has been pronounced by the most erudite of sportsmen, including the late editor of *Bell's Life*, in 1870, by Major Whyte Melville, by Admiral Rous, by Dr. Shorthouse and other educational sportsmen, to be the best of its kind ever penned. *Bell's Life*, I remember, in publishing it appended some particularly flattering notices, and all at different times remarked in my hearing that no one but Lindsay Gordon could have produced such a fine piece of rhythmical word-painting. Could any one but Lindsay have written such a description of a steeplechaser jumping a fence in full career as the following, which is a verse of the piece under discussion?—

"She raced at the rasper, I felt my knees grasp her,  
I found my hands give to her strain on the bit,  
She rose when the Clown did—*Our silks as we bounded,*  
*Brush'd lightly, our stirrups clash'd hard as we lit.*"

This last touch of the poem italicised exhibits the experience of the horseman and the power of the poet. Truly in matters of this kind, as Eloise concluded her love-letter to Abelard, I may be permitted to say, 'He best can paint them who has felt them most.'

"This remarkable production is marred in one place, I admit, by the mention of a piece of aimless cruelty suggested by the exigencies of the rhyme probably)—

“‘I flogg’d up the straight, and he led—sitting still.’

“All horsemen know that if Lindsay Gordon had done as he states, his game mare must have shot her bolt long before she got to the post and secured the verdict by a head—“Small Hopes” (Fred Marshall) in the *Sporting and Dramatic*, about 1886.

“‘Kissing Cup,’” said Mr. Pickernell, “isn’t in it with that last steeplechase verse of Gordon’s. I never read it but what I think of poor friend Gordon.” Holman and Stanmore beat Archer and Daddy Long Legs by a short length, Gordon and Bay Iseult beat Neville and The Clown “by a short neck,” so Clarke said, and that is all. It does not need much imagination to walk up Knoverton Lane with Gyngell’s meadows and Turner’s orchard on either side, and see it all again—the uncertain glory of the April day and the certain glory of Gordon and Bay Iseult. The fruit trees in Turner’s orchard were pink with apple-blossom, and all the world was young and very fair. How Gordon must have longed for the greenness and the white mists rolling off the hills he never saw again save in imagination, when he set himself down to beat The Clown on paper under the Southern Cross.

It is winter now and the mists are low on the top of Cleeve, and the man who saw the Knoverton Steeplechase and Gordon’s first attempt in the Trials lies in the old churchyard at Prestbury hard by the door. They had but a short way to carry him from the house where he lived seventy-five years, and from whose windows he saw Gordon passing continually on the way to Tom Oliver’s.

And the three great steeplechase riders and friends, Stevens and Oliver and Gordon, “have ridden their last race and gone to their long rest, leaving behind them names that will probably last as long as sport and horsemanship remain characteristics of the English race.” Gordon’s imaginary steeplechase which he evolved out of Knoverton and Prestbury Park and the Berkeley Hunt Cup is a living reality, and the real one is almost forgotten, the



THE BROOK IN "HOW WE BEAT THE FAVOURITE."

"She rose when I hit her, I saw the stream glitter,  
A wide scarlet nostril flashed close to my knee."

*Photo by J. A. Williams, Cheltenham.*





steeplechase over the worst course that was ever known in the days of the Prestbury giants, when Holman beat William Archer by a short length and Oliver broke his stirrup-leather on Hewlett's Hill and finished the race without the use of it. The very tree is gone where poor Tramp met his death in Turner's orchard among the apple-blossom. Yet still the scene is one of surpassing beauty, the old grey house with its mullioned windows and string courses and gables and the silver streak. "I saw the brook glitter," says Gordon, and *we* see it glitter, but Gordon and the rest are gone.

## CHAPTER XV

### GORDON AND THE EVER-FAITHFUL CITY—WORCESTER

“SIR EDWARD ELGAR’S mother is a friend of mine, and I have often told her how I knew Lindsay Gordon when I was a schoolgirl of seventeen. I like the Song of Autumn so much, and Sir Edward set it to music and it was performed at one of the Festival Concerts.” Thus a dainty little Worcester lady like a Porcelain Shepherdess. She has never forgotten “Linnie” and Gordon’s letters show that he did not forget her. There is a romance in Gordon’s life, she says, which will never be told in her lifetime, and one would not wonder if she said of herself “*Pars magna fui!*” She had a pretty sister (which is quite to be credited), a year younger than herself, and Lindsay Gordon used to flirt with Sally but never with herself—perhaps it went deeper—one does not know, and the lady will say no more.

Linnie used to chase Sally round the pump and did, they say, try to kiss her? Lindsay and Sally had beautiful chestnut curls just the same colour—curiously enough—only his were short and hers were long. Gordon was a very handsome boy with lovely dark-grey eyes which had a fateful look in them. He had splendid teeth too, but his old friend says that from his later pictures he looks as if he had lost them. She remembers that he had extraordinarily long arms. So, by the way, had Jem Edwards, and most likely Lindsay’s long reach helped to make him the Earywig’s most promising pupil. However, the lady says, “she thought she had broken Lindsay of his love of boxing, he never said much about it, he came to know I didn’t like it.” The schoolgirl and the school-boy had, at least, *one* taste in common. They both

passionately loved horses, and she would ride on a man's saddle with the stirrup turned over rather than not at all. She used to ride the Master's covert hack "Tom Oliver" in this way. Tom Oliver (the man), after whom the horse was named, and this girl seem to have been Lindsay's chief audience in Cheltenham and Worcester respectively when he recited poetry. "I knew the poor boy loved doing it, and I used to ask him to recite. The others used to laugh at him, but I listened to him by the hour." (Tom Oliver, however, *really* enjoyed it.) "Lindsay didn't like music. I played to him one night and he only said, 'very pretty,' and I could see he wasn't listening at all. Then he saw I was annoyed and said, 'Play something else—do,' but I said 'No, you weren't attending at all.' Then Lindsay said, 'Ah, do. I like to look at you when you are playing!' But I shut up the piano and I never played to him again. In turning over some music for repairing, I was again reminded of the happy past in finding 'Weber's Last Waltz,' the very thing I fancied I was giving expression to when I was annoyed at finding my expected listener so unappreciative. Linnie used to tell me all about his affairs, he thought a lot of me, perhaps because I was very devoted to my old father, who was an invalid." She thinks Gordon's mother disapproved of the expenses Lindsay ran his father into. "She wanted the money kept for herself and the girls, so I have been told. But Lindsay was only living here about a year, and I never saw his father and mother and sisters. He was my brother's friend, that was how we came to know him. Lindsay had a great friend who courted my sister for twelve years. They kept up a correspondence after Gordon went to Australia. There was a great bundle of letters. I don't know where they are now. I think the *Melbourne Argus* borrowed some of them and returned them. After the death of Lindsay's friend they were distributed among his family. I kept one of Lindsay's letters for years, but it was stolen. Gordon was coming home, you know, after

his father's death, when he got the legacy. But he heard that the girl he cared so much for was married, so it was no use his coming home, was it ?

"About that scrape he got into when he stole Lallah Rookh out of the stable—he came and told me all about it, and how his father had to pay £30. That was the worst trouble he was ever in, I can assure you—I know, for he confided everything to me. Don't say that he got into a scrape that was kept quiet, for that may imply that he did something dishonourable, and Lindsay could never have been that." Lindsay has a faithful friend in this Citizeness of no mean City—the ever faithful *Worcester*. "Lindsay went abroad partly because of this, and chiefly because his sight was not good enough for the Army. It was a great disappointment to him. Ah—yes, and then he said good-bye." "Were you the one in the poems?" But the lady is not to be caught out in this way. She is a very charming-looking little lady, and whether she is "the one" or not, Gordon showed his good taste in admiring her. "I have been twice married and twice a widow since the days when Sally and I knew Lindsay," she says sadly. "I have a photograph of the girl he married—a very sweet face she has. A fortune-teller once told me that I should be well-known on both sides of the world—it seems to be coming true. Ah—well, I said good-bye to Lindsay, but I am not going to tell you about that, and we never saw him again." A manuscript about Gordon was sent to this Worcester China Shepherdess on February 14, she wrote:<sup>1</sup> "Your

1 TO A PROUD BEAUTY

A VALENTINE

"Though I have loved you well, I ween,  
 And you, too, fancied me,  
 Your heart hath too divided been  
 A constant heart to be.  
 And like the gay and youthful knight,  
 Who loved and rode away,  
 Your fleeting fancy takes a flight  
 With every fleeting day.



SUNDAY RECREATIONS—A SCENE ON THE CROWLE ROAD. A SKETCH BY A. L. GORDON TO WHICH HE GAVE THIS TITLE. IT REPRESENTS GORDON AND CHARLEY WALKER WRESTLING. IN ALL THESE SKETCHES GORDON HAS A FOREHEAD CURL.

*Reproduced by permission of Miss H. Walker.*



Valentine surprised me yesterday and reminded me of over half a century ago, when I was aroused from slumber by a noise of pebbles or shots against the bedroom window, and in the dull early morning light discovered two youths looking up, who said they had walked over five miles and slept in the barn, that theirs should be the first faces of the male sex seen (by us) on St. Valentine's morning. Sally, with her usual bluntness (and her lovely curls packed in papers) exclaimed, 'Geese!' Adam Lindsay Gordon and his boy friend were the two, who as they said, 'For luck' spent the night in the barn on the eve of St. Valentine. A friend of mine in Worcester has the rocking-chair in which Gordon was rocked to sleep as a baby." Another old Worcester friend says, "I cannot trace that Gordon lived at Worcester earlier than 1852. At that date his uncle, Captain R. C. H. Gordon, mentioned in your letter, occupied a house situated at Greenhill, London Road, Worcester, and I believe Lindsay Gordon resided there during his stay at Worcester, a period of about eighteen months only." He was between eighteen and nineteen then, and was being privately coached by the then headmaster of the Worcester Royal Grammar School, an old foundation of Queen Elizabeth's. In a School Magazine is an account by the headmaster of the school as it was in 1852. He says, "I also taught private pupils in the school; the most distinguished was Lindsay Gordon, who was really an extraordinary genius."

Lindsay's mother (also a Gordon by birth) carried her pride in her "long pedigree" somewhat to excess if one may judge by her son's poems. A Worcester paper also

So let it be as you propose,  
 Tho' hard the struggle be;  
 'Tis fitter far—that goodness knows!—  
 Since we cannot agree.  
 Let's quarrel once for all, my sweet,  
 Forget the past—and then  
 I'll kiss each pretty girl I meet,  
 While you'll flirt with the men."

said that Lindsay was related to General Gordon, and General Gordon has said so himself in writing. None of the Gordons are left in Worcester now. Lindsay's old friend in Worcester somehow does not look old enough to have been Gordon's contemporary. He shared Lindsay's love of horses and remembers how Lindsay used to frequent the old Plough Inn stables, where Mr. Charles Walker kept and trained two or three steeplechase horses for Captain Rees-Jones and others. Gordon had struck up an acquaintance with Mr. Walker and with Mr. J. Parker, the son of a former Master of the Worcestershire hounds, who is still alive and at one time owned Lallah Rookh. In the early 'fifties he was riding steeplechases as a professional jockey. Lindsay frequently rode out with them, especially when hunting was available. Mr. Charles Walker died at St. John's, Worcester, on December 30, 1861, aged forty-nine years. Gordon's Worcester friend himself rode Walker's horses, though he finds that his experience with the said animals was in 1849-50 and 1851, before the year in which Gordon came to live in Worcester. He says that Lindsay spent all the time he could either on the back of one of these three horses or falling off it—very often the latter. "For my part I never can understand how Gordon won a steeplechase in any part of the world. He was so painfully near-sighted. Pluck? Ah! yes, he had pluck enough, but he was fearfully short-sighted; why, he used to be knocked out of his saddle by obstacles he couldn't see. He never won any steeplechases here—he never rode in any that I know of. Gordon was only in Worcester a short time, about a year, I think, and I don't quite know how I got to know Gordon. It would be hard to convince one that Gordon *ever won any steeplechases anywhere.*" (It is curious, in this connection, to remember Mr. Pickernell's remark that, "It was news to him that Lindsay had ever been on a horse's back in his schooldays.") "But did not Gordon win the steeplechase on Walker's mare?"



“No, that I’ll swear he didn’t. Walker rode her himself,” replied the authority referred to elsewhere as Wigorn, thus repudiating the story given by Mr. Howlett Ross in the following passage. This is the story “so nearly,” Mr. Howlett Ross says, “as it can be ascertained. Gordon when a youth of about seventeen was anxious to distinguish himself in the Worcestershire Steeplechases, but he was so well-known, even then, as a reckless rider, that he found it impossible to obtain a mount. In despair he paid a man<sup>1</sup> £5 for the privilege of riding his mare next day at the races. The same night it was seized by the Sheriff, and locked up in the stables of a Worcester hotel. Gordon failed to see the justice of this, and, deeming that he had a certain claim on the animal, broke into the stable and took the horse away. He appeared at the races on the following day, and it is asserted won the steeplechase in which he rode. But at the conclusion of the race the officers of the law appeared, and rescued the mare from her proud rider. He escaped in the crowd, but a warrant was issued for his arrest. The friendly intervention of Tom Oliver of Prestbury, and the payment of a monetary consideration by Captain Gordon, prevented the execution of the warrant.”

Gordon’s old acquaintance thinks that most of this story is correct. He thinks Gordon did take the lock off the stable door probably at the old Plough Inn (now the Angel), where Lallah Rookh was kept in a loose box through the archway on the left of the picture. Gordon, however, had to disappear at once. The Sheriff’s officers took the mare from him and only Black Tom’s persuasive tongue and Captain Gordon’s “monetary consideration” of £30 prevented the execution of the warrant. This friend also remarks that “respecting the cause of Gordon’s leaving England I have no knowledge, yet should say,

<sup>1</sup> Miss Gordon says that Lindsay and a friend had bought the mare and were behind-hand in paying for her keep. Lindsay also thrashed the ostler.

as my opinion, that the so-called Worcester escapade had nothing to do with it. I just remember the occurrence, but do not think much notice was taken of it in Worcester; but then Gordon was here only some eighteen months and probably known to only few of the inhabitants; further it is sixty years ago and most of those who knew him are gone. Plainly I don't think an escapade of that nature would have troubled Gordon much." Lallah Rookh had become Louisa when Gordon rode her in the Cheltenham Steeplechases in 1852. So far the name of Louisa's rider at Cheltenham in 1853 cannot be ascertained.

George Stevens remembers his mother mentioning Lallah Rookh. Wigorn says, "I remember the mare called *Louisa* (late Lallah Rookh). In colour she was black." (Bob James of Prestbury, Tom Oliver's old jockey, remembers *Louisa*, but not Gordon, who rode her so often. When told that he remembered horses better than people he said, "Of course I do.")

In 1851, on October 13, The City of Worcester Steeplechase was won by Mr. Hooper's black mare, Lallah Rookh, aged 6 yrs. Her racing performances as recorded in the *Steeplechase Calendar* of the date are as follows—  
1852.

March 9, at *Beckford*, entered as Mr. J. Parker's *Louisa*; won a 3½ miles steeplechase. Ridden by Mr. Walker. 4 ran

March 11, at *Morton-in-the-Marsh*, entered as Mr. J. Parker's *Louisa*; ran unplaced. Rider not named.

March 18, at *Charlbury*, entered as Mr. J. Parker's *Louisa*; won a 3 miles steeplechase. Ridden by owner. 5 ran.

March 25, at *Cheltenham*, entered as Mr. J. Parker's *Louisa*; was second in a 3 miles steeplechase. Ridden by Stevens. 4 ran.

March 25, at *Cheltenham*, entered as Mr. Parker's *Louisa*; ran unplaced in the Berkeley Hunt Cup—3 miles. Ridden by Mr. Bolton. (The *Cheltenham Journal* says she was ridden by Mr. Gordon.)



THE OLD PLOUGH INN AT WORCESTER, FROM WHOSE STABLES GORDON REMOVED LALLAH KOOKH.  
THE STABLES ARE THROUGH THE ARCH TO THE LEFT.



April 29, at *Leominster*, entered as Mr. G. L. Parker's *Louisa*; was second in a 3 miles steeplechase. Ridden by Mr. C. Walker. 5 ran.

May 11, at *Worcestershire Hunt Meeting*, *Crowle* won a 4 miles steeplechase. Entered and ridden by Mr. Walker. 5 ran. (This was the time Gordon stole her out of the stable.)

Wigorn writes—"You will no doubt notice that Gordon is not mentioned in the *Steeplechase Calendar* in connection with any of the foregoing events either as owner or as rider. Mr. Bolton is returned as the rider in the Berkeley Hunt Cup at Cheltenham, March 25, 1852. It is possible Gordon assumed that name on that occasion, as registration was not required in those days."

The only race Gordon is supposed to have won in England is a steeplechase over stone walls at Birdlip, and of this there is no written record,—or at least none can be found. Let his admirers ever pray that this at least may be left to them. Since then has been found a record of a hurdle race of 3 sovs. each with 15 added, at Tewkesbury, won by Mr. Gordon on his own mare *Louisa* (aged), September 23, 1852, so that *Louisa* evidently passed into Gordon's possession.

Lallah Rookh may have been the original of Bay Iseult. She won steeplechases whether with Lindsay on her back or not. His friend Stevens was second at Cheltenham on her in 1852. Perhaps Gordon thought Bay Iseult somewhat better than black Lallah Rookh and much better than black *Louisa*—so he changed her name for the third time, and her colour for all eternity by Poet's Licence.

#### ALLUSIONS TO LALLAH ROOKH IN GORDON'S LETTERS TO CHARLEY WALKER.

Gordon writes from Penola (November 1854) to Charles Palmer Walker: "So the Governor is in luck again. I am rejoiced to hear it, and has ridden *the old black 'un* at Birmingham Knowle and was beat. She was never such a good one as he thought, though at heavy-weights and

four miles I think she would take some beating. I wish I had her here, horses do not go so fast as they do in England."

1. Gordon (in a letter to C. P. Walker written from Priory Street) alludes to "the night-larks and capture of the Rooking Mare, with the various exaggerated and non-exaggerated details of the glorious transaction.

2. "I've no idea of ending my riding career in the Cheltenham brook as seen in the next page" (sketch of Gordon and the Rooking Mare in the brook).

3. At some steeplechases held at Tewkesbury, Monday and Tuesday, the 22nd and 23rd of September, 1852, a Hurdle Race of 3 sovereigns each with 15 added.

Mr. Gordon's Louisa, aged, 1. Owner.

Mr. T. Golby's Comedy, aged, 2. ———.

When Gordon is speaking of going to Australia in his letters to C. P. Walker he says—

"I should like to see the Worcester Autumn event come off" (before he sails for Australia). "I must see the programme for the steeplechases next November before I can tell when I will go. Young Holmes of this town has asked me to ride his mare at a little hurdle race coming off near Gloucester. (N.B.) He won't see much of the stakes if I win."

"I told the whole story of the race to the Governor (my father, I mean), and he was rather crabbed, and said I shouldn't have been done if he could have known it in time. I've been a most unlucky fellow all along, but there's no good grumbling. Give me a line and I will pay you a visit if you like. I've got over this scrape pretty well, for no one knows of it. I mean the *forfeit* job. I am surprised at the calm and stagnant state of things and wonder how long they'll last." Lieut.-Col. J. Watkins Yardley says: "My explanation of the 'forfeit job' is this. If a horse is entered for races and the entrance money is not paid, the owner and horse are put in the

forfeit list, and cannot start for another race until the back entrance fees are paid. It is quite possible that Gordon was in the forfeit list."

Ridden at Prestbury Park by Gordon and Stevens it seems reasonable to suppose that Lallah Rookh is the heroine of the classic event when Gordon and Stevens sang her praises and Stevens told Gordon how to ride her to victory.

"I have never heard," says Gordon's Worcester historian, "of a picture of the mare Louisa (late Lallah Rookh) being published. In fact her history is obscure. I searched in the General Stud Book and found no record—probably she was a H.B. Further there is no record in the *Steeplechase Calendar* of the mare running in steeplechases earlier than 1852." In the photograph of the old Plough Inn there is a "gateway" on the left leading to the stable and horse boxes in one of which Lallah Rookh was attended to, and from which I think it reasonable to suppose that Gordon took her out when the Sheriff's officers had locked her up. The Plough Inn is one of the oldest houses in this ancient city. "It saw Elizabeth and Charles II. and those that came to Worcester before them."

It stood probably unchanged through Lindsay Gordon's short span of life. Some of the friends Gordon rode with in his Worcester days are here to tell the story and Mr. Pickernell can tell of Gordon's doings at the Roebuck in Cheltenham, but Gordon himself has been only a memory for the last forty years or more.

It should be remembered that in the old coaching days Worcester, which was only twenty-six miles from Cheltenham by road, was more in touch with it than it is now.

Miss Frances Gordon, whose memoir of her cousin is one of the most valuable contributions to this biography, was the daughter of Captain R. C. H. Gordon, the uncle with whom Gordon stayed at Worcester, and the letter of Gordon's reproduced in autograph in this book proves that they continued on terms of the utmost cordiality after Lindsay had gone to Australia. Miss Gordon writes—

“I am afraid I cannot tell you much about Lindsay’s manners in Society, nor if he was fond of the society of beautiful women. I was a little girl when he was living with us and did not go out to parties except occasionally, where there were children, and my father and mother lived very quietly; but the people we knew belonged to our own set and Lindsay knew the same people. I do not imagine he would have been shy, or otherwise than at his ease, with *any one*, either beautiful ladies or any one else; he used to be friends with . . . and her elder sister, who were very handsome. I never saw him act in Regular Theatricals, but he used to be fond of taking part in Charades, which we often used to act at home, when any of our friends came to spend the evening with us. He made friends with jockeys and horsey sort of people because he was so fond of horses, but he of course knew nice people, but there was not much gaiety at Worcester, and my people did not go in much for gaiety nor do I fancy his own family did. His mother was always going abroad for her health. He was not, I think, like his father, who had a good deal of the old-world excessively chivalrous manner, but he was, I fancy, much like any other young men of his day. How far his poetry expresses exactly what he thought I don’t know, he was a great admirer of Byron and took him for a copy and wrote things often in his style.”

Miss Sidebottom says: “Lindsay Gordon was a charming young fellow when I knew him, and he and I and his cousins used to have some very pleasant country walks together. I was only thirteen when Lindsay left England. He was tall and slight and very agile, and had very dark, crisp wavy hair. The sister (Inez) married an Italian. His father was a very nice and good-looking man.”

She says that “in the holidays when all the Gordons were at home from school she used to spend most of her time with them. There were six (?) boys and Fanny and Lindsay at the time he lived with Captain R. C. H. Gordon at Greenhills. They were a most original and



interesting lot of children, all of them, but Lindsay was really exceptional. He seemed as if he could do everything. They used to go out for walks nearly every day and Lindsay always jumped over all the walls and hedges. He seemed able to jump over everything. She jumped over too, Lindsay would hold her hand on one side and sometimes one of the other boys on the other. Then they used to act charades. Lindsay was very great at that—he was always full of spirits and altogether a most charming and attractive boy. She has always understood that Lindsay got into rather hot water for keeping a horse when he was at Woolwich, which was contrary to the regulations and he couldn't afford it. But there he *wanted* to do it and so he thought he *must*. He was just a very high-spirited boy with boundless energy and if he only hadn't gone off to Australia very likely he would have settled down in time." Miss Sidebottom said she thought Lindsay must have felt quite cut off from every one at home when that man in Australia kept back his home letters for so many years. It must have embittered Lindsay and preyed on his mind. She should like to know who that man was. Miss Sidebottom said the brother Miss Gordon described as having "Sabbatarian Views" used to give the other children (including herself) little tracts with their besetting sins (as he understood them) *plainly marked* so that they should make no mistakes. When the boys went back to school they used to cut off locks of hair to give to each other. Miss Sidebottom has a fine collection of the Gordons' hair of all sorts and colours. They are tied up with tiny bows of coloured ribbon and wrapped up in tissue paper. She cannot find one of Lindsay's, but she says she will look again. He had very pretty hair, chestnut, and very curly. Indeed, he was a very handsome boy. He had a very long throat (so had Inez and Mrs. Gordon), but it was beautiful in its way, rather like a pillar. Mrs. Gordon and Inez were very graceful, very good looking, and their long necks gave them a sort of swan-like look.

Lindsay had a way of throwing his head back—rather like a startled stag he looked sometimes. Inez married an Italian and went to live in Switzerland or Italy, Miss Sidebottom could not remember which, though her sister went to see them once when she was travelling abroad. She did not think Inez seemed happy.

They used to have a very happy time together. All the Gordon boys are dead now. When Miss Sidebottom heard of Lindsay's death she wrote to her friend Mr. Livingstone Learmonth, and asked him if he could tell her anything about Gordon. He said that he hadn't ever met him himself but had heard a great deal about him from other people. Gordon always rode for his friend Major Baker. He understood that Gordon's widow was left very badly off and that the Poems were being sold for her benefit.

Mr. John Randall of Worcester says: "I remember Lindsay Gordon's father well but I cannot recall the son. He left England when I was about seven years old, but I have been to his father's house in Cheltenham, I must have seen him there if not in Worcester, because I have played with the Gordon children at his uncle's house in Worcester, where he stayed. His father was the hero of my childhood's days, and I remember how nice he was to me. The Gordons were highly connected and proud of their lineage. Lindsay's love of horse-racing, and the prize-ring led him into company that his parents thought low and degrading, and caused great unhappiness, which led to his leaving England. I cannot help thinking that his wild escapades were but freaks of a noble nature, which could not be controlled, that he, like his father, not only was, but had the instincts of a gentleman, and was never known to do a mean thing." He fancies that one of Miss Gordon's maternal relatives named Elrington wrote some poems on "The Youth of Australia."

Miss Gordon says that Captain A. D. Gordon and his family once lived in St. George's Square, Worcester, and also out at Kempsey. This was probably before Captain Gordon

became a Master at Cheltenham College. Captain R. C. H. Gordon's home at Worcester is a tall narrow house in a quiet side street. It had a long narrow garden—and the Gordons had the use of the one next to it. The jump out of the only window which looks out on the garden must have been a truly awful one, and Fanny and Dick Gordon were two courageous children if they tackled that with their human steeds. There is a long wide wall still down which Lindsay often ran with little Fanny on his back and dropped her into a hedge which has disappeared.

## CHAPTER XVI

### “AND BLACK TOM OLIVER”

IN an old *Cheltenham Journal*, published in 1874, appears the following advertisement. “For Sale :—House with garden and paddock. Stabling for thirteen horses. Situated in the delightful village of Prestbury. And well deserving the attention of Capitalists and others.” (Gordon would have liked nothing better than to be a Capitalist, or even one of the others, with money enough to secure this earthly paradise, “suitable for the residence of any gentleman fond of hunting.) In the centre of Earl Fitzhardinge’s country. Also suitable for a trainer. Now in the occupation of Mr. Thomas Oliver. Sale Monday, 8th of July, at 3 o’clock.” The Hand of Time has swept away “this Mecca of Gordon’s early pilgrimage.” Black Tom himself, and his pupils George Stevens and Lindsay Gordon, are only a memory in Prestbury—and Gordon is barely that. Indeed in the late Mr. Holland probably the last Prestbury man who remembered Gordon has passed away. Leland wrote of Prestbury “that it is a pratie townelet standing a mile Este south este” (which should be north), “from Chiltenham in Gloucestershire. It hath been somewhat defacid by chaunce of fier.”

In the main road through the village, just where the lane to the church branches off, lived the late Mr. Holland.

Born in Prestbury he lived in the house for seventy-five out of eighty-seven years. He used to see Lindsay Gordon passing his house on his way out to Tom Oliver’s.

“A nice-looking young fellow, I never saw him without his cap, he has a good forehead in that picture. I used to see him riding Tom’s horses on the Race-course—he ought

to have ridden well, he had a good tutor in Tom Oliver—‘Black Tom’—they used to call him. Dark, very dark, a good-looking chap, very clever and witty. Now if it was Tom Oliver you wanted to know about I *could* tell you some tales. A great man in the village was Tom. One day he went and asked the baker to go for a walk with him. The baker felt lifted up. ‘Wife,’ he called up the stairs, ‘bring me down my top hat, I’m going for a walk with Mr. Oliver.’ ‘Don’t you know,’ said this unkind woman, ‘that it’s under the bed with a quarter of seed potatoes in it?’ Tom Oliver (and William Holman) taught Mr. Pickernell to ride when he was a boy at Cheltenham College. George Stevens and Lindsay Gordon were also Tom’s pupils. At different times Mr. Pickernell and Gordon used to go out hunting with Oliver. ‘Tom Oliver,’ says the *History of Steeplechasing*, ‘was born at Angmering in Sussex, some say he had gipsy blood<sup>1</sup> in his veins. He was born and died hopelessly insolvent. Page, the Epsom trainer, was his uncle, and to him he was sent to learn stable work and a certain amount of reading and writing. Page failed ere long and Tom, having nothing better to do, took service in Ireland, where poverty again reigned supreme and the unlucky Tom had, once more, to run for it.’ He landed in Liverpool with only a few pence in his pocket, obtained a situation as rough-rider, left it to go to another trainer who failed, and Oliver had once more the world before him. He set up as a gentleman rider and he soon had plenty of mounts. A win on Reformer at St. Albans, when Mason on Lottery was second, established his reputation as one of the foremost steeplechase riders. In the spring of 1838 he won the Dunchurch Steeplechase, beating Mason on the Nun; Oliver was always in difficulties, and once, when shut up in Oxford gaol for debt, a friend asked if he could send him anything that would be useful to him. ‘Send me a d—d good wall-jumper,’ was Tom’s reply. The *History*

<sup>1</sup> But his pedigree proves that it was Spanish.

of *Steeplechasing* also gives an account of Oliver's Lawsuit, which he won against the executors of a man whose horses he had trained. The executors considered Tom's charges excessive. The case was heard before a sporting Judge and the Counsel for the defence was well-known on the Turf, and Tom had wanted to retain his services for himself.

" 'Come,' said this gentleman. 'Mr. Oliver, you have already informed the Court that £5 for a losing steeplechase mount, and £10 for a winner of a similar description was the regular price. How is it, then, that you have charged £50 for winning this particular race? Did you have any express contract before you rode?'

*Oliver.* " 'No, I had no previous agreement.'

*Mr. —.* " 'Then how do you pretend to defend this outrageous charge?'

*Oliver.* " 'Well, before I answer that question, please let me read the back of your brief. I want to see how much they give you to ride this match against me!'

*Mr. —.* " 'Certainly not. That is a matter totally wide of the question.'

*Oliver.* " 'Oh! no, it isn't. I should like to see what they are giving you for your mount.'

"There was a great laugh at this, and the Judge joined in with the public and the bar in their mirth. When the laughter had subsided Mr. — continued: 'I don't intend to satisfy you. Now, then, tell the public how you can support this charge.'

*Oliver.* " 'Well, it was a big race, and I won it. Now, if I could get you to ride for me to-day, I think I could have made a certainty of getting all the stakes, and I shouldn't have thought of giving you less than a couple of "ponies," whatever the Taxing Master might have said afterwards, while as to these outsiders,' indicating the bar in general, 'I would not have had them at a quid apiece.'

Mr. Oliver won his case.

The same writer says of Jem Mason that "when the erratic Tom Oliver had nothing left in the world but

*Trust-me-not*,<sup>1</sup> he asked Jem Mason to buy him in order that he might have a little ready money. “Don’t you sell your horse,” said Jem, “but send him to me and I will win you a race,” while the advice was accompanied by a £5 note to pay the cost of the animal’s transit. He won the race cleverly and put Tom Oliver on his legs again. Tom Oliver had already won three victories at Aintree when Lindsay Gordon left home. The late Mr. Fred Marshall in his MS. notes has said a good deal about Gordon’s friendship with Oliver, “to whose stables at Prestbury he became a constant visitor, and through whose aid and kindness he completed his education in all-round horsemanship. He had made the acquaintance of Tom Sayers,<sup>2</sup> who was then training for one of his earlier fights under Tom Oliver’s care. Gordon’s acquaintance with heroic poetry was well-known, and fully appreciated by his friends and companions, all of whom, Tom Oliver especially, were fond of, as well as capable of enjoying, the intellectual treats which he could give them over the mahogany. One of Gordon’s favourite recitations was Longfellow’s ‘Skeleton in Armour.’ It was Oliver, of course, tradition says, who got Gordon out of his scrape in Worcester when he took the lock off the stable door to get out Lallah Rookh. It is said that Gordon was always, if a welcome guest, an unsatisfactory pupil.” Oliver gave Gordon his first mount in the trials on Prestbury Race-course and often lent him horses, though, as a rule, people were not eager to mount the impecunious and reckless schoolboy.

Lindsay Gordon mentions Oliver twice in his poems. In “By Flood and Field” his name comes last (but not least) in a list of notabilities of the Cotswold Hunt. Lindsay lingers over his name as all Oliver’s friends do—as if

<sup>1</sup> In the Selling Steeplechase at Prestbury, April 5, 1852, Mr. T. F. Mason’s *Trust-me-not* came in last.

<sup>2</sup> In an old *Baily* is an account of Tom Sayers’s funeral, in which it is said that his *dog* was the only respectable person present.

he loved it, "And black Tom Oliver." Again, in the Hunting Song Gordon pays a tribute to his old friend and tutor—

"Here's a health to every Sportsman, be he stableman or lord,  
 If his heart be true I care not what his pocket may afford,  
 And may he ever pleasantly each gallant sport pursue,  
 If he takes his liquor fairly, and his fences fairly too.

He cares not for the troubles of Fortune's fickle tide,  
 Who like Bendigo can battle and *like Oliver can ride*.  
 He laughs at those who caution, at those who chide he'll frown,  
 As he clears a five-foot paling or he knocks a peeler down."

This sounds a very true description of Oliver, whose recklessness and love of poetry have, through Gordon, made their mark on Australian literature. The pity of it is that Oliver did not teach Gordon to laugh. A sense of humour is so sadly lacking in Oliver's pupil and no one would have thought it possible. If Oliver sometimes helped Gordon into scrapes he was always willing to get him out of them, and certainly the Australians may thank him in a great measure for the first of Australian poets and the best amateur rider in the colony. Only at Prestbury was Lindsay encouraged in his poetical aspirations. Old Mr. Holland had an old newspaper cutting which remarks that why Gordon's beautiful poems were bought up and suppressed by his friends is best known to them. The Badminton Library's volume on Racing and Steeplechasing says of Tom Oliver that he won three Grand Nationals, and other races all over the country. He taught the late Captain Little much of the jockeyship which he so often turned to account, but as a horseman he was far inferior to Mason, and, there is reason to suppose, frankly recognised his inferiority. As a lad he did most of his riding on bare-backed animals; from a child he had displayed a passion for riding and had never been so happy as when on a donkey, and is spoken of as going wonderfully well to hounds on a broken-kneed grey mare. He had the most fervent admiration for Captain Becher, and his delight



was extreme when at Clifton, over hurdles, he beat his idol by a head. Oliver distinguished himself greatly on Foreigner, an animal which was backed over and over again to kill his rider against winning. When Mason rode Oliver's Trust-me-not, he first took off the terribly severe bit which Oliver had put on. This occurrence supports what has been said of the relative capacity of the two men. Oliver often rode for Mr. Joseph Anderson, the famous dealer of 108, Piccadilly. He won the Grand National in 1842, on Mr. Darcy's Gay Lad, in 1843 on Lord Chesterfield's Vanguard, and in 1853 on Captain Little's Peter Simple. Oliver appears in Herring's picture "Steeplechase Cracks," mounted on the chestnut Discount. In and out of the saddle Tom Oliver was a universal favourite. He was always cheery, possessed a ready wit, was a kindly-hearted man, but not being very particular as to his personal appearance, he presented a strong contrast to the always well-dressed and somewhat foppish Jem Mason, while his high spirits stood out strongly against the grim melancholy of William McDonough.<sup>1</sup> Oliver was a fine, resolute, if not over-elegant horseman. Mr. Holland used to talk a good deal about Oliver in connection with a horse called Thurgarton which belonged to Mr. Davenport, on which, in 1848 at Cheltenham, William Archer won a steeplechase, beating Tom Oliver on his own horse Vanguard. Mr. Holland said there used to be, if indeed it is not still there, a coloured print of Oliver on Thurgarton in the inn at Andoversford, which William Archer afterwards kept.

There is a beautiful picture of Oliver on Birmingham in the Stork Hotel at Birmingham (see p. 226). Thurgarton afterwards belonged to Mr. Cartwright, for whom Oliver often rode. At the Cheltenham Easter Steeplechases in 1851 Thurgarton won the Hunters' Stakes, ridden by Cheswas. In 1853 Thurgarton won the United Hunters' Stakes Handicap ridden by Mr. F. Berkeley. Oliver had many hair's-breadth escapes. The *Cheltenham Journal* says, that in

<sup>1</sup> *Baily* suggested in 1874 that Captain Little should write *Oliver's Life*.

1851, Victim (originally Standard-bearer), was killed in the South Leicestershire Steeplechases. Oliver, his rider, was injured. The horse had been bought by Mr. Palmer for £500. In the famous Knoverton Steeplechase Oliver broke his stirrup leather half-way through the race and finished the steeplechase without it. Two Cheltenham papers remarked on this wonderful feat, for the course was one of fearful difficulty. Oliver got a bad fall in the Grand National in 1858. It is said to have been Oliver who in a snowstorm stopped in the first round of a steeplechase at Warwick and sheltered behind a hayrick. He chipped in again towards the end suddenly, appearing ahead of the leading horses. Mr. Fred Marshall's brother remembers Oliver leading a horse up a hill on his way to the Hunt Steeplechases (Lord Fitzhardinge, then Lord Segrave, used to flag out the course and often the riders did not know where it would be till the morning of the meeting). Oliver told Mr. Marshall that the animal had been called Cheroot because it had a curious mark on it. It was an old horse which had been trained up for the occasion. "You see that fence," said Oliver; "well, if he gets to that he'll win." They watched and the horse did not manage to stagger to the fence. Black Tom once offered to lie in wait for Spring-Heeled Jack in a ditch. He stayed there for hours with a gun and the agile Jack leapt over the very ditch Oliver was in and was lost to sight before Tom could get in a shot. One day several friends went to see Oliver, and Tom put his back against the door and said, "Now then, you'll none of you go home till you are drunk!" Rather excessive hospitality! Tom once described a visit to the theatre where he and his wife sat in the Dress Circle. "The Missus had a parting all along her head like a gravel path with a flower garden at one end of it, and I had my best togs on. Suddenly at the back of the Pit a shabby figure rose up waving a glass. 'Hullo! Tom, old chap—come and have a drink.'" Oliver's name is always spelt Olliver in Gordon's poems and in most sporting books and



TOM OLIVER ON BIRMINGHAM.

*Reproduced by permission of Mrs. Shepherd of the Stork Hotel, Birmingham, from the oil painting which hangs there.*



papers. “I don’t know why you spell it with two ll’s,” said Mr. Holland. “Tom himself always spelt it with one.”<sup>1</sup> Probably Oliver knew how to write his own name, though his spelling certainly left something to be desired. Mr. Elmes, an old apprentice of Tom’s, says that Oliver (Gipsy Tom as he calls him—he was half a Gipsy really) once sold a horse. Having elinched the bargain he asked the new owner what the animal was wanted for and was told “To carry the mails out to Winchcombe and Toddington.” “Well,” said Tom, “you can just give him a flick with the whip by the Rising Sun<sup>2</sup> and he’ll kick you into Winchcombe Post Office!” This cheerful prophecy was fulfilled a few weeks later when the delightful creature kicked the mail van to pieces and was again “For Sale.” Oliver’s old thatched home and stables stood just where the road from Prestbury turns round sharply towards Southam. A row of loose boxes stood where the garden wall is, belonging to the present house. Oliver’s handsome son used to sit on the wall sometimes to talk to the Miss Shentons or other pretty girls. Oliver for some time kept two establishments going, one at Prestbury and the other at Wroughton, near Swindon, in Wiltshire. The village inn at Wroughton shows on its sign the Horse and Jockey, Ely (one of Oliver’s horses) standing for the horse and a red-coated rider for the jockey.

Oliver left Cheltenham altogether in 1857, and was at Wroughton for the rest of his life. If there was anything Tom Oliver hated and feared it was law. “Law,” he said, “was like a country dance, you got led up and down by your coquettish partner, your attorney, till you were tired but never satisfied.” At Bristol the staid and reverend Mr. Commissioner Hill looked with a frowning brow several times at the bankrupt steeplechase-rider as he answered

<sup>1</sup> His family now spell it with two ll’s. The latest information proves that he was part Spaniard, not part Gipsy.

<sup>2</sup> The Rising Sun is the inn on Cleeve Hill, near which Stevens’s horse shied and bolted down the hill with him, thus causing his death.

the pressing interrogatories of the opposing lawyer in his peculiarly emphatic but rather evasive manner. "Tell the Court, Mr. Oliver," said Mr. Abbott, with considerable embarrassment, "why did you sell Battery for so small a sum as £8?" "Why did I sell him for £8?" quoth Tom, "because I couldn't get any more." "Bankrupt——" here interposed the Commissioner, "be careful. Do not prevaricate." "Look here, your honour," spoke out our poor badgered friend, "you must excuse me if my answers don't meet with your approval, but off the pig-skin I'm the biggest fool in England." It took ten minutes for the Commissioner to recover his gravity. Mistaking the intent demeanour of the Commissioner, who was simply cogitating in his mind whether he should give him a first, second or third class certificate, poor Tom suddenly bolted from the Court. The Commissioner turning towards the witness-box to lay on a little mild rebuke before giving Tom his discharge, noticed his absence, and being informed of his flight, ordered the bailiffs of the Court to catch him. The bailiffs came back in half-an-hour, breathless, to say that they not only couldn't catch Tom, but couldn't catch sight of him. After several months' needless retirement Tom purged his contempt of Court by appearing in person before the Commissioner, who, with the utmost cordiality and good temper, not only gave him his discharge, but some pleasant advice along with it, with which he blended his good wishes for the eccentric bankrupt. At Gloucester in another encounter with the law the mention of Battery opened an old wound, and Tom at once got his bristles up when Counsel again asked him why he sold Battery, a horse of some merit as a chaser, at so small a sum as £8. Oliver felt more at home with Baron Martin, who was trying the case, than he had done under the calm scrutiny of Commissioner Hill, and he faced his interrogator with a demeanour that created much interest and amusement.

*Counsel.* "Now Mr. Oliver, you have always evaded this question. What made you sell this valuable steeple-

chase horse for so small a sum as £8 ? He was a first-rate horse, wasn't he ?”

*Oliver.* “First-rate ? Well, that's a matter of opinion. He couldn't carry a baby and it took three men to hold him.”

*Counsel.* “But he won several times ?”

*Oliver.* “Lost oftener.” (Roars of laughter.)

*Counsel.* “This may be very amusing but I must pin you to the point. Why did you sell him so cheap ?”

*Oliver.* (Very deliberately). “Well, then, if you must know *he had a leg.*” (More laughter.)

*Counsel.* “I suppose he had ; he had four legs, hadn't he ?”

*Oliver.* “Yes, certainly ; but he had a very particular one.” (Renewed laughter in which the Judge himself joined heartily.)

*Counsel.* “Oh, you can't get out of answering by this unintelligible foolery. Let me know, sir, what do you mean by a leg ?”

*Oliver* (smiling blandly on the learned Counsel and pointing backwards over his left shoulder with his thumb to the Judge, without moving a muscle of his face). “Ask the Baron, he can tell you.”

After the roars of laughter had subsided Baron Martin explained.

Oliver called subpœnas—“*Subpœnys, deuce take 'em.*”

“Tom Oliver was once staying with Mr. Bosley, the landlord of the Green Dragon at Hereford. There was a writ out against him, but the Sheriff's officers could only enter a man's own house, and were posted all round the house to arrest Tom as he left the house. He was going to ride in a big steeplechase on a horse in which Bosley had an interest. Some one suggested that the horse should be brought into the bar and that Oliver should mount and ride out boldly. But a sporting lawyer suggested that the horse might slip and fall on the tiled passage, and besides, even a touch of a bailiff on his projecting boot-toe would be an arrest. A

bolt after an arrest means that the delinquent breaks out of one of Her Majesty's prisons. A *deus ex machina* appeared. A poor old waiter had died some days previously and a hearse was drawn up to the door just as the council were rising from the consultations. The assembled sages took the dead man out of his coffin and put Tom in. They boxed him up with plenty of air room and having deposited him in the hearse drove away outside the city boundaries, where he was safe for the day. For the writ was directed to the City Sheriff, where the County Sheriff could not act, and so Tom Oliver rode his race and, it is said, won."

(Copied from the *Sporting Times* by the *Cheltenham Mercury*, May 16, 1885 (?).)

When Paddy Jackson had hunting grounds at Paddington, some wags took Tom Oliver (who was unknown to Jackson) down there for a lesson in riding. Tom acted his part to perfection, and the delight of the jokers was excessive when Jackson informed him that after a few more lessons he should be able to take him out with the harriers.

The contrast between Oliver's style of riding and that of his rival Jem Mason was very great. It was a sight for sore eyes to see Jem put his horse at a fence, so skilfully did he handle him. Oliver, on the contrary, was a one-handed rider, and horses frequently refused with him, but if the two landed together over the last fence it was any odds on Tom Oliver. Mason was a poor finisher, whilst Oliver's education in the racing stables had made him an accomplished jockey. Then again, Oliver was the best judge of pace. His making the running on *The Chandler*, in a match with *Charity* at Newport Pagnell, was a masterpiece. In picking his ground Mason had no superior. "Here Jem will come," said John Elmore, pointing out some sound ground, "and here the others will go." And the event proved that Elmore was right. If, then, Mason was the best suited to the lines of country that were chosen forty years ago (this was written in 1874), Oliver would have



been more than his match over the courses of the present day. When Captain Little won the Grand National on *The Chandler*<sup>1</sup> it was a wonderful piece of luck, for he did not then know much about steeplechasing, and when it came to the finish he had to fight out the issue with his old coach Tom Oliver, well-known as one of the most resolute riders of the day. Thomas Coleman, the Father of Steeplechasing, first encouraged Tom Oliver to try his hand at the sport. At Wroughton Oliver trained many good horses, such as Ely, Fairweather, and George Frederick, which last, as Oliver prophesied on his death-bed, won the Derby of 1874 a few months after his trainer's death and on the birthday of King George V (George Frederick). A *Baily* of that year says, "that the public had favoured this horse from the time he first appeared at York and they stuck to him to the last. His good looks got him their support, and they had faith, moreover, in Tom Oliver's dying words that his horse would win the Derby. Poor old Tom! It would have been a proud moment for him if he could have led George Frederick back to the weighing stand and Tom would have been as much cheered as his horse."

Swindon seems to have gone mad over George Frederick and over Apology, the mare that won the St. Leger.

“When the news came at fall of night,  
 Commanding beacon fires to light,  
 From Wroughton down to Avebury,  
 With hissing squibs and torch in flames,  
 Each strove to fire the Thames,  
 And Wiltshire held her racing games,  
 With most unusual devilry.  
 \* \* \* \* \*

But louder still these shouts that rise,  
 From Wroughton Hills to greet the skies,  
 And denser yet the crowd that plies,  
 In Swindon, cheering lustily.  
 \* \* \* \* \*

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<sup>1</sup> There is a life of *The Chandler* in an old *Australasian* of Gordon's time. Most likely the poet read it and how the horse won a race at Southern Prestbury with Oliver on his back.

The mêlée thickens, on ye brave,  
Past Olliver's new-mounded grave,  
Wave Swindon! all thy kerchiefs wave,  
From clanging forge and factory."

Oliver had died on January 8, 1874, not quite four years after the death of his pupil and ardent admirer Lindsay Gordon.

Mrs. Austen (the widow of Tom Oliver's son, young Tom) has given some particulars of her father-in-law's life. Young Tom Oliver, her late husband, was very handsome. Mrs. Turk remembers him when she was a girl; he used to sit on the wall at Prestbury where his father's row of loose boxes were and talk to her and her sisters. She says she spelt his name Olliver. She thinks Olliver once had an "e" at the end as well.

She said that David Page, of Epsom, a trainer, was Oliver's uncle and brought him up, and that Black Tom's ancestors were Spanish smugglers who landed on the south coast. His father and uncle were farmers and millers, and lived at Angmering. The uncle was an eccentric old man and was buried on his own ground not far from Worthing.

Mr. Thomas Coleman first set Tom Oliver going across country. He lived with Tyrwhitt Jones. He first put him on a mare and said: "Let me see you take her across three fields straight. I don't see why you shouldn't ride steeplechases." The Prince Consort admired Oliver's first mount very much when he came through St. Albans with Queen Victoria.

Mrs. Austen did not know Tom Oliver in his Prestbury days. She was a Wroughton girl and married Tom's handsome son after Oliver had settled in Wroughton in 1858 or 1859. Mrs. Austen has an old sporting paper with a list of the starters and jockeys for the first Grand National in 1836, when Captain Becher had the mount on Conrad, while Oliver rode Seventy-Four and Alan McDonough The Nun. Becher's Brook got its name that day when Captain Becher was shot into it and scrambled under a

bank while the rest of the field cleared him in safety. Jem Mason on Lottery won in a canter. These were the good old times when steeplechasing was in the palmiest of its palmy days. Gay Lad and Peter Simple (well known in connection with Tom Oliver), The Nun, True Blue, Cigar and Cannon Ball were all running about then.<sup>1</sup>

“Alas!” (says Gordon) “neither poet nor prophet  
Am I, though a jingler of rhymes—  
'Tis a hobby of mine, and I'm off it  
At times, and I'm on it at times;  
And whether I'm off it or on it,  
Your readers my counsels will shun  
Since I scarce know Von Tromp from Blue Bonnet,  
Though I might know Cigar from the Nun.”

Poor Tom Oliver was always up to his hat in debt and often emerged from durance vile to ride in a steeplechase and then return to his stone retreat. Tom Oliver's first recorded steeplechase was in March 1837, when he failed to get a place in a sweepstakes at Bath. His first big win took place at St. Albans, where he rode The Performer in a sweepstake of ten sovereigns each. In that race ran Lottery, ridden for the first time by Jem Mason, who only reached second place. Midnight came in first, but was disqualified owing to Barker having ridden under weight. The result was a great feather in Oliver's cap, but in February 1838 he was defeated by Lottery with Mason up, The Performer not even getting a place. The next event in which the two great rivals engaged was at Dunchurch, where riding Mr. Marshall's Foreigner, Tom cleverly defeated<sup>2</sup> The Nun, ridden by Mason. At the Leamington meeting, March 23, 1858, The Nun was ridden by Mason, there were Jerry, Vivien, Lottery (with Barker up), The Disowned and Sportsman (piloted by Oliver). During the race the excitement was terrific and it was at one time thought that Sportsman would have overhauled The Nun, but she caught

<sup>1</sup> Gordon most likely was referring to well-known Australian horses with the same names, when he introduced them into his poems.

<sup>2</sup> Mentioned in Gordon's *Ex Fumo Dare Lucem*.

the judge's eye a length in advance. This was a tremendous disappointment to Oliver, who was scarcely able to crack a joke for several days, so deeply was he chagrined at the result. He rode in and won many other steeplechases till 1842, when he began what may be called his famous career. Up till 1842 he often rode Mr. Vevers's Charity. Seventy-Four was another favourite mount. At a memorable steeplechase at Warwick, Mason on The Nun was pitted against Seventy-Four with Oliver up, but here again the famous mare carried Jem to victory, much to the discomfiture of Tom Oliver, who panted for his revenge, which he obtained shortly afterwards at Daventry.

Oliver's first great victory was the Grand National at Liverpool, in 1842, on Mr. Elmore's Gay Lad. Tom was "exceedingly jubilant over this victory and in the evening he told his merriest stories and cracked his best jokes while the 'sparkling circulated freely.'" In 1843 Tom won his second National on Vanguard, then an aged horse. Peter Simple was the favourite and twelve to one against Vanguard. So well, however, did Oliver handle him that he won easily. He won many steeplechases in this year, and among others two with Cheroot (the horse seen in his declining days by Fred Marshall's brother), at Cheltenham and Newport Pagnell, beating Lottery at the latter place. Oliver had a busy time of it in '44, '45, '46, riding with more or less success in the chief races, doing wonders with the aged Vanguard. It was not until 1852 that he again won the Liverpool Grand National, which he carried off upon Peter Simple in superb style. Oliver had ridden nearly all the best horses of his day, and for twenty years before his death he had been engaged first as jockey and then as trainer to Mr. Cartwright. There were, indeed, few men who knew more about horses than did Tom Oliver. Beyond his thorough knowledge of horseflesh Tom was always a pleasant companion, ever willing to do a good turn for any brother in trouble or distress, with a cheerful word and smile for everybody. During his long career as a rider

Oliver enjoyed remarkably good health, but in 1873, when at a ripe old age, he began to fail. Still he was able to attend to his duties, and was present at Newmarket when Louise Victoria and George Frederick ran in the Cesarewitch and Middle Park Plate. But he never left his home afterwards, and died on January 7, 1874, at his place at Wroughton, near Swindon, highly respected by all who knew him, just too soon to have the crowning gratification of seeing a horse which he had trained (George Frederick) win the Derby itself.

*Baily's* for November 1868 tells how Colonel Knox, riding with a patience that Tom Oliver might have envied, won a race at Streatham, and odd numbers of *Baily* have many allusions to Black Tom. *Baily's* describes a French jockey's riding thus: "His seat was dreadful to behold and would have made Tom Oliver kill himself with laughing, for his knees came up to his nose and he was as loose as an egg on a horse. Still all he knew about danger was how to spell it." In January 1870, *Baily's* records the death of poor Jack Cheswas, who for many years acted as head lad to Tom Oliver, and whose mirth-provoking countenance was well known on all provincial race-courses, where Tom used to say it always resembled a harvest-moon in appearance.

"Poor old Tom," soliloquises the "Van Driver" in February 1874, "we wish we could remember half of his queer sayings, and should have liked a week with him at Wroughton and got him to tell us his life, it would have made an amusing volume; perhaps some one has already got the nucleus of it. Will Captain Little try his hand?" (Captain Little, a disciple of Oliver's, won the National in 1848 (?) on Chandler.) "He ought to know as much about Black Tom as any man living."

Oliver's grave is in the pretty little churchyard of Wroughton, just a turf mound. Oliver, unlike his pupils Gordon and Stevens, has no gravestone of any sort.

“Tom Cribb, who had taken his farewell benefit in 1822 (?) appeared once more in the ring in 1845 and 1846, when, in his seventy-fourth year, at his own benefit, at the Westminster baths, he put on the gloves with old Tom Oliver. It was a tremendous affair; of course the old man could not spar, but he just showed us the old guard, with his right hand within a few inches of his face about the level of his eyes, and his left hand advanced a little before it and a few inches higher.”

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE STEEPLECHASE RIDERS—GEORGE STEVENS AND “MR. THOMAS”

1863.

1856.      1864.

1869.

1870.

*Non moritur Cujus Fama vivit.*

*(Front)*

In Memory of  
GEORGE STEVENS,  
who having received fatal  
injuries from a sudden accident  
departed this life  
at Emblem Cottage, Cleeve Hill,  
On the 2nd of June, 1871  
In the 38th year of his age.

*(Left side)*

His name  
Will be inscribed with honor  
in the annals of the turf  
for his general character  
And for his accomplished  
And successful achievements  
And never mentioned without  
regret by the patrons of that  
National institution.

*(Back)*

This monument  
Raised by a subscription  
among the numerous friends  
who best knew him is a  
slight memorial of his  
Virtues and of deep general  
and unaffected sorrow  
for his loss.

(*Right side*)

The integrity of his principles  
and the uniform propriety of  
his conduct obtained for him the  
confidence of the public and he  
enjoyed in no common measure the  
respect and esteem of his  
employers in the intimacy of  
social life his unassumed merit  
fine temper and pleasing manners  
inspired a general affection.

“AYE, Squire,” said Stevens, “they back him at evens,” is the opening line of Gordon’s most famous poem, “How We Beat the Favourite.”

Tom Oliver *really* tried to give Stevens and Gordon and the other lads advice before they rode in steeplechases. The elderly worthy who is *supposed* to have advised Gordon how to beat the favourite was nineteen at the most when Gordon sailed for Australia.

“But none can outlast her, and few travel faster,  
She strides in her work clean away from the Drag;  
You hold her and sit her, she couldn’t be fitter,  
Whenever you hit her she’ll spring like a stag,”

said Stevens of Bay Iseult, and he went on—

“And p’raps the green jacket, at odds though they back it,  
May fall, or there’s no knowing what may turn up.  
The mare is quite ready, sit still and ride steady,  
Keep cool, and I think you may just win the Cup.”

“Some parting injunction bestowed with great unction,” but Lindsay Gordon was away and did not hear the other lad’s last words of advice. George Stevens, though so young, was, however, quite an experienced rider and well qualified to advise the reckless fellow-disciple who sat with him at Tom Oliver’s feet. He had even ridden in the Grand National of 1852, a year before Gordon sailed for Australia. Tom Oliver wrote a friend a letter of advice to be given to Stevens on the eve of the 1870 Grand National. It is very much like Stevens’s advice to Gordon





GEORGE STRVENS' MONUMENT IN THE CHELTENHAM CEMETERY.

*Photo by J. A. Williams.*



in the poem, but the mention of The Colonel shows that it is impossible that Gordon could have had this letter in his mind when he wrote the poem, and put these words into George Stevens's mouth. The explanation must be that Gordon remembered the way Oliver talked, and his recipe for riding steeplechases.

“Wroughton,

“February 9/70.

“DEAR JOHN,

“Nothing can beat The Colonel if he stands on his legs and he is well on the day.

“The master means it, the jockey rides honest and they have got a good horse. If Stevens lays away from his horses and not to be interfered with, it will be like a lot of terriers leading a staghound a gallop. The Colonel is a good horse, the weight is of no consequence when rode by a man like George Stevens. Give him an old man's advice and tell him to be *Patience and it is a Virtue* and he will *win*. Tell him it is a long way home from the last half mile. I have no doubt he will say I am a d—old fool, but recollect Old Tom Oliver's *words*: be cautious and not to go too soon, the post is the place to win at.

“Yours truly,

“OLD TOM OLIVER.”

Doubtless in this letter Oliver was only repeating advice he had given Stevens and Gordon when they were mere boys—yes, ever since the day when he said to the delighted College boy, “There, now, you young devil, you've rode a race!”

Oliver rode so well that his liberties with the verb “to ride” may be pardoned. Stevens apparently did not need advice to “lay away from his horses.” His son says, “This my father always did, and evidently the plan succeeded for he never had a fall in a National.” A writer in *Baily's Magazine* says in 1869, “It is really a

wonder that favourites are not, from the fear of being upset, taken more care of and made to run a patient race. This was strikingly exemplified in this year's Grand National, when the winner was brought so quietly along, while many of the others were tumbling one another over—

“‘Post equites sedet ater *Stevens*.’”

Another writer says of this year's National: “The Colonel was a model of what a steeplechase horse should be. George Stevens, who had been waiting patiently, brought his horse to the front and cantered in alone.”

The horses came on to the race-course for the last time, followed by The Colonel, who jumped *the last hurdle but one* in front of his rivals and then began to leave them.

Certainly Stevens seems to have hardly needed Tom Oliver's cautious advice, while on Gordon it would probably often have been completely thrown away, at least in his youth. Very different were the dispositions and tactics of Tom Oliver's two famous pupils, two of the greatest steeplechase riders in the two hemispheres. In 1870 Stevens won at Aintree on The Colonel. Gordon most likely heard of his friend's victory before his own death in June of the same year. “G. Holman was a close second on The Doctor. A finer finish to a steeplechase than that between The Colonel and The Doctor was probably never witnessed.” Stevens won by a neck. He told his Cheltenham friends who saw him off for Liverpool at the station, that he should win the race “on the post.” Despite this tip some of them put their money on The Doctor, and they celebrated Stevens's return with much festivity and somewhat heavy hearts and empty pockets. The Colonel was considered an “unlucky horse,” for despite his victories he brought (or was supposed to bring), misfortune to all who had to do with him. Stevens holds two records for the Grand National; he was the only man who ever won it two years in succession on the

same horse, and that horse was The Colonel. He was also the only man who ever won it five times.

Within a few months of the last time he rode The Colonel he died a tragic death. In 1871, a year after his last victory at Aintree, he rode The Colonel when "Mr. Thomas" won on The Lamb. Stevens was cheered when he appeared on the famous horse. One of The Colonel's trainers fell over the Wye Cliff near Chepstow and was killed, another was killed accidentally when riding home from market. Misfortune, if not death, fell on The Colonel's owners as well. Stevens himself had a tragic end. The horse was at last sold to the old Kaiser Wilhelm for a charger, and the Emperor died soon afterwards, but that might have been of old age and not of The Colonel's malign influence. They tried to train The Colonel up for some more races after that, but his racing days were over. Nothing is known of his end. The Colonel was trained near Chepstow—he "disapproved of racing," and never wanted to start unless he could be persuaded that it was not a real steeplechase. He was so gentle that he would lift his feet one at a time and step daintily over a baby that was put in his way—though this sounds like tempting Providence. In 1860, when Mr. Pickernell won at Aintree on Anatis, George Stevens was fourth on Maria Agnes, a mare that would do nearly anything for him. Stevens and Mr. Pickernell once made her jump over two long churchwarden pipes which they held with their stems together in George Stevens's garden at Shurdington. She was like a child, and would jump over bits of string and do almost anything you told her to do. Her rider had a way with horses always though—he "would just talk to them and they would do things." Stevens won his first National of 1856 on Free Trader, which was trained by the Holmans of Cheltenham. In 1863 and 1864 he won on Lord Coventry's twin mares Emblem and Emblematic, "the weedy sisters," which were trained by Mr. Weevey at Bourton on the Hill. This beautiful

village appears in the background of a charming picture of Stevens on Emblem. Stevens's record of five victories will probably remain unbeaten as long as the Grand National exists. He was riding up Cleeve Hill one evening in June 1871, when his hat blew off and his startled horse turned round by the Rising Sun Inn and galloped down Cleeve Hill at such a pace that the newspapers said that most likely no other man in England could have kept in the saddle. Just where the road turns round into Southam the horse stumbled over a drain-pipe and fell. Stevens struck his head against a stone and was carried into a farm near, and afterwards to his home, Emblem Cottage, where he died the next day without regaining consciousness. Mr. George Stevens writes: "A. L. G. and my father were of the same age, both being born in 1833, and both passed away about the same time, the former in 1870 and the latter in 1871; my father died from a fractured skull (not a broken neck), caused by falling on a large stone rolled over a drain against the path within about five feet of the stone in the hedge at Southam. My father and a Dr. Gregory who lived in a house opposite the G.W. Ry. Station and R. Catholic Church, now used, I believe, as a furniture store, found most of the money for Jem Edwards's fights, and at one period of his career kept him hidden away on the banks of the Severn when a warrant was issued for his arrest for a breach of the peace. In those days I should imagine that *A. L. G. and G. S. under the tuition of Old Tom Oliver* and Dr. Gregory (whom I remember very well), were what is called now-a-days "hot-stuff." It is said that the cob he was riding at the time of the accident was named The Clown, probably (in the opinion of Mr. Stevens's son) because he had read his old friend's poem about Gordon and himself and Bay Iseult and The Clown. He certainly had read some at least of Gordon's poems, for one was found among his papers after his death. It was the "Legend of Cotswold." "You see," said his son, "so many of his old friends are mentioned in it."



GEORGE STEVENS ON THE COLONEL, WINNER OF THE GRAND NATIONAL IN 1869 AND 1870,  
BUT CALLED "THE UNLUCKY HORSE." (See pages 240-1.)

*Reproduced by permission from the oil painting in the possession of his son George Stevens, Esq.*





Over his grave his friends erected a granite obelisk with the dates of his victories on it and a laurel wreath, with the legend "Non moritur Cujus Fama vivit," and an inscription telling how his name would be "inscribed with honour on the annals of the turf for his general character and for his accomplished and successful achievements," and how "the integrity of his principles and the uniform propriety of his conduct obtained for him the confidence of the public, and his unassuming merit, fine temper and pleasing manners, inspired a general confidence."

Sad as George Stevens's death was it was an infinitely happier one than Gordon's. A writer in the *Cheltenham Examiner* says: "When I look at the stone at Southam which marks the place where George Stevens met with his fatal accident, I think, with a feeling of regret, how Gordon would have welcomed a similar fate—but should there not be some monument to his memory in the town of his youth?" Though Stevens died within a year after Gordon, it is certain that he followed Lindsay's career with interest, that he read the "Legend of Cotswold" and "How We Beat the Favourite," and named the last horse he ever rode after the Favourite in his old friend's poem.

"Poor George Stevens!" says Lord Coventry. "An honest, quieter and more straightforward fellow did not exist, and his untimely death will create a void in the ranks of our cross-country jockeys not easily filled. At the late Cheltenham Meeting, in answer to a question from a friend as to whether he was to pilot another Grand National winner, he said, 'Oh, yes, I have taken a lease for six'; and now his cob bolts with him down Cleeve Hill, and the 'lease' falls in." He has always been intimately associated with Cheltenham, and his first great win was in 1856 when he landed his first Grand National on a Cheltenham horse, Free Trader. Stevens, indeed, took the highest honours in the profession of his choice, for he won the Liverpool no less than five times, and did, moreover,

what no man had ever done before, won it twice on the same horse, as well as on two occasions twice in succession. How well he assisted his friend, Mr. Matthew Evans, whose niece he married, in the management of *The Colonel*, the horse's career will testify. Long associated with the brown and blue of Lord Coventry, his wins with *Emblem* (he called his cottage on Cleeve Hill "Emblem Cottage") and the following year on *Emblematic*, were crowning points in his career. It is well known that on *Emblematic's* appearance in her preliminary at Liverpool, she was greeted with derision, such a wretched-looking weed was she; and Stevens, who had never crossed her before, went up to Weever and bewailed his fate for being on such a "roaring brute." Weever implored him to ride her according to instructions, and the result was the hollowest win on record; and it was said at the time that the placings should have been *Emblematic* (or "the blue mare" as the Irishmen called her) first, Lord Coventry second, and Weever third. Before George dismounted to weigh in, Weever got up and gave him a tremendous slap over the thigh, inquiring "if she roared now?" but certainly we must say, as far as appearances went, George was right in remonstrating. After *Emblematic* won, people found out that she was a wonderful-looking mare (as indeed she was); but there is no doubt what the public verdict was before the race. . . . Stevens was as fine a judge of pace as ever got into the saddle. He loved steeplechasing but he was not a betting man, was a good husband and father, saving without parsimony, and a sportsman without stain.

Mrs. Turk remembers Mr. and Mrs. Stevens, and says "his wife was nearly as keen on horses as he was, and used to help sometimes with saddling them up."

Mr. George Stevens, junior, says he has heard his mother speak of Louisa (late Lallah Rookh).

William Archer, Fred Archer's father, must have been an acquaintance of Gordon's. A horse mentioned in Gordon's "*Hippodromania*" is named after him, says Mr. F. Marshall.

Mrs. Wilfred Blacket thinks Mr. Etienne de Mestre had a jockey named Archer, so the Australian steeplechase horse of the poem may have been named after him.

Gordon most likely made William Archer's acquaintance in Prestbury, but he must also have often met him at the Roebuck, for Archer greatly patronised Jem Edwards's boxing entertainments.

William Archer won the Grand National of 1858 on Little Charlie, belonging to Mr. Capel, also a Prestbury man. He was offered the mount on Free Trader by Mr. W. Holman in the 1856 Grand National. Archer scornfully refused to ride the "second string," and young Stevens rode the horse and won his first Liverpool. In this race "Tom Oliver got a heavy fall at the brook at the lower end of the course. William Archer, riding a patient race, bided his time till close home and won fairly easily. Archer, who died in December 1889, was born on New Year's Day, 1826, at St. George's Place, Cheltenham. When he was only nine years old he had his first mount on a pony in a hurdle race at Elmstone Hardwicke, near Cheltenham." His son Fred rode his first race on a pony in a field near Prestbury Church. The Prestbury people are never tired of talking about Fred Archer. He, of course, does not belong to Gordon's generation. The little boy did not win and came home crying. "William Archer in his younger days was a competent jockey on the flat, and after running away from home made his own living in the Midlands," and won one or two races. Then he was employed by George Taylor, the father of Alec Taylor, and "made rapid strides in horsemanship." Later he went to Russia to ride for the Czar. In 1844 he returned to England and began to ride in hurdle races and steeplechases. He came back to Cheltenham, where he rode a great deal for Mr. Holman, and in 1848 he won a steeplechase on Thurgarton, beating Tom Oliver on his own horse Vanguard. He was also second on Daddy Long Legs in the great Knoverton Steeplechase which Mr. William Holman won on Stanmore (which was

Gordon's steeplechase in "How We Beat the Favourite"). "William Archer's eldest son, who was named after him, was killed at the Cheltenham Steeplechases in 1878, while in 1862 Archer père gave up riding steeplechases, his last mount being on Mr. G. Taylor's Yaller Gal. When Fred Archer was in the height of his fame he used to stay with his father, who then had the hotel at Andoversford, and hunt with the Cotswold hounds.

Bob James, who still lives in Prestbury, used to be in Tom Oliver's employment there. In 1856 James was third at Aintree on Minos, and in 1857 he was third on Maurice Daley. He is said to be the second oldest living rider in the Grand National. In 1853 at the last Cheltenham Meeting before Gordon sailed for Australia, James rode Mr. Oliver's Telegraph in the Berkeley Hunt Steeplechase. This was the race in which Lallah Rookh (late Louisa) ran and was disqualified because her unknown jockey, probably Gordon, had not been weighed. James possesses a portrait of and a lively interest in Gordon's friend, Mr. Pickernell, who seems to share one of the high niches in his mind usually allotted to horses.

Of Tom Pickernell, *Baily's Magazine*, 1872, says in "Our Van": "The pleasant face of him who is known to newspaper readers as 'Mr. Thomas,' looks out from the title-page in this number, and recalls many an exciting struggle over country and on the flat, from the time when in 1857 he brought out Tom Moodie for a steeplechase at Shrewsbury, and training and riding him himself, then and there made his mark as the rising gentleman-jockey of the day. Mr. Pickernell, who was born in 1834 and received his education at Cheltenham College, may be said to have begun his racing career in Tasmania, whither when quite a youngster he went in 1852, but it was at Shrewsbury that he won his spurs, at least in this country; and so highly was his performance on Tom Moodie—a terrific puller and to ride whom Mr. Pickernell had worked very hard indeed—estimated that Isaac Day was most

anxious to secure his services as gentleman-rider for his stable; and he was fortunate in so doing. Though he rode often on the flat in those days, and does still, yet steeple-chasing has always been his passion and the branch of sport with which his name is most associated. His early friends and confederates were Sir E. Hutchinson and Mr. Capel, and while riding for them he won the Liverpool in 1862, on that beautiful mare Anatis. In 1863 he married, and partially gave up the sport, but the old passion was too strong, and in 1866 we find him carrying all before him at the Liverpool Autumn, winning all three steeple-chases and, after breaking his stirrup-iron at Becher's Brook, on Sprite, beating George Stevens on Balder by a neck. Our space will not allow us to follow Mr. Pickernell through his long and honourable career. He has made his mark in many lands. He has come down the bank at Baden more times than we can remember, he knows the double and the 'head's garden' at Punchestown by heart, and wherever on French soil there has been jumping, there has 'Tom' been found. His recent second win of the Grand National on 'The Lamb, and how we always look for him since poor George Ede's death in the 'cerise and blue' of Lord Poulett, we need scarcely refer to here. He is, no doubt, the best gentleman-rider of the day; his judgment unsurpassed, his nerve unflinching, his finishing powers of the highest order. He has, however, other and better qualifications than these; his thoroughly manly, straightforward character, his genial *bonhomie* and kindness of disposition, have made him a valued friend, a much sought-for companion, a universal favourite. And he has trod the not always very clean paths of sporting life without a speck on his honour or a stain on his name."

George Stevens's son writes of Mr. Pickernell: "I found he has a wonderful memory for things that occurred long ago; he saw a good deal of A. L. G. in 1849 and 1850, but never knew that he rode in any races; he said Gordon's great delight was to go anywhere where he could get some

boxing, and it did not matter who he encountered. It is a remarkable fact that my father and these two young sparks were all born in 1833. T. P. won his first National in 1860, the year my father rode Maria Agnes; he remembered that mare and the incident of jumping her over the pipes at Shurdington at once, without me refreshing his memory."

Mr. Pickernell ("Mr. Thomas"), though not a Prestbury man, spent his younger days in Cheltenham and was, like Gordon, a Day boy at the College. He often used to come to Prestbury in his steeplechasing days and won one of his victories at Aintree on a Prestbury horse, Mr. Capel's Anatis. Mr. Capel, indeed, was one of his greatest friends, and he often stayed with him.

Mr. Pickernell says he "remembers nothing about Gordon's riding," it was news to him that Gordon had ever been on horse's back (in their days at Cheltenham). After he left the College in 1852, Mr. Pickernell's relations sent him out to Tasmania (of all places in the world!) to cure him of his love of sport, especially of steeplechase riding. Was it after this that Gordon did most of his riding at home? Mr. William Holman and Tom Oliver taught Mr. Pickernell to ride, and he used to go out hunting with Tom Oliver.

The Cheltenham College Register thus records the history of Gordon's friend, the College's other great steeplechase rider—

"Thomas Pickernell, son of Thomas Pickernell, Esq., Hatherly Lodge, Cheltenham, born *3rd September, 1834*. Day boy."

Went to Tasmania in 1852, where he remained some years. Subsequently well known as a gentleman-jockey in England, and always rode as "Mr. Thomas." Has twice (now three times) won the Grand National Steeplechase at Liverpool, in 1860 on Anatis, and in 1871 on The Lamb (and in 1875 on Pathfinder).

Mr. Pickernell (writing to Miss Humphris) says: "I

have heard nothing of my old friend since about 1848-51, but had the enclosed" (a photograph of Gordon's grave) "sent me from Melbourne which may be useful to you.

"I am sorry and afraid I can't help you much about Gordon, as although we were the greatest friends as young *men* at the College, when I left there I went to 'far-off' Tasmania and heard nothing more of him until his death." It is, however, the time when Gordon was at College and in Cheltenham about which is known least. It will be noted that Mr. Pickernell does not allude to the fact that Gordon went to Australia a few months after himself, and was for some years only separated from him by the narrow streak of water between Tasmania and the mainland. "Mr. Thomas" lived chiefly near Launceston while he was in Tasmania.

Mr. Pickernell was in Hobart in the old days "when it was Hobart *Town*, when there were no railways and no trams, only a coach by which you travelled from Hobart to Launceston." Though his uncle had sent him out there to cure him of his love of horses he said it was "bred in the bone," for his father also rode and owned steeplechase horses. Mr. Pickernell rode and won his first race in Tasmania, and thereafter won so many that the Hobart professional jockeys sent him a petition asking this amateur to "desist from his pleasures, as he was taking the professionals' living away." When Mr. Pickernell returned to England the hair of the dog that bit him had fairly inoculated him with the steeplechasing virus. He won no end of steeplechases, and among them three Grand Nationals; and when his uncle found that the famous "Mr. Thomas" was his nephew—well, it seriously interfered with the young rider's prospects, financially, at any rate. Mr. Pickernell has a book called his scrap-book, which he says he began to keep in Tasmania, and which has become a sort of running commentary on his career.

He rode seventeen times in the Grand National, and from 1859 to 1877 he did not miss a year except 1863

and 1864.<sup>1</sup> He was fifth on Anatis in 1859, third on Shangarry in 1867, fourth on The Lamb in 1871, with the weight of twelve stone seven pounds, and, on The Liberator he also was third. This with three wins is the record of a man who is said to know the Grand National course better than any one else.

When Mr. Pickernell won at Aintree on The Lamb, he almost exactly fulfilled a dream of the horse's owner, Lord Poulett. In his scrap-book he has Lord Poulett's letter asking him to ride for him.

*"Thursday night,*

*"December 15, 1870.*

"MY DEAR TOMMY,

"Let me know for certain if you can ride for me at Liverpool on The Lamb. I dreamt twice last night I saw the race run. The first dream he was last and finished among the carriages. The second dream—I should think an hour afterwards—I saw the Liverpool run. He won four lengths, and you rode him and I stood above the winning post at the turn. I saw the cerise and blue sleeves, and you, as plain as I write this. Now let me know as soon as you can, and say nothing to any one.

"Yours sincerely,

"POULETT."

The Lamb, like The Colonel, seems to have given the superstitious folk food for thought. He fulfilled this dream of Earl Poulett's, and just as a train reached Liverpool, taking people to see the Grand National, a little lamb jumped out of a truck and ran away down the line. Several passengers backed The Lamb to win on the strength of this. Also, like The Colonel, he was "unlucky" to some of those connected with him. Ben Land, his trainer, committed suicide. Mr. George Ede

<sup>1</sup> Table supplied by Mr. Pickernell.



(Land's favourite pupil), The Lamb's first jockey, was killed in the Sefton Steeplechase, and The Lamb himself broke his leg at Baden-Baden in 1872, and had to be destroyed. It is said of this 1872 steeplechase, "At no previous Grand National, perhaps, was there a scene of greater enthusiasm"; and it appeared as though that popular amateur horseman, "Mr. Thomas," would have been dragged from the saddle. The Lamb was almost carried into the enclosure by the crowd, and so tightly was he wedged in that he had no room to kick had he deemed fit to do so.

In the race The Lamb jumped some fallen horses, hopping "over them like a cat," as Mr. Pickernell expressed it. "The finest fencer I was ever on in my life."

In 1875 "Mr. Thomas's" success on Pathfinder was quite unexpected by most people, as "prior to his coming into the possession of Mr. Bird,<sup>1</sup> the horse's performances had been moderate in the extreme; but he managed to win the Leicestershire steeplechase in the hands of 'Mr. Thomas,' who on this occasion took part in the Grand National for the fifteenth time, and for the third time rode the winner. A finer or more exciting finish has seldom been seen in a Grand National."

"Pathfinder changed hands for £100; and not long before the Grand National had been beaten at Bristol."

"'Mr. Thomas' was fond of Pathfinder, we think," says a writer in *Baily's Magazine*, "and indeed, made no secret of his belief that the horse would run much better than at Bristol, where he had to make his own running and race with everything."

The winner won by sheer gameness on his part, and fine riding on the part of his jockey.

After riding in seventeen Grand Nationals, "Mr. Thomas" has shown us that, though the years have crept on since he was on Anatis, his nerve and judgment were

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Thomas was really riding Pathfinder for Gordon's kinsman, Lord Huntly, though entered in Mr. Bird's name.

never better than they are now. His finishes lately have been most brilliant—witness those at Worcester and Rugby—and he put the crown on them to-day.

A very extraordinary thing about the victory of Anatis in 1860, was that the mare had not jumped a fence for a year before she won the Liverpool. At the finish of this race Huntsman, on whom Captain Towneley had been riding a most patient race, gradually drew up to Anatis until at the last hurdle the pair were neck and neck. Then came an exciting struggle between the two, but "Mr. Thomas" called on Anatis, the mare eventually winning by half a length. In this race George Stevens rode his favourite Maria Agnes, but on nearing the last hurdle into the straight, her rider, finding her unequal to the task of joining the first three horses, pulled her up.

Mr. Pickernell says his victory on Pathfinder was the hardest of his three Nationals, as he had to hold him up, and this he had not to do with The Lamb or Anatis.

One of his most exciting steeplechases was the Sefton one, when he beat George Stevens on Balder by a neck. "Mr. Thomas" was on The Sprite. Balder and The Sprite were together at Becher's Brook when Mr. Pickernell "felt something go," reached down and caught the leather and saved a broken stirrup, and rode home with it in his hand. "You see," he said, "as I sat down to beat George Stevens, to the stand occupants it probably—as was reported in the papers at the time—appeared that I was triumphantly flourishing the iron." He went on to say he was not doing this, but riding as if for his life with both hands as he always did in times of emergency, because he never used a whip except as a last resource.

In 1877 Mr. Pickernell was given up for dead—after an accident in a flat race at Sandown Park. He was terribly smashed up, but recovered remarkably quickly.

Mr. Pickernell lives at King's Heath near Birmingham. He has some pictures of his father on one of his steeplechase horses, and an old jockey Arthur on the other. Both are

by Woodward of Worcester, and bear the dates 1820 and 1822. His father was ninety-two when he died. It is a pity that Gordon and the cheery Tom Pickernell never met again after they left Cheltenham College, though at one time in their lives little more than Bass's Strait lay between them. It would have been so good for the homesick Stockrider, at any rate, if they could have met; besides, they said Gordon never could find people good enough to box with in his later years.

"Mr. Thomas" (Mr. Tom Pickernell), says a writer in *Baily's*, "seemed for some time to be a link between the past and the present. He has ridden three Grand National winners and had a mount in no less than eighteen Liverpools. Anatis, The Lamb and Pathfinder were all steered most brilliantly by this gentleman to victory; the latter in 1875. Pathfinder had been used as a hack and a whip's horse before trying his luck at Liverpool, and he was one of the worst horses that ever won. A short time after this Mr. Thomas got a fall at Sandown, which seriously affected his eyesight and rendered his retirement from the saddle imperative. His second winner, The Lamb, was probably as good as, if not better than, any previous winner of the event. As a clever jumper, few have ever equalled him, and he showed this with a vengeance when he cleared four prostrate horses and their riders without touching one of them while running at Aintree."

## CHAPTER XVIII

### AN INTRODUCTION TO GORDON AS A POET<sup>1</sup>

BEYOND dispute Gordon is the national poet of Australia. In Victoria and South Australia nearly every family owns Gordon's poems, and they are better known than any English poet's are known in England. And rightly, because Gordon is the voice of Australia. But for him Australian literature would be less loyal than it is to the Old Country. For all Australians respect a man who was so much after their own heart, who would stand up to anybody with his fists, or put a horse at anything; who loved the bush like a home and extorted the admiration of all bushmen; who founded Australia's school of grim fatalism; who voiced Australia's code of honour.

Adam Lindsay Gordon was the national poet of Australia not only because he was a real poet, and wrote living poetry about the romantic old colonial days when Australia was in the making, but because he was a typical example of the fine strain which gave the Australian people its greatest qualities.

It has sometimes been assumed by European writers that, because three of the Colonies possessed convict stations, the Australian population contains no leaven of good blood. The opposite is the case. The native-born working man is often the descendant of noble or squire. For in the piping " 'fifties," the decade which saw Englishmen shake off the sloth of the long peace of fifty years which followed Waterloo, and show the bulldog breed in the Crimea and the Mutiny, the younger sons of peers and country gentlemen, instead of going to shoot lions in

<sup>1</sup> *By Douglas Sladen only.*

Central Africa or going to court death in learning to be the navigators of the air, went to Australia.

The gold fields were their first attraction. Rich alluvial deposits, where one may dig up a fortune with one's own hands and may have to defend it with one's life, have an irresistible fascination for the adventurous. And, when that fascination was on the wane for them, they took up vast tracts in the Bush for grazing purposes where the rent was really paid in risks, since they paid less money per annum for two thousand acres than they paid for a single stock-rider. There were many sanguinary battles between lonely households and the blacks in the early days of squatting, and many deaths occurred from the want of communications and medical aid. But the younger sons of the country gentry flocked to Australia to be squatters, though no due proportion of their descendants is to be found in Australia among the squatters—the owners of flocks and herds of to-day. For those who succeeded mostly sold out when they had made a fortune and went back to buy places in the Old Country.

We are more concerned with those who failed, for it was they who leavened the manhood of Australia. Whether they failed from want of training for the Colonial life, or from drunkenness brought on by hard work in terrific heat, they were absorbed by the working class. They and their children married into the working class and their descendants have proved some of the best stock in Australia. Sometimes they won their way back to wealth. I have no need to tell Australians the names of the two millionaire partners in the last generation who were grandsons of British officers and sons of common labourers. We are not concerned with this class.

We are concerned with the general body of the native-born Australians, who owe their braininess and their adventurousness and their genius for sport to the plentiful admixture in their veins of the best blood in the Old Country, crossed with more practical strains, just as we get

the best oranges and the best roses by grafting choice varieties on to sturdy ordinary trunks.

Adam Lindsay Gordon, the National poet of Australia, was a typical specimen of the well-born man who becomes absorbed into the ranks of labour when he settles in Australia. He lived to be head of the ancient family of the Gordons of Hallhead and Esslemont, though his predecessor had terminated the entail diverting the estates<sup>1</sup> to a niece. He, through his great-grandmother, Lady Henrietta Gordon, and the Hon. Sir Arthur Gordon, whom Australians remember as Governor of New Zealand, were both descendants of the second Earl of Aberdeen. His mother's small fortune would have been immense, but for the ruin of the West Indies by the abolition of slavery. Instead of using his introductions and family influence to be appointed to a Government clerkship, when he landed in Australia, he enlisted in the South Australian Mounted Police, and that was the beginning of his career of manual work and adventure. From policeman he became horse-breaker, if never actually a stockrider, and from horse-breaker (after a brief period as a member of Parliament, squatter and racehorse-owner, while he was dissipating the £7,000 which came out to him) he became a livery-stable keeper, the chief amateur steeplechase-rider of Australia, and the chief poet. He might have enjoyed the most brilliant literary career any man ever had in Australia, if he had allowed himself to go on living, for he had graduated in the only school for which the Australian people of his day had a sincere respect—the school of horsecraft.

He began his steeplechasing as soon as he left the police force, at any rate riding in every steeplechase within distance where his weight would allow him, and he rode his last fatal race, in which he was so injured, only three months before his death. In spite of his increasing

<sup>1</sup> It was the decision of the lawyers against him in the matter of this succession which led to Gordon's despairing suicide.



FOUR STEEPLECHASE SKETCHES BY A. L. GORDON.  
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difficulties he owned racehorses till 1869, and he went on training till the end. No doubt training his own horses was an element in his success as a steeplechase rider, for he knew every ounce, every inch of which the animal was capable. But his chief elements of success were his judgment, his iron nerve, and his magic influence over horses. Old Tom Oliver and George Stevens, two of the most notable winners in the Grand National at Liverpool, had ground it into Gordon as a boy that there is plenty of time to win in a steeplechase, that the main thing to do is to keep your horse on all four legs, while the other horses are weeding themselves out at the jumps. His pet theory was to let a horse take its own time at the jumps. He had a marvellous capacity for getting the last ounce out of the animal in the run home—and he never lost his nerve. His sketches of steeplechasing, whatever their shortcomings in draughtsmanship, are universally admired by sporting men.

As a police-trooper he had been noted for his reckless daring; as a horsebreaker and rider of buck-jumpers his name was a proverb for courage and skill. He was ready to meet any man in Australia, no matter what his size, with his fists, and generally came off victorious, for he was the favourite pupil of the famous Earywig (Jem Edwards), and had often had the gloves on with the great Tom Sayers himself.

He had done, too, a deal of camping out in the bush when it was a forest primæval, though we have no record of his having had any fighting with the blacks, and though there is apparently no foundation for the story of his earning a Government reward of £500 for killing a noted bushranger.

When, therefore, Gordon was writing of the wild life of the old colonial days he was writing of a subject which no one knew better than himself. The author of the "Siek Stockrider" had spent long years in the society of stockriders, when he was a horse-breaker, going from station to station; most authorities except Mr. F. Vaughan are agreed that he did the ride from the Wreck to fetch assist-

ance himself; there are people yet who believe that he killed his bushranger in a cave before he wrote "Wolf and Hound"; the author of "How we Beat the Favourite" was the most famous steeplechase-rider in Australia.

Whence he got his poetical gift is another matter. There is nothing to show this except that he and Byron stand in about the same degree to the original Gordon of Gicht. We can only guess that it was begotten in solitude by his love of reciting the best models of poetry with which he was acquainted.

From a boy he had done this. When he went to see Tom Oliver, the old trainer and jockey, at Prestbury, he not only went to get wrinkles about riding and learn the nature of horses; he used to recite his favourite pieces of poetry to Old Tom, who loved to hear him do it though all witnesses are agreed that his reciting was very monotonous. And when he went to see Jane Bridges, the beautiful girl he loved in England, who could have stopped him going to Australia if she had raised her little finger, he used to recite to her, not only other people's pieces but his own. And she used to advise him what poems of the great masters he ought to study and recite. I think I am right in saying that she suggested to him those studies of Browning which had such an important influence on him. It is an odd thing that Gordon of all people should have been one of the first poetical disciples of Browning. But "From the Wreck," "No Name," "Ex Fumo Dare Lucem," not to mention other poems, are clearly inspired by Browning.

Tenison Woods, the Roman Catholic priest in the Penola district, used to lend him Homer and Horace, Swinburne and Browning, though good books were worth their weight in silver in the Australia of those days, and Gordon thumbed his books to pieces. Gordon carried them about in his pocket, and studied them when he got the chance on his long rides, and every night by the dim light of a sludge lamp. He had wonderful eyesight for reading small print in a bad light, though he was so short-sighted that no

honest doctor could ever have passed him for the Army, for which his temperament so fitted him.

With these models before him he beguiled his time, during his long lonely rides in the bush, by casting his own reflections on the rough and tumble of life into poems whose rough-hewn eloquence has never been surpassed. Tradition says that he sang his poems in his head as he was writing them to the rhythm made by his horse's hoofs. On long rides bushmen ride very slowly unless they are driven for time. He found another incentive to composition in lying on the cliffs above the sea listening and looking. Here again there was rhythm to accompany his thoughts. His very best poems were written while he reclined on a natural couch formed by the boughs of an old gum-tree near the house of the friend who was providence to him, and would certainly, had he known, have cleared away the money troubles which led to his suicide, the late John Riddoch. Here again he had rhythm and to spare, the shrilling of importunate and innumerable tree-cricket. His reflective powers were fed by a steady recourse to his old clay pipe.

It is not hard to picture him composing—a typical bushman with his tall, lean, stooping figure, short beard bleached by the sun, and dark weather-beaten, resolute face under a big cabbage-tree hat; dressed for the most part in a Crimean shirt, well-fitting cord breeches and top boots—always neat, always carrying the stamp of his birth upon him, for those who were familiar with the appearance of a gentleman.

From his boyhood he had had a dreamy, far-away look in his weird eyes,<sup>1</sup> which meant that his thoughts were turned inwards. General T. B. Strange, R.A., noticed it when they were both cadets together at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. This look in his eyes seems to have struck all his Australian friends.

<sup>1</sup> Some of the people who noticed his eyes so particularly say that they were blue, and some say they were dark grey.

One thing cannot fail to attract notice, that all these poems, which are so full of the open air in their atmosphere, were composed out of doors. They were only copied out indoors. Some may have been jotted down on odd scraps of paper, but for a man with a verbal memory like Gordon's it would have been no effort to compose a poem and carry it in his head for some time before he wrote it down. I have never heard if Gordon knew his own poems by heart. But he certainly knew the whole of Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome* by heart, and he could spout prodigious quantities of Scott, Byron, Browning, and Swinburne—not to mention Horace, Virgil, Ovid and Homer.

The fact stands out that these poems which are so redolent of the bush were written in the bush by one who made the bush his life. Their background is full of the broad effects which would have been his atmosphere to a short-sighted man who spent his life in the bush. But his bad eyesight prevented him from filling in details of the foreground. The country round Mount Gambier with its lakes and floods must have been full of snakes : Gordon hardly mentions them. He mentions a few trees, the various Gums, the Wattle, the Blackwood, the She-oak, the Tea-tree and the Honeysuckle, but hardly any flowers except the Wattle and Tea-tree blossoms. He has nothing to say about the resplendent parakeets which are gayer than the flowers in Australia, and are found there by millions, or about huge birds like the Emu, the Wild Swan, the Giant Crane, the Pelican, and the Bustard.

A few times he mentions the dingo or wild-dog, and the Eagle-hawk, but never, or hardly ever, the innumerable opossums, wild cats and native bears. He has very little to say about any lizards, though they come next in numbers after the ants, and nothing about the enormous iguana. Even the corn-grower's curse, the great white cockatoo which comes down in flocks that whiten a field and sweep it bare like locusts, hardly crosses our vision.

Gordon made his bush effects with bushmen—he used

little else except sounds, light and darkness, heat and shade.

And this method has great advantages, because it makes his poems truly *dramatic lyrics*—not musings about still life, scenery or natural history, like so many forest poems, even Kendall's. The Kendall method produces the better poetry, and more good writers, but the world at large will always be more interested in dramatic lyrics, and personally I think that Gordon, with his literary offspring Rudyard Kipling, stand at the very top of the tree in this form of writing. I do not of course claim for them the technical finish of the great masters of poetic style, but Browning achieved his fame without any respect for perfection of metre and vocabulary. And both Gordon (who could recite Browning by the page) and Mr. Kipling have a splendid and haunting swing, and have swept into the net of poetry a miraculous draught of expressions and experiences of common life. Gordon gave the bushman and the jockey his halo of poetry, Mr. Kipling laid it on the head of Tommy Atkins (the descendant of the archers of Crecy and Poitiers), the engineer, the merchant seaman, and the flotsam of Empire. These two have put the theories of Walt Whitman into a more articulate form. They have sung in ringing ballads the struggles of the men who lead hard and dangerous lives in their everyday round. Their song is always of battle, though their battles are not always those of knights in mail, or clashing armies. They are the poets of action.

The curious feature in the matter is that Gordon, much the more classical of the two in language and subject, led a wild bush life, while Mr. Kipling has always written as an observer, not drawing on his own experiences. It is his genius which has enabled him to put himself inside the minds of his heroes. It is on him that the mantle of Gordon, the laureate of the brave, has fallen, rather than on the writers of bush ballads, who are spoken of as the School of Gordon.

The most typical of Gordon's disciples in Australia was poor Morant, "The Breaker." Reckless, as Gordon himself in Ogilvie's poem—

" Wild fearless horseman ! with a reckless rein,  
Riding at Fate's big fences unafraid,  
Holding the phantom rider in disdain,  
And fretting only for his call delayed."

There were wonderful tales of Morant, how he jumped his horse for a bet over a gigantic wall and landed safely in the gaol-yard up country somewhere, and tales of other equally hare-brained performances. He was always something of a mystery, evidently a Public School and University man, but his sparse accounts of his life in the Old Country varied considerably, perhaps out of consideration to his people. He went to South Africa at the time of the Boer War and became a lieutenant in a locally raised regiment. He and some other officers and men found their captain dead with his eyes gouged out by the Boers—so they said, anyway. They seized the Boers at that farm, held a drum-head court martial, and themselves shot the men they considered guilty. Morant took all the responsibility, but he could not save two of his inferior officers—though one or two others got off with penal servitude. Morant and his two comrades were shot in the gaol-yard at Pretoria. He refused to have his eyes bandaged, "holding the phantom rider in disdain." Perhaps it was only discipline to shoot them—but the pity of it!

I have found plenty of beautiful writing in the works of those whom we call the school of Gordon, but I have found nothing to equal Kendall in his moments of inspired simplicity like "After many years" or Gordon in "The Sick Stockrider," which is the best poem of its kind in the language. It is very beautiful, its choice of metre is instinctively just; it is terse, presenting a great picture with few superfluous details; and the genius of Australia sits brooding over every line, for it is the Bushman's Requiem. All through it we hear the voice of manhood

which has borne the burden and heat of a warrior's day, and now, sorely stricken, is waiting for death with the dignity of the Dying Gladiator of the Capitol. It is a wonderful piece of painting; no poem that was ever written could more truly be called a picture. And, above all, it has the qualities of Sir Arthur Sullivan's "The Lost Chord." That song is simple and popular in its materials, but no matter how large or how varied the assemblage which is listening when it is played, every heart in the assemblage is lifted up and filled with a flood of feeling not far from tears. If Gordon had only written "The Sick Stockrider" he would have been secure of immortality. Here is the best of it.

(Extract from "The Sick Stockrider")

"Hold hard, Ned! Lift me down once more, and lay me in the shade.

Old man, you've had your work cut out to guide  
Both horses, and to hold me in the saddle when I sway'd,  
All through the hot, slow, sleepy, silent ride.  
The dawn at 'Moorabinda' was a mist rack dull and dense,  
The sunrise was a sullen, sluggish lamp;  
I was dozing in the gateway at Arbuthnot's boundary fence,  
I was dreaming on the Limestone cattle camp.

We crossed the creek at Carricksford, and sharply through the haze,  
And suddenly the sun shot flaming forth;  
To southward lay "Katâwa," with the sandpeaks all ablaze,  
And the flush'd fields of Glen Lomond lay to north.  
Now westward winds the bridle path that leads to Lindisfarm,  
And yonder looms the double-headed Bluff;  
From the far side of the first hill, when the skies are clear and calm,  
You can see Sylvester's woolshed fair enough.  
Five miles we used to call it from our homestead to the place  
Where the big tree spans the roadway like an arch;  
'Twas here we ran the dingo down that gave us such a chase  
Eight years ago—or was it nine?—last March.

'Twas merry in the glowing morn, among the gleaming grass,  
To wander as we've wander'd many a mile,  
And blow the cool tobacco cloud, and watch the white wreaths  
pass,

Sitting loosely in the saddle all the while.

'Twas merry 'mid the blackwoods when we spied the station roofs,  
To wheel the wild scrub cattle at the yard,  
With a running fire of stockwhips and a fiery run of hoofs;  
Oh! the hardest day was never then too hard!

Aye! we had a glorious gallop after 'Starlight' and his gang,  
 When they bolted from Sylvester's on the flat;  
 How the sun-dried reed-beds crackled, how the flint-strewn ranges  
 rang

To the strokes of 'Mountaineer' and 'Acrobat.'  
 Hard behind them in the timber, harder still across the heath,  
 Close beside them through the tea-tree scrub we dash'd;  
 And the golden-tinted fern leaves, how they rustled underneath!  
 And the honeysuckle osiers, how they crash'd!

\* \* \* \* \*

Aye! nearly all our comrades of the old colonial school,  
 Our ancient boon companions, Ned, are gone;  
 Hard livers for the most part, somewhat reckless as a rule,  
 It seems that you and I are left alone.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ah! those days and nights we squandered at the Logans' in the Glen—  
 The Logans, man and wife, have long been dead.  
 Elsie's tallest girl seems taller than your little Elsie then;  
 And Ethel is a woman grown and wed.

I've had my share of pastime, and I've done my share of toil,  
 And life is short—the longest life a span;  
 I care not now to tarry for the corn or for the oil,  
 Or for the wine that maketh glad the heart of man.  
 For good undone and gifts misspent and resolutions vain,  
 'Tis somewhat late to trouble. This I know—  
 I should live the same life over, if I had to live again;  
 And the chances are I go where most men go.

The deep blue skies wax dusky, and the tall green trees grow dim,  
 The sward beneath me seems to heave and fall;  
 And sickly, smoky shadows through the sleepy sunlight swim,  
 And on the very sun's face weave their pall.  
 Let me slumber in the hollow where the wattle blossoms wave,  
 With never stone or rail to fence my bed;  
 Should the sturdy station children pull the bush flowers on my grave,  
 I may chance to hear them romping overhead."

"The Sick Stockrider" is Australia's "Scholar Gipsy," not so purely poetical as Matthew Arnold's, not perhaps a greater poem, but secure of reaching a hundred hearts where the Oxford poem reached one.

The concluding lines of "The Sick Stockrider" read as if Gordon had written them as an epitaph for himself; indeed, many would like to see them engraved on the broken



column with a laurel wreath which marks his resting place amid the wild flowers which make the North Brighton Cemetery (near Melbourne) an exquisite *rus in urbe*.

I am ready to acknowledge that "The Sick Stockrider" stands far above Gordon's other work in the same line—"The Ride from the Wreck," and "Wolf and Hound"—his only other typically bush poems, though "Gone," the Dedication to Whyte Melville, and a few others deal with the subject. Here is one of the best passages in "From the Wreck"—

"In the low branches heavily laden with dew,  
 In the long grasses spoiling with deadwood that day,  
 Where the blackwood, the box, and the bastard oak grew,  
 Between the tall gum-trees we gallop'd away—  
 We crash'd through a brush fence, we splash'd through a swamp—  
 We steered for the north near 'the Eaglehawk's Nest'—  
 We bore to the left, just beyond 'the Red Camp,'  
 And round the black tea-tree belt wheel'd to the west—  
 We cross'd a low range thickly scented with musk  
 From wattle-tree blossom—we skirted a marsh—  
 Then the dawn faintly dappled with orange the dusk,  
 And peal'd overhead the jay's laughter note harsh,  
 And shot the first sunstreak behind us, and soon  
 The dim dewy uplands, were dreamy with light;  
 And full on our left flash'd 'The Reedy Lagoon,'  
 And sharply 'the Sugarloaf' rear'd on our right.  
 A smother'd curse broke through the bushman's brown beard,  
 He turn'd in his saddle, his brick-colour'd cheek  
 Flush'd feebly with sundawn, said, 'Just what I fear'd;  
 Last fortnight's late rainfall has flooded the creek.'  
 Black Bolingbroke snorted, and stood on the brink  
 One instant, then deep in the dark, sluggish swirl  
 Plunged headlong. I saw the horse suddenly sink,  
 Till round the man's armpits the wave seem'd to curl.  
 We follow'd—one cold shock, and deeper we sank  
 Than they did, and twice tried the landing in vain.  
 The third struggle won it, straight up the steep bank  
 We stagger'd, then out on the skirts of the plain.  
 The stockrider, Alec, at starting had got  
 The lead, and had kept it throughout; 'twas his boast  
 That through thickest of scrub he could steer like a shot,  
 And the black horse was counted the best on the coast.

The mare had been awkward enough in the dark,  
 She was eager and headstrong, and barely half-broke;  
 She had had me too close to a big stringy-bark,  
 And had made a near thing of a crooked she-oak;

But now on the open, lit up by the morn,  
 She flung the white foam-flakes from nostril to neck,  
 And chased him—I hatless, with shirtsleeves all torn  
 (For he may ride ragged who rides from a wreck)—  
 And faster and faster across the wide heath  
 We rode till we raced. Then I gave her her head,  
 And she—stretching out with the bit in her teeth—  
 She caught him, outpaced him, and passed him, and led.

We neared the new fence; we were wide of the track;  
 I look'd right and left—she had never been tried  
 At a stiff leap. 'Twas little he cared on the black.  
 'You're more than a mile from the gateway,' he cried.  
 I hung to her head, touched her flank with the spurs  
 (In the red streak of rail not the ghost of a gap);  
 She shortened her long stroke, she pricked her sharp ears,  
 She flung it behind her with hardly a rap—  
 I saw the post quiver where Bolingbroke struck,  
 And guessed that the pace we had come the last mile  
 Had blown him a bit (he could jump like a buck).  
 We galloped more steadily then for a while.

\* \* \* \* \*

I pull'd her together, I press'd her, and she  
 Shot down the decline to the Company's yard,  
 And on by the paddocks, yet under my knee  
 I could feel her heart thumping the saddle-flaps hard.  
 Yet a mile and another, and now we were near  
 The goal, and the fields and the farms flitted past;  
 And 'twixt the two fences I turn'd with a cheer,  
 For a green, grass-fed mare 'twas a far thing and fast;  
 And labourers, roused by her galloping hoofs,  
 Saw bare-headed rider and foam-sheeted steed;  
 And shone the white walls and the slate-coloured roofs  
 Of the township. I steadied her then—I had need—  
 Where stood the old chapel (where stands the new church—  
 Since chapels to churches have changed in that town).  
 A short, sidelong stagger, a long forward lurch,  
 A slight choking sob, and the mare had gone down.  
 I slipp'd off the bridle, I slackened the girth,  
 I ran on and left her, and told them my news;  
 I saw her soon afterwards. What was she worth?  
 How much for her hide? She had never worn shoes."

The poem was of course inspired by Browning's "How They brought the News to Ghent," published ten or twenty years earlier, but in every way is far superior to Browning's manufactured article. For in Gordon's poem we have the description not from an observer but from the man who did the ride, or other such rides, while Browning did not write like a man at arms any more than he looked like a man at arms. Gordon's poem was also truer poetry. Still "From the Wreck" is inferior as poetry to "The Sick Stockrider" because it was written consciously after a model instead of being a swan-song from the heart.

"The wild swan's death hymn took the soul  
Of that lone place with joy,"

wrote one of the greatest of England's poets—almost a prophecy of Gordon's Sick Stockrider.

"Wolf and Hound" has little poetical merit though it is a vigorous and life-like description of an exciting episode, and full of bush colour. The only other poem of Gordon's in which there is any great deal of bush colour is his dedication of *Bush Ballads and Galloping Rhymes* to the novelist Whyte Melville, which is directly inspired by Kendall, and in truth reads more like Kendall than Gordon. This again is not Gordon at his best, though the picture is a brilliant one. The last poem in this group is "Gone," written about the lost explorers Burke and Wills. But its local colour has no great value.

There are touches of Australian colour here and there in poems like "De Te," but the Australian racing poems contain hardly any local colour except the names of the horses and their humans.

Apart from "The Sick Stockrider" and "From the Wreck," Gordon's fame rests chiefly on his English horse poems, of which "How we Beat the Favourite" is the best, though not the most poetical. His best poems, tested only as poetry, are his poems of regret like "Doubtful

Dreams," "De Te," and "A Song of Autumn," and their setting is Australian.

In these without achieving Swinburne's mastery of rhythm and vocabulary he is more interesting, because Gordon writes not of lovers but of strong men fighting fate. Struggle is Gordon's favourite theme.

(From "Doubtful Dreams.")

"From the spot where we last lay dreaming  
 Together—yourself and I—  
 The soft grass beneath us gleaming,  
 Above us the great grave sky.  
 And we spoke thus, 'Though we have trodden  
 Rough paths in our boyish years;  
 And some with our sweat are sodden,  
 And some are salt with our tears;  
 Though we stumble still, walking blindly,  
 Our paths shall be made all straight;  
 We are weak, but the heavens are kindly,  
 The skies are compassionate.'  
 Is the clime of the old land younger,  
 Where the young dreams longer are nursed  
 With the old insatiable hunger,  
 With the old unquenchable thirst.  
 Are you longing, as in the old years  
 We have longed so often in vain;  
 Fellow-toilers still, fellow-soldiers,  
 Though the seas have sundered us twain?  
 But the young dreams surely have faded!  
 Young dreams!—old dreams of young days—  
 Shall the new dream vex us as they did?  
 Or as things worth censure or praise?  
 Real toil is ours, real trouble,  
 Dim dreams of pleasure and pride;  
 Let the dreams disperse like a bubble,  
 So the toil like a dream subside.  
 Vain toil! men better and braver,  
 Rose early and rested late,  
 Whose burdens than ours were graver,  
 And sterner than ours their hate.  
 What fair reward had Achilles?  
 What rest could Alcides win?  
 Vain toil! 'Consider the lilies?  
 They toil not, neither do spin.'

\* \* \* \* \*

Vain dreams ! for our fathers cherish'd  
 High hopes in the days that were ;  
 And these men wonder'd and perish'd,  
 Nor better than these we fare ;  
 And our due at least is their due,  
 They fought against odds and fell ;  
 ' *En avant les enfants perdus !* '<sup>2</sup>  
 We fight against odds as well.

The skies ! Will the great skies care for  
 Our footsteps, straighten our path,  
 Or strengthen our weakness ? Wherefore ?  
 We have rather incurr'd their wrath."

\* \* \* \* \*

This is Gordon's high-water mark in pure poetry. There is the same power—the same gift of striking phrase with the philosophy of life behind it in these verses of "De Te," the poem Gordon wrote so prophetically about suicide.

(From "De Te")

" Were new life sent, and life misspent  
 Wiped out (if such to God seemed good),  
 Would he (being as he was) repent,  
 Or could he, even if he would,  
 Who heeded not things understood  
 (Though dimly) even in savage lands  
 By some who worship stone or wood,  
 Or bird or beast, or who stretch hands  
 Sunwards on shining Eastern sands ?

And crime has cause. Nay, never pause  
 Idly to feel a pulseless wrist ;  
 Brace up the massive, square-shaped jaws,  
 Unclench the stubborn, stiff'ning fist,  
 And close those eyes through film and mist,  
 That kept the old defiant glare ;  
 And answer, wise Psychologist,  
 Whose science claims some little share  
 Of truth, what better things lay there ?

Aye ! thought and mind were there,—some kind  
 Of faculty that men mistake  
 For talent when their wits are blind —  
 An aptitude to mar and break  
 What others diligently make.

This was the worst and best of him—  
 Wise with the cunning of the snake,  
 Brave with the she-wolf's courage grim,  
 Dying hard and dumb, torn limb from limb."

These two poems may be taken as typical of Gordon in his most serious vein.

But most readers of this book will be interested in Gordon chiefly as the Laureate of Sport—and his fame as a laureate of sport rests not so much on the sporting tips in verse which he wrote for *Bell's Life in Victoria* and the *Australasian*, as on the sporting poems which he wrote in Australia, but which were inspired by his memories of racing at Prestbury and hunting in the Cotswolds in the days when he enjoyed the friendship of some of the most famous steeplechase-riders England ever produced, who rode eleven Grand National winners between them—Tom Oliver, George Stevens, and "Mr. Thomas" (Tom Pickernell), who is still alive. They are the poems which furnish most of the quotations which have passed into proverbs in Australia. "How we Beat the Favourite" was one of them. This poem is by universal consent the best racing poem in the language. It was necessary that a poet should combine perfect knowledge of steeplechasing and the ability to write an unconventional poem with a certain stateliness as well as verve, in swinging metres, before "How we Beat the Favourite"—"THE RHYTHM OF A RACE" could be written. It presents a perfect moving picture of a race: it is matchless. If you read the verses aloud you get the galloping of the horses in sound as well as in meaning.

With "How we Beat the Favourite" may be grouped the poems in "Ye Wearie Wayfarer"—"By Wood and Wold" (a preamble); "By Flood and Field" (a legend of the Cottiswold); "Zu der Edlen Jagd" (a treatise on trees—vine-tree v. saddle-tree); "In Utrunque Paratus" (a logical discussion); "Lex Talionis" (a moral discourse); "Potters' Clay" (an allegorical interlude); "Cito Pede

Preterit *Ætas*" (a philosophical dissertation); "*Finis Exoptatus*" (a metaphysical song); and "*The Roll of the Kettledrum*" and the poems in "*Hippodromania*," though these last deal with riding in Australia. And undoubtedly this group had much to do with the fact that in Australia Gordon is more of a household word than Shakespeare. It is in them that most of his sayings which have become proverbs like—

"No game was ever yet worth a rap  
For a rational man to play  
Into which no accident, no mishap  
Could possibly find its way,"

occur.

To give such of my readers as have never had Gordon's poems in their hands some idea of "*Ye Wearie Wayfarer*" and "*Hippodromania*," I will give three or four typical quotations. The first is from "*By Flood and Field*," and describes the famous Captain Nolan, immortalised by the charge of the Light Brigade.

"The right hand man to the left hand said,  
As down in the vale we went,  
'Harden your heart like a millstone, Ned,  
And set your face as a flint;  
Solid and tall is the rasping wall  
That stretches before us yonder;  
You must have it at speed, or not at all,  
'Twere better to halt than to ponder,  
For the stream runs wide on the take-off side,  
And washes the clay-bank under.  
Here goes for a pull; 'tis a madman's ride,  
And a broken neck, if you blunder.'  
No word in reply his comrade spoke,  
Nor wavered, nor once looked round,  
But I saw him shorten his horse's stroke  
As we splashed through the marshy ground;  
I remember the laugh that all the while  
On his quiet features played.  
So he rode to his death with that careless smile,  
In the van of the Light Brigade;  
So, stricken by Russian grape, the cheer  
Rang out, while he toppled back

From the shattered lungs, as merry and clear  
 As it did when it roused the pack,  
 Let never a tear his memory stain;  
 Give his ashes never a sigh;  
 One of many who perished, *not in vain,*  
*As a type of our chivalry.*  
 I remember one thrust he gave to his hat,  
 And two to the flanks of the brown;  
 And still as a statue of old he sat,  
 And he shot to the front, hands down.  
 I remember the snort and the staglike bound  
 Of the steed six lengths to the fore,  
 And the laugh of the rider while, landing sound,  
 He turned in his saddle and glanced around;  
 I remember but little more,  
 Save a bird's-eye gleam of the dashing stream,  
 A jarring thud on the wall,  
 A shock, and the blank of a nightmare's dream—  
 I was down with a stunning fall."

The second quotation comes from "Cito Pede Preterit  
 Ætas."

"We have no wish to exaggerate  
 The worth of the sports we prize,  
 Some toil for their Church, and some for their State,  
 And some for their merchandise;  
 Some traffic and trade in the city's mart,  
 Some travel by land and sea,  
 Some follow science, some cleave to art,  
 And some to scandal and tea.  
 And some for their country and their Queen  
 Would fight, if the chance they had.  
 Good sooth, 'twere a sorry world, I ween,  
 If we all went galloping mad.  
 Yet if once we efface the joys of the chase,  
 From the land and out-root the stud,  
*Good-bye to the Anglo-Saxon race!*  
 Farewell to the Norman blood!  
 Where the burn runs down to the uplands brown,  
 From the heights of the snow-clad range,  
 What anodyne drawn from the stifling town  
 Can be reckoned a fair exchange  
 For the stalker's stride, on the mountain side  
 In the bracing northern weather  
 To the slopes where couch in their antlered pride  
 The deer on the perfumed heather!



Oh the vigour with which, the air is rife,  
 The spirit of joyous motion,  
 The fever, the fulness of animal life  
 Can be drained from no earthly potion !  
 The lungs with the living gas grow light,  
 And the limbs feel the strength of ten,  
 While the chest expands with its maddening might,  
*God's glorious oxygen.*

Thus the measured stroke on elastic sward  
 Of the steed three-parts extended,  
 Hard held, the breath of his nostrils broad  
 With the golden ether blended.  
 Then the leap, the rise from the springy turf,  
 The rush through the buoyant air,  
 And the light shock landing—the veriest serf  
 Is an emperor then and there.”

The third quotation is from “Visions in the Smoke,” which is certainly one of his racing pieces, and, to my mind, much the most poetical of them.

“In their own generation the wise may sneer,  
 They hold our sports in derision.  
 Perchance to sophist, or sage, or seer,  
 Were allotted a graver vision.  
 Yet if man, of all the Creator planned,  
 His noblest work is reckoned,  
 Of the works of His hand, by sea or by land  
 The horse may at least rank second.

Did they quail, those steeds of the squadrons light,  
 Did they flinch from the battle's roar,  
 When they burst on the guns of the Muscovite  
 By the echoing Black Sea shore ?  
 On ! on to the cannon's mouth they stride  
 With never a swerve or a shy,  
 Oh ! the minutes of yonder maddening ride  
 Long years of pleasure outvie.

No slave, but a comrade staunch in this,  
 Is the horse, for he takes his share,  
 Not in peril alone, but in feverish bliss,  
 And in longing to do and dare.  
 Where bullets whistle and round shot whiz,  
 Hoofs trample, and blades flash bare,  
 God send me an ending as fair as his  
 Who died in his stirrups there ”

“The Roll of the Kettledrum” is put into the mouth of the last surviving charger<sup>1</sup> of the Light Brigade, and gives the charger’s account of the famous charge. Some of its stanzas are very pathetic, and some full of spirit.

“The Last Leap” ought perhaps to be mentioned here. It is not written in the vernacular like his other horse-poems. Its brevity, its nearer approach to classical English would almost fit it for inclusion in serious anthologies were it not too much a reflex in its most pathetic touch of Black Auster in Macaulay’s Lays.

But Gordon was not only a horse-poet. He was the Laureate *par excellence* of the over-intrepid and over-generous, we might perhaps say “the Laureate of wild oats.” The cavalier poets—most of them heroes—of the great Rebellion, would have hailed him as their bright particular star. That kind of bravery, that kind of generosity, which illuminate a life with flashes of lightning instead of an even brilliance, found in him their most eloquent advocate.

“No tears are needed—fill out the wine,  
Let the goblets clash and the grape-juice flow,  
Ho! pledge me a death drink, comrade mine,  
To a brave man gone where we all must go”—

he wrote over poor Wills, the explorer, when he had perished in what was then the wilderness.

There is an echo of despair in nearly all Gordon’s poems, but it is not the kind of despair which apathetically lets things go by default, nor does his poetry breathe much suggestion of the last terrible refuge which he did actually seek; it is more the despair of a “forlorn hope,” the courage of despair.

Some lines in “Finis Exoptatus” give us the Gordonian philosophy at its noblest—

<sup>1</sup> The late Colonel Connelly hunted for many years with the Berkeley (afterwards Cotswold) hounds, on the charger he rode in the charge of the Light Brigade. The charger came out of the charge shot through the ear. Some people hold that the Colonel was “Ned.”

“ Question not, but live and labour  
 Till yon goal be won,  
 Helping every feeble neighbour,  
 Seeking help from none.

Life is mostly froth and bubble,  
 Two things stand like stone—  
 Kindness in another's trouble,  
 Courage in your own.

Courage, comrades ! This is certain—  
 All is for the best ;  
 There are lights behind the curtain ;  
 Gentles, let us rest.”

The eight Fyttes of *Ye Wearie Wayfarer* have probably won Gordon as many friends as any of his poems. They are so full of his bushman's philosophy, which has become the Gospel of Australia, so full of his sayings which have become proverbs in Australia.

Fytte I, “ By Wood and Wold,” is as agreeable an introduction as the opening of Boccaccio's *Decameron* in that garden between Florence and Fiesole.

Fytte II, “ By Flood and Field,” gives us an inimitable description of hunting in the Cotswolds—incidentally introducing Captain Louis Edward Nolan riding to hounds, and riding to his death in the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava—in ringing and immortal verse.

Fytte III, “ Zu der Edlen Jagd,” proclaims how much a finer stimulant riding is than drink. It is about the least inspired of the series.

Fytte IV, “ In Utrumque Paratus,” on the other hand, is one of the best, full of proverbs, and ending with the famous passage about David and Uriah the Hittite.

“ Does HE warble ‘ non nobis Domine,’  
 With his monarch in blissful concert, free  
 From all malice to flesh inherent ? ”

“ Zeruah's offspring, who served so well,  
 Yet between the horns of the altar fell—  
 Does HIS voice the ‘ *Quid gloriaris* ’ swell,  
 Or the ‘ *Quare fremuerunt* ? ’

It may well be thus, where DAVID sings,  
 And Uriah joins in the chorus,  
 But while earth to earthly matter clings,  
 Neither you nor the bravest of Judah's kings  
 As a pattern can stand before us."

Fytte V, "Lex Talionis," is good Gordonian philosophy in vigorous verse. It is remembered by most people for its allusion to the wreck of the *London*.

Fytte VI, "Potter's Clay," is a graceful little two-stanza poem on the danger of safety—one idea slightly treated.

Fytte VII, "Cito Pede Praeterit Aetas," is one of the best of the series, it is the *carpe diem* poem, and contains some of Gordon's most ringing stanzas, the panegyric on riding, which culminates in—

"Yet, if once we efface the joys of the chase."

Fytte VIII, "Finis Exoptatus," is Gordon's valediction. Perhaps the best remembered of many memorable lines in it are the passage on the chimes of Sweet St. Mary's, and—

"Life is mostly froth and bubble."

These eight poems are full of felicitous expressions, full of the Gordonian philosophy in his best vein of—

"Trusting grandly, singing gaily,  
 Confident and calm."

They are ringing in metre, picturesque in expression, full of striking allusions; they show us Gordon before the fearlessness and sturdiness of his youth were broken by constant injuries to his head in steeplechasing, and pecuniary disillusion.

The five pieces of "Hippodromania"—"Visions in the Smoke," "The Fields of Coleraine," "Credat Judaeus Apella," "Banker's Dream" and "Ex Fumo dare Lucem," with the exception of the first, are not at all equal to the eight pieces in *Ye Wearie Wayfarer* as poetry. In fact, they are not poetry at all. They are merely excellent racing rhymes. In the same way the "Romance of

Britomarte " is not a poem, but a metrical story, whose chief illumination is its knowledge of horsecraft. Like " Ashtaroth " it is full of immaturities.

The best of the poems written directly under the influence of Swinburne, whose rhythms Gordon loved more than any other poet's, are " Podas Okus," which describes the death of Achilles, " The Rhyme of Joyous Gard " (as Arthurian scholars spell it), and " The Swimmer."

" Podus Okus " and the " Rhyme of Joyous Gard " are very much under the influence of Swinburne, but they are strengthened with Gordon's own warrior touch, and contain some very fine lines and passages. In the very first verse of " Podus Okus," which is the very first verse in the book, occurs that line which has almost become a proverb, " Hush'd are all the Myrmidons," and a little later follows some typical Gordonisms—

" glory,  
Coupled with an early tomb.  
\* \* \* \*

Day by day our ranks diminish,  
We are falling day by day;  
But our sons the strife will finish,  
Where man tarries, man must slay.  
\* \* \* \*

Shorter doom I've pictured dimly,  
On a bed of crimson sand;  
Fighting hard and dying grimly,  
Silent lips, and striking hand.  
\* \* \* \*

Dry those violet orbs that glisten,  
Darling, I have had my day;  
Place your hand in mine and listen,  
Ere the strong soul cleaves its way  
Through the death-mist hovering o'er me,  
As the stout ship cleaves the wave,  
To my fathers gone before me,  
To the gods who love the brave.  
\* \* \* \*

Yet th' Elysian halls are spacious,  
Somewhere near me, I may keep  
Room—who knows?—the gods are gracious;  
Lay me lower—let me sleep!"

These last lines are addressed to his beautiful lost mistress, Briseis. The whole poem has the vibrant Achillean personality of Gordon permeating it.

The "Rhyme of Joyous Gard"<sup>1</sup> is supposed to be written by Sir Launcelot of the Lake, in the monastery whither he had retired as a penitent, over the death of Queen Guinevere, who had also retired to a convent at Amesbury. In form it may be too beholden to Swinburne, and Gordon had but a slight acquaintance with the legend compared to Tennyson, but he has earned his right to handle the subject by the personality, his own personality, which he has infused into Launcelot. Here is a verse with more honest fighting in it than generally comes within the limits of a whole Arthurian poem—

"Then a steel-shod rush and a steel-clad ring,  
And a crash of the spear staves splintering,  
And the billowy battle blended.  
Riot of chargers, revel of blows,  
And fierce flush'd faces of fighting foes,  
From croup to bridle, that reel'd and rose,  
In a sparkle of sword-play splendid.

And the long, lithe sword in the hand became  
As a leaping light, as a falling flame,  
As a fire through the flax that hasted.

\* \* \* \* \*

I have done for ever with all these things—  
Deeds that were joyous to knights and kings,  
In days that with songs were cherish'd.  
The songs are ended, the deeds are done,  
There shall none of them gladden me now, not one;  
There is nothing good for me under the sun,  
But to perish as these things perish'd."<sup>2</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

"If ever I smote as a man should smite,  
If I struck one stroke that seemed good in Thy sight,  
By Thy loving-mercy prevailing,  
Lord! Let her stand in the light of Thy face,  
Clothed with Thy love, and crowned with Thy grace,  
When I gnash my teeth in the terrible place  
That is filled with weeping and wailing."

<sup>1</sup> Incorrectly spelt *Garde* in Gordon's poems.

This is a ringing poem which carries the reader right along.

Gordon was not so successful in the imitations of the old Scottish Border ballads which he attempted. Most of his poems have some merit, except "Ashtaroth" and the "Road to Avernus" and the "Old Leaven," but poems like "Fauconshawe" and "Rippling Water" and "Unshriven," have not enough *raison d'être*. They suggest to me the immature author who had written "The Feud" for publication in a bazaar album at Mount Gambier (a poem which though it injures Gordon's reputation, is reproduced in this volume), feeling his way towards the vigorous gift of poetic expression which was to give him a permanent place in the literature, not only of Australia, but of England.

Gordon wrote a few poems of very high merit which do not depend on local colour (except in the case of the last one), or his own personality for their interest. "The Song of the Surf," "From Lightning and Tempest," "A Song of Autumn" and "The Swimmer." "The Song of the Surf," which contains that often-quoted verse—

"You come, and your crests are hoary with the foam of your countless years;

You break, with a rainbow of glory, through the spray of your glittering tears.

Is your song a song of gladness? a pæan of joyous might?

Or a wail of discordant sadness for the wrongs you never can right?

For the empty seat by the ingle? for children 'reft of their sire?

For the bride, sitting, sad, and single, and pale, by the flickering fire?"

"From Lightning and Tempest" and "A Song of Autumn" are Gordon's two little gems, the two which are mostly likely to find their way into anthologies like the Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics. They must be quoted entire.

#### FROM LIGHTNING AND TEMPEST

"The spring-wind pass'd through the forest, and whispered low in the leaves,

And the cedar toss'd her head, and the oak stood firm in his pride;

The spring-wind pass'd through the town, through the housetops,  
casements, and eaves,

And whisper'd low in the hearts of the men, and the men replied,

Singing—' Let us rejoice in the light  
 Of our glory, and beauty, and might;  
     Let us follow our own devices, and foster our own desires.  
 As firm as our oaks in our pride, as our cedars fair in our sight,  
     We stand like the trees of the forest that brave the frosts and the  
     fires.

The storm went forth to the forest, the plague went forth to the town,  
     And the men fell down to the plague, as the trees fell down to the  
     gale;  
 And their bloom was a ghastly pallor, and their smile was a ghastly  
     frown,  
     And the song of their hearts was changed to a wild, disconsolate  
     wail,  
 Crying—' God ! we have sinn'd, we have sinn'd,  
 We are bruised, we are shorn, we are thinn'd,  
     Our strength is turn'd to derision, our pride laid low in the dust,  
 Our cedars are cleft by Thy lightnings, our oaks are strew'd by Thy  
     wind,  
     And we fall on our faces seeking Thine aid, though Thy wrath is  
     just.' ”

#### A SONG OF AUTUMN

“ Where shall we go for our garlands glad  
     At the falling of the year,  
 When the burnt-up banks are yellow and sad,  
     When the boughs are yellow and sere ?  
 Where are the old ones that once we had,  
     And when are the new ones near ?  
 What shall we do for our garlands glad  
     At the falling of the year ?

“ Child ! can I tell where the garlands go ?  
     Can I say where the lost leaves veer  
 On the brown-burnt banks, when the wild winds blow,  
     When they drift through the dead-wood drear ?  
 Girl ! when the garlands of next year glow,  
     You may gather again, my dear—  
 But I go where the last year's lost leaves go  
     At the falling of the year.”

“ The Swimmer ” is too long to quote entire, nor is it of such a uniform merit as the two poems just quoted. But it has passages of supreme beauty, and is of the highest interest in a biography of Gordon because the sea had such



an extraordinary fascination for him. Regardless of the savage blue sharks which infest the coasts of Australia, he would swim half a mile out to sea, and once taxed himself so severely that he only just had the strength to get back again. When he was living near Cape Northumberland he would lie for hours on the edge of the cliff gazing at the sea, and he seems to have liked it best in its fiercest moods, though he makes no allusions to boating on it. It took a man who revelled in swimming to write this verse—

“ I would that with sleepy soft embraces  
 The sea would fold me—would find me rest  
 In luminous shades of her secret places,  
 In depths where marvels are manifest;  
 So the earth beneath her should not discover  
 My hidden couch—nor the heaven above her—  
 As a strong love shielding a weary lover,  
 I would have her shield me with shining breast.”

Of the poems Swinburnian in form and pessimism, but full of the personality of Gordon, the best is “ Doubtful Dreams,” quoted above, though there are also splendid lines in “ De Te,” “ Quare Fatigasti,” and “ Wormwood and Nightshade.” I have quoted from “ De Te.”

“ Laudamus ” falls into the same group, but it is inspired by Alfred de Musset more than by Swinburne. It is a poem with striking beauties, and contains four of Gordon’s most famous lines—

“ Let us thank the Lord for His bounties all,  
 For the brave old days of pleasure and pain,  
 When the world for both of us seem’d too small—  
 Though the love was void and the hate was vain—”

In connection with “ Laudamus ” it is natural to mention “ Cui Bono,” a poem not at all of the same rank, because it is made up entirely of aphorisms, some of them rather cheap aphorisms, without the backbone of romance which adds so much to the other. The sayings in it are much quoted by the people who “ spout ” Gordon. And with “ Cui Bono ” must be mentioned poems like “ Sunlight on the Sea,” which contains the famous anachronism, *To-*

*night with Plato we shall sup; and "Ars longa, Vita brevis."*

One other class of poem remains to be noticed, the autobiographical. Chief among them come "Whisperings in Wattle-boughs," "To my Sister" and "I am Weary, Let me Go." Gordon did not write "A Voice from the Bush," which is printed in some editions of his works. I have in my possession a letter from Mr. Mowbray Morris, saying definitely that he wrote the poem. Mr. Morris was secretary or aide-de-camp to Sir James Fergusson, Bart., Governor of South Australia (1869-1873) at the time the poem was written. Internal evidence shows that it could not have been Gordon's, because its metre is halting and irregular, while Gordon, though not so musical as Kendall, was essentially a musical writer. Also, it is a reflection of "The Sick Stockrider" in one passage, as Mr. Howlett Ross points out.

The biographical allusions in this poem are explained in the glossary of Gordon allusions.

The often-quoted poem "To my Sister" is chiefly valuable biographically. It shows that it was not want of sensibility and natural good feeling which made Gordon so wild as a boy. His wildness was due to the fact that he was born strong, brave and adventurous and was allowed to run wild. The world would have applauded his escapades as fine and spirited if he had been born a little higher in the scale of rank.

This poem, written three days before he sailed for Australia, when Gordon was about twenty, is, of course, immature compared with his best work, though it contains some typically Gordonian lines, such as—

"On earth there's little worth a sigh,  
And nothing worth a tear."

"Early Adieux" was not included in Marcus Clarke's edition of the collected volume of his poems, nor was "The Exile's Farewell." The latter, rather similar in cast to

the poem called "To my Sister," is written with much more rhythmical skill. Indeed, parts of it reach a high standard. It also has a biographical value.

"I am Weary, Let me Go" is a *Nunc Dimittis* poem, written glibly but with strong internal evidence of not being Gordon's work, though it is stated on the good authority of the *Australasian* to be his.

"Whispering in Wattleboughs" is on the same theme as "To my Sister," but Gordon has grown up poetically in the interval. Here is a really fine lyric, written with the ease and strength of rhythm which furnished a great factor in Gordon's popularity.

It is uncertain whether "No Name" should be included in this group, or in the group which contains "Doubtful Dreams" and the beautiful translation from De Musset's "Three Friends." It is, however, sometimes believed to be autobiographical and, in that case, belongs here. The biographical interest centres round the verse—

"You in your beauty above me bent,  
In the pause of a wild West Country ball  
Spoke to me—touched me without intent—  
Made me your servant for once and all."

Personally, I am not of the opinion that this poem refers to any event in his own life, I think I can trace its origin in Browning.

The sources of Gordon's popularity as a poet are personality, subject and style. Chief among them is the intense personality which vibrates through them. Gordon is never a Wordsworth, filling his hives steadily from all the suitable flowers round him. He never writes poems as intellectual exercises—as essays in rhyme and rhythm on phases supplied by Nature or domestic incidents. His poems well up from his heart like strong springs and sweep the reader along with them. In other words he is a *vates*, the word which the Romans applied to a great poet, in all senses of the word—not only as a maker of verses but as a prophet and a preacher, who has a message to deliver.

He was one of those curious vessels chosen by the Lord to stop the passer-by, and force him to take an interest in the enigma of life. That wonderful personality, so arrestive, so splendid, so tragic, must have been given him for the purpose.

Subject, of course, counted for an immense deal in Gordon's popularity. But it was not till his last days that Gordon wrote of sport consciously because people were interested in sport, and the verses he wrote under that influence, except "Visions in the Smoke," which may have been written already and merely served as the sample which secured him the order for the others, are, but for their knowledge of horses and their metrical merits, among the least valuable of Gordon's poems. Up to this he had written of sport because sport was the matter that lay nearest to his hand. Like Walt Whitman, he had said nothing is unsuitable for poetry which can be made a vehicle for feeling and creation.

But his magnificent "How we Beat the Favourite" and the ringing, manful, breezy, picturesque poetical proverbs of "Ye Wearie Wayfarer" belong to a very different order. Gordon wrote those because he felt Australia in his veins. I know from personal experience what this means to a young man, for I went to Australia straight from Oxford when I was little older than Gordon, and going up on stations in the Western District of Victoria belonging to various connections of my family, spent months in sheer exultation over the forest primeval of the Otway, the plains that lost themselves in the horizon, the glittering Australian climate, the champagne-like air, the long days in the saddle, the shooting of extraordinary game, the flashing by of parrots and cockatoos, the hiss of the angry snake, the excitements of raging floods and raging bush-fires. And all except the climate Gordon must have felt a hundredfold. In my time we went into the forest on purpose to get the wild life, as one takes a rough shooting in the Hebrides; in Gordon's time the whole country was only just emerging from its primeval state; the Blacks

were still a menace to solitary stations, though, curiously enough, Gordon never alludes to raids by the Blacks, and hardly alludes to the Blacks at all, probably because the subject of the reprisals by the settlers was distasteful to him. Mr. George Ridloch informs me that the Blacks in the actual Gordon country were very civilized. In Gordon's time one had often to ride from station to station through the bush. To Adelaide itself, from Mount Gambier, he once rode through the ninety-mile desert. The memories of the great gold rush were still fresh; the bushranger was still abroad in the land. Life was full of stimulants which were watered down by my time.

Yet I felt intoxicated with that year I spent on stations in Australia, though I had not chafed against the conditions of my life in England.

How much more than I should Gordon, who was for ever kicking against the pricks in England, have rejoiced like a young colt in the wild life of his time? What could be more natural than that his exultation should have found vent in poetry—the poetry which he felt in his everyday surroundings!

It is this which makes those early sporting poems so spontaneous, so original, so irresistible.

The third element in the popularity of Gordon was the charm of the style he evolved. Gordon was familiar with the sporting verses which had been written by hunting men in England, but, unlike most sporting men, he also loved all good poetry—Latin and Greek and French as well as English. So he was able to improve his models. What made him better than all other sporting poets was that he was a much better poet than any of them, and that he had exactly the ear for devising and executing the ringing metres which his subjects demanded. There is no other volume of sporting poetry so dashing as Gordon's, dashing in subject, style and metre. Gordon was a genius. Kipling is the only other genius who has written English poetry in the vernacular, and he is not a sporting poet.

But Gordon was not a poet of the first order. He had not the broad humanity, the serene power of a Homer, a Chaucer, a Shakespeare, or a Longfellow. Within his narrow range, he was strong, but his range was somewhat narrow. He was, however, a true poet, as is shown by his universal and growing popularity in his own land. A poet who appeals to the lettered and the unlettered alike, who is popular with the student and popular with the stable-boy, must be a true poet. A man may appeal to a class as the mouthpiece of that class; he cannot appeal to all classes alike if he be not genuine.

The "Sick Stockrider" is the essence of the man. It displays, in a marked degree, his eloquence, his ringing rhythm, his knowledge of the bush, and it is the child of his history, the genuine outcome of his wild heart. Had he never written another piece his fame would have been assured. Like "Doubtful Dreams" it rings with the manly melancholy of Gordon.



A. L. GORDON STEEPLE-CHASING.

*Drawn by himself in a letter to Charley Walker. Reproduced by permission of Miss H. Walker.*





## CHAPTER XIX

A KEY TO THE PRINCIPAL ALLUSIONS IN GORDON'S POEMS

**PODAS OKUS.**—The Death of Achilles is described here. Fred Marshall has a note about it. “Gordon wished to withdraw this poem as his history was wrong. Briseis was taken from him by Agamemnon, and she did not see him die.” This is a fact, but Gordon may be allowed the poetic licence of imagining Briseis back with him as he was dying.

*Myrmidon* has now become a phrase, but the original Myrmidons were a race of warriors who migrated from Ægina to Thessaly and thus became the subjects of Peleus and his son Achilles.

*Automedon*, the son of Diore, was the charioteer and companion of Achilles.

*Agamemnon* was the generalissimo of the Greek forces before Troy. He was King of Mycenae and a sort of over-King of the whole Peloponnesus. As such he compelled Achilles, who was merely the Chief of a few brave highlanders from Thessaly, to surrender to him his beautiful mistress, Briseis.

*Diomede* or Diomedes, another of the Greek allies in the Siege of Troy, was the King of Argos. Next to Achilles he was reckoned the bravest of the Greeks.

*Nestor*, the oldest of the Greek chiefs before Troy, was famous for his wisdom, justice, bravery, knowledge of war, and eloquence. It was he who persuaded Achilles to join in the expedition.

*Ulysses*, the King of the Island of Ithaca, was the most cunning and capable of all the Greeks before Troy, and famous for his wanderings on his return

from Troy, which form the subject of Homer's *Odyssey*. Gordon should not have used the form Ulysses, as the Greek form of his name was Odysseus.

*Priam* was King of Troy, father of Hector, Paris, Cassandra, Polyxena, etc.

*Menelaus* was King of Sparta. The carrying-off of his wife, Helen, by Paris, was the occasion of the Trojan war. He was the most modern and humane of all the characters in Homer.

*Paris*, son of Priam, King of Troy, by eloping with Helen, the wife of Menelaus, when he was her husband's guest, brought on the Trojan war.

*Phæbus* and *Apollo* are names of the same God, the most powerful deity on the side of the Trojans in the war.

*Polyxena*, whose name Gordon pronounces wrong, because the "e" is short and not long, was the daughter of Priam, King of Troy, and beloved by Achilles.

There are two different legends about the love of Achilles and Polyxena. One is that Achilles promised Priam to force the Greeks to conclude peace with him if he gave him Polyxena to wife, and that when he went to the temple of the Thymbrean Apollo for the purpose of negotiating the marriage in a neutral spot, he was treacherously killed by Paris. The other is that Achilles and Polyxena fell in love with each other when Hector's body was delivered up to Priam, and that after the murder of Achilles Polyxena fled to the Greeks and slew herself with a sword on the tomb of her beloved.

*Athena*, the goddess of wisdom, identified by the Romans with *Minerva*, was the most powerful deity on the side of the Greeks in the siege of Troy.

The whole poem deals with the Homeric details of the siege of Troy.

*Thetis*, the Sea-Goddess, was the mother of Achilles,

a Nereid who lived in the depths of the sea with her father, Nereus. She fell in love with his father, Peleus, King of Thessaly, and when Achilles was born of the marriage she made him immortal by dipping him in the waters of the Styx. But the ankles, by which she held him, remained dry, and it was there that the arrow of Paris killed him.

*The Scamander* is the river on the plain of Troy.

*Patroclus*, a beautiful boy, the bosom friend of Achilles, played a very important part in the Trojan War, because it was to avenge his death that Achilles took the field again after he had refused to take all further part in the war in consequence of Agamemnon having commandeered his beautiful mistress, Briseis.

"Should I hear the shepherd boasting  
To his Argive concubine."<sup>23</sup>

*The Shepherd* is Paris, the son of Priam, King of Troy, who was so beautiful that Hera (Juno), Athena (Minerva), and Aphrodite (Venus) asked him to decide which was the most beautiful of the three, and to present her with the apple (of Discord.) Paris gave the apple to Aphrodite, throwing the far more powerful Hera and Athene on the side of the Greeks in the Trojan War.

As Gordon is using the Greek form of the names he should have called Jove, Zeus.

The real name of *Briseis* was Hippodameia, the daughter of Briseus, King of the Leleges, who hung himself when Achilles carried off his daughter to be his mistress.

"Were the laurels torn from Hector."

*Hector*, son of Priam, was the chief hero on the side of Troy; he was killed by Achilles, and the Iliad ends with his death. His boastfulness originated the term Hectoring.

“ ’Twas the fraud of Priam’s daughter,  
Not the force of Priam’s son.”

This refers to Polyxena and Paris.

*Charon* was the ferryman who conveyed the souls of the departed across the river Styx.

GONE.—This poem describes the death of Burke and Wills, the explorers, in Central Australia. It appeared in *Baily’s Magazine* for March 1870, in an article by Major Leveson (the Old Shikarri—H.A.L.). Major Leveson remarked on this pathetic description of Burke’s death. Three months later it would almost have done for a description of Gordon’s own death.

The famous monument to Burke and Wills by Charles Summers, the first Australian sculptor, which used to stand in Collins Street and now stands in Spring Street, Melbourne, commemorates the disastrous death of the two explorers, Robert O’Hara Burke and William John Wills, who made a successful expedition of exploration from Melbourne to the Gulf of Carpentaria, leaving their supply depôt under Brahe and three other men at Cooper’s Creek, to await their return for three or four months. They reached tidal waters and turned back, but Brahe carried out his orders too literally and retreated, leaving only a small supply of provisions, on the very morning of the day on which they arrived. Burke and Wills made a fatal delay in waiting to bury Gray, and then, instead of carrying out Wills’s suggestion of hurrying on in Brahe’s tracks, Burke insisted upon striking across the desert for the nearest South Australian station. They failed for want of water, and struggled back to Cooper’s Creek, only to find that in the interval Brahe had come back to look for them and, not finding them, had gone South. Burke and Wills died almost simultaneously of starvation, on June 28, 1860. King, a labouring man, their companion, managed to subsist among the blacks

till he was rescued on September 21, by the search party sent out under Alfred W. Howitt. Howitt buried the two hapless explorers, though Burke had particularly requested King not to bury him, but to let him lie above ground with a pistol in his hand, as commemorated in the line of the poem,

“*With the pistol clenched in his failing hand.*”

Burke and Wills were the first white men to cross the Australian Continent. The monument commemorates their exploit as well as their fate. This and other poems of Gordon were reviewed by Major Leveson—the Old Shikari—in *Baily's Magazine* three months before Gordon's death. Gordon was much pleased by the review, which reached Melbourne before his death.

UNSHRIVEN.—This poem seems to have been suggested by one of Mrs. Browning's.

YE WEARIE WAYFARER. Fytte I.—“By Wood and Wold.”  
 “This is a rather hyperbolical account of a foxhunt on the Cotswold hills. Gordon had very little experience with fox-hounds, for he left England before he had reached maturity. He could not afford good mounts; he seldom borrowed or hired a hunter on which he could learn the noble art properly. Tom Oliver, the trainer and steeplechase rider, used to put him up now and then either on rough young horses to educate him in a short lesson with hounds, or on a valuable steeplechaser to ‘qualify.’ The country which he describes is not to be found in the Cotswolds, nor could a horse be discovered who could jump out of a bog over a big stream and a big stone wall and shove to the front of a field. This sort of thing was probably suited to his Antipodean audience, for it reads splendidly.”—“Small Hopes,” in the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*.

But Colonel Yardley, of Cheltenham, a recognised authority on sport, says that the jump does exist.

Fytte II.—“By Flood and Field.” (A legend of the Cotswolds.)

“The Seven Rills” are the seven springs three miles out of Cheltenham on the Cirencester road—locally considered to be the source of the Thames. They are in an enclosed garden at the back of the old rifle range.

*Jack Esdaile.* See chapter on “Gordon in the Cotswolds.”

*Hugh St. Clair,* ditto.

*Bob Chapman,* ditto.

*Andrew Kerr,* ditto.

*George Griffiths* on Devil-May-Care. Most authorities think that Gordon was writing about Ned Griffiths, his brother. Both of them were at Cheltenham College with Gordon, but the late Lord James of Hereford, who was at Cheltenham College with all three of them, thinks that Gordon did refer to George Griffiths. He calls him a stout young gentleman who hunted with the Cotswolds in the fifties, and afterwards became a barrister on the Oxford Circuit. The horse’s real name was not Devil-May-Care, but Box-keeper; it was changed to suit the rhyme.

“*One who rode on a dark brown steed.*” This is believed to be Captain Louis Edward Nolan, of the 15th Hussars, who was killed in the charge of the Light Brigade, almost exactly in the manner described in the poem,<sup>1</sup> except that Gordon evidently thought Nolan was cheering on the Light Brigade when he fell, instead of trying to divert their course to one side of

<sup>1</sup> Monsignor Nolan, a cousin of Captain Nolan, has established the fact that he was called “Ned” in his family. Major Leveson, known also as Hal and the Old Shikarry, who says that Gordon meant Nolan by Ned, was himself wounded at Balaclava. He was a constant contributor to *Baily’s Magazine* and died in 1875

the Valley. Captain Nolan was very well known as a steeplechase-rider in India.

“*And headed towards the vale.*” The late “Small Hopes” says no Cotswold fox heads for the vale; no one ever saw a wall on the down-side of a brook and a swamp before it on the Cotswolds; no one ever rode such an impossible jump. But Colonel Yardley disagrees with him as has been seen.

“*I was down with a stunning fall.*” There is an old rhyme of Gordon’s, dated 1852, which runs—

“There’s lots of refusing and falls and mishaps  
Who’s down on the chestnut? He’s hurt himself p’raps.  
O ‘it’s Lindsay the lanky,’ says Hard-riding Bob,  
‘He’s luckily saved Mr. Calcraft a job.’”

“Lindsay Gordon took the effect out of adverse criticism on the part of his comrades by severely criticising himself among the rest of the tumblers.” *Cheltenham Examiner*, March 27, 1889.

*Hard-riding Bob* is Bob Chapman.

Fytte III.—*Zu der Edlen Jagd*. This means “To the Noble Chase.”

For the allusions to Gordon’s family, see page 134.

“*Market Harborough*” was the title of one of the most famous novels of Major Whyte Melville, with whom he corresponded, and to whom he dedicated *Bush Ballads and Galloping Rhymes*. Gordon evidently uses it as a pseudonym for Whyte Melville.

“*Nimrod*” was the editor of the *Sporting Magazine* and many books on sport, and a life of Jack Mytton. His name was Charles James Apperly.

Mr. W. Searth Dixon has discovered that “*Martingale*” was the pseudonym of James White, a well-known sporting writer, whose two brothers owned the *Doncaster Gazette*.

*The Powers that be*. This refers to two brothers, Messrs. Robert and Herbert Power, who were stock and station agents in Melbourne. Robert Power was

a Steward of the Victorian Racing Club and, like his brother, Herbert Power, owned racehorses. Gordon was the guest of Robert Power at Toorak a few months before his death, and wrote "The Song of Autumn" for Mr. Power's little daughter, who must be a woman of fifty now if she is alive.

*Faugh-a-ballagh* (Mr. R. Norfolk), ridden by Downes, won the hurdle race at the V.R.C. Spring Meeting, 1868.<sup>1</sup>

*Dandenong* is a beautiful place in the hills near the Melbourne waterworks.

Fytte IV.—*In Utrumque Paratus*. Prepared for either event, *i. e.* for good or evil fortune.

This *Wills* was one of the first great Australian cricketers.

"Don't stop with your head too frequently." Gordon is said to have stopped with his own head very frequently. "Look before you leap, etc." "Gordon's first preceptor in horsemanship, Mr. George Reeves, of the Riding School, Cheltenham," says "Small Hopes," "had much trouble with his headstrong pupil. He never could get him to soften his hands or use his wrists properly: he had, moreover, to restrain his rampageous tendencies. Gordon was always so shortsighted that half the time he could not see which way he was going. . . . he was a butcher on horseback, plucky without discretion, and very hard upon his horse. In boxing, Gordon never condescended to guard himself or evade a blow, but stopped every one by some part of his person, his head for a choice." See account of Gordon's fight with Jem Edwards.

Gordon was fond of visiting the West Country fairs to put on the gloves with all comers in the boxing booths.

<sup>1</sup> *Faugh-a-ballagh* was also the pseudonym of a sporting writer of the time in the *Australasian*. The horse ran in many hurdle races.



*Last par. lines 1, 2.—*

“*Though the Philistine’s mail could naught avail  
Nor the spear like a weaver’s beam.*”

This refers to the armour and spear of Goliath, the giant killed by David. 1 Samuel, chap. xvii.

*Line 3.* The Psalmist is David.

*Line 6.* *The Hittite* is Uriah, who was put by David in the forefront of the battle to be killed because the King was in love with his wife.

*Non nobis Domine* is the Latin heading of Psalm cxv. “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give the praise; for Thy loving mercy, and for Thy truth’s sake.”

*Line 10.* Zeruah’s offspring is Joab, the faithful and successful general of David, who, in spite of all his services, was killed while taking sanctuary at the altar, for espousing the cause of Adonijah.

*Line 12.* The “*Quid Gloriaris*” is the heading of Psalm lii. “Why boasted thou thyself, thou tyrant?”

*Line 13, Quare fremuerunt?* “Why do the heathen so furiously rage together, why do the people imagine a vain thing.” Psalm xi.

Fytte V.—*Lex Talionis.* This signifies the law of revenge.

“*Ah, Friend, did you think when the London sank!*” The *London*, one of the Money Wigram line to Australia, foundered in the Bay of Biscay on January 11, 1866, with terrible loss of life, made dramatic by the heroism of Gustavus Vaughan Brooke, the actor.

Fytte VI.—*Potter’s Clay.* Harry de Windt, in *My Restless Life*, wrote of this poem, “it was surely better to die in harness with Nature for a nurse and the open sky above you, than to see Death slowly approach, inch by inch, through the stifling atmosphere

of the sick room. When elderly croakers, therefore, remind me that I am not as young as I was and enforce their remarks by quoting from that time-worn, dreary chestnut, the pitcher and the well, I am sorely tempted to reply in the words of Lindsay Gordon."

Fytte VII.—*Cito pede preterit ætas*. This means Age passes with swift foot.

Verse 5.—*Arcades ambo*. The Arcadians were the most primitive of all the Greeks, proverbial for their want of intelligence.

*Exeter Hall* stood on the site of the Strand Palace Hotel; it was the great place for religious meetings held in protest. *The Bacchanals* were the female attendants of Bacchus, the God of Wine. *The Sensual Sybarites*. The inhabitants of Sybaris were proverbial as voluptuaries.

*Dum Vivimus, Vivamus*: "While we live let us live." This is a corruption of the famous motto, "Vive ut Vivas."

"*But Nolan's name will flourish in fame*."—Captain Louis Edward Nolan, killed at Balaclava. See Fytte II, "By Flood and Field."

*"Ere nerve and sinew began to fail  
In the Consulship of Plancus?"*

There ought to be a comma after "fail" because in sense the second line comes first. Gordon means that he couldn't have borne this in the consulship of Plancus, *i. e.* in his salad days. Munatius Plancus was Consul in B.C. 42, the year of the Battle of Philippi, when passions were at their highest and Horace was only twenty-one years old. The allusion is in the last two lines of Horace's *Odes*, 3. 14.

*"Non ego hoc ferrem calidus juventa  
Consule Planco,"*

Which may be translated—

“ I could not stand this when I was hot with youth  
In the consulship of Plancus.”

It means, therefore, roughly, “ In the pride of my youth.”

Fytte VIII.—*Finis Exoptatus* means “ The desired end,” *The Apostle of the Gentiles* means St. Paul. *Dark Plumed Azrael* in the Mahomedan Mythology is “ The Angel who watches over the dying, and takes the Soul from the Body.”

“ Or like chimes of sweet St. Mary’s  
On far English ground.”

This refers to the Cheltenham Parish Church.

It is on record that Warren Hastings, who owned the ground on which the Plough Hotel, Cheltenham, is built, was in the habit of going to St. Mary’s to see Lady D’Oyley’s monument. Was this his romance ?

BORROW’D PLUMES.—This poem is explained by its footnote on page 44 of Gordon’s Poems.

PASTOR CUM.—This stands for *Pastor Cum traheret*, part of the first line of Horace, *Ode*, 1. 15, of which this poem is a translation. The poem refers to the Rape of Helen and the Destruction of Troy.

*The Shepherd False* is Paris, son of Priam, whose carrying off of his hostess, Helen, from Menelaus, led to the siege of Troy. *Priam* was King of Troy.

*Pallas* (Minerva) was the most powerful deity on the side of the Greeks during the siege.

*Nereus* was a sea-god, the father of the Nereids, including *Thetis*, the mother of *Achilles*.

*Aphrodite* (Venus), sprung from the foam, was the “ Goddess of Love and Beauty ”; she sided with the Trojans because Paris assigned the Apple of Beauty to her in his famous judgment.

*Ajax*, son of *Telamon*, King of *Salamis*, is not to be

confused with the other, Ajax, the son of Oileus. He was a head and shoulders taller than any other of the Greek princes, but was conquered by Ulysses in the contest as to who should succeed Achilles as the chief warrior of the Greeks.

*Laertes' Son* is Odysseus, or Ulysses, King of Ithaca, the most capable of the Greeks. *The Pylean sage* is Nestor, the oldest and wiliest of the Greek chiefs.

*Teucer*, the half-brother of Ajax, the best archer of the Greeks, founded a kingdom in Cyprus. He commanded the Argives under Diomed, son of the King of Argos, who was after Achilles the bravest of all the Greeks.

*Meriones* was one of the bravest Cretan chiefs at the siege of Troy.

*Dardan* signifies Trojan: Dardanus was King of Troy.

*Argive Flame*. Argos in the *Iliad* sometimes stands, as here, for the whole of the Peloponnesus.

A LEGEND OF MADRID.—This is a description of a bull-fight. There is no authority for the assertion that Gordon ever was in Spain.

FAUCONSHAW.—This is an imitation of the old Border Ballads.

RIPPLING WATER.

CUI BONO. Signifies "for what benefit"—to what purpose.

BELLONA.—Bellona was the Goddess of War

THE SONG OF THE SURF.

WHISPERINGS IN WATTLE BOUGHS.—"*Father mine*" is Captain Adam Durnford Gordon. See Fytte III, of "Ye Wearie Wayfarer," and chapter on Adam Lindsay Gordon's father. "I remember Gordon and that grand old man his father, who was so much loved and respected." writes Mr. H. H. Hornby

“*Oh, tell me, sister dear!*” Two of Gordon’s sisters, Ada Mary and Theodora, are buried in Trinity Churchyard, Cheltenham, with their father and mother; a third, Inez, married an Italian named Ratti, and went to live at Nice. The sister referred to here would be Ada Mary, as Theodora, like the other sister, Amy Christian, died young.

“*Oh, tell me, ancient friend!*” Mrs. Lees, of Worcester, one of Gordon’s most intimate surviving friends, thinks that this must refer to Captain R. C. H. Gordon, of Worcester. E. M. H. considers that Mr. Pickernell, the “Mr. Thomas” of Grand National fame, must be intended, as he was Gordon’s boyhood’s friend, and very ready with his fists.

“*O whisper, buried love!*” No trace has been discovered to this allusion.

#### CONFITEOR.

SUNLIGHT ON THE SEA.—“*Who slept with heaps of Persian slain.*” This refers to the annihilation of the three hundred victorious Spartans at Thermopylæ.

“*This night with Plato shall we sup.*” Commenting on this phrase one of the most famous Oxford tutors of the whole generation says: “I am inclined to think that the phrase ‘This night with Plato we shall sup,’ is a good instance of the mistakes into which a man, who is no classical scholar, may fall if he plunges into classical allusions. Of course there may be, as you suggest, a phrase in common use which would give point to the allusion. It had caught my attention before. My belief is that Plato is merely put for ‘good company’; and that the ‘sup’ is an allusion to the Symposium (there is a dialogue by Plato called the Symposium), at which there were present Socrates, Aristophanes, Agathon, who I think was host, and Eryximachus (the most celebrated physician of his day at Athens; he treated Aristophanes at the

supper for hiccough), and other distinguished men. So that the supper recorded by Plato might just suggest the phrase, 'We shall sup in good company—with Plato himself.' The reason I think that Lindsay Gordon's is no more recondite allusion, the possibility of which I do not deny, is this: he puts the words into the mouth of Leonidas, who must have lived roughly one hundred years before Plato. The battle of Thermopylæ was fought in 480 B.C., and Plato was not born till more than fifty years later. Therefore for Leonidas in 480 B.C. to say 'This night with Plato we shall sup,' speaking in the spirit of prophecy long before Plato was born, suggests an inadequate conception of dates and possibilities."

*Delilah* was a courtesan of the higher class, living in the Valley of Sorek, who was bribed by the Philistines to betray Samson. The story is told in the Book of Judges, chap. xvi. She got Samson to confide to her that he would lose his strength if his hair was cut off, and then, while he was asleep, shore it off and delivered him to his enemies.

FROM LIGHTNING AND TEMPEST.—This is a quotation from the Litany in the Church of England prayer book: "From lightning and tempest; from plague, pestilence, and famine; from battle and murder, Good Lord deliver us."

WORMWOOD AND NIGHTSHADE.—Annie has not been identified. The poem fits in with the poem printed in Mr. Howlett Ross's Memoir of Adam Lindsay Gordon, under the title of "The Old Station." In "The Old Station" the poet makes a chain of wild flowers and twists them about the heroine's neck. And in "Wormwood and Nightshade" he speaks of "One shred of your broken necklace, one tress of your pale gold hair." And the scenery in both poems is sufficiently alike. Gordon seems to have written "The Old Station" for Mrs. Lauder.

ARS LONGA.—*Ars longa vita brevis* signifies, “Art is long : life is short.”

THE LAST LEAP.—No trace has been discovered to this allusion, though its subject might so easily have happened in Gordon’s life.

QUARE FATIGASTI.—The words signify “Why hast thou wearied me ?” The same poem is printed on p. 214 of Gordon’s Poems under the title “Whither Bound.”

HIPPODROMANIA, or “Whiffs from the Pipe,” signifies “Race-course madness.”

Part I. *Visions in the Smoke.* *Bell* is *Bell’s Life in Melbourne*, a Melbourne paper for which Gordon wrote a number of his poems.

*Playboy* was a b.g., belonging to Mr. M. Pender.

*Omen* was one of the best brood mares owned by Mr. C. B. Fisher. When he broke up his stud she was raffled like *Seagull*, *Fishhook*, *Lady Heron*, and *Fly*. *Hurtle Fisher*, his brother, who had sold off his horses in 1866, won *Omen* and bought others from people who had won them. *Fishhook* was drawn by a company of bookmakers. The sold horses were led past the grave of *Fisherman*, the ancestor of most of them, “Though the Turf is green on *Fisherman’s Grave*,” alludes to his grave at *Maribyrnong*, where Mr. Fisher had his stables, and the raffle took place.

*Shorthouse* was undoubtedly Dr. *Shorthouse* of *Carshalton*, *Surrey*, a great authority on race-horse breeding with a great antipathy to what he called “the accursed *Blacklock* blood.” He was the original founder of the *Sporting Times*, and was imprisoned for libelling the late Duke of *Beaufort* therein. He sold the paper to the present owner, Mr. *John Corlett* (Note by Mr. *Finch Mason*). Gordon apparently differed from Dr. *Shorthouse* on the subject of the “*Blacklock*” horses, as *Nolan* rode one of them at the time of his marvellous exploit with the *Berkeley Hounds*

*Lantern*, a horse which won the Melbourne Cup in 1864, was owned by H. Fisher; aged 3 years, weight 6st. 3lb.; ridden by Davis; time 3.52. Won the V.R.C. Derby 1864, 1½ miles; rider Simpson; time 2.58.

*The Barb* won the Melbourne Cup 1866; owned by J. Tait; aged 3 yrs., weight 6st. 11lb; rider W. Davis; time 3.43; distance 2 miles. It won the A.J.C. Derby 1866, 6 st., rider C. Stanley; time 2.48. It won the Champion Stakes 1867; weight 7st. 1lb.; time 5.38; and the Sydney Cup in 1868 and 1869.

Part I.—*And Exile plays*. Exile after winning the Ballarat Cup, when being led back to the scales for the jockey to weigh in, suddenly fell down, and in a few seconds expired, whether of arsenic, as alleged, or apoplexy.

Part II.—*Blueskin*. A gr. g. belonging to Mr. Scott, which won the Selling Steeplechase at the Ballarat Turf Club Autumn Meeting of 1868. He was third in the Ballarat Spring Meeting of 1865, in the chief race, won by Gordon on Ballarat.

*Tory Boy* won the Melbourne Cup 1865. He belonged to Mr. Dowling and afterwards to Mr. M. P. Lewis. Aged; weight 7st.; rider Kavanagh; time 3.44; owner—Marshall.

*Seagull*, owned by C. B. Fisher, won the V.R.C. Derby 1866; rider Morrison; time 3.4. It also won the Oaks 1866; rider Morrison; time 2.55.

Mr. C. B. Fisher, brother of Mr. Hintle Fisher, mentioned above, a leading South Australian squatter, owned besides *Seagull*, *Fishhook*, winner of the Champion and the Sydney Cup 1867; *Angler*, winner of the V.R.C. Derby 1865; *Lady Heron*, *Sylvia* *Midnight*, *Typo* and *Kingfisher*, winner of the Sydney Cup in 1877.

*Strop* won the Champion Stakes 1864. Owned by W. Field; weight 8st. 5lb.; time 5.55.



*Tim Whiffler* won S.A.J.C. Derby 1865. Owner Mr. O. Adcock, afterwards owned by Mr. E. de Mestre; rider Jones; time 2.53. *Tim Whiffler* won the Melbourne Cup 1867. *Tim Whiffler* won the Australian Cup and the A.J.C. Metropolitan Stakes 1867; time 3.38.

*Davis*: there are two Davises. S. Davis, who won the Adelaide Cup on Australian Bush 1872, the South Australian Stakes in 1875, and the Oaks in 1874, on Gaslight; and W. Davis, who won the Melbourne Cup in 1866, on The Barb.

*Yattendon* won the Sydney Cup, two miles, in 1866; weight 8st. 4lb.; time 3.43.

Part II.—THE FIELDS OF COLERAINE. *Ballarat*, a famous horse owned by Gordon. It was his steeplechase victories on *Ballarat* in December 1865 which made his name in Australian sporting circles. He parted with him in April 1866. Gordon was third on *Ballarat* to Ingleside and Blueskin in the Great Western Steeplechase at Coleraine.

*King Alfred* (see Turner and Sutherland), not the King Alfred who won the Sydney Cup in 1871 after Gordon's death.

"*According to Cocker*" was a saying in Murphy's comedy, *The Apprentice*, which became a proverb. Cocker was the author of an Arithmetic in the reign of Charles II.

*Archer*. The tradition is that Gordon invented this name in memory of his old friend William Archer of Prestbury, who won the Grand National in 1858, and was the father of the immortal Fred Archer. But Mr. de Mestre had a jockey named Archer in Australia.

Part III.—CREDAT JUDÆUS APPELLA.—*The Champion* is the great three mile race at Melbourne.

*Smith* is probably the Smith who won the Hunt Club Cup at Melbourne in 1871 with a horse ridden by H. Malcom.

*The Hook* is perhaps Fishhook, owned by C. B. Fisher, which won the Champion Stakes at Melbourne 1867, and won the Sydney Cup 1867. Its sire was the famous Fisherman. The *Australasian* ("Peeping Tom"), says, "The great Fishhook's value in the eyes of a Moffat was equal to a fair-sized sheep station."

*Horace, Satires, I. v. 100.* Apella is here the type of the credulous Jew—almost extinct.

*Seagull*, the horse belonging to C. B. Fisher mentioned above.

*The Barb*, the famous horse owned by Tait, mentioned above.

*Tom Sayers*, one of the most famous prize fighters in the history of the Ring. Gordon used to box with Tom Sayers when he was being trained for one of his earlier fights by Tom Oliver, with George Reeves, the riding-school master, for his principal backer. Gordon though only seventeen years old was tall and well-knit, and soon became more than a mere "chopping block," says "Small Hopes."

*Bill Bainge* was a Welshman. He was called Pill, which degenerated into Bill. His real name was Benjamin, and he was called Pill Benjamin Bainge. There are prints of Sayers's fights with Bainge. Bainge was rather a disappointment; he did not come off as well as was expected in his fight with Sayers. A Captain Carruthers took him up and made him his land-agent. Tom Sayers was trained for his terrific fight with Harry Paulson at Tom Oliver's place at Priestbury. Mr. Holman, who holds the same position in Cheltenham steeplechasing circles as Tom Oliver held in his day, remembers seeing Oliver walking Tom Sayers about on Cleeve Hill. Gordon probably had seen Bainge sparring with Sayers at Prestbury; he speaks as if he had done so, and *The Barb's* expression reminded him of Sayers's when he looked at Bainge.

*Stow* was the Attorney-General of South Australia, defeated by Gordon when he was elected for the district of Victoria. He afterwards became a judge and died in 1878 (Randolph Isham Stow).

*Baker.* Sir Samuel Baker, the explorer.

*Stanley* was a jockey who rode *The Barb* in the A.J.C. Derby of 1866, and most of Mr. J. Tait's horses. He won the Melbourne Cup in 1868 with Mr. Tait's *Glencoe*, and the A.J.C. Derby in 1867 with Mr. Tait's *Fireworks*.

*Davis.* See above.

*Filgate.* Mr. W. Filgate, who owned *Glenormiston*, winner of the Adelaide Cup, and won the V.R.C. Derby in 1873.

*D—G—Y.* This is J. W. Doughty. And *L—N.* is Major Lyon, S.M. These two were Justices at Mount Gambier (F. Vaughan).

*Bell* is *Bell's Messenger*.

*W—N.* is said to stand for Wilson.

Part IV. BANKER'S DREAM.—Gordon owned *Cadger* in 1868, and won several races on him. *Ingle-side* was a good steeplechase horse trained by Gordon and beaten by him on *The Babbler* on March 27, 1869, the last race he won.

Banker was a steeplechaser belonging to Major Robins, who lived in Melbourne and bought Australian horses for the Indian Government in those days. Gordon rode for him. Major Robins lived and raced in Melbourne.

*Western* belonged to Mr. P. Sweeney, and won the Great Northern Steeplechase at the V.R.C. Meeting, 1868.

In September 1865, Gordon won the Grand Annual Steeplechase of the South Australian Jockey Club with *Cadger*, which then belonged to Mr. J. C. James. In 1868 he won the Selling Steeplechase at Melbourne on *Cadger*, now belonging to him. He gives a picture of himself in this poem.

“ All loosely he’s striding, the amateurs riding  
 All loosely, some reverie locked-in  
 Of ‘ a vision in smoke,’ or ‘ a wayfaring bloke,’  
 His poetical rubbish concocting.”

Gordon sold Cadger for £40 after the Selling Race.

Part V. *EX FUMO DARE LUCEM* (*i. e.* out of the smoke to give light).—The race described is the Melbourne Cup of 1867. Tait was the owner of The Barb mentioned above, one of the most famous horses of Australia. He also owned Florence, which won the Australian Oaks in 1870; Rose d’Amour, which won the Australian Oaks in 1873; Amendment, Goldsborough, and Fireworks, which won the A.J.C. Derby in 1867.

*The Gull* is Seagull, mentioned above.

*Bylong*, owned by Mr. J. Lee, won the A.J.C. Metropolitan Stakes in 1866. Tim is Tim Whiffler.

*A Vicious Cross-Counter*. These two verses contain some of the many allusions Gordon makes in his poems to boxing. See the chapters on “ Jem Edwards.”

**THE ROLL OF THE KETTLEDRUM.**—This poem was inspired by the Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava. The two verses commencing “ One was there leading by nearly a rood ” (*i. e.* by a quarter of an acre) describe Nolan’s death. For Nolan *vide* chapter on “ Gordon in the Cotswolds.” There’s a very fine description of Nolan’s death in Kinglake’s History of the Crimea. Most of the names in this poem seem to be imaginary, but Elrington was the name of some relatives of Gordon; one of them is mentioned in one of Gordon’s letters to Charley Walker, “ I lounged about Worcester with the Captain on Tuesday morning; went to see Elrington, who was on the parade ground with the militia, but did nothing of consequence.”

**THE DEDICATION TO BUSH BALLADS AND GALLOPING RHYMES.**—The Author of *Holmby House* is, of course, the famous novelist, Whyte Melville, who was one of

the first persons in the Old Country to recognise the genius of Adam Lindsay Gordon. He had written about the poet in *Baily's Magazine*. This poem shows the influence of Kendall, the other chief poet of Australia, more than any other of Gordon's poems.

THE SICK STOCKRIDER.—This poem is the Euthanasia of Adam Lindsay Gordon. The *Ned* of the poem, who has so long defied commentators, was Mr. Edward Bright, who is, I believe, still living in Queensland. He and his brother John, author of a little book of poems called *Wattle Blossoms and Wild Flowers*, and his sister, Mrs. E. A. Lauder, were among Gordon's first intimate friends in South Australia. Mrs. Lauder had the wattles planted round his grave, and had the tomb kept up at her own expense till 1900, when the Australian Literature Society took over its care. Nobody has worked more unremittingly to keep the memory of the poet green. When the poet died Edward Bright, who had been his rival in his early steeplechasing days, wrote the following poem in his memory—

IN AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE OF  
ADAM LINDSAY GORDON.

(Composed by Edward Bright, Flinders River, N. Queensland.)

“ We met, and many years are gone—what sorrows, bitter strife  
Have passed since we, so happy then, so young, and full of life,  
Rode in the bush, or on the turf in colours bright and gay!  
Oh! who could think those happy days would ever pass away!

We met as friends, so happy then—o'er hurdle, by the stand,  
And often at the winning post our horses each did land;  
For we were often in the fray together, side by side  
While others and their horses were running rather wide.

We met each season, for a time; but years have passed away  
And changed full many things around that once appeared so gay.  
Where are thy colours? Now aside. No longer in the meet  
We see that form or smiling face we often used to greet.

Thou art away: long absent; a friend, where one so kind  
 Than you, my dear old Gordon, none truer will we find!  
 With all thy faults, if one you had, few dearer friends than thee,  
 And years will pass before again the like of you we see.

Thy saddle; it is empty; thy whip is hung aside;  
 No more now after dingo will we together ride.  
 Thy racing days are over—thou art but just before,  
 And I will follow in the race as in the days of yore.

You are ahead—long passed us by; the judge is at His stand,  
 To say that you have won the race unto that better land.  
 But we will meet when all is done—each race in life is o'er  
 We'll join in love that race above to meet and part no more."

MOORABINDA, or Moorabinta, is a "station" in the Gordon country of South Australia.

The SICK STOCKRIDER was written while Gordon was staying with Mr. Riddoch of Yallum, in January or February, 1869. Mr. Alexander Sutherland thus describes its composition: "It was the most productive poetic time of his life. On his previous visit he had taken a whimsical fancy to a gnarled old gum-tree that stood in a sunny paddock a few hundred yards from the house. After breakfast he used to climb it, and sit in a natural arm-chair upon a crooked limb. There he would fill and smoke successive bowls of the old clay pipe, and those who were curious might see him from time to time jot down lines in pencil on a paper spread upon the branch or sometimes on his hat. He never had any thought upon the time, and when the meals came round he generally had to be specially summoned, whereupon he would slide down the trunk and apologize for causing delay.

"It was here he wrote 'The Sick Stockrider,' though nearly a year passed ere he printed it. Seated on his gum-tree, he looked out over some of the localities mentioned in the poem, and thought of men who had inhabited the district in the 'old colonial days,' never again to return."

Gordon had a great friend called Sylvester, who died

a few months ago in Coleraine, Victoria. Mr. Mount, Gordon's partner in the livery-stable fiaseo at Ballarat, summed up Gordon as "a good stockrider," "*Ay, we had a glorious gallop after Starlight and his gang.*" Compare the poem called "Wolf and Hound."

Rolf Boldrewood, the eminent Australian novelist, gives the following information about Starlight.

"Starlight," though he is not and cannot be a portrait of any single colonial outlaw, in real life is sufficiently natural to consistently represent in both his conduct and adventures much that was typical of Australian bushranging forty years ago—and later. . . . Some of his characteristics, and at least one of the concluding episodes of the story, were suggested by the career of a New South Wales horse-stealer who became known as Captain Moonlight. So much is certain. Ralph Boldrewood has himself related his reminiscences of Moonlight and his end.

"Among other horses he stole was a mare called Locket, with a white patch on her neck. We had all seen her. This animal brought about his downfall, and he was actually killed on the Queensland borders in the way I have described in 'Robbery under Arms.' Before that he had had some encounters with Sergeant Wallings or (Gorring), and this day, when Wallings rode straight at him, he said, 'Keep back if you're wise, Wallings, I don't want your blood on my head, but if you must.' . . . But Wallings rode at him at a gallop. Two of the troopers fired point blank at Moonlight and both shots told. He never moved, but just lifted his rifle. Wallings threw up his arms and fell off his horse a dying man. As Moonlight was sinking the leader of the troopers said, 'Now you may as well tell us what your name is.' But he shook his head and died with his secret."

"He was a gentlemanly fellow, probably one of that unhappy class of young Englishmen of good birth and no character who are exiled to the Colonies for

their sins, and there often acquire new vices or sink into obscurity."

But this cannot be Gordon's Starlight, for "Robbery under Arms" was written eighteen years after Gordon's death. And in 1883, I well remember seeing in the domain at Paramatta an old horse which, local tradition said, was kept there by the Government, because it had belonged to the celebrated bushranger, Captain Starlight. It was remarkably tame, and had a trick of coming up to any one who was reading a newspaper and suddenly devouring the paper. It always ate any newspaper it could get hold of.

"*Let me Slumber in the Hollow where the Wattle Blossoms Wave.*" There is a large wattle-tree, given by Mrs. E. A. Lauder, growing above Gordon's grave in the cemetery at Brighton, near Melbourne. The 1911 summer number of the Melbourne *Australasian* had as a supplement a beautiful picture of Gordon's grave. The lines—

"For good undone and gifts misspent and resolutions vain  
'Tis somewhat late to trouble. This I know—  
I should live the same life over, if I had to live again;  
And the chances are I go where most men go,"

are Gordon's auto-epitaph written in the year before he put an end to his stormy existence.

This poem as first written had an additional verse. Mr. Alexander Sutherland says—

"It was perhaps a pity that, ere printing this poem, he yielded to the suggestion made by one of his acquaintances of the *Colonial Monthly* staff to omit the last verse from his manuscript copy. It originally ended thus—

"I don't suppose I shall, though I feel like sleeping sound;  
That sleep they say is doubtful. True; but yet  
At least it makes no difference to the dead man underground  
What the living men remember or forget.



Enigmas that perplex us in the world's unequal strife,  
 The future may ignore or may reveal;  
 Yet some as weak as water, Ned, to make the best of life,  
 Have been to face its worst as true as steel."

I cannot agree with him. It seems to me altogether unworthy of the rest of the poem. This verse had been preserved for us by Mr. J. J. Shillinglaw, who was present when the matter was discussed.

THE SWIMMER.—Gordon, like his favourite Swinburne, was an admirable swimmer. In his last days, when he was living at Brighton, just before he shot himself, Turner and Sutherland tell us that "Every morning, summer or winter, he walked down to the beach for his plunge into the sea; he was a powerful swimmer, and, regardless of sharks, he would head half a mile out into the bay before thinking of turning back. When remonstrated with, on one occasion, for having gone so far that he was all but spent, ere he touched again a solid base he answered that if Death came without his actually seeking it, he at least would have no cause for complaint."

FROM THE WRECK. Mr. F. Vaughan says that Gordon does not describe his own ride, but one made by Adam Farteh, a stockman, a bold rider who was killed in the hunting-field over a fence at Mount Gambier. But Sir Frank Madden, a very intimate friend of Gordon's, speaks of Gordon having made the ride (see p. 439). This poem was undoubtedly suggested by Browning's "How they brought the News from Ghent," and as a description of a ride is infinitely superior. We know that Tenison Woods lent Gordon a volume of Browning's poems, and Tenison Woods was the Roman Catholic Priest in the district. "Small Hopes" says "this is a transcription of a holograph letter to a friend in England. Or was it Wolf and Hound?). Both poems describe episodes in Gordon's

actual life." There is an account of this poem in Mrs. Lauder's letters.

*Acrobat* was the name of a steeplechase horse which belonged to Mr. George Watson, who hunted the Melbourne Hounds. Mrs. Lauder, who was living in the district at the time and gives an account of the poem in her letters, maintains that Gordon did the ride from the wreck himself, and that her brother John, the Jack of the poem, author of the little volume of poems called *Wattle Blossoms and Wild Flowers*, referred to above, was with him. According to her, Bradshaw Young, the policeman, was with him too. The *Alec* of the poem is Alec Macpherson, who was killed in the Cooraminta Yards by a steer while he was trying to put a hat on its horns for a bet. Her account of the wreck is as follows: "It was in the same year and month as the Royal Charter with a lot of our diggers on board was wrecked on the Welsh Coast.

"On the 6th of August, 1859, the S.S. *Admella* was wrecked on our coast; twenty-three were saved out of 113. Our dear Gordon was horse-breaking on Livingstone station, three natives walked up in the night with firesticks—big one ship in rocks—it was between two rocks that we called the Carpenters, the way the sea broke on it only one mile from the shore. If you can get a map of our coast, look for Lake Bonney, the wreck was right opposite—twenty-five miles from the lighthouse on Cape Northumberland and thirty from Mount Gambier, read Gordon's poetry 'From the Wreck'—they went right between two reefs, it was on a Saturday it broke into three pieces—and, strange to say, three of the horses swam on shore. One was Fisher's, the Barber, and a lot clung to the spars. The steamer *Haviland* passed them close but never saw them, and in the night the Mail Steamer *Bombay* passed them so close

that they heard the rush of the water and the beat of her engines. When the blacks took the news in the night it was about twenty-six miles, I think our poor natives, that was on Sunday morning. Gordon got the news—only one Telegraph Station in the Mount. He rode his beautiful mare until she fell under him, a beautiful beast; he sent a telegram to Messrs. Ormerod & Co., who sent their Ant. Steamboat and to Melbourne and Adelaide, Victoria and to Portland; they sent their lifeboat; two sailors washed ashore on spars, a man went from the lighthouse. So I do not know who sent first, but I know Gordon sent to Messrs. John and Charley Ormerod first. Gordon came back on Monday with his friend Bradshaw Young, Constable—the Lady Bird came—George Fisher was drowned, his brother Hurtle Fisher was saved. Rochfort and a Miss Ledwith. She clung to the ropes while the rest of the others was washed off, and when the lifeboat went under she clung to the ropes, the waves went over her three times before the Portland lifeboat went beneath her, poor thing. She was only the female saved. There was one Annie Girdler, a married woman. Her baby died in her arms, and when they took it from her she jumped into the sea. Bradshaw Young and Gordon buried her on the beach there. Then there was the *Corio*, Gordon went out in her boat, but was washed back; drove right on the beach—the sea rose up every time like a wall, then we went with others, my brother and several others. *Admella* lifeboat, that was on Saturday morning, eight day, but they were capsized near the shore—just fancy the agonizing scenes, the human beings standing on the beach, looking at people falling off one by one, no food and no clothes. Mr. McEwen was part owner, they said, you will scarcely credit this, but we saw many wrecks on that fearful coast.”

Mr. W. J. Sowden, the editor of the *Adelaide Register*, a very careful collector of information about Gordon and his poetry, gives the name of the wrecked vessel as the steamer *Gothenberg*, on Carpenter's Rocks near Mount Gambier. It was about this poem that "Small Hopes" wrote one of his biting criticisms in the *Sporting and Dramatic*. He asks: "Did Mr. Sladen not hear of the indignation Gordon felt at having his expressions altered for the worse by the compositor, such as the excerpt 'From the Wreck' exhibits; for instance, when he is galloping over the wide heath, and a big post and rail had to be negotiated, the Australian printer thus puts it—

"I hung to her head—touched her flanks with the spurs,"

This should be as all horsemen know—

"I just felt her mouth—touched her flank with the spur."

The idea of Gordon's hanging to his mare's head in a ride at timber is simply preposterous.

"Small Hopes" says of the last line,

"How much for her hide? she had never worn shoes!"

This apparently heartless expression is in reality most pathetic.

Gordon's grief was too deep for utterance, so he hid it in cynicism. It is like the remark of Dean Swift which was found after his death written on a paper packet containing a lock of Stella's hair. "Only a woman's hair." Thackeray, with all the hatred of the brutal dean, even yields to him the real delineation of sorrow, love and remorse, in this brief legend. "From the Wreck" formerly concluded with the following lines wisely omitted by Marcus Clarke—

"There are songs yet unsung, there are deeds yet untold,  
Concerning yon wreck that must baffle my ken.  
Let Kendal write legends in letters of gold  
Of deeds done and known among children of men."

FROM THE WRECK was written while Gordon was staying with Mr. John Riddoch at Yallum at the beginning of 1869.

WOLF AND HOUND. This poem also is believed by Turner and Sutherland to have been written at the same time, at the Riddochs'. It describes the killing of a notorious bushranger (named Marshall), and it has been the custom to assert that the poem is autobiographical and that Gordon received a £500 Government reward for the exploit. But I imagine that we should have heard a good deal about the spending of that £500 if it had been true. Mr. P. Evans Lewin, the late librarian of the Adelaide Public Library in South Australia and now Librarian at the Royal Colonial Institute writes: "Possibly if you were able to supply me with a *date* I might be able to do more. I have searched the police returns for South Australia from 1853, but can find no record either of the offer of a reward of £500 or the capture of any bushranger—but possibly I may have overlooked it in the great mass of proclamations, police returns, etc.

"The only case in which Gordon appears to have apprehended a man for felony was that of Alex. Macquire who was apprehended by Inspector Short and P. C. Gordon for stealing a horse from Robert Smith of Glencoe. The case was dismissed Nov. 11, 1855."

But Miss Frances Gordon, the poet's surviving cousin says that "A friend of theirs, who came from Australia, told them about Lindsay having tracked the bushranger to a cave and fought him in the dark. Miss Gordon says that Lindsay was absolutely devoid of fear and that it was a terrible pity he could not have been a soldier, which, of course, was rendered impossible by his eyesight.

*I struck with my left hand then.* It must be remembered that Gordon was a magnificent boxer who had

put on the gloves repeatedly with Jem Edwards and the famous Tom Sayers.

DE TE.

“We had not sought for that we found;  
He lay as dead men only lie  
With wan cheek whitening in the sky,  
Through the wild heath flowers, white and red.”

This sounds like a prophesy of the discovery of Gordon's own body on that June morning of 1870, described by Turner and Sutherland on p. 69.

Australia is famous for its beautiful epaeris heaths. As far as I remember there are plenty of them in bloom in June, the winter month in which Gordon took his life.—*D. S.*

HOW WE BEAT THE FAVOURITE.—“How we Beat the Favourite,—a lay of the Loamshire Hunt Cup,” was published in the *Australasian*, June 12, 1869, anonymously.

*Aye, Squire said Stevens.*—George Stevens was the only man who ever rode five Grand National winners or who won the Grand National two years running on the same horse. He never had a fall in the Grand National. He was born in the same year as Gordon and met his tragic death a year after Gordon. After his death one of Gordon's poems was found among his papers. Bell's *Life in London* called him “the best of the sort.” The horse which threw Stevens and mortally injured him riding down a lane near Cheltenham was called The Clown, the tradition is that Stevens named it after the horse in his friend's poem, “How we Beat the Favourite.” George Stevens's son writes of this race—I feel satisfied that Gordon wrote “How we Beat the Favourite,” after a real and not an imaginary race. It is far too realistic even for Gordon to have written only from his imagination.

*Dick Neville* has not been identified.



THE STONE WHICH MARKS THE PLACE WHERE GEORGE STEVENS MET WITH HIS FATAL ACCIDENT. HE WAS RIDING THE CLOWN, NAMED AFTER THE HORSE IN "HOW WE BEAT THE FAVOURITE."  
(See page 316.)

*Photo by J. A. Williams, Cheltenham.*





The man who saw Lindsay Gordon's first attempt at steeplechasing traced out the Knoverton Race-course on the 13th of February, 1911, as the place where Gordon beat the Favourite. He had a stroke two or three days after and died suddenly and most painlessly, as he had always wished. He saw Fred Archer's first race and Fred came home crying because he did not win.

Gordon rode Louisa, late Lallah Rookh (her name is said to have been changed in consequence of Gordon's Worcester escapade) in the Berkeley Hunt Cup in the Cheltenham Steeplechases of 1852 for horses which had been fairly hunted with any hounds.

*Iscult* is believed to represent Lallah Rookh, though Lallah Rookh was a black horse.

*Reginald Murray* and most of the horses are probably fictitious names. For *Kerr*, see p. 189.

"*And gave Abd-el-Kader at Aintree nine pounds.*" Abd-el-Kader did win the Grand National in 1850 and again in 1851, and made several other strenuous attempts to win. Bob James, Tom Oliver's old jockey at Prestbury, was second in the Grand National on Minos and third on Maurice Daley. He remembers Louisa but not Gordon.

"How We Beat the Favourite" is supposed to have been run on the Knoverton Course where the Cheltenham Hunt Steeplechases were held in 1847, but not again because it was too difficult.

"*All through the wet pasture where floods of last year  
Still loitered, they clotted my crimson with clay—*"

There are springs in the bank by Knoverton House and heavy clay soil.

"*The lane stopped Lycurgus.*" This is Knoverton Lane.

"*And Man-Trap and Mermaid refused the stone wall.*" There is a stone wall between Knoverton Lane and Turner's orchard.

“*My cap was knocked off by the hazel-tree bough.*” It was really an apple-tree in Turner’s orchard which killed the Tramp in 1847.

The Turn of the Flag was on Hewlett’s hill.

In this Knoverton steeplechase Tom Oliver broke his stirrup-leather, but finished the race without it.

Gordon won a hurdle race at Tewkesbury with Lallah Rookh and is entered as her owner.

“*She rose when I hit her. I saw the stream glitter.*” The stream by Knoverton House was stanked and had gorse on the take-off side.

“*A fence with stone coping.*” This is the wall on the left of Knoverton Lane (see illustration, p. 200).

“*We diverged round the base of the hill.*” The noble hill called Cleeve. The race ended near Queen’s Wood.

“*I flogged up the straight.*” Concerning this “Small Hopes” says, “After describing how he rode a punishing race on that generous and game mare, Gordon says when he landed close to the Favourite after the last jump, ‘I flogged up the straight’ (an ill-judged piece of jockey-ship to say the least of it). In fact through all his performances and narratives real and supposititious in the saddle he and his heroes all ride their horses to death, though there is no want of remorse when once the vital spark has left the poor over-ridden creatures. About the last verse of this poem Mr. Pickernell, the Mr. Thomas of Grand National Fame, says, ‘Kissing Cup is not in it with that last steeplechase verse of Gordon’s.’”

“*Clarke said ‘The mare by a short head.’*” For Clarke, see pp. 202, 203.

“How We Beat the Favourite” is evidently the steeplechase in which Gordon rode Louisa at Prestbury Farm in 1852, transferred to Knoverton just above Prestbury, where Gordon must have seen the famous steeplechase of 1847, which Mr. Holman won, beating

Fred Archer's father on Daddy Long Legs by a length Gordon's winning the race himself is a poet's licence.

At some steeplechases held at Tewkesbury, September 20 and 21, 1852, a hurdle race of three sovs. each with 15 sovs. added was won by Mr. Gordon's Louisa, aged. Mr. T. Golby's Comedy was second. This seems to be the only record of a race in England which Gordon won, though there appear to be two others to his credit. Mr. Jessop thinks he saw Gordon win a Hunt Cup at Prestbury, and Mr. Harold Webb thinks he won a steeplechase over stone walls at Birdlip. From this it would appear that he did at one time own Louisa (late Lallah Rookh), the mare he rode in the Berkeley Hunt Steeplechases at Prestbury in 1852 and perhaps in 1853. This is the mare he stole out of the stable of the old Plough Inn at Worcester to ride in the Crowle Steeplechases.

THE ROAD TO AVERNUS. None of the names in this piece have been identified. Though he belonged to a great Scotch family, Adam Lindsay Gordon was never in Scotland.

WHAT FAIR REWARD HAD ACHILLES? *Achilles* was the bravest and best fighter of all the Greeks who were besieging Troy.

*Alcides*—Hercules whose twelve labours are a proverb.

“Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”—Luke vii. 27.

DOUBTFUL DREAMS. “*What visions under the stone lie.*”

The tradition is that this line refers to the graves of his family in Trinity Churchyard, Cheltenham. His father and mother died after he left England, but two of his sisters, Ada Mary and Theodora, were buried

there before he left. This is one of the finest of Gordon's poems.

THE RHYME OF JOYOUS GARDE<sup>1</sup> (Misspelt Guard in the Massina edition). *Joyeuse Garde* or *Garde-Joyeuse*, according to Brewer, was "The estate given by King Arthur to Sir Launcelot of the Lake for defending the Queen's honour against Sir Mador."

*Verses 5.*—Severn's shore. It must be remembered that King Arthur's capital was Caerleon on the Usk, and that the Severn was a natural boundary between the Saxons who had conquered England and his Celts who were driven back into Wales and Cornwall and the Lake District.

*Verses 11.*—Lyonesse according to Brewer is the "tract between Land's End and the Scilly Isles, now submerged full forty fathoms under water. Arthur came from this mythical country."

*Verses 16.*—"She had leisure for shame and sorrow." Guinevere retired, after Arthur had discovered her infidelity, into a convent at Amesbury in Wiltshire. "When I rode against Saxon foes or Norse," King Arthur represents the Celt resistance to the invaders from Friesland and Jutland.

*Verses 17.*—"In this living death must I linger and die." Sir Lancelot also retired into a monastery.

*Verses 18.* "And that bright burden of burnished gold  
Was it shorn when the church vows bound her?"

Guinevere was buried at Glastonbury Abbey, and when her tomb was opened her golden hair was discovered quite perfect, but crumbled to dust soon after its exposure to the air.

*Verses 22.* "And one trod softly with sandall'd feet—  
Ah! why are the stolen waters sweet?—  
And one crept stealthily after."

This was *Modred*, the nephew of King Arthur, who

<sup>1</sup> Arturian scholars spell it *Gard*.

himself whilst spying on Launcelot and Guinevere seduced the latter when he was left in charge of her and the Kingdom. He afterwards revolted against Arthur, who was killed in crushing the revolt.

*Verse 24.—Sir Melegance.* In the MacMillan edition of the "Morte D'arthur" he is called Sir Meliagance or Meliagrance. He had always intended to steal the queen, but fear of Launcelot prevented him. While Launcelot was in disgrace he took her by an ambush. Launcelot himself was ambushed while trying to rescue her, but showed his miraculous powers. Sir Meliagrance then impeached the Queen of High Treason, and Arthur consented to have her burnt unless she could find a champion to maintain her. In the nick of time Sir Launcelot appeared and killed Sir Meliagrance in single combat. Mr. C. J. Purnell, Sub-Librarian of the London Library, points out that Meliagrance, called also Mel, was likened by Professor Rhys to Pluto, his realm in some of the legends being called the Abode of the Dead.

*Mador* was a prince of Scotland, slain in single combat by Sir Launcelot of the Lake when he accused Queen Guinevere of poisoning. He was called Sir Mador de la Porte. Arthur gave Launcelot the estate of Joyeuse Garde, which has been identified with Bamboro' Castle in Northumberland, as a reward.

*Verse 25.—Gawaine.* King Arthur's nephew, one of the most famous of his knights. He figures largely in Tennyson's "Idylls of the King."

*Verse 27.—The crime of Modred.* This refers to the revolt of Modred against King Arthur.

*Verse 29.—The Dane or the Saxon.* Arthur's wars were against the Danes and the Saxons.

*Last Verse.*—Mrs. Filgate points out that there is a strong religious element in Gordon's poems. Religion amounted to almost a mania in his mother, and it is possible that he was sent to Cheltenham College at

the tender age of seven years because it was opened under the auspices of extreme Low Churchmen. For a long time the meetings of its council were always opened with a sort of bidding prayer.

THE THREE FRIENDS was taken from a poem of Alfred de Musset's.

A SONG OF AUTUMN. This was written for the little daughter of Mr. Robert Power with whom Gordon spent the month of October and part of November 1868. Turner and Sutherland say those months "had passed in a time of quiet recovery in the house of Mr. Robert Power, for whose skill as an amateur rider Gordon had a vast respect. The poet was always fond, in a shy sort of way, of children, and the young folks in the house found in him an ever-ready playmate. A little girl of Mr. Power's, then aged five years, was a close companion of his, and could be seen at odd times of the day seated on the tall man's shoulder, carried round the garden, while grave converse was held betwixt them. One balmy afternoon in these lengthening spring days, as they sat together on a seat beneath a tree, the little girl asked him to gather her a bunch of flowers, and began to moralize in childish fashion about the poor blossoms that die when you pluck them; but then they die too, if you don't pluck them, for the scorching weather comes and the flowers pass away. Hereupon the poet fell into a train of meditation, and, while the child played round about, he wrote on a scrap of paper the mournful lyric he called "A Song of Autumn."

I have heard that this Miss Power is the wife of Mr. A. C. Maclaren, the famous cricketer, who married a daughter of Mr. Robert Power, but the dates hardly seem to fit, if she was five years old in 1868. This song has been set to music by Sir Edward Elgar. Mrs.

Lees of Worcester, one of the greatest of Gordon's surviving friends in this country, told Sir Edward Elgar's mother how fond she was of these lines and Sir Edward set them to music and had them performed at one of the Worcester Festival concerts.

THE ROMANCE OF BRITOMART. In the last verse Gordon has been blamed for making *Usquebaugh* rhyme with *are*, but Dr. Kenealy, famous for his defence of the Tichbourne Claimant, who was a good Celtic scholar and probably of Celtic extraction, defended the rhyme and he was fond of reading this piece.

LAUDAMUS is a contraction for *Te Deum Laudamus*—the Latin heading of the *Te Deum*.

A BASKET OF FLOWERS. Miss Lizzie Riddoch, daughter of the late John Riddoch of Yallum, one of the best friends Gordon ever had in Australia, asked him to write a poem to go with "A Basket of Flowers," which was to be sent to her aunt Mary, Miss Riddoch (who is still living in Scotland, now eighty-seven years of age). Gordon left Yallum on the following day and rode over the border forty miles to Casterton in Victoria. He rested occasionally on the way under the shade of a tree to write down the verses of this poem as he composed them. From these pencil-written scraps he wrote out a complete poem in ink on his arrival in Casterton. It is inscribed "AD MARIAM, Feb. 14th, 1869."

A FRAGMENT. No note.

TO MY SISTER.

*"My parents bid me cross the flood  
My kindred frowned at me."*

Gordon's father undoubtedly, as the poet's letters prove, urged him to go to Australia, but Miss Frances Gordon, his only surviving cousin, says that his family never quarrelled with him, but liked him very much, and the letter reproduced in facsimile, written by Gordon to her father, suggests that they not only

liked him but sought his advice about a career in Australia for one of his cousins. Australian writers about Gordon say that his mother suffered from religious mania, but the tradition in Worcester, where the Gordon cult is stronger than at Cheltenham, is that she merely disliked the money wasted by him and wanted it for herself and her daughters. The verses "*I once had talents fit to win*" and "*My friends will miss a comrade's face*" with the verse quoted above are certainly borne out by Gordon's letters to his friend Charley Walker, printed in this volume.

"*I loved a girl not long ago,*" and the two following verses. These refer to Mrs. Lees, a lady living at Worcester, and her own account of the episode is to be found in the chapter entitled "The Romance of Adam Lindsay Gordon."

"*There is a spot not far away*" and the two following verses. These must allude to Gordon's dead sister, Ada Mary, who was buried in Trinity Churchyard Cheltenham, but the poem appears to have been written for a living sister, alive when Gordon sailed for Australia on August 17, 1853. If so she would be his sister Inez, who married an Italian named Ratti and went to live at Nice.

" But those who brand me with disgrace  
Will scarcely dare to say  
They spoke the taunt before my face  
And went unscathed away."

Gordon was always ready to square up to any one over a supposed slight. Fred Marshall, who knew him well personally, says, commenting on these verses, "That was true for Lindsay; those who tackled him were like the tarrier dawg who got hold of the wrong tom-cat."

" What fears have I? What hope in life?  
What joys can I command?  
A few short years of toil and strife  
In a strange and distant land!



When green grass sprouts above this clay  
 (And that might be ere long),  
 Some friends may read these lines and say,  
 The world has judged him wrong."

These verses read almost like a prophecy of Gordon's seventeen years and untimely end in Australia. This poem is said to have been found among Gordon's papers after his death.

THE OLD LEAVEN. This poem is autobiographical. Written after going to the Opera with his partner in West Australia, Lambton L. Mount, just before starting for W.A.

AN EXILE'S FAREWELL. This poem was supplied to *Temple Bar* by the late Arthur Patchett Martin, one of the first to familiarize the British public with Gordon's poems, as he was one of the first to discover and proclaim the genius of Robert Louis Stevenson. He was himself a delightful poet who wrote one of the most charming poems ever published in Australia—"The Storm."

Mr. George Bentley, who edited *Temple Bar* at that time, introduced this poem with these words. Among the mass of letters I have received since the appearance of the article in *Temple Bar* on an "Australian Poet," testifying to the strange fascination of Gordon's muse, came a communication from a lady who had been a fellow passenger of his in the ship *Julia* which sailed for Adelaide on August 7, 1853. This lady remarks, "I urged him to write in my MS. book. He was shy of doing so, saying that he had never tried his hand at verse-making. However, he wrote the enclosed verses—his first essay—in which you will recognise his style." What caused my correspondent to detect a poet in the exiled youth so moodily leaving "home" I cannot say. It is only another instance of the superiority of women in the insight born of sympathy.

In any case Gordon was not telling the truth when he said he had never tried his hand at verse-making, because there are various witty verses in his letters to Charley Walker which, though not dated, show that they were written before he went to Australia. They were not, however, poems of the calibre of the "Exile's Farewell."

"*I see the same tall poplars stand beside the garden door.*" Gordon is here speaking of 25, Priory Street, Cheltenham, where his father lived during the latter part of his life at Cheltenham. See pp. 148-9.

The poem was originally signed L. G., Ship *Julia*, 1853. Fred Marshall says that this poem was really written to his friends and companions before he left Cheltenham, so Gordon was probably romancing to the lady on this point also.

EARLY ADIEUX. "*No more than three in all who e'er will think of me or heed what fate may me befall.*" Who are these three? His long-suffering father must have been one of them. The other two must be selected from Miss Gordon and her father, Mrs. Lees and Charley Walker "*For tho' I pleasure's paths have run,*" etc. Cf. the letters to Charley Walker quoted in this volume.

This poem is said by Fred Marshall to have been written in 1850.

*"My mother is a stately dame,  
Who oft would chide with me,  
She saith my riot bringeth shame,  
And stains my peligree."*

This is distinctly according to the Cheltenham and Worcester traditions, which said that she deeply resented Gordon's scrapes and the expense he caused. "*My gentle sister's tears may fall.*" This must refer to Inez, as the others were dead. The verse beginning, "*Thou too, whose loving-kindness makes my resolution less,*" refers to Mrs. Lees at Worcester. See notes on

“An Exile’s Farewell,” “*I outcast pass away.*” Miss Frances Gordon, Lindsay’s cousin, says that the family never regarded him in the least as an outcast.

A HUNTING SONG.—“*Like Oliver can ride.*” Black Tom Oliver, the famous trainer and steeplechase rider at Prestbury, who has a chapter to himself in this book, gave Gordon his first mount in the trials on the Prestbury race-course. Mr. Holland saw Gordon dismount. “There now, you young devil, you’ve rode a race.” There is a splendid oil painting of Oliver on a horse called Birmingham in the Stork Hotel at Birmingham. This poem was written in Cheltenham.

*Bendigo* was a famous prize fighter. His real name was William Thompson. He became a preacher in his later days and is said to have converted a rowdy congregation by knocking them out. The inscription on his grave at Nottingham is as follows—

“On earth he fought like any Lion  
In Heaven he sings the songs of Zion.”

One of his best known fights was with Ben Caunt. Party spirit ran high amongst the spectators. Jem Turner introduced them: “*Ben Caunt*, gentlemen; *Bendigo*, gentlemen; *both* champions of England. No applause, gentlemen. Mum as oysters, gentlemen. If you please—time!” That was something like a set-to, and *Bendigo* gave Caunt a regular hammering, and hit him just as he pleased.

TO A PROUD BEAUTY. This relates to an actual episode. Lindsay and Charley Walker spent the night in a barn near the great farm house at Broughton Hackett where Mrs. Lees and her sister Sally, afterwards Mrs. Walker, lived, so as to be the first people she and her sister saw on Valentine’s morning. The sister looked out of the window and told them they were geese!

ASHTAROTH. Nothing much is known about this poem except that it was published in 1867. As Turner and Sutherland point out, "Ashtaroth" is in general sentiment and handling closely akin to "Faust."

*Ashtaroth* had practically no sale. The whole of the 500 copies were left on Clarson and Massina's hands. It came out a few months after *Sea Spray and Smoke Drift*. It has been set to music in an opera by Mr. W. R. Furlong. "The Song of Thora" was not written for "Ashtaroth," but incorporated in it.

The poem commencing "All Night I've Heard the Marsh-Frog Croak" was found by a shepherd in an old pair of trousers belonging to Gordon, which the poet asked Mr. Lambton to give away after he had left West Australia for good. At the same time Gordon asked Mr. Mount to destroy a whole portmanteau full of manuscripts, written chiefly on lined blue foolscap, without reading them. Probably many of Gordon's poems were thus lost to the world, and Mr. Mount says that a boxful of manuscripts were burnt by Gordon's widow after his death to avoid the expense of removing them.

## CHAPTER XX

POEMS OF A. L. GORDON NOT INCLUDED IN THE  
COLLECTED EDITION, EDITED BY MARCUS CLARKE

### THE DEATH OF NELSON

(A POEM of A. L. Gordon's never published in any form, preserved by Miss Frances Gordon in an album in which Gordon wrote it with his own hands. Given by her permission.)

“ I was midst the battle's echoing din  
And the cannon's thundering roar,  
When brave men fought to die or win  
And the decks ran red with gore;  
When the fleets of England, France and Spain  
Were joined in desperate fight,  
When fell the leaden shot like rain  
And flashed the cutlass bright,  
When the iron ball's resistless sway  
Through sheet and rigging passed,  
And through the swelling sails made way  
And split the towering mast;  
When the tumult of the contest's swell  
Reached to the shore  
Twas then in victory's arms he fell—  
He fell to rise no more.  
    And will he never, never rise,  
    That spirit bold and true;  
    Has he for ever closed his eyes  
    And bid this world adieu?  
    And where, oh where shall England find  
    'Mong all her many brave  
    A soul so generous and so kind  
    In hour of need to save.  
    Thou may'st on bygone times look back  
With conscience bright and clear,  
No mad ambition made thy track  
A selfish vain career.  
Thy country's safety thou didst guard,

Her honour was thy care,  
 Her foeman's course thou didst retard  
 And made her prospects fair;  
 And couldst thou live and yet return  
 Back to thy grateful land  
 I ween each English heart would burn  
 To clasp thee by the hand;  
 And highest honour thou wouldst hold  
 And most revered wouldst be  
 Midst all that loyal race and bold  
 The Saxon chivalry.  
 While England's lovely fair ones too  
 On thee would brightly smile,  
 And hail with joy the guardian true  
 Of their unconquered isle.  
 But no, alas, the thought is vain,  
 Thy course on earth is o'er,  
 And thou wilt never rise again  
 Nor see thy country more.  
 Yet wherefore shouldst thou be delayed  
 In this dark world of ours,  
 Whose brightest paths are marked with shade  
 And false its fairest flowers?

The hero in his cabin lies.  
 While round him mutely stand  
 With throbbing hearts and tearful eyes  
 A sad but silent band;  
 But now his gallant mates have hurled  
 Destruction on their foes,  
 And through the fleet like lightning whirled  
 The shout of victory goes.  
 The conqueror gazed upon his sword:  
 'My earthly race is run'  
 Then faintly murmured, 'Thank my God,'  
 'My duty I have done.'  
 The sun on high with golden light  
 Streaks through the cabin now,  
 And for an instant flickers bright  
 On Nelson's pallid brow.  
 The dying man looked up and smiled,  
 One long look round him cast,  
 And from that scene of carnage with  
 The soul to heaven passed.<sup>22</sup>

A GORDON POEM

Written for Miss Riddoch. Given for publication by George Riddoch, Esq., and reprinted from the *Australasian*.

ARGEMONE

“THE terrible night watch is over,  
     I turn where I lie,  
 To eastward my dim eyes discover  
     Faint streaks in the sky;  
 Faint streaks on a faint light, that dapples  
 And dawns like the ripening of apples,  
 Day closes with darkness and grapples,  
     And darkness must die.

And the dawn finds us where the dusk found us,  
     The quick and the dead;  
 Thou dawn staying darkness around us,  
     Oh, slay me instead.  
 Thou pitiless earth, that would sever  
 Twain souls, reuniting them never,  
 O, gape and engulf me for ever!  
     Oh, cover my head!

The toils that men strive with stout-hearted,  
     The fears that men fly,  
 I have known them, but these have departed,  
     And those have gone by.  
 Men, toiling and straining and striving,  
 Are glad, peradventure, for living;  
 I render for life no thanksgiving,  
     Glad only to die.

For alike now to me are all changes,  
     Naught gladdens, naught grieves;  
 Alike now pale snow on the ranges,  
     Pale gold on the sheaves;  
 Alike now the hum of glad bees on  
 Green boughs, and the sigh of sad trees on  
 Sere uplands, the fall of the season,  
     And the fall of the leaves.

Alike now each wind blows the breezes  
     That kiss where they roam,  
 The breath of the March wind that freezes  
     In rime on the loam;

The storm blast that lashes and scourges,  
 And rends the white crest of the surges,  
 As it sweeps with a thunder of dirges  
     Across the sea foam.

Alike now all rainfall and dewfall  
     Foul seasons and fair;  
 Let the rose on my path or the rue fall,  
     I heed not nor care;  
 Nor for red light of dawn, nor for dun light  
 Of dusk, nor for dazzle of sunlight  
 At noon, shall I seek light or shun light,  
     Seek warmth or shun glare.

Now for breaking of fast neither grateful,  
     Nor for quenching of thirst  
 In the dawn or the eventide hateful,  
     In the noontide accurs't.  
 In the watch of the night, sleep forsaken  
 Till the sleep comes no watch shall awaken,  
 Be the best things of life never taken,  
     Never feared be the worst.

Skies laugh, and buds bloom, and birds warble  
     At breaking of day;  
 Without and within on grey marble,  
     The light glimmers grey.  
 Ah, pale silent mouth, surely this is  
 The spot where death strikes and life misses,  
 Warm lips pressing cold lips, waste kisses,  
     Clay cold on cold clay.

Through sunset and twilight and nightfall  
     And night watches bleak,  
 We have lain thus, and broad rays of light fall  
     And flicker and streak.  
 The death chamber, glancing and shining,  
 Where death and dead life lay reclining,  
 My hands with her hands intertwining,  
     My cheeks to her cheek.

I conjure thee by days spent together,  
     So sad and so few,  
 By the seasons of fair and foul weather,  
     By the rose and the rue;  
 By the sorrows and joys of past hours,  
 By the thorns of the earth and the flowers  
 By the suns of the skies and the showers  
     By the mist and the dew;



By the time that annihilates all things—  
     Our woes and our crimes,  
 By the gathering of great things and small things  
     At end of all times,  
 Let thy soul answer mine through the portal  
 Of the grave, if the soul be immortal,  
 As the wise men of all climes have taught all  
     The fools of all climes.

If these men speak truth I come quickly,  
     My life does thee wrong;  
 Dost thou languish in shades peopled thickly  
     With phantoms that throng?  
 Have they known thee, my love? Hast thou known one  
 To welcome the stranger, and lone one!—  
 Oh, loved one! oh, lost one! mine own one!  
     I tarry not long.

The flowers that no more shall enwreath us  
     Turn sunward, the dove  
 Sails skyward, the flowers are beneath us,  
     The birds are above.

Those skies (an illegible letter)  
 Seem fairer and farther, scarce better  
 Than earth to men crushed by life's fetter  
     When lifeless is love.

And none can live twice, say the heathen,  
     And none can twice die,  
 More hopeful than these were are we then  
     With hopes past the sky!  
 Yon Judge, will He swerve from just sentence,  
 For tardy, fear-stricken repentance?  
 Ask those who came hither and went hence,  
     But hope no reply.

And He who shall judge us is mighty,  
     How then shall I trust  
 In Him, having sinned in His sight? He  
     Is jealous and just.  
 So priests taught me once, in their learning  
 Perplexed, slower still in discerning,  
 Are ashes to ashes returning,  
     And dust seeking dust.

But the dead, these are tranquil, or seem so  
     Nor laugh they nor weep,  
 And I who rest not, though I dream so,  
     Ask only their sleep.

I have sown tares and brambles on fickle,  
 False sands, and already my sickle  
 Has reap'd the rank weed and the prickle—  
     What more shall I reap ?

Can life thrive when life's love expires ?  
     Are life and love twain ?

Men say so—nay, all men are liars,  
     Or all lives are vain.

Let our dead loves and lives be forgotten,  
 With the ripening of fruits that are rotten,  
 So we, loving fools, dust-begotten,  
     Go dustward again.<sup>33</sup>

### TO MY SOUL

#### GORDON'S LAST POEM

[The subjoined poem by Adam Lindsay Gordon has a special interest for two reasons. In the first place, it has, so far as we are able to discover, never been published, and in the second it is one of the last the dead poet penned. It was, in fact, written only a fortnight prior to his melancholy death. We are enabled to publish it through the kindness of Mr. W. D. Armstrong, M.L.A., who received it from the daughter of Mrs. M'Gillivray, one of Gordon's best and oldest friends.—Ed. *Queenslander*.]

“Tired and worn, and wearisome for love  
 Of some immortal hope beyond the grave,  
 Thy soul thou frettest like the prisoned dove  
 That now is sick to rest, and now doth crave  
 To cleave the upward sky with sudden wing !  
 The heaven is clear and boundless, and thy flight  
 To some new land might be a joyous thing,  
 Within this cage of clay there is no light ;  
 Glimpses between its mortal bars there be  
 That bring a powerful longing to be free,  
 And tones that reach the ear mysteriously  
 When thou art wrapt in thy divinest dream.  
 Yet thou art but the plaything and the slave  
 Of some strange power that wears thy strength away—  
 Slowly and surely, which thou dar'st not brave  
 Because pale men in some tradition say

It is a God that would not have thee 'scape  
 The torture that He wills to be thy fate.  
 'Tis but a tyrant's dream, and born of hate;  
 Then, soul, be not disquieted with doubt;  
 Step to the brink—this hand shall let thee out."

The following ballad by the late Adam Lindsay Gordon will be read with interest. The lines, which were written forty-eight years ago, and of which only thirty copies were printed, were produced under the following circumstances:—Gordon, who at that time lived in the south-east, one night met a number of friends at the Mount Gambier Hotel, and during the evening his attention was drawn to a set of six plates illustrative of the old border ballad, "The Dowie Dens o' Yarrow," engraved from pictures painted by Mr. (now Sir) Noel Paton for the Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Scotland, and issued to that association's subscribers. Gordon was much pleased with the plates, and intimated to one of the company his intention of using them as a basis for some lines. A day or two later he showed the poem to the gentleman he had spoken to, and an order was given to the proprietors of the *Border Watch* for thirty copies, with the stipulation that the authorship be kept secret. The lines were printed in pamphlet form, and were entitled "The Feud: a ballad," and were dedicated by "A. Lindsay" to Noel Paton, R.S.A., as a key to the plates named. The following is an exact copy of the poem, as it was reprinted in the *Australasian*—

A POEM BY A. L. GORDON

PLATE I

*Rixa super mero.*

"They sat by their wine in the tavern that night,  
 But not in good fellowship true;  
 The Rhenish was strong and the Burgundy bright,  
 And hotter the argument grew.

'I asked your consent when I first sought her hand,  
 Nor did you refuse to agree,  
 Tho' her father declared that the half of his land  
 Her dower at our wedding should be.'  
 'No dower shall be given (the brother replied)  
 With a maiden of beauty so rare,  
 Nor yet shall my father my birthright divide,  
 Our lands with a foeman to share.'  
 The knight stood erect in the midst of the hall,  
 And sterner his visage became,  
 'Now shame and dishonour my 'scutcheon befall  
 If thus I relinquish my claim.'  
 The brother then drained a tall goblet of wine,  
 And fiercely this answer he made—  
 'Before like a coward my rights I resign  
 I'll claim an appeal to the blade.  
 'The passes at Yarrow are rugged and wide,  
 There meet me to-morrow alone,  
 This quarrel we two with our swords will decide,  
 And one shall his folly atone.'  
 They've settled the time and they've settled the place,  
 They've paid for the wine and the ale,  
 They've bitten their gloves and their steps they retrace  
 To their castles in Ettrick's Vale."

## PLATE II

*Morituri (te) salutant.*

" 'Now buckle my broadsword at my side  
 And saddle my trusty steed;  
 And bid me adieu, my bonnie bride,  
 To Yarrow I go with speed.  
 'I've passed through many a bloody fray  
 Unharmed in health or limb;  
 Then why is your brow so sad this day  
 And your dark eye so dim?'  
 'Oh, belt not on your broadsword bright,  
 Oh! leave your steed in his stall,  
 For I dreamt last night of a stubborn fight,  
 And I dreamt I saw you fall.'  
 'On Yarrow's braes there will be strife,  
 Yet I am safe from ill;  
 And if I thought it would cost my life  
 I must take this journey still.'

He turned his charger to depart  
 In the misty morning air,  
 But he stood and pressed her to his heart  
 And smoothed her glossy hair.  
 And her red lips he fondly kissed  
 Beside the castle door,  
 And he rode away in the morning mist,  
 And he never saw her more!<sup>23</sup>

## PLATE III

*Heu! deserta domus.*

"She sits by the eastern casement now  
 And the sunlight enters there  
 And settles on her ivory brow  
 And gleams in her golden hair.  
 On the deerskin rug the staghound lies  
 And doses dreamily,  
 And the quaint carved oak reflects the dyes  
 Of the curtain's canopy.  
 The lark has sprung from the new-mown hay,  
 And the plover's note is shrill,  
 And the song of the mavis far away  
 Comes from the distant hill;  
 And in the wide courtyard below  
 She heard the horses neigh,  
 The men-an-arms pass to and fro,  
 The scraps of border lay.  
 She heard each boisterous oath and jest  
 The rough moss-troopers made,  
 Who scoured the rust from spur or crest,  
 Or polished bit or blade.  
 They loved her well, those rugged men—  
 How could they be so gay  
 When he perchance in some lone glen  
 Lay dying far away?  
 She was a fearless Border girl,  
 Who from her earliest days  
 Had seen the banners oft unfurl  
 And the war beacons blaze—  
 Had seen her father's men march out,  
 Roused by the trumpet's call,  
 And heard the foemen's savage shout  
 Close to their fortress wall.

And when her kin were arming fast,  
 Had belted many a brand—  
 Why was her spirit now o'ercast?  
 Where was her self-command?  
 She strove to quell those childish fears,  
 Unworthy of her name;  
 She dashed away the rising tears,  
 And, flushed with pride and shame,  
 She rose and hurried down the stair,  
 The castle yard to roam;  
 And she met her elder sister there,  
 Come from their father's home——

'Sister I've ridden here alone,  
 Your lord and you to greet.'  
 'Sister, to Yarrow he has gone  
 Our brother there to meet;  
 I dreamt last night of a stubborn fray  
 Where I saw him fall and bleed,  
 And he rode away at break of day  
 With his broadsword and his steed.  
 'Oh! sister dear, there will be strife,  
 Our brother likes him ill,  
 And one or both must forfeit life  
 On Yarrow's lonely hill.'

A stout moss-trooper, standing near,  
 Spoke with a careless smile—  
 'Now have no fear for my master dear,  
 He may travel many a mile,  
 And those who ride on the Border side,  
 Albeit they like him not,  
 They know his mettle has oft been tried  
 Where blows were thick and hot,  
 He left command that none should go  
 From hence till home he came;  
 But, lady, the truth you soon shall know  
 If you will bear the blame.  
 Your palfrey fair I'll saddle with care,  
 Your sister shall ride the grey,  
 And I'll mount myself on the sorrel mare,  
 And to Yarrow we'll haste away.'

The sun was low in the western sky,  
 And steep was the mountain track,  
 But they rode from the castle rapidly—  
 Oh! how will they travel back?"

## PLATE IV

*Gaudia Certaminis.*

" He came to the spot where his foe had agreed  
 To meet him in Yarrow's dark glade,  
 And there he drew rein and dismounted his steed,  
 And fastened him under the shade.  
 Close by in the greenwood the ambush was set,  
 And scarce had he entered the glen  
 When, armed for the combat, the brother he met,  
 And with him were eight of his men.  
 ' Now swear to relinquish all claim to our land,  
 Or to give as a hostage your bride!  
 Or fly if you're able, or yield where you stand,  
 Or die as your betters have died!'<sup>2</sup>  
 His doublet and hat on the green sward he threw,  
 He wrapt round the left arm his cloak;  
 And out of its scabbard his broadsword he drew,  
 And stood with his back to an oak.  
 ' My claim to your land I refuse to deny,  
 Nor will I restore you my bride,  
 Nor will I surrender, nor yet will I fly;  
 Come on, and the steel shall decide!'<sup>3</sup>  
 Oh! sudden and sure were the blows that he dealt!  
 Like lightning the sweep of his blade!  
 Cut and thrust, point and edge, all around him they fell,  
 They fell one by one in the glade!  
 And pierced in the gullet their leader goes down!  
 And sinks with a curse on the plain;  
 And his squire falls dead! cut thro' headpiece and crown!  
 And his groom by a back stroke is slain.  
 Now five are stretched lifeless! disabled are three!  
 Hard pressed, see the last caitiff reel!  
 The brother behind struggles up on one knee,  
 And drives through his body the steel!"<sup>3</sup>

## PLATE V

" *Non habeo mihi facta adhuc cur Herculis uxor  
 Credar: conjugii mors mihi pignus erit.*"<sup>2</sup>

" The traitor's father heard the tale,  
 In haste he mounted then  
 And spurred his horse from Ettrick Vale  
 To Yarrow's lonely glen.

Some troopers followed in his track—  
For them he tarried not,  
He neither halted nor looked back  
Until he found the spot.

The earth was trod and trampled bare,  
And stained with dark red dew,  
A broken blade lay here, and there  
A bonnet cut in two;  
And stretched in ghastly shapes around  
The lifeless corpses lie;  
Some with their faces to the ground,  
And some towards the sky.  
And there the ancient border chief  
Stood silent and alone—  
Too stubborn to give way to grief,  
Too stern remorse to own.  
A soldier in the midst of strife,  
Since he had first drawn breath,  
He'd grown to undervalue life  
And feel at home with death.  
And yet he shuddered when he saw  
The work that had been done;  
He knew his fearless son-in-law,  
He knew his dastard son.  
Despite the failings of his race  
A brave old man was he,  
Who would not stoop to actions base  
And hated treachery.  
He loved his younger daughter well,  
And though severe and rude,  
For her sake he had tried to quell  
That foolish border feud.  
Her brother all his schemes had marred,  
And given his pledge the lie,  
And sense of justice struggled hard  
With nature's stronger tie.  
He knew his son had richly earned  
The stroke that laid him low,  
Yet had not quite forgiveness learned  
For him that dealt the blow.  
There came a tramp of horses' feet,  
He raised his startled eyes,  
And felt his pulses throb and beat  
With sorrow and surprise.  
He saw his daughter riding fast,  
And from her steed she sprung,



And on her lover's corpse she cast  
     Herself, and round him clung.  
 Her head she pillowed on his waist,  
     And all her clustering hair  
 Hung down, disordered by her haste,  
     In silken masses there.  
 Her sister and their sturdy guide  
     Dismounted and drew nigh,  
 The elder daughter stood aside—  
     Her tears fell silently.  
 The stout moss-trooper glanced around,  
     But not a word he said,  
 He knelt upon the battered ground  
     And raised his master's head.  
 The face had set serene and sad,  
     Nor was there on the clay  
 The stamp of that fierce soul which had  
     In anger passed away.  
 With dagger blade he rip't the shirt,  
     The fatal wound to show,  
 And wiped the stains of blood and dirt  
     From throat, and cheek, and brow.  
 And all the while she did not stir,  
     She lay there calm and still,  
 Nor could he hope to comfort her,  
     Her case was past his skill.  
 The father first that silence broke;  
     His voice was firm and clear,  
 And every accent that he spoke  
     Fell on the listener's ear.  
 ' Daughter, this quarrel to forgo,  
     I offered half our land  
 As dower to him—a feudal foe—  
     When first he sought your hand.  
 I only asked for some brief while,  
     Some few short weeks' delay,  
 Till I my son could reconcile;  
     For this he would not stay.  
 He was your husband, so I'm told,  
     But you yourself must own  
 He took you to his fortress hold  
     With your consent alone.  
 Of late the strife broke out anew;  
     They blame your brother there;  
 But he was hot and headstrong, too—  
     He doubtless did his share.

Oh ! stout of heart ! and strong of hand !  
 With all his faults was he  
 The champion of his Border-land ;  
 I ne'er his judge will be !  
 Now, grieve no more for what is done ;  
 Alike we share the cost ;  
 For girl I, too, have lost a son,  
 If you your love have lost.  
 Forget the dead ! and learn to call  
 A worthier man your lord  
 Than he whose arm has vexed us all ;  
 Here lies his fatal sword.  
 Think, when you seek his guilt to cloak,  
 Whose blood has dyed it red,  
 Who fell beneath its deadly stroke,  
 Whose life is forfeited.'  
 The old man paused, for while he spoke  
 The girl had raised her head.  
 Her silken hair she proudly dashed  
 Back from her crimson face !  
 And in her bright eyes once more flashed  
 The spirit of her race !  
 Her beauty made him stand abashed !  
 Her voice rang thro' the place !  
 ' Who held the treacherous dagger's hilt  
 When against odds he fought ?  
 My brother's blood was fairly spilt !  
 But his was basely bought !  
 Now Christ absolve his soul from guilt ;  
 He sinned as he was taught !  
 His next of kin by blood and birth  
 May claim his house and land !  
 His groom may black his saddle girth,  
 Or bid his charger stand !  
 But never a man on God's wide earth  
 Shall touch his darling's hand !'  
 The colour faded from her cheek,  
 Her eyelids dropped and fell,  
 And when again she sought to speak  
 Her accents came so low and weak  
 Her words they scarce could tell.  
 ' Oh ! Father, all I ask is rest,  
 Here let me once more lie !'  
 She stretched upon the dead man's breast  
 With one long weary sigh,

And the old man bowed his lofty crest  
 And hid his troubled eye!  
 They called her, but she spoke no more,  
 And when they raised her head  
 She seemed as lovely as before,  
 Though all her bloom had fled;  
 But they grew pale at what they saw—  
 They knew that she was dead!"

## PLATE VI

*Dies iræ! dies illa*

"The requiem breaks the midnight air, the funeral bell they toll,  
 A mass or prayer, we well may spare, for a brave moss-trooper's soul;  
 And the fairest bride, on the border side, may she too be forgiven!  
 The dirge we ring, the chant we sing, the rest we leave to Heaven!"

## GORDON'S EARLY POEMS

The four fragments annexed, taken from Gordon's letters to Charley Walker, must be among the earliest of his poems.

"Whereas! L. Gordon, *having gone away*  
*Sundry and diverse debts have failed to pay,*  
 By virtue of the law we here decree  
 That all his goods shall confiscated be.  
 And since, *by reason of his tender age,*  
 His creditors, their grievance to assuage  
 (Albeit they have cause for just complaint),  
 Upon his person can put no restraint,  
 Nor cause him to be pulled up at the sessions  
 We hereby give them claim to his possessions."

Reply to the above paragraph—

"Whereas L. Gordon, be it understood—  
 Hath got no goods *that be of any good,*  
 His ereditors from Draper down to Clee  
*To all the goods aforesaid welcome be!*  
 And when they've nailed what comes within their range  
 The *surplus* they may keep and grab the *change*  
 And much he hopes, when they *thereof* partake,  
 Beasts of themselves *therewith* they will not make."

---

"Charley! Here I am at last  
 Quartered in my old position,  
 Though from having lived so fast  
 I'm in rather poor condition.

Came by train to save my feet, .  
 On a walk I wasn't nuts,  
 Got home, drowsy, crabbed and beat,  
*Pockets empty, ditto guts.*<sup>21</sup>

---

“Put no faith in aught you meet with, *friends* or *lovers*, new or old,  
 Never trust the gamest racehorse that was ever reared or foaled.  
 If you find your lady fickle, *take it cool and never heed*,  
 If you get a bill delivered, *roll it up and light your weed*.  
 If a foe insults your honour, *hit out and straight and wop him well*;  
 If your thickest friend turns rusty, *tell him he may go to hell*.  
 Fame is folly, honour madness, love delusion, friendship sham,  
 Pleasure paves the way for sadness, none of these are worth a  
 d——n.

But a stout heart proof 'gainst fate is, where there can be nothing more  
 done,

This advice is given gratis, by Yrs truly, Lindsay Gordon.

---

What if friends desert in trouble. Fortune can recall them yet  
*Faithful in champagne and sunshine, false in clouds and heavy wet*,  
 Who would trust in mankind's daughter, since by Eve our fall was  
 planned,

Woman's love is writ on water, woman's faith is traced on sand.  
 Fame is folly, etc.<sup>22</sup>

The following four lines written in Cheltenham many years before and sent to the late Patchett Martin are included in “Thickheaded Thoughts”—

“I've something of the bulldog in my breed,  
 The spaniel is developed rather less,  
 While life is in me I can fight and bleed,  
 But never the chastizing hand caress.”<sup>22</sup>

---

Our correspondent, says the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, recalls a rhyme which was curiously enough written by Gordon (1852) about himself and his companions in the hunting-field, in which arena, however, he got very little experience.

“There's lots of refusing and falls and mishaps  
 Who's down on the Chestnut? He's hurt himself p'raps.  
 ‘Oh! it's Lindsay the Lanky,’ says Hard-riding Bob,  
 He's luckily saved Mr. Calcraft a job.”<sup>23</sup>



BOB CHAPMAN (HARD-RIDING BOB).

"There's lots of refusing and falls and mishaps;  
Who's down on the chestnut? He's hurt himself, p'raps.  
Oh! it's Lindsay the Lankey, says Hard-riding Bob,  
He's luckily saved Mr. Calcraft a job,"

*A. L. Gordon, 1852.*

*Reproduced by permission of Mr. Charles Travess, late Huntsman to "The Coltsfold."*



Lindsay Gordon took the effect out of adverse criticisms on the part of the rest of his comrades by severely criticizing himself.

One of Gordon's earliest surviving rhymes is a free translation of these words—

“*Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes  
Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros*”—

which Lindsay rendered into this—

“To rightly learn the pugilistic art,  
Such as Jem Earywig can well impart,  
Refines the manners and takes off the rough,  
Nor suffers one to be a blooming muff.”

The following poem was given to Mr. Sladen for inclusion in his anthology “*Australian Poets*”—

#### GORDON'S VALEDICTORY POEM

“Lay me low, my work is done,  
I am weary. Lay me low,  
Where the wild flowers woo the sun,  
Where the balmy breezes blow,  
Where the butterfly takes wing,  
Where the aspens, drooping, grow,  
Where the young birds chirp and sing—  
I am weary, let me go.

I have striven hard and long  
In the world's unequal fight,  
Always to resist the wrong,  
Always to maintain the right.  
Always with a stubborn heart,  
Taking, giving blow for blow;  
Brother, I have played my part,  
And am weary, let me go.

Stern the world and bitter cold,  
Irksome, painful to endure;  
Everywhere a love of gold,  
Nowhere pity for the poor,  
Everywhere mistrust, disguise,  
Pride, hypocrisy, and show,  
Draw the curtain, close mine eyes,  
I am weary, let me go.

Other chance when I am gone,  
 May restore the battle-call,  
 Bravely lead the good cause on  
 Fighting in the which I fall.  
 God may quicken some true soul  
 Here to take my place below  
 In the heroes' ever roll—  
 I am weary, let me go.

Shield and buckler, hang them up,  
 Drape the standards on the wall,  
 I have drained the mortal cup  
 To the finish, dregs and all;  
 When our work is done 'tis best,  
 Brother, best that we should go—  
 I am weary, let me rest,  
 I am weary, lay me low."

The following is an unfinished poem of Gordon's published in the *Australasian*. A shepherd discovered it in an old pair of Gordon's trousers given him by Mr. Lambton Mount after Gordon had left West Australia—

"All night I've heard the marsh-frog's croak,  
 The jay's rude matins now prevail,  
 The smouldering fire of bastard oak  
 Now blazes freshened by the gale:  
 And now to eastward far away  
 Beyond the range a tawny ray  
 Of orange reddens on the grey,  
 And stars are waning pale.

We mustered once when skies were red,  
 Nine leagues from here across the plain,  
 And when the sun broiled overhead,  
 Rode with wet heel and wanton rein,  
 The wild scrub cattle held their own,  
 I lost my mates, my horse fell blown,  
 Night came, I slept here all alone,  
 At sunrise riding on again,  
 I heard yon creek's refrain.

Can this be where the hovel stood?  
 Of old I knew the spot right well;  
 One post is left of all the wood,  
 Three stones lie where the chimney fell.



Rank growth of ferns has well-nigh shut  
 From sight the ruins of the hut.  
 There stands the tree where once I cut,  
     The M that interlaced the L—  
 What more is left to tell ?

Aye, yonder in the blackwood shade,  
     The wife was busy with her churn;  
 The sturdy sunburnt children play'd  
     In yonder patch of tangled fern.  
 The man was loitering to feed  
 His flock on yonder grassy mead;  
 And where the wavelet threads the weed  
     I saw the eldest daughter turn,  
     The stranger's quest to learn.

Shone, gold-besprinkled by the sun,  
     Her wanton wealth of back-blown hair,  
 Soft silver ripples danced and spun  
     All round her ankles bright and bare.  
 My speech she barely understood,  
 And her reply was brief and rude;  
 Yet God they say, made all things good  
     That he at first made fair.

\* \* \* \* \*

(NOTE.—The manuscript here is rather blurred and indistinct, and probably the author's words are not accurately copied, as the sense is rather vague.)

She bore a pitcher in her hand  
     Along that shallow, slender streak  
 Of shingle-coated shelving sand  
     That splits two channels of the creek;  
 She plunged it where the current whirls,  
 Then poised it on her sunny curls;  
 Waste water decked with sudden pearls  
     Her glancing arm and glowing cheek,  
 What more is left to speak ?

It matters not how I became  
     The guest of those who lived here then;  
 I now can scarce recall the name  
     Of this old station; long years, ten  
 Or twelve it may be, have flown past,  
 And many things have changed since last  
 I left the spot, for years fly fast,  
     And heedless boys grow haggard men  
     Ere they the change can ken.

The spells of those old summer days  
 With glory still the passes deck,  
 The sweet green hills still bloom and blaze  
 With crimson gold and purple fleck.  
 For these I neither crave nor care,  
 And yet the flowers perchance are fair  
 As when I twined them in her hair,  
 Or strung them chainwise round her neck  
 What now is left to reckon ?  
 The pure, clear streamlet undefiled  
 Durgles the flowery upland yet;  
 It lisps and prattles like a child,  
 And laughs, and makes believe to fret,  
 O'erflowing rushes rank and high;  
 And on its dimpled breast may lie  
 The lizard and the dragon-fly.

(NOTE.—The manuscript, which is carelessly written and unrevised, abruptly leaves off here.)

By kind permission of the Editor of the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* I am able to give the under-written little monologue in rhyme, handed to a predecessor as one of Gordon's unpublished compositions. It is evidently incomplete, but, such as it is, we present it to our readers—

#### A VOICE FROM THE BUSH

The Patrol (GORDON) and the Gold Digger.

(*An episode in the life of the Poet while in the Mounted Police force in Australia.*)

GORDON, mounted, loq.—

Ho ! you chap of grit and sinew,  
 Smoking in your pit,  
 Why thus labour discontinue ?  
 Why your forehead knit ?  
 Are you weary of the searching  
 For the Root of Ill,  
 That you like an idle urchin,  
 Play at sitting still ?  
 I confess it hardish lines is  
 Not to earn a mopus.  
 Galling—ne'er to get a *Finis*  
*Coronare Opus.*

Catch this flask of old Jamaica  
 In your iron paw,  
 While I fill a pipe and take a  
 Seat to have a jaw.

Let me hitch my horse's bridle  
 To this stunted tree:  
 Now, instead of one chap idle,  
 We can reckon three.

\* \* \* \* \*

*They have a jaw. Presently the Patrol rises to depart, and, loq.—*

Well! there's much truth underlying  
 That old growl I've heard.  
 I shan't please you by replying,  
 Yet I'll have a word.

Growl away! But live and labour  
 Till your race be run,  
 Helping every feeble neighbour,  
 Seeking help from none.

Life is mainly froth and bubble,  
 Two things stand like stone;  
 KINDNESS IN A NEIGHBOUR'S TROUBLE,  
 COURAGE IN YOUR OWN.

Though we chafe at Duty's rigour,  
 All is for the best.  
 You will work with greater vigour,  
 Having had a rest.

Fortune's lap has prizes in it  
 Yet for you in store.  
 Who knows? In another minute,  
 You may strike the ore.

Now I'm off with my old kicker,  
 On my daily task,  
 Stay! Since you have paunched the liquor,  
 Hand me back that flask.

This is taken from an article by "Small Hopes." It seems to be either the original draft or a parody of "Finis Exoptatus."

## CHAPTER XXI

### BUSH SONGS ATTRIBUTED TO GORDON

THERE are three songs very much sung in the bush which are generally, but I think without reason, attributed to Gordon. They are "The Stockman's Last Bed," "The Bushman's Lullaby" and "Careless Jim." Copies of them were procured for me by the kindness of the Hon. Mrs. W. E. Cavendish, daughter of Sir Thomas Bayley, Bart., a squatter then living in Melbourne, for publication in my anthology *A Century of Australian Song*. I have been told that "The Stockman's Last Bed" was written by the beautiful Miss Hunter who afterwards became Mrs. Charles Rome, but I think there is better ground for supposing that it was written by her sister-in-law, Mrs. James Hunter. Mr. C. D. Mackellar, who stayed at Kalangadoo station, when it belonged to the Hunters, believes that Gordon wrote it himself, and gave it to one of the Hunters.

#### THE STOCKMAN'S LAST BED

"Whether stockman or not,  
For a moment give ear—  
Poor Jack, he is dead,  
And no more shall we hear  
The crack of his whip,  
Or his steed's lively trot,  
His clear "Go ahead,"  
Or his jingling quart pot.  
For he sleeps where the wattles  
Their sweet fragrance shed,  
And tall gum-trees shadow  
The Stockman's last bed!  
One day, while out yarding,  
He was gored by a steer.

'Alas!' cried poor Jack,  
 'Tis all up with me here;  
 And never shall I  
 The saddle regain,  
 Or bound like a wallaby  
 Over the plain.<sup>1</sup>  
 So they've laid him where wattles  
 Their sweet fragrance shed, etc.

His whip at his side,  
 His dogs they all mourn,  
 His horse stands awaiting  
 His master's return;  
 While he lies neglected,—  
 Unheeded he dies;  
 Save Australia's dark children,  
 None knows where he lies;  
 For he sleeps, etc.

Then, Stockman, if ever,  
 On some future day,  
 While following a mob,  
 You should happen to stray—  
 Oh! pause by the spot  
 Where poor Jack's bones are laid,  
 Far, far from the home  
 Where in childhood he strayed.  
 And tread softly where wattles  
 Their sweet fragrance shed,  
 And tall gum-trees shadow  
 The Stockman's last bed.<sup>2</sup>

#### THE BUSHMAN'S LULLABY <sup>1</sup>

Lift me down to the creek-bank, Jack  
 It must be cooler outside:  
 The long hot day is well-nigh done,  
 It's a chance if I see another one.  
 I should like to look on the setting sun,  
 And the waters cool and wide,  
 We didn't think it would be like this  
 Last week as we rode together;  
 True mates we've been in this far land  
 For many a day since Devon's strand  
 We left for these wastes of sun-scorched land  
 In the blessed English weather.

---

<sup>1</sup> Attributed also to Henry Kingsley.

We left when the leafy lanes were green,  
And the trees met overhead;  
The merry brooks ran clear and gay;  
The air was sweet with the scent of hay;  
How well I remember the very day,  
And the words my mother said!

We have striven and toiled and fought it out  
Under the hard, blue sky,  
Where the plains glowed red in tremulous light,  
Where the haunting mirage mocked the sight  
Of desperate men from morn till night,  
And the streams had long been dry.

Where we dug for gold on the mountain side,  
Where the ice-fed river ran,  
Through frost and blast, through fire and snow,  
Where an Englishman could live and go,  
We've followed our luck for weal or woe,  
And never asked help from man.

And now it's over, it's hard to die,  
Ere the summer of life is o'er,  
Ere time has printed one single mark,  
When the pulse beats high, and the limbs are stark,  
And, oh God, to see home no more!

No more! No more! Ah! vain the vow,  
That, whether rich or poor,  
Whatever the years might bring or change,  
I would one day stand by the grey old grange,  
While the children gathered, all shy and strange,  
As I entered the well-known door.

You will go home to the old place, Jack;  
Tell my mother from me  
That I thought of the words she used to say,  
Her looks, her tone, as I dying lay;  
That I prayed to God as I used to pray  
When I knelt beside her knee.

By the lonely water they made their couch,  
And the southern night fast fled;  
They heard the wild fowl splash and cry,  
They heard the mourning reeds low sigh.  
Such was the Bushman's lullaby;  
With the dawn his soul was sped."

## CARELESS JIM

“ His other name ? Well, there I’m stumped ;  
 He was tall, sir, dark and slim,  
 And we—that is, my mates and I—  
 Just called him ‘ Careless Jim,’  
 That was all we know—to his other name  
 No thought we ever gave,  
 Until one day, at the foot of the mount,  
 When we laid him in his grave.

There were four of us all young and wild,  
 You know what the times were then—  
 But you see that gap in the mountain, miss—  
 That gap in the Ferntree Glen—  
 ’Twas there we lived in a hut so rude,  
 But you know what the huts were then !  
 That house there’s mine, but I’ve often wished  
 For those times in the Fern-tree Glen.

We had no care—a quarrel at times  
 Might the light of our lives bedim,  
 But a jump between and ‘ Don’t be fools,’  
 Would come from Careless Jim.  
 So our lives sped on unruffled, unchanged,  
 Till a day all dreary, when  
 A shadow fell on the rude old hut  
 That we built in the Fern-tree Glen.

It was night, and beside a rough bush bed  
 We stood with our eyes all dim,  
 Watching the flickering lamp of life  
 In the face of Careless Jim.  
 How bright at times it seemed to burn,  
 And then how faint its glow !  
 But ’twas sinking fast, and we heard a voice  
 Cry, “ Good-bye, boys—I go.”

We dug a grave where the brook babbles on,  
 Beneath the Fern-tree’s shade,  
 And between two sheets of the white-gum bark  
 The form of Jim we laid ;  
 Then with spade in hand all mute we stood,  
 Chained as it were by a spell,  
 Waiting each for the other to heap the clay  
 On the clay we loved so well.

’Twas done at length—yet I scarce know how,  
 For not a word was said ;

And a creeper we set at the foot of that grave,  
And a box-tree at his head.  
And we carved his name on a blue-gum near,  
Leastways all we knew,  
In a rough irregular sort of way—  
‘ Jim, 1852.’

Ten years ago I saw that grave;  
The brook babbled on as before;  
But the box-tree had pushed the fern aside,  
And the creeper was there no more;  
But I alone, sir, know that spot  
(For my mates are sleeping too),  
And I carved once more on the blue-gum tree,  
‘ Jim, 1852.’ ”



## PART II

### CHAPTER I

#### THE ROMANCE OF ADAM LINDSAY GORDON <sup>1</sup>

BUT for a single attachment one might have said that Adam Lindsay Gordon's romance was a romance of action.

As to that attachment there can be no doubt. It fills his letters from the time that he went to live at Worcester until he had been in Australia for years. The object of his affections was the elder daughter of Mr. Bridges of St. John's and Broughton Hackett, just outside Worcester, a beautiful girl who was sweet seventeen when the attachment began. She is still living, and the details are given with her permission. As has been mentioned in the introduction to Gordon's life, she has been twice married, and has by her first marriage a son very eminent at the Bar. She is now Mrs. Lees.

Gordon never declared his love till he came to say good-bye for his departure for Australia, when with characteristic recklessness he offered to sacrifice the passage he had taken to Australia, and all his father's plans for giving him a fresh start in life, if she would tell him not to go, or promise to be his wife, or even give him some hope.

To her honour, she refused to do either, though she retains her affection for him undiminished to this day, sixty years afterwards.

Gordon was a handsome, dashing boy, the hero of numberless exploits with his fists and his horses, when he first made her acquaintance. He was a merry boy in those days, fond of what would now be called "ragging,"

<sup>1</sup> *By Douglas Sladen only.*

but also given to fits of silence, and in the habit of reciting heroic poetry.

His admiration for Jane Bridges was a silent one, a matter of eye worship. She was unaware that he loved her, and attributed his shyness in her presence to the natural shyness of a boy not accustomed to women, with a beautiful and popular girl. She was therefore very kind to him, encouraging him to recite his favourite pieces to her and helping to form his taste in poetry. Gordon was always more at ease with her tall young sister, who was hardly more than a child at the time, but showed a marked desire for the society of Jane, whom he approached in such a distant way. The letters he wrote to Charley Walker, published in Chapter IV of Part II, contain innumerable allusions besides those quoted below, to his affection for Jane Bridges and his desire to marry her.

Mrs. Lees's correspondence, which has never been alluded to in any previous memoirs of Gordon, throws a fresh light on Gordon's disposition which brings out proofs of his loveliness and demonstrates that even in those days ragging formed only one side and that not the most conspicuous in his character.

Mrs. Lees's information is given in a series of letters to Mr. Sladen.

*Letter dated November 23, 1911.*

“The only letter from Gordon I ever had was written a few days after the poor unhappy boy left, and I hid it away in an old pocket-book which was stolen from me, and I have no recollection of a word he said in it, and the little I heard of the writer came through Charley's sister Agnes who became my very affectionate and loved friend. We had always a great deal to talk about when we met, and by degrees our references to Gordon and thoughts of him died out; but occasionally, after he was spoken of as a *Poet* I have been asked questions by the few who knew that I had been acquainted with him, and I have always related



THE JANE OF GORDON'S ROMANCE.

*Reproduced by her permission.*



the true story of the broken stable-door lock, and the trouble and expense it had been to his father, and that his father decided to prevail upon him to go to Australia, an arrangement to which he cheerfully assented, or seemed to do so until, when the time for parting came *somebody's loving-kindness made his resolution less*<sup>1</sup>—as he states in one of his poems, and drew forth a confession of a *carefully concealed* and ardent affection; the brief leavetaking from that Somebody is I believe the only incident described in my former communication, although there was nothing in that last brief sad interview which, being related truthfully, could bring a blush to the cheek of the lady named. Ah, well, my dear sir, in my seventy-seventh year *my* blushing days are over, and if it will give any gratification to you, as a genuine enthusiastic admirer of my old friend, A. L. Gordon, I will entrust you with the details of that interview, which will ever remain in my memory (as long as I have any left), although for many years I regarded Gordon's feeling, briefly mentioned under excitement, as an expression of a *lad's* love which would soon pass over to another. I was much affected in reading the letters<sup>2</sup> alluded to at finding that his esteem for me was not a passing fancy.

“I am more pleased to hear of the discovery of the *last* contemporary member of Lindsay's family in the person of a lady, and her statement that he was *not cast off* by his family, as suggested and even *stated* by his biographers, but the lady says simply, ‘We lost him,’ and what more natural than for one who had not anything pleasing to relate to keep silent in the hope of better times.”

#### GORDON'S PROPOSAL TO JANE BRIDGES

“Only very trifling incidents are worth recording unless I exclude his leavetaking with myself, which was too vividly impressed upon my mind for any word of it ever

<sup>1</sup> In his “Early Adieux” slightly altered.

<sup>2</sup> Letters from Gordon to Charley Walker.

to be forgotten though it occupied only a few minutes, and I was dressed for driving out with my father, who was waiting for me in the gig at the door. I was just leaving when Gordon came into the room I was in and said to me abruptly, 'I am going away and have come to say "good-bye."' I simply said '*I am sorry you are going.*' Then, as by a lightning flash was revealed to me the *beauty of a face* which I had hitherto regarded as *expressionless*, for the lad had never looked straight into mine, and I knew that he was sensitive regarding his nearness of sight; at my words he flushed crimson and said, 'One word from you and I will not go.' At this moment I recall the look of entreaty which accompanied his brief confession and request. I intuitively *knew* what I had never before suspected, my heart seemed to leap into my throat—I awkwardly added, 'We are all sorry, Mr. Gordon, but I cannot say a word to induce you to stay after the trouble and expense you have given your poor father.' Then he said, 'I will *be* and *do* all my father wishes if you will only say one word.' Then I repeated, 'I cannot. Why have you said nothing of this before?' He said, 'Because I was afraid you would ridicule or shun me, and I could not have stood it,' and added,

"'I shall hope unless there is another; is there another?'

"I felt obliged to say '*Yes*, there is another!'

"Then the crimson flush died out of the beautiful face, and the tears gushed into my eyes. I offered my hand; for the first time in our lives he drew it slowly nearer his eyes, silently and reverentially kissed it. Once more he said, 'I *will* hope.'

"Well, my friend, I rushed off, for my dear father was reminding me of his impatience (and Kit's) by thumping the floor of his gig, and his surprise was great when I appeared *sobbing* and explaining, 'Oh, father, Gordon is going away and has been saying he loves me,' so we drove off, and I kept crying. Suddenly Kit was pulled up, and father said, 'Are you quite sure you know your mind,

and don't wish Gordon to stay; if not we can return; if you *are* sure, then don't cry.' I told no one, but Gordon told his chum Charley (not *the* old Charley) all about it. I could not forget the haunting scene for a long time; but I could not accuse myself of wrong, and my natural gift of cheerfulness came to my help, and my love for my father, and his need of me in his long and terrible illness, weaned me from thoughts of every one and everything else."

*Letter dated December 1, 1911.*

"The poem 'to my sister' does refer to me, in that poem he alludes to the whiteness of my neck. I can truly state that he never mentioned the subject to me, nor did he ever pay me a compliment, and he appeared disgusted when Charley (who always came with him) was ready with one on all occasions, and they were usually accepted as a matter of course by me and my sister; one incident I record as a specimen of his anxiety to keep me from suspecting that he admired my personal appearance. It is just this. We met at a ball given by the widow of Captain Holyoake at Crowle (the next village to ours, which is Broughton Hackett), and Gordon neither danced nor played cards, nor conversed with any one, and certainly beyond a slight bow of recognition at meeting did not appear conscious of my presence; when he called next I thought to just see what he could be made say, when I asked bluntly *who was the belle at Holyoake's ball*; he replied just as bluntly 'Sally was certainly the *finest* girl there.' Now my sister was six inches taller than myself and quite a contrast in feature and manner, and he always appeared pleased to be with her, and even to joke with or tease her; on the contrary I always knew if he inquired for 'Miss Jane' to expect to hear of a grievance, or that he had brought me a book to read, and very frequently he had met with a poem which he should like to recite to me, and I liked to hear him, although his tone was monotonous and he seemed to be looking far off. I encouraged him to

study the poems and recite, and perhaps without suspecting it I commended passages of his own composing; but I do not think we any of us had regarded him as a *writer of verses even.*"

*Letter dated December, 1911.*

"I could not truthfully record any word or act of his (Charley Walker's) which could class him with those individuals whom poor Gordon was *obliged to make useful* in giving himself his only opportunities for testing and exhibiting his powers of endurance, courage and skill, qualities inherited through his father from a long line of ancestry. *These exhibitions over*, I allude to boxing (now a fashionable pastime), horse-racing, etc., and glowing descriptions of them patiently listened to and *confidentially* detailed to his friend, with promises given that 'Miss Jane' or 'Jenny' should not be told *anything about it*, and that, all the excitement over, and the reciter just again the dreamy, sad, complaining Gordon come, perhaps with a book to lend, or complaint of his mother's temper, or a suspicion that —— has been 'twitting' to his Uncle about having seen him in the company of some one, and his sister's sneers, etc., during these confidences, Charley most frequently took his pipe outside, where he would very likely get from Old Martin, the farm bailiff, a draught of our excellent home-made perry or cider; the pair rarely sat down, and Gordon, when reciting poetry, *stood or walked up and down*; this is a fair specimen of our intercourse, and there appeared nothing to indicate a poet and his love.

"I intend writing you a full description of Charley, after Christmas perhaps, if not sooner, but can only for the present confine myself to the statement that after an acquaintance of I think *eleven years* he married my *sister*, the *Sally* so frequently alluded to in Gordon's letters; those letters which will perhaps see the light again; I took extracts from them, chiefly references to myself as clearly



establishing my assertions that *I never played the coquette*, as some imagined, and *jilted* Gordon and drove him away. Gordon's *ordinary* common-place surroundings, and incidents furnished *nothing* to awake inspiration in his poetic mind, and in England he would never have been anything better or worse than '*that poor young fellow*' Gordon.

"For the present and future,

"Yours, etc. . . ."

*Letter dated January 9, 1912.*

"The two boys had paid a brief visit to Broughton Hackett and finding neither Sally nor little Fanny with me took leave and, I thought were clear off when, just outside the gate I saw and heard them in serious conversation, and Charley said 'I make *no* (I thought the word was) *headway*. I give it up and leave the running to you.' Gordon looked seriously at him, and after a little silence he said 'Honour bright, Charley?' 'Yes,' replied Charley, and then *shook both hands* and departed; no name having been mentioned, no circumstance alluded to, I had *no clue* and should probably have thought no more about it, but I learnt long after that when first the boys became acquainted with me each of them had confided the state of his feeling toward me to his friend and agreed to be open and truthful to each other, and *try their luck*; I can state that they faithfully kept their pledge and, with the exception of some trifling compliment, paid to me openly by Charley in Gordon's presence, I had no word from either one of them expressive of anything warmer than sincere friendship. *You know how the matter ended.*

"I knew the Walkers, they were a very happy family; young Charley had a very liberal education, had a cheerful and amiable disposition, and ought to have been articed to some profession, but he had to learn that the necessary means were not forthcoming and, like Gordon and the Army, he had to *think* what he could do; but unlike Gordon he kept a happy cheerful spirit, enjoyed the society of his

mother and sisters, enjoyed reading, had a very healthy appetite, digestion, a keen sense of humour and never seemed to think upon his future, and he used to speak of his father as 'The Governor,' seemed rather proud of him, but was never seen out with him, and never seemed desirous to make *acquaintance* with any of his set, never crossed a horse, nor had a desire for one, and if he could have a pipe and book would seem one to be happy under any circumstances; he patiently wooed *Sally* for many (I think ten) years; then they married and went away after a time and so I saw or heard little of them."

*Letter dated January 13, 1912.*

"I little thought when scribbling my relation of trifling incidents that I had done more than amuse you and left it to you to pick out and arrange in your artistic style anything worth preserving, and throw a sidelight upon the character of our hero and show you how and why he attached himself to Charley. Here were two lads in nearly similar circumstances, educated as gentlemen, with manly and gentlemanly instincts, *stranded* by fate in the beginning of their lives! *financially* cut off from congenial society, for of course Gordon in the hunting-field would be *conscious* that he, not *subscribing liberally to the Hunt*, and only being mounted upon a borrowed or hired hack, was only regarded as 'that young fellow Gordon,' and he would shrink from and resent any acceptance of patronage from any of the more favoured few in the field, Then he could not be a member of either of the select City or County Clubs or Societies; he found a *chum* in the son of old Charley, sober, cheerful, very amusing, *with time on his hands*; the pair loved long walks, little short pipes, nice books—and *you know* that in some other respects their tastes and opinions agreed."

*Letter dated January 23, 1912.*

"Trifling incidents crop up which, though scarcely worth

relating throw sidelights showing the difference in the dispositions of our hero and his devoted friend; here is one I well recollect. The boys came together as usual. Charley went into the arbour in front of the window in which Gordon looked out of the *parlour* and seemed particularly miserable over his mother's crossness, and I tried to persuade him not to think of it; that he was going to be a fine fellow when he settled down and I should live to see them all proud of him; but it was useless to talk to him, and for a wonder I offered to play the piano for him; he moved to the instrument and placed the seat for me and I played my father's favourite 'Weber's Last Waltz' (I have kept the old tattered music until now) over and over again. Lindsay appeared to be gazing steadily at the *instrument*, and on a sudden, I felt sure he was not taking interest in my performance, and I jumped up, saying, 'I perceive my effort to amuse you is quite useless, you have not half as much ear for music as old Duke (a favourite cart-horse), just come and see how he will appreciate my singing.' 'Gordon said as I closed the piano, 'Thank-you'; he followed me to the barn where Duke was, and when nearing it I began to sing 'The Minstrel Boy to the War has gone' and a responsive merry neigh could be plainly heard from within, and when we entered, Duke came up and put his nose to my cheek. Then I was startled by a *deep groan* from the doorway, where stood Charley, who in his jocular way said, 'Oh, don't I wish I was Duke!' I said, 'Of course we could have guessed what *you* would say.' Gordon's look of disgust I never forget. He uttered not a word, solemnly took his hat and departed; Charlie gave a *comical bow* and followed like a faithful dog, without returning to the house for his favourite cup of cider after a five-mile walk."

The letters Gordon wrote to Charles Walker, published in Part II, Chap. IV, contain constant allusions to his affection for "Miss Jane" and his desire to marry her. Here are a few specimens of them.

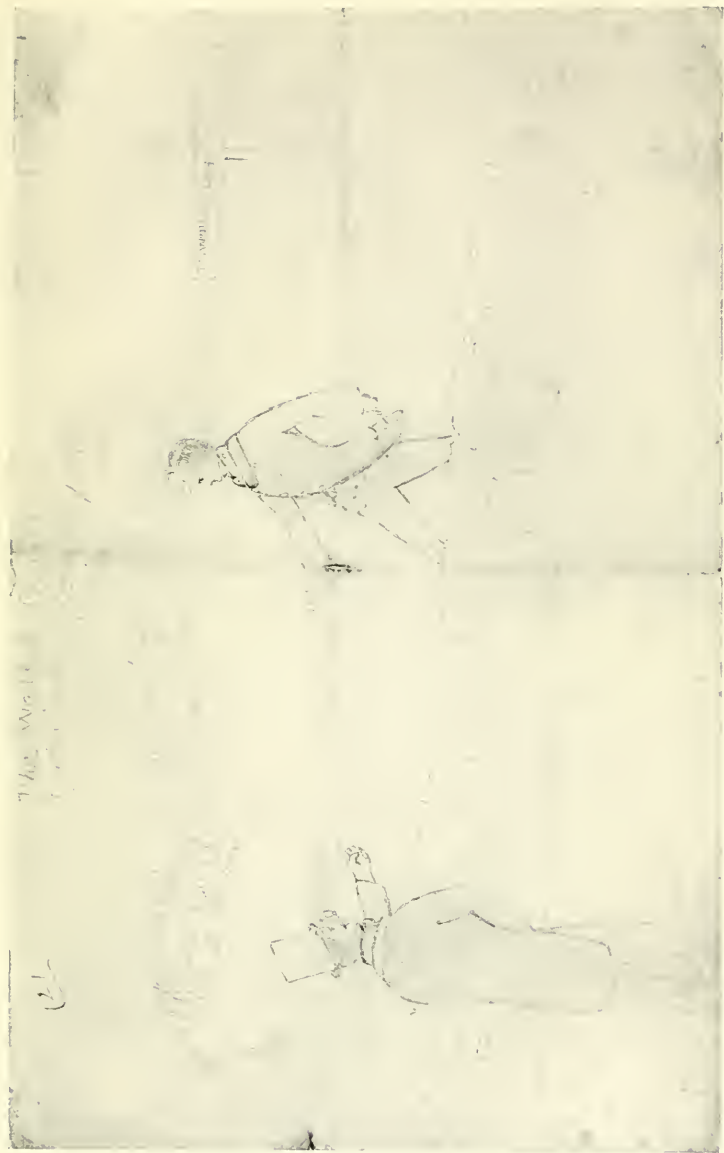
“Now, if you have seen Jane tell me how her throat is and everything, you know, besides. . . .”

“I hope Sally won't be crabbed at my valentine. I'm sorry I sent it, but I couldn't help our quarrel. You told me, she wouldn't stand my writing to Jane, but, if I'd believed you, I should have done the same, for, as you've already found out, Jane'ems was my favourite all along. I wish I knew more about her, but she puzzles me, though I used to fancy myself a pretty sharp hand, but this I know, she is or was very near engaged if not quite. I never came any nonsense to her because I saw she would not stand it, besides it would have been too near earnest for me. It would serve me right if I'm downright nutty at last, for I've fooled with girls so often, and never cared a rap for them, not that I ever deceived them, as they call it, or at least not intentionally. Well, I shan't make a fool of myself, so don't fear, not even for Jenny if I see her again, which I'm not sure of; but you'll see I'm not going to gammon you, so I shall stop and say enough on that score.”

“It was rather too hard on me, I thought, of Miss Jenny to tell me of it, the hardest thing for a man to swallow is a half truth and an unpleasant one, *but she always tells me what she thinks on such matters, and strange to say I always stand it*; if I were to see her often enough I think she'd almost reform me, not that she'd take the trouble to do that either.”

“*And my dear Jane too! I have not forgotten her, for I never really cared for any other girl. (I hope she is not altered either in appearance or anything.) By Heaven, Charley, when you and I knew her she was one in a thousand.*”

“I don't know that she was so *very* handsome, Charley,



GORDON AND CHARLEY WALKER. THE WALK TO BROUGHTON—A DEVIATION FROM THE PATH.

"Refused again, by Jove! What a bunker! Take it here, man!"

"Hang it, the path baulks me; give us a lead over."

*From a sketch by Gordon, reproduced by permission of Miss H. Walker.*



but she had one look I thought beautiful. I remarked it more at some times than at others. So you are nutty on Sally, oh! And a very good girl she will be, and is getting sensible, I have no doubt. Has she ever forgiven me? Tell me this in your next. She spoke like a trump for me to Skinner when he was saying the reverse. . . . *I should like to see Jenny tho'*, and know how she is getting on. I daresay she has forgotten me, or thereabouts."

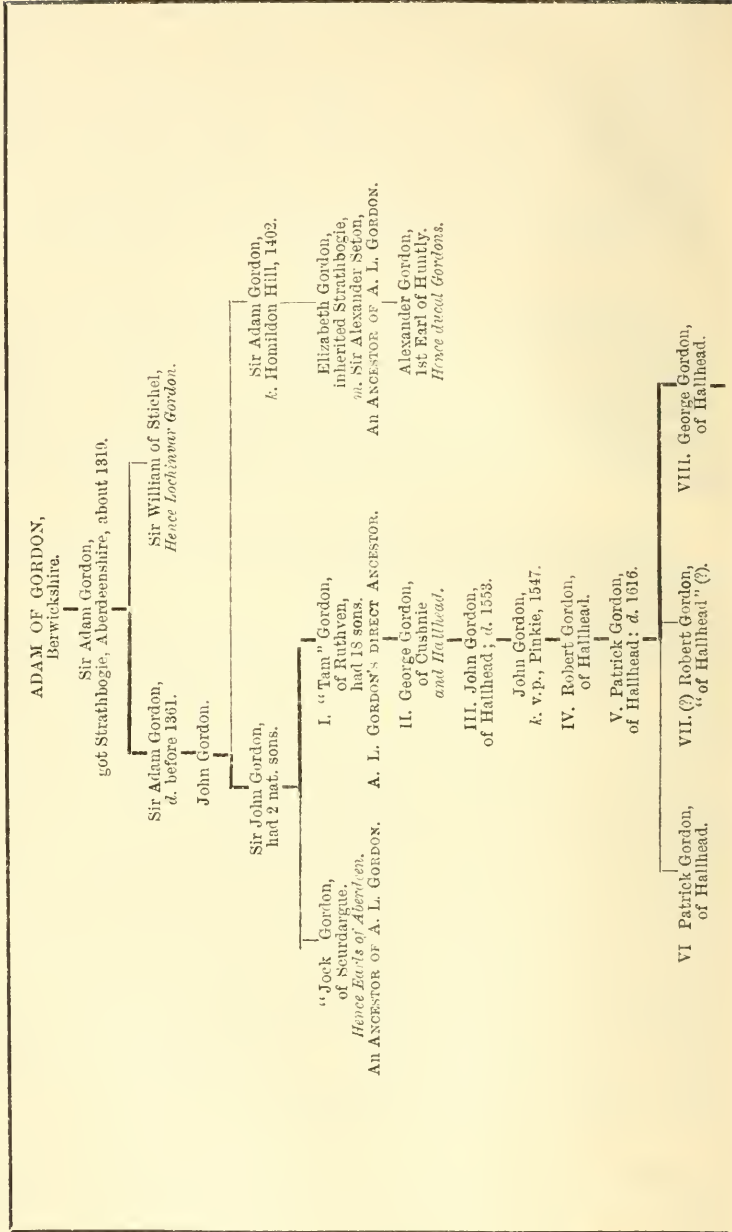
"A note from your father was enclosed and also one from my dear little Jane. You remember how fond I was of her, Charley, so no more on that head. . . . I wonder if I shall find Jane married by the bye, I half expect to. To you I am neither afraid nor ashamed to own that I would marry her to-morrow if I had the chance and she would have me."

"*Respects to Sarah and Love to Jane*, to you the assurance of eternal brothership will suffice."

"And dear Jane, Charley, I am almost afraid to speak of her, is she married yet? I can scarcely mention her to you without a sudden moisture of the eyelids, which, however, dries up almost as soon as it rises owing to the dryness of the soil. Strange it may seem to you that after a long absence a careless, selfish chap like me should still think of her with feelings undiminished by time, absence or new faces. If you can, Charley, see her and speak to her of me, it would seem to me the nearest approach to seeing her in person for my old friend to mention me to her, and tell her what news of me he thinks would please her to hear, tho' I expect she cares little now to hear my name mentioned. . . . It seems but yesterday that I was fighting C. Skinner about Jane's ems and that I was with you at the old station."

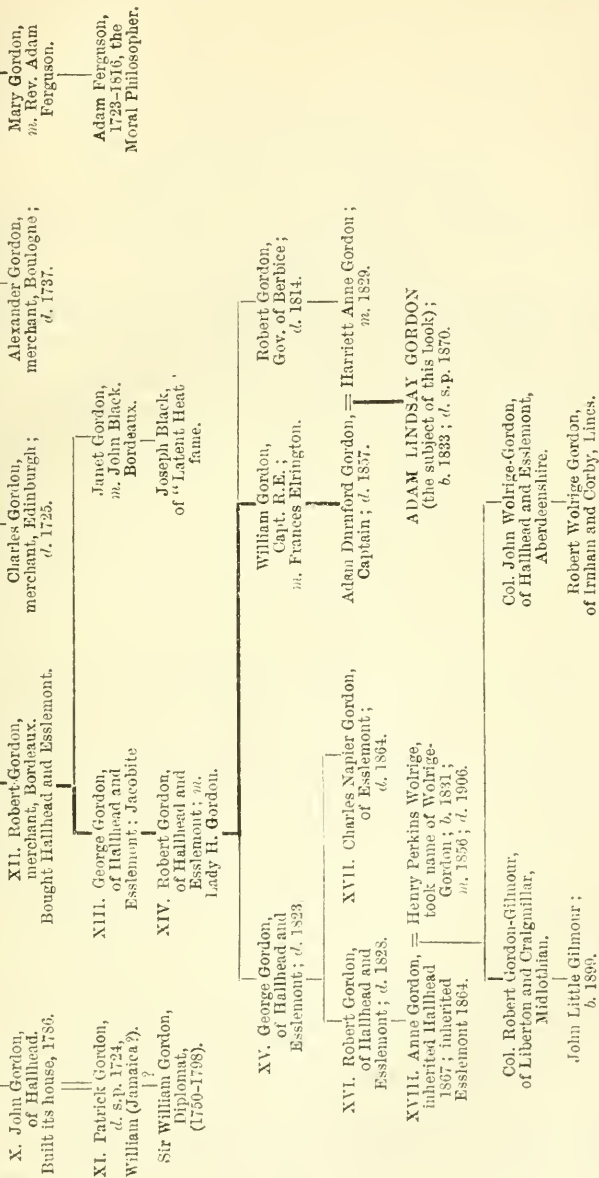
This was the one and only great romance of Gordon's life.

CHAPTER II  
THE DESCENT OF ADAM LINDSAY GORDON  
CONSTRUCTED BY JOHN MALCOLM BULLOCH





IX. Patrick Gordon,  
of Hallhead.



Note that Gordon claimed descent from all the three great groups of Gordons. Besides the military strain in the family (more fully described in another table), note the brains which (partly) produced such notable thinkers as Adam Ferguson (1723-1816), the Moral Philosopher, and Joseph Black (1728-1796), the exponent of Latent Heat, which gave the first impetus to Watt's steam engine, and forms the basis of modern thermal science.

## CHAPTER III

### THE GORDONS OF HALLHEAD

By John Malcolm Bulloch, Editor of "The House of Gordon"  
for the New Spalding Club.

ADAM LINDSAY GORDON displayed in an extraordinary degree—indeed, the qualities which endear him to Australasians exactly connote—the spirit of the Gay Gordons. As a matter of fact it would have been remarkable had he done anything else; for not only did his father and mother, who were first cousins, bear the same surname, but he was the product of the three great lines of north country Gordons, founded by Elizabeth, the heiress who married a Seton, and by her cousins "Jock" and "Tam," represented to-day respectively by the Duke of Richmond and Gordon, the Earl of Aberdeen and by the poet's own immediate family, the Gordons of Hallhead, Aberdeenshire.

Overworked as the doctrine of heredity has become in the interests of modern biography, it is essential to an understanding of Adam Lindsay Gordon, for the spirit of the house, which oral tradition long ago crystallized into the alliterative phrase the "Gay Gordons," is amply confirmed by the minute researches of the modern scientific genealogist. That spirit is not only very distinctive, but it is as enduring as the Hapsburg lip which inevitably masters contributory strains of blood. To take a striking example, the Right Hon. Sir George Hamilton Gordon, 6th Earl of Aberdeen (1841–70), masquerading in complete incognito as "George H. Osborne," was swept overboard when serving as first mate of the schooner *Hera*, from Boston to Melbourne, six months before Adam Lindsay Gordon died by his own hand at the latter port. In the previous

decade Charles George Gordon, with whom the poet was at Woolwich, had made the world ring with his dashing exploits in China, just as he was to make it resound with his fearlessness at Khartum, where he displayed all the reckless unworldliness characteristic of the name he bore; while the famous regiment who compose for ill-informed people *the* Gay Gordons, have maintained with undiminished force the spirit of the house which called it into existence.

To provide a fully reasoned definition of Gay Gordonism would involve a history of the entire "clan" far beyond the purpose of the present work. It may, however, be described in general terms as a spirit of dash, of idealism, of a recklessness which is the very reverse of canny; it has far more affinities with the character of the French and the Irish than with the Scot proper. It can be called "Celtic" (a much abused *cliché*) only by infection or by environment, for the Gordons were not originally Highland, although in the course of their career they married into Highland families, and assumed the rôle of Highland chieftains.

Their beginning is quite unknown, for the modern genealogist has swept aside as mythical the Continental origins once assigned to the family. Keeping to history, we first find them in Berwickshire in the twelfth century, and can trace them fairly clearly during the next two hundred years fighting indiscriminately for Scotland and for England. In the beginning of the fourteenth century, however, they made up their minds to throw in their lot with the growing entity which we call Scotland, and, as a reward, one of them got a grant of the lands of Strathbogie, in Aberdeenshire, from which the Earls of Atholl had been ousted by the victorious Bruce. That was the first great division of the tribe, for, though the "superiority" of the parish of Gordon is still in the hands of the northern line owning the Duke of Richmond and Gordon as its head, the group which emigrated to Strathbogie was quite distinct

from that remaining in the borders, displaying far more spirit and ability, however its claims to seniority may be questioned.

The northern group, in turn, became divided at the end of the fourteenth century by Sir John Gordon's not having married the mother of his two sons, the famous "Jock" and "Tam." They were probably the offspring of a "handfasting union," which, while not committing them to illegitimacy in the code of the Highlands, was unrecognized by the Church. So when Sir John died (between 1391 and 1395), his lands went to his brother, Sir Adam, who in turn was succeeded by a son and by a daughter Elizabeth. This fortunate lady found herself in possession of broad acres first by the death of her father at the battle of Homildon Hill and then by the death of his brother John in 1408 : while her cousins "Jock" and "Tam" had to content themselves with small holdings at Seurdargue in the parish of Rhynie, and at Ruthven in the parish of Cairnie, Aberdeenshire. Elizabeth married Alexander Seton, the son of her guardian, Sir William Seton of that ilk, so that all her descendants were really Setons and not Gordons, though her oldest son took her maiden name and founded first the Earls, and then the Marquises, of Huntly, and finally, the Dukes of Gordon. "Jock" Gordon had a numerous progeny with ramifications of bewildering complexity, the most notable being the Earls of Aberdeen. His brother "Tam o' Riven" was also prolific, so much so, indeed, that the compiler of the "Balbithan MS.," the most valuable authority in the northern group, gave up tracing them in sheer despair, finding them "hard to be condescended upon."

It would be unnecessary to take the reader even thus far but for the fact that Adam Lindsay Gordon combined the blood of all these three lines, his father tracing directly from "Tam" and his grandmother from the Seton Gordons on one side and from "Jock's" ennobled progeny on the other, so that the poet had a triple supply of "gayness" in him.

To come to his own direct male line, the Gordons of Hallhead, we are assured by the "Balbithan MS." that the doughty "Tam" married three wives, "with whom he begat sixteen sons." Only five of these sons are said to have married, but their descendants are legion. They soon overflowed from the parish of Cairnic where "Tam" was established, and in the course of time annexed a great many estates in the neighbouring parishes. The eldest son did not travel far afield, establishing himself in the parishes of Forgue and Gartly. The second had to be content with less fertile land, and migrated south-westwards across the county border into the wild parish of Mortlach, feeling himself safe, however, at Balveny, in the shadow of the historic Gordon stronghold of Auchindown, which is immortalized in the famous ballad "Edom o' Gordon." The third son entered the Church. The fourth ventured so far south as the valley of the Dee, setting up his roof-tree at Braichlie, near Balmoral, where one of his descendants is known wherever our ballads are known as the "Baron o' Braichlie." The fifth son, George Gordon, stopped two-thirds of the way thither, setting up his house at Hallhead in the inhospitable parish of Cushnie, beneath the very noses of the antagonistic family of Forbes. It is with George's descendants that we are here concerned.

Cushnie, now united with the parish of Leochel, remains to this day a rather inaccessible place. Ranging from 500 feet to 2000 feet above the sea-level, it is a bleak stretch of country, and even Gilderoy and his hardy gang are said to have declared that the hills of Cushnie were the coldest in Scotland. Even its parish minister, Dr. Taylor (who succeeded the present writer's grand-uncle, the Rev. William Malcolm), admitted in the *Statistical Account of Scotland* (1843), that both Leochel and Cushnie "have long had an evil report, on account of the coldness and lateness of the climate and the consequent uncertainty of the crops"; while in more recent times, the learned Gaelic scholar, James Macdonald, kinsman of George MacDonald,

the poet-novelist (who told a legend about "Tam" Gordon in his delightful sketch the *Wow o' Riven*), while unable to derive the name Cushnie, definitely assured his readers that the hills of the parish are "proverbially cold." This, then, was the cradle of the family of Adam Lindsay Gordon, who spent his days under the happier auspices of Australian skies.

It was just the sort of bleak place into which a younger son would be dumped under the forces of primogeniture; but, if it was a difficult spot to find sustenance in, it was also a bracing place, with the result that alone of "Tam" Gordon's sons, the descendants of George of Hallhead still retain their holding, the others and their (male) issue having been blotted out—at least as land owners.

A minute history of the Gordons of "Ha'head" as it is euphoniously known, would make tedious reading to any but a genealogist; the table printed here traces them with sufficient conciseness. But one may indicate the broad lines of the family story—which happens to be the typical story of many another estate throughout Scotland.

From the end of the fifteenth century, when Hallhead was acquired, down to the end of the seventeenth century, nearly all we know about the Hallhead Gordons is a bald record of marriages and legal formalities. Situated in an isolated part of the county, and separated from other Gordon families, the Hallhead family were content to plough their lonely furrow without meddling in the religious and political problems of the time, which brought so many of their race to ruin, and without impinging on the rights of their neighbours. Indeed, the Privy Council Register, the aristocratic Newgate Calendar of the north, while bristling with other Gordon misdemeanours, notes only one Hallhead offence, when Adam, son of one of the lairds, was indicted in 1601, with several other men, for bullying the tenants of the land of Tillymorgan by stealing their horses. "To colour their extraordinary proceedings with any pretence of law, they hold courts on the said tenants

and pronounce decrees." Eleven years later another of them, Walter, was outlawed for troubling the town of Aberdeen with an unpleasing display of swash-buckling. But, taken on a whole, the Gordons of Hallhead were a law-abiding people—which makes it all the more difficult to trace their descendants.

They enlarged their original holding of Hallhead (valued for tax purposes in 1695 at £100), by going eastwards into the adjoining parish of Tough (£50 valuation), and southwards into Tarland (£250 valuation). This total valuation, £400, shows them to have been quite an unimportant sept—the Earl of Aberdeen's family, into which they ultimately married, stood at £5461—and they very wisely did not attempt to play a part incommensurate with their rent-roll.

But there came a moment—the commonplace of thousands of estates long before the operations of modern politics—when the paternal acres were insufficient to support the family, which had to look elsewhere for subsidies. The familiar move—the initial impulse of Lindsay Gordon's migration to Australia—took the usual form. The eldest son held on (if he could) to the estate; his brothers either took to soldiering or to trade. As there was no Scots army to speak of, these young Scots went as "mercenaries" into foreign armies, and the Gay Gordons thus came to serve under many flags. For instance, the Gordons of Gight, Byron's riotous ancestors—sent a son into the army of the Empire, for the safety of which he engineered the assassination of Wallenstein in 1634. The Gordons of Auchleuchries gave Peter the Great a notable helper and server in the person of General Patrick Gordon. The Scots Brigade in Holland, the Scots Men-at-Arms in France and the levies of Gustavus Adolphus teemed with Gordons at one time or another. That was the destiny of the older of the younger sons of these Scots families. The younger of them took to trade, and as they were too proud as a rule to start in the neighbouring town, and were

practically debarred from crossing the border, they too went abroad and peopled the ports of the Baltic, the towns of Poland and the business centres of France, until they too came to be barred; and then the adventurous Scot looked to our increasing colonies, especially in former times, the West Indies.

It was quite in keeping with their peaceable traditions that the early Hallhead Gordons confined their operations to trade, and did not enter the armies of the Continent. When bad times came, three of the sons of Patrick Gordon, the ninth laird, went off to seek their fortunes in business—Robert, the second son to the wine binns of Bordeaux, a fruitful land compared with the bleak hills of Cushnie; Charles, the third son to Edinburgh; and Alexander the fourth to Boulogne, which had become a great “howff” for Scots traders and a happy haven for Jacobite refugees. Entrenched in trade, they all made money, while their elder brother John, who got the estates, became so poor that he had had to send his heir, Patrick, to Bordeaux, while his second son William seems to have gone to Jamaica. But that did not save the estates, for Patrick, the tenth laird, who died in 1725, had to sell them to his uncle Robert, the wine merchant, to whom and his issue the story now changes.

Characteristically enough, this change was as complete as it was unexpected, for Robert Gordon began to display the essence of Gay Gordonism under circumstances antagonistic to it. While he saved the family name by the fortune he had amassed in the wine trade, he was the first of his line to mix himself up in politics, and that, too, of a kind that was inimical to his family's interest; but then no true Gordon has ever been logical. Instead of selling his wine to the “nobility and gentry,” as the old-fashioned merchant would have put it, he began intriguing with them for the restoration of the Stuarts, harbouring refugees in his house at Bordeaux, entertaining Jacobites like the Duke of Liria, corresponding in cipher over the name of



“Mr. Liburn,” with the “Duke” of Mar and the other Jacobite leaders at home, and, generally identifying himself with all the causes bound up in “The ’15,” as students of the voluminous Stuart papers belonging to the king know. Fortunately for him by the time he bought Hallhead and came home the plotters had subsided, but Robert’s predilections were only latent, and blazed up in his son at the call of “the ’45.”

Having resigned the family estate of Hallhead, Robert Gordon, buttressed financially by his wine binns, extended his footing in his native shore by purchasing another estate nearer the coast, for he bought Esslemont in Buchan from another family of Gordon, who had also made their fortune in trade and are remembered to-day as ancestors of Mr. A. J. Balfour. Then he took the great step towards founding a family by entailing his estates in 1731, dying (in Edinburgh) six years later.

It is interesting to note in connection with Adam Lindsay Gordon’s distinction as a poet, that it was in Robert’s lifetime that the Hallhead family associated themselves with literary and scientific associations not usually favoured by the landed gentry. Robert and his younger brother Alexander collected books, which were hardly hobbies of the landed gentry of their period. Robert, through one daughter, became the grandfather of Joseph Black, the expounder of latent heat, which forms the basis of modern thermal science, while another daughter married the professor of natural philosophy at Edinburgh University. One of his nephews was Adam Ferguson, the moral philosopher.

Death prevented Robert from any further flourish of his old leanings, but the essentially reckless character of Gordon blood sent his son and successor, George, straight into the arms of Prince Charlie. This laird, who was probably born in France, accentuated the temptation by marrying into the family of Bowdler, for his wife, who was the aunt of the expurgator of Shakespeare, was the daughter

of a keen Stuart. One is not, therefore, surprised that George Gordon, now established as a county gentleman, plunged boldly into Jacobitism. While he was marching to Culloden, his house in Aberdeen was occupied and ransacked by Cumberland's soldiers, as his wife has told us at tearful length in a long letter which the curious reader will find in that doleful book *The Lyon in Mourning*. George Gordon himself was excepted from the general amnesty, and completely disappears from the scene, so that we do not know what became of him.

His disappearance was highly diplomatic, for his presence might have ended in forfeiture. It is probable that he took himself off to France, which his father and uncle knew so well. At any rate, his only son Robert was taken there as a boy, received his education in France and Italy, and married a French count's daughter. Left to himself Robert might have followed his father's footsteps; but fortunately he married as his second wife on March 2, 1760, Lady Henrietta Gordon, daughter of the 2nd Earl of Aberdeen, whose influence—entirely on the side of the House of Hanover—permitted bygones to be bygones and made her launch her sons into the honourable service of the State.

On the other hand, if the Hallhead Gordons had displayed gay Gordonism only in their later phases, Lady "Heny," as she was called, gave that spirit a great fillip; but that demands a new chapter.

### CHAPTER III

#### GORDON'S LIVELY GREAT-GRANDMOTHER

By John Malcolm Bulloch

LADY HENRIETTA GORDON, who married the poet's great-grandfather, was a character. She inherited her high spirits, not from her father, the second Earl of Aberdeen, but through her mother, Lady Anne Gordon, a daughter of the second Duke of Gordon. Furthermore, her elder half-sister, Catherine, married the third Duke of Gordon (Lady Henrietta's uncle), so that Lady Henrietta was brought into intimate personal touch with the ducal family besides inheriting its audacious blood.

These intermarriages between the ducal and the Aberdeen Gordons linking up the two great lines of the north country Gordons, forms an interesting study in contrasts and neutralisations, the dashing dukes being steadied by the douce Aberdeens, and the Aberdeens being enlivened by the ducal blood. The ducal line, first as Earls, and then as Marquises, of Huntly, had fought, and died and suffered severely for the house of Stuart. They were essentially Gay Gordons, reckless, daring, somewhat unstable, possessing brains and beauty, and the luck of born gamblers.

The sixth Earl of Huntly was raised to a Marquisate (now the oldest in Scotland), but died (in 1636) a State prisoner. His son, the second Marquis, was beheaded in 1649. The third Marquis was first attainted and then restored to his honours, while his son in turn was advanced to a dukedom. His Grace, however, had learned nothing from the trials of his house, and died a prisoner in the

Citadel of Leith (1716). The second Duke had meantime flirted with Jacobitism and figured on the field of Sheriffmuir. He recanted, or seemed to recant, in time, largely through the influence of his wife, but his younger son, Lord Lewis Gordon of ballad fame, almost brought the house to pieces by joining the Jacobites. Like George Gordon of Hallhead, he managed to escape from Culloden, and died a miserable exile in France.

The third Duke of Gordon, named after Cosmo de Medici, managed to keep his feet, partly because he had the good fortune to die early, and partly because he had married a daughter of the steady-going house of Aberdeen, which after being ennobled (in 1682) abandoned the wild ways it had led as the Gordons of Haddo, and, on the whole, accepted the new reigning régime. Her Grace, Lady Catherine Gordon, half-sister of Lady "Henry," was a very sensible woman. Seeing how the land lay, she put two of her boys into the Army and the youngest into the Navy, and lived to see her first-born raise two complete regiments, and marry the brilliant Jane Maxwell, who helped him to raise two more. But the sound sense of the Duchess Catherine evaporated in the flamboyant person of her youngest boy, Lord George of Riot fame, while her second son, Lord William, scandalised society by bolting with Lady Sarah Bunbury. These two sparks, then, were the first cousins of Lady "Henry," who was certainly far more like them than she was like her uxorious and rather "douce" father the second Earl of Aberdeen.

Lady Henrietta was the elder daughter of Lord Aberdeen's third marriage, and seems to have been named after her mother's sister, Lady Henrietta Gordon, on whom his lordship had first cast his eye; for Susanna, Countess of Eglinton, writing to Lord Milton on June 2, 1729 (as quoted in the *Eglinton Papers*), remarks—

"You say Lord Aberdeen is wanting Lady Harriot Gordon. It disturbs me not. No doubt his ambitious views will give his fancie wings. Take care to lope them,

as he may soar quite out of reach." Lady "Harriot" never married at all, dying in 1789, at the age of 81.

Her niece, Lady Henrietta, married Robert Gordon of Hallhead, on March 2, 1760, at Wallyford. The marriage was the subject of an extraordinary correspondence, which was first printed in the *Scottish Review* of January, 1885. It appears from the letters that Lady Henrietta was keen on James Veitch of Elioek, who was raised to the bench as Lord Elioek on March 6, 1761. Born in 1712, he was at least thirteen years older than "Heny"; but she cast a fond eye on the learned lawyer. The circumstances are told in the letters written by his sister, Mary. The first of them is dated, Edinburgh, February 16, 1760—

"Dear Jamie,—I am about to write you the oddest story with a good deal of reluctance, but I thought myself obliged to do it, so take it as follows:—

"No doubt you will remember Lady Harriott Gordon, Lord Aberdeen's sister. You'll also perhaps remember that I told you of an old courtship between her and Mr. Gordon of Whiteley [apparently Alexander Gordon of Whiteley, who was the Sheriff-Depute of Elgin], which is long ago over; and him railing against her to everybody, particularly her own relations, writing (of) the ill-treatment he had received from her to her mother and brother, and notwithstanding, of which they are in the same degree of intimacy with him, and he is as frequently with them all as ever except her. She rails at him in her turn, and runs out of a room as he comes in. Friday night, before you set out this winter for London, she arrived from Glasgow, where she had been keeping her Christmas. She called at our house on the Saturday night, where Miss Craik was. I got more of his history that night. Miss Craik and she tried who should sit the other out, but Miss Craik got the better, and Mrs. Baillie and Lady H. went away. I tell you all this previous to the main story, that you may understand it the better.

“There is a man of the name of (Robert) Gordon, his title Hallhead of Hallhead, who has an estate near Haddo House. This man, though no Papist, was born in Scotland but has got his education somewhere in France, and has been there, and sometimes in Italy, since he was a boy; that is to say, he has been sixteen years abroad and is now twenty-six or twenty-eight years old. He came from Nice last harvest, took London and Edinburgh on his way to the North, where his estate is, and from thence he returned to Edinburgh about the time Lady Harriott arrived from Glasgow as above—at least she did not see him till some time after. He soon, I understand, became her suitor for marriage. She so far accepted of his proposal as to tell her brother she would marry him, and desired him to write to Wallyford to acquaint her mother of it. Her brother argued with her against it, setting forth his bad state of health, it being thought he was dying in a consumption, and wasted to a skeleton.

“But all was to no purpose. Lady Aberdeen came to town in the greatest rage against it, just this day se’nnight, for it had been on the carpet only a fortnight. Her mother said it would be a most ridiculous marriage—the man’s want of health; his having a strict entail on his estate, which would not admit of anything for younger children; his having been so long abroad made him unknown to everybody; that she was well informed he was in debt; that could he have raised £200 he would not have sought her or anybody, but gone directly again to Nice, to Gen. Paterson, who is his relation; and in short abused her for thinking of it.

“All this conversation passed before Lady Halkerton, who told me Lady Harriott’s answers. In the first place she told my lady that he was a gentleman as good as themselves; that he had £500 a year; and that, if he could not give her £200 a year of fortune, she would be content with the interest of her own money, which is £2,000, which bears interest, and £500 my Lord is obliged to give her for

wedding clothes; that if he could not give a provision to younger children, they would not be Quality, and so could work for their bread; and if he was in a strait for a little ready money, she had £200 in her pocket, which she had just got from Lord Aberdeen for bygone interest, and he should have that. As it is to be imagined, Lady Aberdeen was exceedingly angry with her. She left Lady Halkerton's, went immediately on the Sunday to Wallyford, and next day to Preston Hall, and has not seen her daughter, nor desired to see her, since. In the meantime, Lord Aberdeen arrives in town. She told him the same she had told her mother. He went off for London, but took her the length of Wallyford, and left her there; but her mother being from home, she got a house in the neighbourhood, and came back the next morning, which was yesterday. In the meantime she wanted to employ lawyers to look into his charters and entail. My Lord Aberdeen desired her if she was for that, to employ his dear Frazer, the writer; so she took him and Mr. Millar, the solicitor. Mr. Gordon took Mr. Ferguson of Tillfour, and one Scott, a writer. So the papers are lying before these gentlemen just now.

“During the time these transactions are going on, her brother told her he had often heard she had had a courtship with Mr. Veitch; that had she employed him to transact a marriage with him, he would have been more ready, and, besides, he knew she would have had the consent of all her friends. She told him she never had a courtship with Mr. Veitch; that she liked Mr. Veitch much better than the man who was seeking her; and were he on the place and would take her yet, she would marry him and not Gordon. All the first part of this letter to the last eight lines was told me by Lady Halkerton and Mrs. Baillie; the last eight lines by Mrs. Baillie; only she added, as of herself, that she wished you were on the place; it would be in your power to put a stop to the marriage with Gordon. I told her that she had many times given me

such hints about Lady Harriott in former times, but that I thought it very improper to take notice of it; that Lady Harriott deserved a better match and a younger man; that for my own part I wished Lady Harriott very well, and if my brother and her had been pleased, I would have been pleased also. Mrs. Baillie then expatiated on her good qualities; how well Lady Harriott loved you; that she was sure were you here, she would instantly marry you without conditions, and let you make them yourself afterwards. I told her I had never spoken in particular with my brother with regard to Lady Harriott, and could not tell what you thought of her; but I thought you and she was not well enough acquainted to go so rashly into a marriage, and that your circumstances had not been what would have been felt suitable for the lady; this and every objection I could make—such as her coquetting and hanging on every fellow she met with; and I condescended on Whiteley; one Robert Boggle, a nephew of Lord Woodhall's, now in London, who wanted to have gone with you; and another boy, one Gordon, I had met with her at Mrs. Baillie's. Mrs. Baillie made light of it, and said it was through the innocence of her heart and for sport that she diverted herself with these sort of folks. This conversation only happened on Thursday, when Lady Harriott went to Wallyford with Lord Aberdeen. So I minded it no more, and went yesterday to dine with Miss Preston.

“While I was at dinner, Lady Harriott arrives from Wallyford, and instantly despatches a servant to enquire for me, who was not to be found. I came home at six at night, when Mrs. Baillie was in the house almost as soon as myself, and fell immediately on the story, all of which I answered as before. But how was I surprised in about half an hour after to see Lady Harriott come in, as it seems it had been concocted between them. She had not mentioned her story to me, and I had seen her but once during this time of her courtship; but now she fell to it



directly, in so much that I am quite ashamed of her. She repeated all that Mrs. Baillie had said before, and asked if I thought you would accept of her. She would allow me to write you the story and would put delays to the other till Wed. se'nnight, which was the return of the post, and if you should refuse her, she would then go on with the other. Did you ever hear such a story, and how I am to put it to be civil and not tell her my mind. However, I did the best I could, and told her if such a thing had ever been suggested before and I had talked to you of it, I would then have told her what had passed; but, as I had never had any conversation on that head with you, I could not tell what you would answer, but that I would write to be sure.

“ In the meantime when this was going on, she got a message from her brother, who lodges on the other side of the street. She took Jack along with her and returned in less than half an hour. She then took a peak, and said little till after supper, when she frequently put Mrs. Baillie in mind to go home, as it was late, for she was to take a chair. Mrs. Baillie went at last. She told me that her brother was just come from a meeting of Mr. Millar and Frazer on her part, and Mr. Ferguson of Tillfour and Scott on his part; that they had given him their opinions in writing of what settlements Gordon's affairs would permit of; but that he was not satisfied that it was sufficient for her, but that her and him would go to-day to Prestonhall and talk to the old Duchess [of Gordon, *née* Lady Henrietta Mordaunt, who died at Prestonhall, October 11, 1760] and Lady Aberdeen of it; that he had somehow let Mr. Millar, the solicitor, know her regard to Mr. Veitch; that Mr. Millar said if that it could be brought about, it would make him vastly happy. He was so pleased at the thought he would write to Mr. Veitch himself, for that nobody was more fit to recommend Lady Harriott than himself. To this, Mr. Gordon said she had one to write for her which would do better, meaning

me. Well, I promise to write, and she goes away. This morning again she comes, and tells me her brother advises I should write two copies of the same letter to you, for fear of miscarriage, and desired that you should be punctual to write with the return of the post, and then as she told me, says she 'Henry, if that does not take place, I shall immediately make out the other for you.'

"So away she goes to Prestonhall, and I suppose their papers along with them. However, after she left me and before she put her foot in the chaise, she saw the man Gordon; upon which she wrote me a note, telling me to put off writing to you till Tuesday's post. I thought I never got such a relief, because I'm determined to be off with them; will keep myself out of their sight; and if there is to be any writing to you, let them do it as they please.

"This and the foregoing sheet was what I was to have wrote, though they had continued to desire me. As it is, I had no occasion to have mentioned this affair at all but I have no certainty for their conduct; nor do I understand such base ways of doing. They are either mad, or think other people very foolish. I'm so jumbled with these people's proceedings, that I'm not capable of saying anything, or giving you my opinions about this affair. But this genuine account will perhaps be of use and prepare you for a degree in case you are attacked from another quarter, and I'll write on Tuesday when I hope to be more composed."

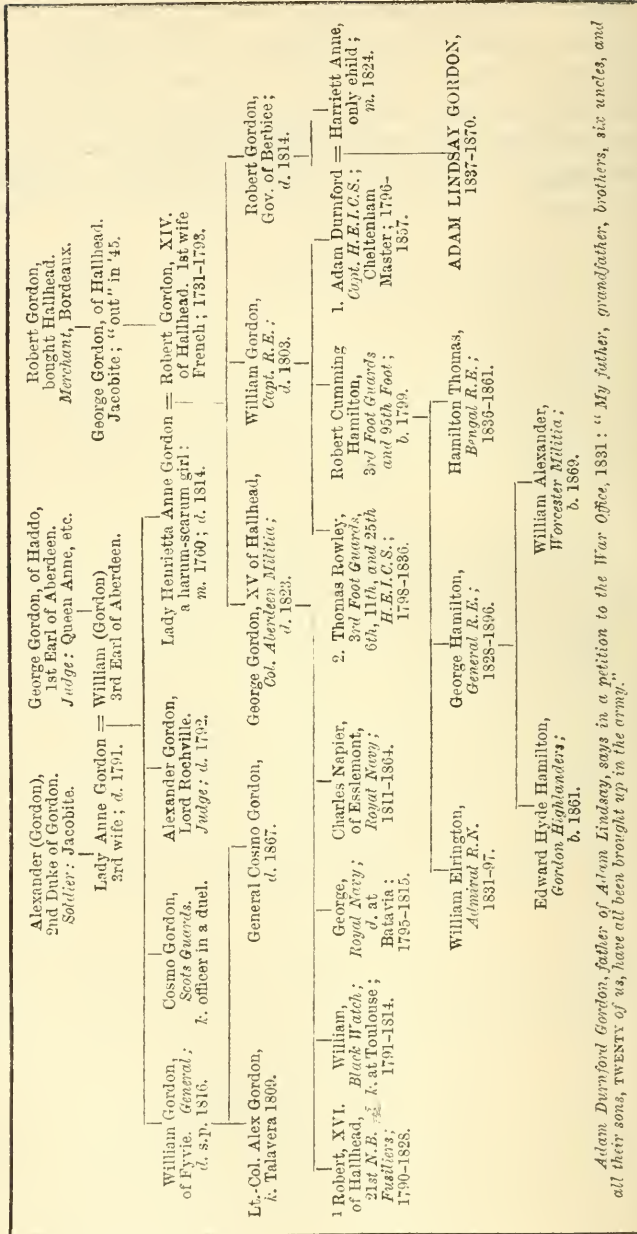
Lord Eliock never married, and by a curious coincidence died on July 1, 1793, within a few months of the successful suitor for Lady Henrietta's hand (and heart?); for the laird of Hallhead departed this life at Esslemont House on November 2, 1793.

Eccentric as she undoubtedly was, Lady Henrietta, who died at Aberdeen on April 17, 1814, had a good share of the strong common sense which distinguished her half-sister, whose example she followed by giving all the three

sons to the State, two to the army and one to diplomacy : and from this point the history of the Hallhead Gordons has been almost exclusively naval and military. Indeed, but for a recrudescence of gay Gordonism, which made him abandon the services, Adam Lindsay the great-grandson might have spent his life in barracks instead of on the bush.

CHAPTER V  
ADAM LINDSAY GORDON'S NAVAL AND MILITARY KINSMEN  
CONSTRUCTED BY JOHN MALCOLM BULLOCH

*Showing the fighting element in which the post was born, and which he at first proposed to follow.*



1 Has the following living military grandsons: Col. Gordon-Gilmour, C.V.O., C.B., D.S.O. (Grenadier Guards); Col. John Wolrige Gordon (late Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders); Major Walter Wolrige Gordon (late Black Watch); Major Hay Wolrige Gordon (late Cameron Highlanders), and one great-grandson, Robert, son of Col. Wolrige Gordon (2nd Lieut. Grenadier Guards).

## CHAPTER VI

### THE LETTERS OF ADAM LINDSAY GORDON TO CHARLEY WALKER

By the kindness of Miss Henriette Walker of Parkstone, Dorset, I am able to give by far the most considerable instalment of letters from Adam Lindsay Gordon which have yet been furnished from any single source. They also furnish the chief autobiographical data for Gordon's life, previous to his departure to Australia. These letters were written to the most intimate friend Gordon had before he went to Australia—Charley Walker the younger. The Walkers lived near Worcester. Their mother was a lady of family and a widow with several children when she married Old Charley. My informant does not know whether her maiden name or the name of her first husband was d'Avençan, but a French strain came in somewhere. She was at that time a fair and beautiful woman, with an air of refinement and dignity. She was very happy with her new husband, who, as a gentleman jockey, was much from home, and in sporting circles well received and entertained. He was a fine and successful rider, and never without an excellent mount for the hunting field or the race-course. "The Walkers," says Mrs. Lees, "were a very happy family. Charley the younger had an expensive education, and a very cheerful and amiable disposition in spite of the fact that his father would not start him in any profession, but kept him at home. Charley Walker was quite happy in the society of his mother and sisters, enjoyed reading, had a very healthy appetite and a good

digestion. He had a keen sense of humour, and never seemed to think upon his future; he always used to speak of his father as the Governor, and was very proud of him, but he was never seen out with him, and never seemed desirous of making the acquaintance of any of his set. He never crossed a horse, and never seemed to wish to. If he could have a pipe and a book he was happy under any circumstances." After a courtship of ten years, he married Miss Sally Bridges, sister of Miss Jane Bridges, who was the romance of Adam Lindsay Gordon's life, and is now Mrs. Lees. He had a son called Lindsay.

Miss Henriette Walker, the daughter of Charley the younger, to whose kindness I owe the publication of these letters, tells me that her father was born at Henwick House, Worcester, in 1833, the same year that Gordon was born. He married Sarah Bridges in the early 'sixties, and proceeded to Bombay a few years later to fill an appointment in connection with railway construction, but was invalided home in the very first year with dysentery. Between that and his death from pneumonia in February 1896, he filled similar posts at Bristol, Lancaster and Gloucester. He was a man of fine physique, gentlemanly bearing and generous impulses, with a love for the open country and sportsmanship in its truest sense. He retained a memory ever green of the days of his youth, when horsed or afoot he and Lindsay Gordon followed the hounds of Croome or Quorn, and could recount endless adventures peculiar to hot-headed, impetuous young manhood when Lindsay Gordon was resident in Cheltenham.

It will be noticed that Miss Walker says her father did ride, as seems almost inevitable in a son of Charley the elder.

When Gordon was in Australia, as mentioned in one of the following letters, he called a steeplechaser he had, Walker, after Old Charley, with whom he corresponded, and went on corresponding with young Charley for several years.

## LETTER I

To C. Walker, Junr.

Copy of a Paragraph in Cheltenham, dated May 16.

“WHEREAS ! L. Gordon, *having gone away, Sundry and divers debts hath failed to pay;*  
 By virtue of the law we here decree  
 That all his goods shall confiscated be.  
 And since, *by reason of his tender age,*  
 His creditors, their grievance to assuage  
 (Albeit they have cause for just complaint),  
 Upon his person can put no restraint,  
 Nor cause him to be pulled up at the sessions,  
 We hereby give them claim to his possessions.”

Reply to the above Paragraph.

“Whereas L. Gordon (be it understood)  
 Hath got no goods *that be of any good,*  
 His creditors from Draper<sup>1</sup> down to Clee<sup>2</sup>  
*To all the goods aforesaid welcome be.*  
 And when they’ve nailed what comes within their range  
 The *surplus* they may keep and grab the *change,*  
 And much he hopes, when they *thereof* partake,  
 Beasts of themselves, *therewith* they will not make.”

## SKETCH

Total.

- 1 Pr. and  $\frac{1}{2}$  of boxing gloves.
- 1 damaged pipe.
- 1 fencing foil.
- 1 single stick.
- 1 sporting print.
- 1 old tin bacey box minus the lid.
- 1 old knife damaged apparently with cleaning pipes.
- 1 monkey jacket of singular colour and shape.
- 1 fancy cap damaged with small shot.

DR. CHARLEY,

I’ve no news for you, old cock, except that I started this morning much against my will for I was loth to go, doubtful of my reception at home and various other things (here I pause for a moment in anxiety for I hear

<sup>1</sup> A tailor in Cheltenham.<sup>2</sup> A tobacconist in Cheltenham.

the Governor coming in at the hall door, upstairs, but no matter, I've had a good reception as yet and I suppose it's all right). Excuse this bad writing, I was very near, as I said, stopping to-day, but for once I did my duty, and I hardly regret it. Please to write and tell me how your Governor's affairs are settled, I do not know, I came by train to Ashchurch and walked home by Cleeve from there, but I missed my way in the fields and made the journey a long one. The sun was very hot and scorched my face and hands awful, even now I look as fiery and sunburnt as a Tartar from the walk. Now, you beggar, you must write me a line and tell me some news directly, I only want a line, I have seen the Governor and he's all serene, but I have an unpleasant matter or two to break to him worse luck to it. Now if you have seen Jane, tell me how her throat is, and everything you know, besides. As I was sitting in the bar at St. Johns along with Jane, who should come in but F. Baker, Esq.,<sup>1</sup> hatter and hosier, they neither spoke, but Jane'ems kept her countenance most admirably and went on with what she was saying to me as unconcerned as if old Wallace had walked in. While poor Freddy looked terribly disconcerted and bolted almost immediately, I answered Jane in a tone of voice mimicking his, and he couldn't stand that.

Yrs. very truly,

L. GORDON.

#### LETTER II

“ Charley! Here I am at last  
 Quartered in my old position,  
 Though from having lived so fast  
 I'm in rather poor condition.  
 Came by train to save my feet,  
 On a walk I wasn't nuts,  
 Got home, drowsy, crabbed and beat,  
*Pockets empty, ditto guls.*”

---

<sup>1</sup> A Worcester tradesman.



I had an awful row with the Governor here, I mean my father, the honble. Capt. He gave it me straight, and I was in a deuce of a rage over it. It was not my fault and about a mere trifle, I shall leave him again if he doesn't mind before very long. I wonder what you'll do next Sunday. You must tell me when you write what you do on your larking day. I dare say you'll go to Broughton if you can muster courage. I don't think myself (knowing the charity of the sex) that the ladies are much disgusted at our frolic, it was a childish affair as you said. Miss Jenny will be apt to consider us two confounded fools, and she'll be about right, seeing that like Margery Daw in the old song we actually left our beds to lie upon straw. What's that Nursery Rhyme? Jane'ems will chaff you a bit, old boy. Mr. Bridges has heard of our serenading the Lion so uncourteously and the other inns in the neighbourhood, but not the glove affair, I hope, which is the worst part. I hope Sally won't be crabbed at my valentine. I'm sorry I sent it, but I couldn't help our quarrel. You told me, she wouldn't stand my writing to Jane, but if I'd believed you I should have done the same, for as you've already found out Jane'ems was my favourite all along. I wish I knew more about her, but she puzzles me, tho' I used to fancy myself a pretty sharp hand, but this I know, she is, or was very near, engaged, if not quite. I never came any nonsense to her, because I saw she would not stand it, besides it would have been too near earnest for me. It would serve me right if I'm down-right nutty at last, for I've fooled with girls so often, and never cared a rap for them, not that I ever deceived them, as they call it, or at least not intentionally. Well, I shan't make a fool of myself, so don't fear. Not even for Jenny, if I see her again, which I'm not sure of, but you'll see I'm not going to gammon you, so I shall stop and say enough on that score. It's seldom I talk so long about such matters, I generally keep my own counsel and think more than I speak, like the nigger's parrot, but I don't know

what to say, and, having no news must talk nonsense, besides, I'm in a bad temper just now.

When I ride at Cheltenham I'll win or break my neck, I'm determined; by Jove what a finale that would be to my riding, fighting, love-making, debt-contracting, et hoc genus omne, larks. I'm a bright article and no mistake, quite an uncommon genius, in brief words a star, but a wandering one. What's that in the Bible about wandering stars, I remember it somewhere, I think it's in St. Jude.<sup>1</sup>

"Now farewell, but let me warn you, ere I've said my last adieu,  
 You may laugh at all things earthly, while your pluck is stout and true;  
 Put no faith in aught you meet with, *friends* or *lovers* new or old  
 Never trust the gamest racehorse that was ever reared or foaled.  
 If you find your lady fickle, *take it cool and never heed*;  
 If you get a bill delivered, *roll it up and light your weed*;  
 If a foe insults your honour, *hit out straight and wop him well*;  
 If your thickest friend turns rusty, *tell him he may go to h—ll*.  
 Fame is folly, honour madness, love delusion, friendship sham;  
 Pleasure paves the way for sadness, none of these are worth a d—n.  
 But a stout heart proof 'gainst fate is, when there can be nothing more  
 done.

This advice is given gratis, by yrs. truly, Lindsay Gordon."

P.S.—I was breakfasting with the Governor when a row began in a curious way rather. I'll relate it. "You don't seem in a mood for breakfast this morning," says he, when I refused some eggs and ham. "Not much," says I, "you ought to have seen me a week or so ago, eating cochin china eggs." "Was that when you stopt a week in the country?" says he; I stared at him and said yes. "You'd got a good-looking lady to make tea perhaps," says he in his sarcastic manner. I was a bit surprised, but keeping cool assured him as he was so inquisitive that he was right or thereabouts. "Ah," says he in the same tone, "I suppose that was the farmer's daughter your uncle says you've been hanging after." This pulled me up and I felt myself getting a little warm, partly with surprise and partly with annoyance, however, I made

<sup>1</sup> "Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."—Jude 13.

answer in this form, "I don't know," says I, "what gammon my uncle may have swallowed, but at all events she's better than your precious son-in-law that is to be. I think," I said, "you've studied my sister's interests nicely by letting her have her way." "Well," said he, with his usual coolness, "I suppose I'm to thank you for a daughter-in-law soon of another stamp." "Never you fear, Governor" (says I), speaking loud as I do when I get angry, "You may make your mind at rest on that score, for a damned good reason why, even suppose I wanted her, she wouldn't have me, tho' I am the Honble. Capt. Gordon's son, so (says I) write and thank her for it. You ought to be much obliged to her if I'm not!" And I walked out and shut the door. It put the old boy in such a rage that next opportunity he set to to abuse me about a bill which came in for me, and gave him an excuse, and we had an awful row—worse luck to it.

Yrs. very truly,

A. L. GORDON.

#### LETTER III

DR. CHARLEY,

I received your letter and am much obliged to you for it. I am rather crabbed at the contents, for I was sorry directly after I had sent the letter that I had asked you to show it to Jane. Send me word by return of post to say whether you think that Jane suspected that I wanted her to see it and told you to show it her, and also whether this conference went on in Sally's hearing, both which things should have been avoided. I never wanted Jane to think I was indifferent to Sally, and, indeed, I was far from it, but Jane tried all she knew to end our friendship, and I shall tell her so next time I see her, if she comes any nonsense I shan't stand it.

Yours truly,

LINDSAY GORDON

## LETTER IV

25, Priory Street,  
Cheltenham.

DEAR CHARLEY,

I sit down after dinner to recount (*over a pipe*) my troubles and grievances, and talk over old times, etc. I am as dull as a deserted dunghill cock minus the consolation of wives and brethren, I have almost no friends here and do not want any, but I shall spend no money (which is a blessing), and also escape racket and bother which is just the thing for me. Now mind you write and tell me how things go on, keep square with Barnett<sup>1</sup> and you'll be all right I hope. What asses we made of ourselves the other night and yet there's something consoling in thinking of our sprees; even the night in the barn has a charm about it, I could never have done it by myself with such spirits and don't think you could. I got off with great difficulty this morning, didn't at all like turning out so early, and not having a great coat with me was rather the reverse of nutty on the journey. I also had to go down to Pearce's for my carpet bag and then go home again to fill it, but running and walking fast I got quite warm and went thro' the journey like a trump. If you see the Broughton folks this week you know what to say. Don't tell Jane'em what you suspect I wanted to say, but say that I passed it over in the morning and laughed at the idea, adding that I supposed the governor's spirits had inspired me with a fit of temporary insanity, or maybe the moon was in power and affected my disordered brain, thus leaving you in ignorance of my darkly hinted purposes concerning which she may make her own conclusions; excuse the window business, those gloves stiek in my mind and I wish the ledge had been out of the way, say it was done for a lark and nothing more, I dare say we shall get forgiven and the Governor perhaps will not have heard of it. I wonder

<sup>1</sup> One of the principal promoters of the Worcester Races, for some years deceased.



THE MORNING OF ST. VALENTINE'S DAY IN THE BROUGHTON BARN TWO HOURS AFTER MIDNIGHT.  
 THE NATIVE RATS DISTURBED BY FOREIGN BODIES.

GORDON: "Is that your arm or a rat, Charley, moving close to my head?"  
 CHARLEY WALKER: "A rat, I suppose, I'm laying still."

Reproduced by permission of Miss H. Walker.



what effect my<sup>1</sup> valentine made, find out if possible but don't say I showed it you? (Here the letter is torn) . . . on Sunday afternoon, let me know and I will come over (the rest missing).

## LETTER V

DR. CHARLEY,

I haven't much news for you, old boy, but what I have is rather favourable. Write and tell me if you shall be disengaged next Sunday, and I'll come over Sat. to see you. I was obliged to lie in bed last Sunday with an exaggerated headache, you may guess why (togs). I told the whole story of the race to the Governor (my father, I mean) and he was rather crabbed and said I shouldn't have been done if he could have known it in time. I've been a most unlucky fellow all along, but there's no good grumbling. Give me a line and I will pay you a visit if you like. I've got over this scrape pretty well for no one knows of it. I mean the forfeit job.<sup>2</sup> I am surprised at the calm and stagnant state of things, and wonder how long they'll last. I'm excellent friends with Papa. He's written to London to make a last effort for an Indian appointment for me; if he fails I shall go into the Queen's Regiment. I've no fancy for Australia now, in fact I don't feel disposed to throw a chance away, and don't feel so romantic as I did in *the barn*.

I had a good laugh this morning. There's a chap comes here sometimes to do our garden and other jobs, a rough looking customer. He married a pretty girl that used to be a servant here, and I used to play the fool with her a little; well some one's been telling this chap all sorts of *lies* about her and me, and he gives her no peace and bullies her about a shawl I sent her a year ago, and more (which I put down to my *brother's* (mother's?) bill, and got in a row about), and now he says he'll give me a remembrance if he can get

<sup>1</sup> See Glossary, p. 327 and pp. 208-209.      <sup>2</sup> See p. 198 and pp. 214-215.

a chance. He has been here while I was away, so I've hardly seen him, our servant told me this, and he's coming again to-morrow. I'll give him the queerest cutting up he ever had or I'll try it on, anyhow, he's a rough chap but has no length of arm and I hate him already for being jealous *without a cause* and *worrying a nice girl*, a deal too good for him. If you want me to come give me a line. I am going to *redeem* the Governor of my backslidings.

Yrs. very truly,

LINDSAY GORDON.

LETTER VI

DR. CHARLEY.

I've let this letter lie two days and have since had a row with my Jewish money-lender, M——, not F. M., but the Israelite. I have, however, squared him in gallant style, so I'm not beat yet. I've kept my pluck up wonderfully, and as I smoke my little pipe (the one I dropt at Broughton and Jenny picked up unbroken, which makes it doubly valuable of course) I feel quite heroic, but I can't help thinking how much better off I should have been if I'd come round sooner. Write and tell me the news for I am as dull as a deserted dunghill, but let us hope for better times. I'm doing penance now with a vengeance.

Yours truly,

A. L. GORDON.

LETTER VII

DR. CHARLEY,

I had an execrable journey home, hexposed to the fury of the helephants (elements), as our maidservant says, the whole time the rain was incessant and sometimes very heavy, and the roads were swamped. I was as wet as if I'd been ducked in the river before I'd gone many miles, but I persevered like a trump. Going up that hill out of Seven Stoke<sup>1</sup> the storm was blinding, and the hill side

<sup>1</sup> Severn Stoke, Worcestershire.



so slippery that I could hardly make any head against the wind and hail which beat in my face, while a literal stream was washing down the road as high as my ankles. Whether the effects of my Saturday debauch with our brave comrade, Josh,<sup>1</sup> had not quite departed, or whether I was out of condition or what, I can't tell, but I got so sick that I was obliged to lean against a stile for a minuit (*sic*) or two and unbotton my waistcoat; but I had such



*This is a  
very faint  
idea.*

Gordon walking in the rain. From a sketch by himself, reproduced by permission of Miss H. Walker.

confidence in my powers of endurance and game that I never doubted the fact that I should rally again, and after another mile or two I was striding along like a brick, but I presented a miserable appearance on reaching home, and looked more like a drowned scarcrow than a rational Christian. My immortal doe-skin pantaloons were wringing wet and stuek to my pins so tight that you could hardly tell that I'd got any on. I wrung about a quart of water out of my hair, and all the things in my pockets were dripping, I was obliged to dry my tobacco at the kitchen

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Joshua Bridges.

fire before I could smoke it nicely, and the blue was washed out of my necktie into my shirt, but I walked fast enough to keep warm the whole time, and a good tea and some run and water, as usual, stopt all bad effects. I smoked my dried tobacco and went to bed as snug as possible. I rather like these difficulties, there's some pleasure in going thro' them, and it's like doing penance for other follies. (N.B. Not always a voluntary one.) We'll have a lark at these races if all goes square.



Gordon winning a foot-race. Sketched by himself, reproduced by permission of Miss H. Walker.

I've really got no news for you, and no orders at present. Tell your Governor that I was too late for the train. I'm tolerably independent of the railway. I flatter myself Jenny may laugh at my legs, but they get me out of many a scrape, and you know yourself that I take a deal of catching, in fact they're quite as useful to me as my fists. Did I tell you about my winning a pair of shoes off young Hescotte of this town, who fancies he can run? I gave him two yards in a hundred.

Bravo the junior member of the Rooking division !

Yours truly,

L. GORDON.

## LETTER VIII

DEAR CHARLEY,

I lounged about Worcester with the Captain on Tuesday morning and went to see Elrington, who was on the parade ground with the militia, but did nothing of consequence. I saw the Governor (I mean yours), he has had Crabbs number 1000, having figured in the County Court and been bullied by that long-nosed rabbit and the old judge about some debt, but he checked them awfully, called them all the scamps on earth, and finished by putting his hat on *in the court*, turning up his aristocratic nose, turning his back on them, and walking coolly away. I walked over to Cheltenham after dinner, every inch of the way, started at three and got here about twenty-five minutes to nine, but was very tired. I overtook a goodish-looking girl about five miles from Tewkesbury carrying a huge basket which was too heavy for her, and being touched at the sight I offered to carry it for her, which I did till within a mile of Tewkesbury, but didn't half like it, it was infernal heavy; she told me her master used her very badly and all sorts of things, but of course I could do nothing for her except comfort her a bit.

I should make a good knight errant at times, but I think a highwayman would suit me better. I had serious thoughts of stopping the mail coach when it came in sight but resisted the temptation; as I had no pistol or bludgeon to enforce my commands. No summons has as yet appeared against me and the Governor is very friendly.

Yrs. truly,

L. GORDON.

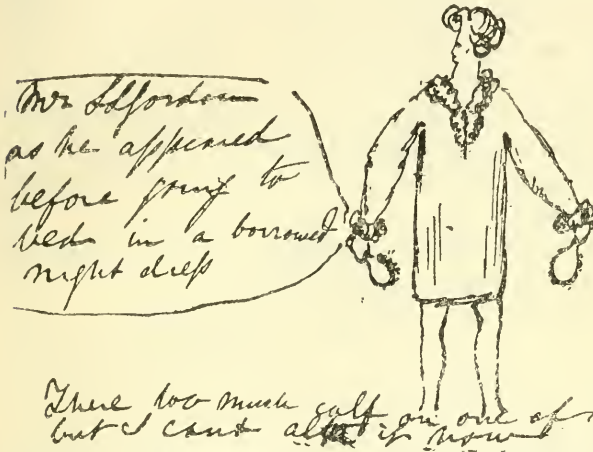
If you could manage to find out whether J—c has been in Worcester this week, and send me word on Friday morning or Thursday night so that I could know on Friday morning, I will come over on foot—for the day. I have got some squaring (?) to do and you shall have your— (word missing).



## LETTER IX

DR. CHARLEY,

I walked over yesterday but stopping at Jack Newman's farm,<sup>1</sup> I did not get home till latish. After I left you I determined to be game again for once, and a sudden reaction taking place, I went home as pleased as Punch to think there was a chance left still for things to be squared and a determination to knock under and please the Governor by a full confession and promise of



A. L. Gordon. Sketched by himself, reproduced by permission of Miss H. Walker.

amendment, which same promise I inwardly determined to keep, and become a more straightforward and steady member of society, for it's quite awful what a scamp I've been for a long time. I got my washing things from Pierce's, and went home to my great-aunt's where the maid-servant let me in and took up to my Governor's bedroom. I asked her if there were any night-shirts of his about and she said No, but presently brought me in one of her own and made me wear it; it was a little thing with frill cuffs and collar, and as she is about half my height you may imagine what a figure I cut, there were

<sup>1</sup> At Stoke Orchard, Clevee, Gloucestershire (Alfred Holman).

no buttons to the cuffs and I had to squeeze my fist through them, no easy task.

You should have seen the servant laugh when she came in and found me in it, I thought I should have split myself. There's too much calf on one of my legs but I can't alter it now.

I was as game as a sandboy going home smoking and chaunting profane songs, to the horror of even the cows and sheep who had sufficient ear for tune to be inconvenienced. I shall see the Governor when he comes back from College. I think between us, Miss Jane Bridges has taught me a good lesson, tho' a disagreeable one. I shall be more careful about the truth in future. I used to hate lies worse than any one, but I got so hardened lately. I didn't mind telling truths (?) but couldn't bear being found out. In fact, I told them without knowing it almost, latterly.

Good-bye, old broken pipes, keep up your pluck and some day we shall get a turn of luck.

Yrs. very deterrmindly

LINDSAY GORDON.

LETTER X

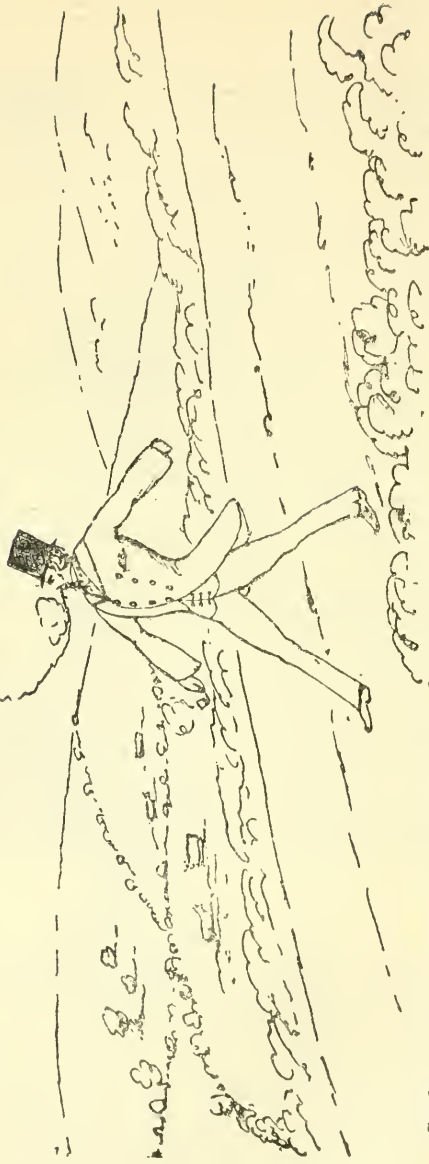
DR. CHARLEY,

I'm going to perform again the week after the races at the York Theatre<sup>1</sup> in an amateur performance, having had my service strenuously requested to contribute to the *talent of the company*. I've had some talk with the Governor, and seriously he means packing me off in a month if he can, but I'm not quite sure I mean going. *Don't tell any one of this or I shall have no peace*, he had a letter from the India House, and I shall not be able to get an appointment to India for a long time. I suppose he thinks I can't be kept quiet here, and he's about right. It will be the best thing I've no doubt, and I don't dislike the idea. I long to begin the world

<sup>1</sup> At Cheltenham. See p. 156.

Sundry Dissonant Sounds are heard on the road between  
Worcester & Cheltenham.

I was all among the meadows  
I used to mow the hay



Gordon walking from Worcester to Cheltenham. Sketched by himself, reproduced by permission of Miss H. Walker.

afresh as it were, and get out all old grievances, but I've so many things to do before I can get off that I mean to consider the length of time seriously. I hope the old man is going on well, I should like to see the Worcester Autumn event come off nuts, but I am sick of crabbs. The Governor has got an offer of an appointment as officer in (what should you think?) the Mounted Police<sup>1</sup> in Australia, devilish good pay, a horse, three suits of regimentals yearly and lots of grub, for me, of course, I don't mean for himself, and he wants me to take it. I think I shall, in fact it's no use mincing the matter, I know I *must*, but I must do something before I start to make my friends remember me, rob somebody or something equally notorious. I've got some money now, and I shall have to come over on Sat. (only for an hour or so), take a return ticket, to get some decent togs and a hat, as I am going to Church, on Sunday. It's astonishing how early I look forward to the event of my departure, but I must see the programme for the steeplechases next November before I can tell; young Holmes of this town has asked me to ride his mare at a little hurdle race coming off near Gloucester. (N.B.) He won't see much of the stake if I win, eh!

I've no idea of ending my riding career in the Cheltenham brook as seen in the next page. I shall see you on Tuesday morning or Monday night if not on Saturday.

Yrs. truly,

L. GORDON.

Miss Jenny had heard all about the night-larks and capture of the Rooking Mare<sup>2</sup> with the various exaggerated and non-exaggerated details of the glorious transaction, that was bad enough, but what crabbed me worst was something she told me respecting a matter with that lout of Purchas, whom I shall shortly visit and having first *done the correct*, shall teach him to keep his own counsel,

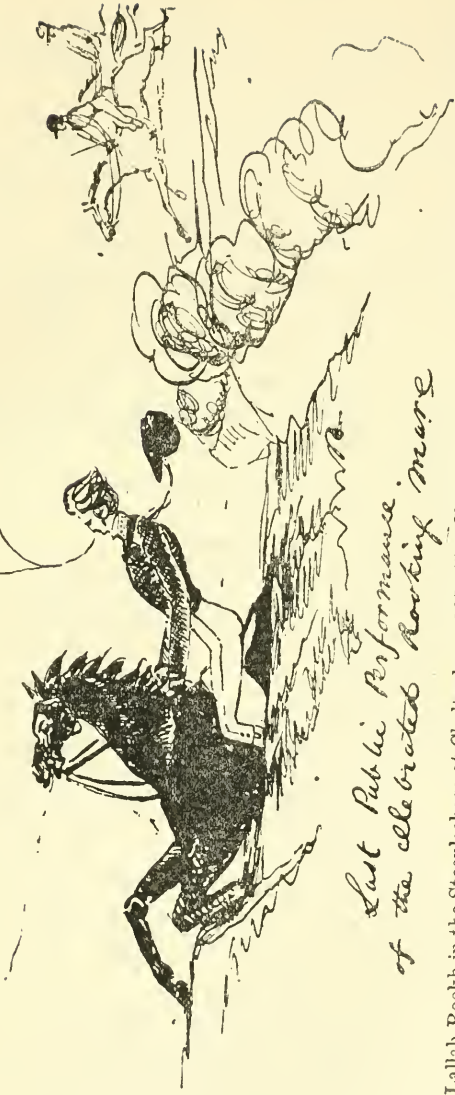
<sup>1</sup> See p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 211 to 215.



~~It is a very fine picture of the  
winner of the Steeplechase at  
Cheltenham, 1853.~~

Woa! my lass They won't let us  
Rook the Steeplechase this time  
we shall be fine for winners



*Last Public Performance  
of the celebrated Rooking mare*

Lallah Rookh in the Steeplechase at Cheltenham, 1853 (1). Sketched by Gordon and reproduced by permission of Miss H. Walker.

and you shall come and see it done if you like, but don't interfere the least; not that I mean to hurt the fool, I shall only frighten him and that's easily done. It was rather too hard on me, I thought, of Miss Jenny to tell me of it, the hardest thing for a man to swallow is a half-truth and an unpleasant one, *but she always tells me what she thinks on such matters, and strange to say I always stand it*; if I were to see her often enough I think she'd almost reform me, not that she'd take the trouble to do that either. She sent little Fanny to bed without her dinner for telling a fib. I tried to beg the young 'un off, but it was no go; I wish some nights when I'm locked out some kind person would send me to bed for telling a fib. If I was always punished that way I should be expensive in clean sheets. The idea quite amused me, and I could have laughed all the way home that evening, *if I hadn't felt rather more inclined to cry*. Fancy, the night after when I had to scramble that high wall out of Laurson (*sic*) Walk, wouldn't I have concocted a buster to have saved myself all that trouble. I half denied that matter with Purchas out of pure shame, and tho' Jane didn't believe me, she was amiable enough not to press the matter as she has done sometimes. It's a queer thing that people hear nothing but harm of me, ain't it? I must be a strong-minded fellow to bear it so well. I've half a mind to bolt to the West now, but I don't quite fancy it. No one will give me credit for caring much about anything or anybody, as my father himself said, "I never saw any one so independent of everybody, you're just the man to go, Li, for you won't care a bit about leaving every one behind you, and precious few will care about your leaving either. Now the second clause was right enough, and I don't think my departure will cause much sensation except among *sundry Jews and tailors*, tho' they are almost all paid now, thanks to the Governor, but I have more tenacity for home than people would fancy. No one gives the thoughtless

scamp, the rake, the fire-eater credit for one bit of feeling, which is a slight mistake, though perhaps not such a great one, for a man's feelings will get wonderfully deadened and blunted by evil report. And so it is that if a man makes one false step, society will force him on to fifty others. One thing in my favour, I shall soon be in a different position if I can keep quiet, and in this wicked world all the follies of youth are looked over and forgotten if a man can retrieve his worldly standing and improve, not out of *charity*, mind ye, Charley, but out of respect for a goodish position no matter how it's got or where it comes from.

Confound this pen.

"What if friends desert in trouble, Fortune can recall them yet,  
*Faithful in champagne and sunshine, false in clouds and heavy wet.*  
 Who would trust in mankind's daughter, since by Eve our fall was  
 planned;  
 Woman's love is writ on water; woman's faith is traced on sand.  
 Fame is folly, etc., etc."

I'm going out a ride to-morrow. If I wasn't afraid of being induced to stop I'd come to Worcester for an hour or so, but it's too near and I've a vivid recollection of my last ride over.

Keep up your pluck, old boy, and tell my creditors to have faith as a grain of mustard seed. Regards to all inquiring friends. I've got an invitation to tea with a female friend, but I shan't go to-night.

Yrs. like blazes,

A. L. GORDON.

#### LETTER XI

Cheltenham,  
 Friday.

\* \* \* \* \*

a second before he could regain his balance and dropt him like a hot potato, then turning to Devereux, who having recovered his feet was prepared to renew the contest by attacking his foe *while on the ground*, I threw

him half over my shoulder in the Theatrical ravishing style and carried him back, not to old Virginia's shore, but to his own domicile, fastening the door of the entrance and depositing him in his own bar. He refused, however, to go to bed without standing some more sherry (a pint, I think), and after trying to dissuade him, I drank it for him and helped him upstairs, his better half, a neat little woman, who evidently was deluded with the idea that I was quite a star, and one of the nobbiest nobs, as Tom says in your book, lighted me to the best room in the house, asking what time I'd be called in the morning, and whether I'd have my breakfast in bed. I thanked her, but declined the latter offer and postponed the first, and lighting my short pipe smoked and laughed to myself for an hour before I could go to sleep; but in the morning the bitter remembrance of my empty pockets recurring afresh, and remembering that the effects of the liquor would have left my host and the glare of the gas lights ceased to bewilder my hostess, I dressed leisurely and took my departure in peace. You know the rest, as I saw you soon after; I was glad to find myself at home again yesterday evening. While I was having my tea in the kitchen the Governor came downstairs and we had some talk. I asked if he'd taken my passage, and told him I was ready to go and the sooner the better, adding that there was no good shivering on the brink when one plunge would make it all over. He was very pleased to hear me speak so, and said that he had the best letters of introduction possible for me, one to the Governor of Adelaide and one to General Campbell, also to Dundee and Ashwin, and he added that I should have a first-rate outfit and that he would lodge some money in the Adelaide bank for me, and concluded by saying that whatever I wanted before I went I could have, and what money I liked. I drew a long breath as he went out, and felt for a moment that choking sensation of sorrow which a man experiences when he knows all the hopes he's

cherished are scattered and blighted for ever; you know the sensation, perhaps, Charley, when one feels as if the air one breathed in was like liquid lead, but I swallowed it somehow, and turning away from the remains of my meal, gave vent to a long whistle and lit my pipe. The Governor will be jolly glad to get rid of me, for tho' he's really fond enough of me he can't bear to see me going on so, a bye-word in the family, as he expressed it. He said once he'd sooner see me in my grave, and I don't know but what I felt much the same thing myself sometimes. But it's a great blessing to be able to get away from such localities and societies as I've frequented, and I have little to care about leaving *now*, to say nothing of the extreme minuteness of the loss I shall be to society; doubtless a few duns will make a passing inquiry after my welfare, but except by them there's no one whose exit will be felt so little. I'm tolerably jolly on the whole at the prospect, for I shall come back in two years and sooner if I dislike the place; directly our affairs get a bit settled the Governor says I can come back. I have enclosed (?) his—and shall send it to-day. I have no time to say more.

Yrs. very truly,  
L. GORDON

## LETTER XII

Penola (South Australia),  
*November 1854.*

MY DEAR CHARLEY,

I have just received your letter and it did me good to hear from you, I can assure you. I am writing by return of post, the mail starts early in the morning and I am tired to-night as I have been watching a prisoner lately. We have no cells at the station, which is, in fact, only a settler's hut, and my handcuffs would not go on his wrists. I apprehended him on a warrant for horse-stealing, but I do not think the charge can be proved

tho' it is clear enough. He is a rough customer, a fighting man, and as strong as a bullock, but men out here are not very scientific fighters, and he is rather shy of me. He was bouncing when I first took him, and on arriving at the station here I showed him an old pr. of boxing-gloves and he put them on. We set to and I proved a bit too long in the reach for him; in a rally, the last round he caught me in the body, the only fair blow I got, and nearly stopped my breath, but I took him at the same instant between the eyes a right-hander with all my strength and floored him. I have the reputation of a good man about here, but more by *hearsay and report* than anything else, tho' I did polish off one chap well, but most of these rough bushmen are so horrid, strong and heavy that it requires all the efforts of superior science and determination to beat them. I am in better health than ever I remember being and much stronger than I was, the active and sober life a man leads in this bracing climate (*if he does not drink much*) will soon take away all the bad effects of early dissipation and irregular life. When I left England my health was impaired, my strength shattered and my very pluck broken down and enfeebled by the life I had been leading, but it is not so now. I am getting stout and healthy, and as sunburnt as a mulatto. I believe a good hard blow would have knocked me to pieces the last few months I was in England, and now I could take a deal of hammering. I have a horse for the steeplechase next meeting, which comes off in a few months. I have ridden with some success since I have been out here, but do not take the same interest in it I used to.

So the Governor is in luck again. I am rejoiced to hear it, and he had ridden the old black 'un<sup>1</sup> at Birmingham Knowle but was beat. She was never such a good one as he thought, tho' at heavy weights and four miles I think she would take some beating.

<sup>1</sup> Probably Lallah Rookh.

I wish I had her here, horses do not go so fast as they do in England. And so poor Skinner wanted to see me before I left, I am very glad I escaped him, and has he shot a man by accident? He is ill too, you say. Well I am sorry for him, for tho' I think he was an enemy of mine if ever I had one, he never could do me so much harm as I have done myself, but it's all for the best, Charley, and now I am steady and have a horse or two and a little cash and some good togs *which never go up the spout*, and I may come back before long. My little sister<sup>1</sup> is married, I hear. You may have heard of it, and is gone with my new brother-in-law to Paris. I have not seen her for a long time, I believe she is good-looking . . . *you will not mention this I know*, but I look on you as a brother. And *my dear Jane too!* I have not *forgotten her*, for I never *really* cared for any other girl. (I hope she is not altered either in appearance or anything). By Heaven, Charley, when you and I knew her she was *one in a thousand*. Do you remember the day we *left Pershore on our return from Beckford* and visited Broughton, and when we left together do you remember your remark respecting her?

I don't know that she was so *very* handsome, Charley, but she had one look I thought beautiful. I remarked it more at some times than at others. So you are nutty on Sally, eh! And a very good girl she will be, and is getting sensible I have no doubt. Has she ever forgiven me? Tell me this in your next. She spoke like a trump for me to Skinner when he was saying the reverse. You ask me if there are many women out here. *So does Jane*. But there are few worth mentioning; by the bye there is a sweet, pretty girl not thirty miles away from here. I saw her the other day, but she is a mere child, a Scotch girl (don't mention it to any one), but I should like you to see her; she has deep blue eyes with black lashes, glossy clustering dark-brown hair, very pretty animated features

<sup>1</sup> Inez, who married Cav. Ratti.

and a dazzling complexion. I do like going by that way to talk a little nonsense to her, but I do not pretend to be a lady-killer, and very much despise those who do, so I will not pitch about women any more or you will think I am as great a fool as I used to be. *I should like to see Jenny tho'*, and know how she is getting on. I dare say she has forgotten me, or thereabouts. We have a jolly life rather out here. When at home we are our own masters and can lounge and smoke or make ourselves tidy and ride about at leisure, and when going round the country you have only to fancy yourself a *moss trooper* of the olden time and your situation is quite romantic. You make yourself welcome everywhere, put your horse in the paddock, get your meals, light your pipe.

## LETTER XIII

Penola,

October 1855.

MY DEAR CHARLEY,

I have just received your epistle enclosed in a parcel from the Governor which reached here some months ago, but which I have only just received; do not think that I have been negligent in answering your letters, this is the second I have received and mine too may have miscarried. As for Old Friendship, as Shakespeare says—

“Let not my cold words here accuse my zeal.”

Yr letter recalled a thousand old reminiscences and made me draw my breath short more than once in the perusal. A note from yr father was enclosed and also one from my dear little Jane. You remember how fond I was of her, Charley, so no more on that head. I am delighted at yr Father's success. I have heard since then that he has won a race at Birmingham. Was it on my namesake the Capt. ? Walker (my bay horse) of whom I told you, has added fresh laurels to his fame and will, if I mistake not, astonish the natives yet, tho' some of them little expect it. I was



amused at yr account of the dinner and spree. Take care of Charley and avoid hard drinking. I have had to give it up. You heard doubtless of my illness brought on by the heat of the weather on a constitution weakened by excesses, and I believe that the games I carried on in early days even long before you knew me have had their weight. But thank God a few months of total abstinence and a sober active life have restored health, strength, spirits and pluck to a wonderful extent and I am now *as good a man as ever I was*, and with hopes of being a still better one, and I mean to show some of the cocktails yet what stuff I'm made of. Excuse my bounce, Charley (the old failing), but some months ago I had not even pluck to bounce.

I have just returned from a journey to Adelaide with a cranky customer. I have sent in my resignation. When I leave the Force I shall be busy for a month or two with some young Stock (colts) I want to get rid of and shall then D.V. *be again upon the sea for home*. I wonder if I shall find Jane married by the bye, I half expect to. To you I am neither afraid nor ashamed to own that I would marry her to-morrow if I had the chance and she would have me. So you have a rival for S—— in a certain Shakespeare, he must be an ugly beggar if he is so like me. You said something in your last about my being a Crichton in a certain sense; I am no such thing, I never was a lady killer, and if I ever fancied myself one it was a *childish lunacy* which has worn off. I think I have got rid of one bad fault at least, I mean vanity, of which I must say I had a tidy share in my juvenile days. You remember my speaking in my last or last but one of a goodish-looking girl whom my companion and I both fancied a bit. She is now sitting opposite me, the wife of the former (my companion in arms), which makes the Barracks look more comfortable. I certainly tried it on strong, but without success; not that I meant Matrimony, but had it not been for a certain old attachment I daresay I should have gone a long way towards it sooner than be *cut out* and *beat*. Not that I

am vain enough to presume that she preferred me to her present husband whom she seems very fond of, but yet at one time I thought she liked me, and the *competition* which is the *mainspring* of my life led me on. I expect she would be wild if she saw this and I hate writing what I should not like to say, so enough on this head. Tell yr father that *Walker* has had a long spell, nearly six months, and has been blistered too in front, which has made his back sinews beautifully fine. He is as fat as a whale and as fresh as a four yr old, he is only six yr old, but has been knocked about so in his younger days and has never had a chance, have been grass-fed and galloped after stock which made him *stale*, *slow* and *footsore*. I mean to train him gently, walking exercise, lots of corn, and the back sinews of the fore legs well hand rubbed in cold water. I rode him to Wells' and back this morning for the first time since he was turned out (two miles) to try a new saddle and see how it fitted him. I only walked him of course, but he seemed as strong as a lion to what he used to be and crossing the race-course on my return I could not resist the temptation to lark him over one of the leaps. He cleared it like a bird, as different to his old stale way of larking as you can conceive. I am sure he will prove faster and fresher when trained than most of us fancy. My next letter shall be to yr father with an account of the Steeplechase he will go for. The saddle I speak of is one of Wilkinson and Kidd's (London) and my father sent it me with some other things. Your letter amongst them. I really have no time to say more but will enclose you some news which may please you before long. *Regards to your father, remembrance to Joshua,<sup>1</sup> Respects to Sarah,<sup>1</sup> and Love to Jane*, to you the assurance of eternal brothership will suffice.

Yrs. sincerely,

LINDSAY GORDON.

<sup>1</sup> The brother and sister of Jane Bridges.

I have another galloper, a chestnut colt, *Mazeppa*, faster I think than Walker, but neither so game nor so lasting. I suspect he will carry feather weight in his first race and ought to go well.

L. G.

I have not fought much lately, but it may amuse you to hear that I did hit out a few weeks ago. Our blacksmith was the victim, a strongish chap but no science, he was rather the worse for liquor too and was sober I, but in a d—d bad humour. He hit me a chapping blow in a scuffle and roused my monkey. I got clear of him and returned the spank with interest, cutting his eye. He came at me three times and each time I met him with the *right* and twice took him clean off his legs, so he dropt it altogether. They were straight fairish spanks, each left *a clean knuckle gash*. *My left I never used*. We are good friends now.

L. G.

LETTER XIV

Adelaide,  
January 1857.

DEAR OLD CHARLEY.

I've not forgotten you, my dear boy, tho' I've had much to keep me occupied of late, and now I'm afraid tho' there is much I could say I feel little spirit to write long at present. But I never take up my pen to address you without a swarm of old recollections crowding across my brain, and I could scribble for four hours without getting thro' all I might wish to say had I time and patience to do so. As it is I must confine myself to a few of the leading outlines of my eventful history. I left the police at the close of October, but I have been working on my own account since, to wit, stock-jobbing, *i. e.* trucking and dealing in horseflesh and bringing colts overland for myself and others. Till this last week I have hardly been a day out of the saddle and have accomplished four journeys between Adelaide and Victoria, which is good work, besides

breaking in several colts, selling and buying and selling again. Any one of my journeys if recounted would fill two of these sheets, but as they are much alike and the novelty of this life has worn off long ago I will not enlarge upon them. Suffice to say that I have been rather unlucky; I like to give a true and faithful account of myself when I write to you, so I will not romance, as it does me good to unburden my mind a little, and tho' I can still draw the long bow at times what I tell you shall be fact and nothing else. I am used to ill-luck and not least likely to fret over money lost, besides I consider experience gained to be worth something especially where a man has tried boldly and well to carry out a difficult undertaking and has pluck and energy not to be disheartened at trifling misfortunes. The truth is I was in too great a hurry to be independent and did not wait till I had accumulated sufficient capital to carry out my projects, chancing too much to Fortune which till latterly has not been so very unkind. The old fault, Charley, make up your mind to win, and if you lose shift for yourself as best you may. Talking of losing you will be sorry to hear that my little bay horse *Walker* has been beaten at last for the Annual Steeplechase at Penola. He was just off a journey so had hardly a chance, but the mare that won was too fast for him. The fences were all stiff timber leaps 4 ft. 6 in. in height, post and rail with a cap or coping rail nailed along the top, very strong and massive. I will not dwell on the race. I had him stabled a few days and brought him out looking bright and blooming, but stale on his legs, tho' I kept close to the cold water hand rubbing and bandaging system which your father taught me and which did his back sinews some good. However we just got off together in a cluster, the pace being slow to the first leap (the highest of the lot), Walker clearing it in style with the mare close at his haunches leaping like a greyhound, *all the others* refused and the race was confined to us two. I led for nearly a mile, the pace still slow as the little horse seemed afraid of the leaps and

was with great difficulty kept from swerving, the mare took the lead at the fourth leap and gradually crept away from me, and being much quicker over her fences I never caught her tho' I pushed between the leaps, the pace for the last mile being terrific. She won eventually with much difficulty, and I must own tho' I said little I was greatly mortified as it is the first defeat the little horse has experienced. I think I rode pretty well too, at least I tried hard to win. It is the first race that has taken place over that course for some years as the fences were reckoned too stiff. In fact only a first-rate leaper will take them, but Miss Craig (the mare) is the best jumper I ever saw out here and gets over her leaps very quick.

I left Penola the other day in bad spirits. You remember long ago my telling you of a pretty girl who two or three of us courted and who eventually became the wife of my companion Saxon who was stationed with me at Penola. Since I left the Police force I have never been at Penola without spending a good deal of time in the Barracks, as we (he and I) were always good friends especially, for we lived together when he married her. To tell you the truth, Charley, I sometimes thought they did not get on quite so smooth after the honeymoon, anyhow I liked her better after I saw more of her; she had her faults, but was a kind affectionate girl tho' rather thoughtless. To cut it short I was rather indiscreet in some things, for people began to talk as people will do at times and I began to think he (Saxon) looked rather queer when he came home and found us together. When I left Penola the other day a report had got about that I was going to England and I did not contradict it. You know the feeling, Charley, when a pretty woman wishes you good-bye silently with tears glistening in her eyes and holds your hand very tight in hers. I did of course as you would do under those circumstances, *i. e.* saluted her more than once and in a decidedly non-Platonic manner, but I'm afraid *he* saw me as he was just outside the cottage at the time for he looked very

black at me as I rode off and I have heard since that they have had a disturbance about me which makes me rather uncomfortable. I tell you this because it has occupied my mind a little more than I hoped it would, not that I want to lay any claim to lady-killing pretensions, such follies with me have long since evaporated, but you can well fancy that as Saxon and I have been old friends so long a little thing like that may cause some unpleasant feelings tho' obligations have been in my favour. I should be sorry to annoy him and still more sorry to be the cause of unhappiness to *her*.

I will not entertain you with recounting any of my sprees, I seldom indulge in them, tho' a visit to Adelaide generally finds me one or two days on the loose. At present neither spirits not pockets induce such outbreaks. There is by the bye a certain house where a night licence is carried on in rather an extensive style within which is a large airy room where twice a week a very good band performs to the glare of many lights and flash gentry do the *light fantastic toe* business in the embrace of frail fair ones. Of this aforesaid house I could perchance tell a brief tale tho' scarcely a moral one. But I am a reformed character now, Charley, and must for a time forget these matters; my present steps are not quite decided on but in a short time I hope to be able to give you some good news, perhaps to tell you that before many months are past you will stand a chance of seeing the well-nigh forgotten ugly mug of your brave comrade and hearing from his own kisser (mouth) an account of some of his wanderings, when you will learn that like the Trojan .Eneas he has been "Multum et terris jactatus et alto." Write nevertheless in answer to this, and that with speed, tho' I would fain hope that the precaution is needless and that your letter may pass me on the salt water. And dear Jane, Charley, I am almost afraid to speak of her, is she married yet? I can scarcely mention her to you without a sudden moisture of the eyelids, which however, dries up almost as soon as it rises

owing to the dryness of the soil. Strange it may seem to you that after a long absence a careless selfish chap like me should still think of her with feelings undiminished by time, absence or new faces. . . . If you can, Charley, see her and speak to her of me, it would seem to me the nearest approach to seeing her in person for my old friend to mention me to her and tell her what news of me he thinks would please her to hear, tho' I expect she cares little now to hear my name mentioned. Respects to your father, I hope he is well and fortunate and that my namesake the Capt. has turned out a trump card for him, and Cheer up old boy as my song says "For a stout heart proof 'gainst fate is."

Believe me, dear Charley, now as ever,

Your sincere friend,

LINDSAY GORDON.

Write soon, old boy, I often think of it. Wish I had you out here you might —— at yr trade. It seems but yesterday that I was fighting C. Skinner about Janems<sup>1</sup> and that I was with you at the old station.

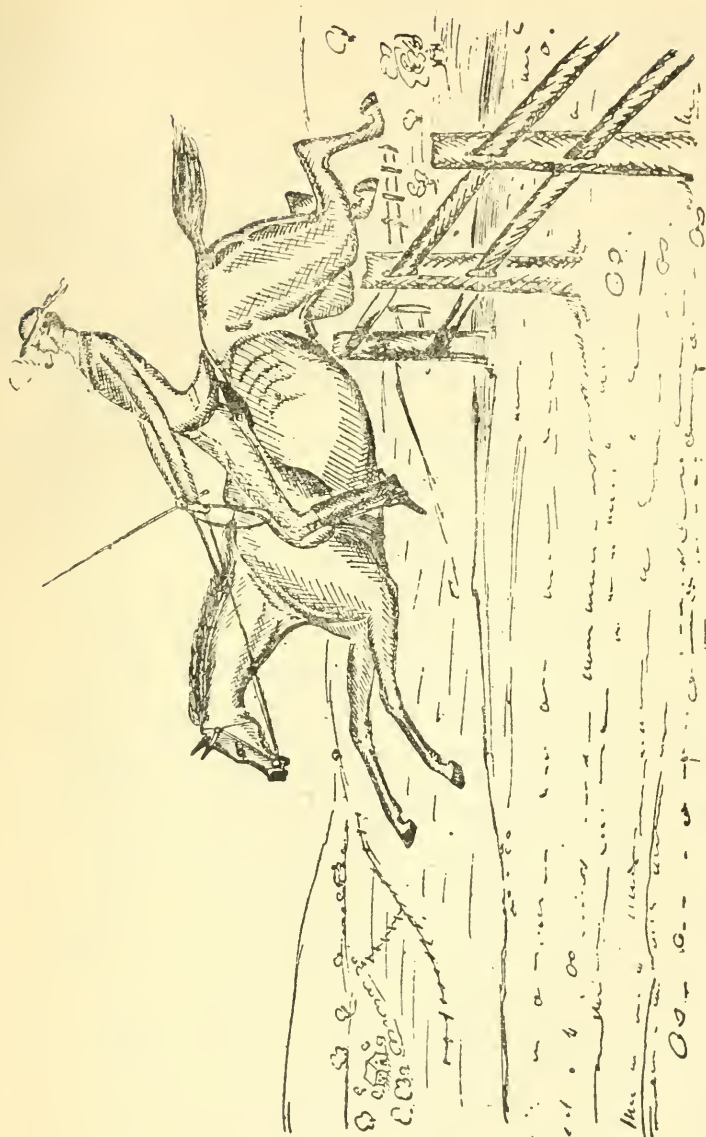
<sup>1</sup> Janems (Jane).

## CHAPTER VII

OTHER LETTERS WRITTEN BY A. L. GORDON, INCLUDING  
A LETTER TO HIS UNCLE GIVEN IN HIS OWN HAND-  
WRITING

THE letter from Gordon to his uncle, Captain R. C. H. Gordon, written just before the poet was elected to the South Australian Parliament, is, by kind permission of Miss Frances Gordon, given in his own handwriting.





Gordon on Cadger, winner of the Metropolitan Steeplechase. Reproduced, with the letter to Captain R. C. H. Gordon, by permission of his daughter, Miss F. Gordon.

## LETTER I

Received 21 Sept Goddard's Mt Gambler  
June 1863

My dear Uncle

I have just written to Willie I got your letter & his. Australia must be different to what you remember it the Sydney was changed less than the other colonies. You would like Sheep farming extremely I wish I had taken to it it is the fastest way & the safest of getting rich & it is a sure life but of late years the Stations have been very dear & it seems so like a speculation to invest your capital to the last penny & give bills besides for even a good Sheep run. So much ground has been lately put up for sale that the wealthiest of the Squatters have had difficulty in buying up their runs & those whose lands are not yet purchased are living in fear & have been selling their best land into the public market. Often to my knowledge the settlers have had to pay a nervous price for land in the heat of their runs. Dr Dixon went as high as £8 per acre for some at his station at Mosquito Plains near here. About Port Gambier & Port Fairy there is a deal of farming in a small way & when properly managed it is a lovely hood but

Not much more unless a man has some thing else to put by. Our farmers go one year after another much in the one way always grumbling & living from hand to mouth but still working hard & probably happy enough. To make farming answer a man should have a thorough practical knowledge of all the detail of farm work so as to save paying for labour as much as possible.

I am going on pretty well tho I fancy I have been taking things rather too easy lately. I get what I call a good income as my money yields 10 per cent which all money will do out here on security quite as good as any colonial Bank. I have not done much dealing lately as horses & cattle have been down in the market & there is not much to be done with them.

I have a little horse that I brought from Melbourne a great beauty as strong as a cart horse & nearly thoroughbred. They said in Melbourne that he was worth £1000 if he would jump but he used to refuse having mastered his riders.

I have been riding him about for five weeks & when I first had him

He would refuse a sheep hurdle  
 with me & would not look at a  
 stiff fence; last Saturday, I rode  
 him about three miles across country  
 over exactly (24) twenty-four fences  
 including crossing four roads with  
 him & he never turned his head once  
 & made no mistake, we measured  
 one stiff post & rail it was 10 inches  
 high which he cleared, so you may  
 guess how much he has improved  
 with me, I could get a long price  
 for him but do not like to sell him  
 for two reasons, firstly Margaret  
 (my wife) has taken a fancy to him  
 & wants him for a hack & then  
 I would like to see him go in a  
 Saddleback as he is fast & capital  
 bottom & it would surprise the Phil-  
 -fourne men so to see him go well over  
 fences, Margaret is a good horse woman  
 She & I rode out from Adelaide to  
 Mt Gambier & six days on the road  
 a distance more than 300 miles which  
 made an average of 50 miles per day.  
 His sound shape but it is a fact  
 & she was not very tired either

I have been thinking that if Willie could get a good Government appointment out here, he might be very comfortable. I mean as Stipendiary Magistrate or even a District Officer in the Mounted Police or Returning Officer for the Registry. The salaries are very good & the business would suit him, it would not require much interest if a man only knew any influential person connected with the Colonial Government. I am sure that a gentleman qualified to take command of a vessel might do first rate if he could get into the confidence of some of our Vessal-chants. I must have a talk to Orisod of Guichen Bay on this subject as he was writing to establish a trade between here & India & China, horses are shipped from here for the Indian Market & realise enormous prices compared with their value in the colony & a load of Tea from China is a highly profitable speculation. Maggie is trying her hand at sketching this evening & has made a wonderful house only it deviates slightly from the perpendicular & leans over in a highly picturesque attitude. There are some wonderful trees or something of the sort tho' whether vegetable or animal matter be intended. I am not quite sure. Here is also a likeness of my horse which I enclose

He rode a little white pony mare  
 an Arab called "fairy" a great pet  
 of hers & I was on my favourite hack  
 Frankoe the winner of 2 steeples  
 (at Guichen Bay & at the Mount) a  
 fine horse & a beautiful jumper but  
 bad bottom Fairy stood the journey  
 much better than Frankoe. You will  
 be sorry to hear that my health is not  
 quite so good as it was. More than a  
 year ago I got a severe fall my  
 horse rolling over me & bruising me  
 in the spine near the kidneys, since  
 then I have been ailing occasionally  
 tho I am still strong & active at times  
 I feel my bodily strength much the same  
 & have nearly the same endurance, but  
 for a long time I was often bad with  
 pains in the back & nasty cramps &  
 I could not sleep at nights & lost my  
 appetite but I am better now thank  
 God. The doctors told me that I should  
 get all right in time but that it was  
 an awkward place to get hurt & does  
 indeed I found it, I must not  
 cross this letter - or you will not be  
 able to read it. Best Love to  
 Adam & Dick & Fanny  
 I am dear Uncle  
 your affect. Nephew  
 Lindsay Gordon

Maggie sends her love

## LETTERS FROM A. L. GORDON TO GEORGE RIDDOCH

## LETTER II

12th Dec., 1868.

“DEAR GEORGE RIDDOCH,

“Your letter dated 26th Nov., reached me only a few days ago. There is nothing I should like better than to spend a few weeks with you, and I should certainly have been at your place or on the road that way before this if I had not been detain’d by one or two things, in the first place, my wife came round by the Penola about a fortnight ago, and we are staying in some quiet lodgings at North Brighton, but I shall be able to get away shortly, and I shall certainly come your way—I have been tolerably busy lately, that is, I have been working *hard* by fits and starts and then taking a lazy spell for a few days—I have not been very strong, but am ever so much better than I was some months ago—I have written to your brother and am expecting an answer from him. When I come to South Australia I think I shall ride, as I have one horse left that I do not care to part with here. I think she would suit your brother well if he wants a weight-carrying hack, well bred and fast—I will write again in a few days and will let you know when you may expect me—I was thinking of coming to see you some time ago and before you had any idea of inviting me. I suppose you do not feel dull up there in the scrub, having so much to employ your time—I would write at more length but I have nothing to say beyond accepting your invitation and thanking you for it—I do not know now while I write whether your brother is still in Adelaide or whether he has left for Yallum—Mrs. Gordon is well and sends you her kind regards,

“YRS. v. truly,

“A. LINDSAY GORDON.

“Mrs. Gordon sends her kind regards to you.”

## LETTER III

North Brighton,  
July 21, 1869.

“MY DEAR GEORGE,

“I should have written to you a fortnight ago—I got your letter all right—I heard of your hurried passage through Melbourne, I think, from John, whom I have seen once or twice since I saw you—I have nothing interesting to communicate—I lunch’d with your friend Forbes yesterday, who ask’d after you—I met him at the Hunt on Tuesday, and we return’d to town in company, escorting one of the wounded, Young Jones,<sup>1</sup> who got a good fall and a black eye. I have a chestnut horse now, by Frank, out of a King Alfred mare. I think rather a good one—we have had some fatrish sport with our hounds. Mrs. Gordon was out once on Badger, since sold for £80 to a Ballarat man. She rode him very well—she was out once since on a mare, but she did not follow on the second occasion. The great Montgomery left to-day for Adelaide after making an ass of himself as usual. It is a pity that one so clever in his profession should be so silly. I met your favourite, The Drone, three times under silk. I won at Caulfield, where I had to give his rider nineteen pounds. At Bylands the mare I rode was lame but she ran third. The Drone nowhere. At Croxton Park? I could have been second if I had chosen—the Drone again sticking up. The mare is no good—she can jump a little but is not fast and can’t stay, besides her fetlock joint is gone.

“I believe the Coursing Match went off well, though the Melbourne men seem dissatisfied with the verdicts—was Connor<sup>2</sup> to blame? The weather has been unusually dry and fine, too fine, indeed. Have you had any rain up your way yet, if not, you must want some soon. The town is quiet enough now, though I have not been there

<sup>1</sup> Harry Jones of Binam station, who built the house at Robe occupied in the summer by Sir James Fergusson, the South Australian Governor.

<sup>2</sup> He started coursing in the Narracoorte S. A. Coursing Club, the first in Australia.



much lately. I go in about twice a week now<sup>1</sup> Michie has been lecturing very ably I hear, and Parliament is dull. The bribery cases having died a natural death at last. Mining at Ballarat has been going ahead, I suppose there will be a reaction and a horror of great dulness in consequence.

“The prices of wool are not very cheering, I expect, and the squatters are grumbling and groaning more than ever. Major Baker went to Sydney to-day and I went to Sandridge? with him—Herbert Power kill’d a very fine colt by Mariner last Saturday with the hounds—I suppose Collie has had a glut of post and rails by this time, and the chestnut is nearly gorged with timber, though I don’t know whether the unfortunate fenees have not suffer’d most, for I should say there was not half a dozen flights in sixty square miles of the Tatiara. How they must have been punish’d—

“There have been wars and rumours of wars between farmers and hunting men here, and something of the sort has been reported in Adelaide—though E——, who has been ‘felling timber’ wholesale on a big, ugly brute that I was lucky enough to sell him, does not mention the campaign in a letter five yards long and closely written on all sides, which I got yesterday. Though, by the bye, I am not sure, for I have not finish’d the epistle yet. I threw up the sponge one yard from the Postscript, which is longer than the letter.

“Pray give my kind regards to your mother and sister and drop me a line now and again. I know writing is a great bore but you are capable of a sacrifice sometimes. I got a letter from your brother the other day, which I have not answer’d yet. I must try and do this in time for this week’s post. Hoping everybody is well with you and that you will let me hear from you again,

“I am,

“Yrs. v. truly,

“A. LINDSAY GORDON.”

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards Sir Archibald Michie, Agent-General for Victoria.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SOME NOTES MADE ON THE GORDON COUNTRY IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA IN NOVEMBER 1887

By C. D. MACKELLAR, Author of "Scented Isles and Coral Gardens."

THE district which lies between and around the extinct volcano of Mount Gambier and Penola is for the most part quite flat, and was at that time clothed with the partly dead and partly living primæval forest. Riding and driving one was often aware by the hollow rumbling sound, that one was passing over huge caves or cavities. At the season of the year I was there the whole country was under some feet of water. As there are many depressions, waterholes and swamps, from which too rise the dead or living trees, it is at this season impossible to tell in this sea of water where these depressions are. They are full of fallen timber, logs and branches, and riding one gets many an unpleasant surprise on suddenly plunging down into these unexpected places, with much danger of injuring your horse by the snags. In hunting kangaroo, which at that time swarmed in the country, I have had unpleasant experiences. Sometimes also a hole breaks out in the ground, the roof of the hidden cave below giving way, the water rushes down and fills the cavity, and these "Run-away Holes" as they are locally called, are very dangerous.

Penola was a small town of the usual Australian type. When the railway between Adelaide and Melbourne was being built, Penola could not make up her mind whether she wanted it or not; having been an important place in the coaching days, she did not relish the thought of sinking into a mere way-side station, so whilst she hesitated the

railway ignored her and passed by at some distance from the town. For a small town the inhabitants numbered many odd characters.

One mysterious man there who was locally reputed to be "a lord," and had no fingers on either hand, married his servant, who when she was asked how she could marry a man with no fingers, held up her own and said, "Why, he has ten—and then he is a lord."

There was even a haunted house in the country. The family inhabiting it who wanted their grandmother to make a will in their favour when she was dying, told her the devil was coming for her and dragged chains up and down the verandah in order to warn her of his advent. After she did die the sound of chains being dragged up and down the verandah never ceased, and terrified all who heard it—quite a pretty story for a bush house. So said local gossip.

*Yallum.* About five miles from Penola lay Yallum Park, the residence of John Riddoch, in the midst of the many wide acres which formed but one of the properties owned by him in this district. The house was approached from the road by an entrance lodge and long drive through a deer-park, where numbers of fallow-deer grouped themselves in picturesque fashion under the trees. Well laid-out and extensive gardens and orchards surrounded the house, and a feature of these gardens was the very thick high-grown hedges, doomed at that time to destruction on account of the immense numbers of troublesome sparrows they harboured. Mr. Riddoch—who was locally known as "The Squire of Penola"—had many people in his employment and paid his head gardener £200 a year. The house was a large stone mansion surrounded by balconies and verandahs and contained many spacious and well-furnished apartments; two drawing-rooms, the library, the billiard-room and Miss Riddoch's boudoir being really fine rooms. The butler who opened the door for you might have been the family retainer of some ancient family in England.

The stables, with all the farm buildings which were grouped at the back of this mansion, were quite in keeping and contained Mr. Riddoch's celebrated pedigree horses and bulls, the prices of which ran to four figures, as did the prices of his stud rams. It was in such fashion that this country magnate—an Australian squatter—lived amongst his countless herds and flocks.

To one side of the mansion stood the old house, a pleasant one-storeyed building surrounded by broad verandahs clothed in creeping plants; and close to it rose the gnarled old gum-tree within the branches of which Adam Lindsay Gordon sometimes took refuge, when he wanted to be alone and escape from people, and where he is supposed to have composed some of his poems.<sup>1</sup> In Miss Riddoch's album were poems written for her which have never been published. He and Mr. Riddoch being colleagues in the South Australian Parliament, he was very frequently at Yallum and for long periods. In those days every Australian bush home had a cottage or building for the reception and entertainment of strangers or travellers; the hospitality being boundless.

Yallum Park was visited by Prince Edward and Prince George (his present Majesty) on their tour round the world, and in the book recording their journey they make references to Mr. Riddoch and Yallum.

Adam Lindsay Gordon having been the colleague in the South Australian Parliament of Mr. Riddoch, was much at Yallum. Mr. Riddoch had a very high opinion of Gordon, and told me that despite his restlessness he was a thorough gentleman at heart, and singularly honourable, never having been known to do a dishonourable thing. He was extremely kind-hearted, but subject to moods of depression alternating with wild spirits. Mr. Riddoch gave all Gordon's letters he possessed to the late Alexander Sutherland of Melbourne, who was writing an article on

<sup>1</sup> "The Sick Stockrider," "Doubtful Dreams," "How we Beat the Favourite," "The Ride from the Wreck."

him.<sup>1</sup> The Riddochs owned Yallum, Katnook, and Glencoe, these properties being very extensive.

The other properties in the district were Penola station, of which "Sandy Cameron, King of Penola," had been the pioneer owner. He was father of J. Cameron of Wurrayure, (Vic.), of Mrs. D. Twomey of Kolor, Mrs. Leander Clarke of Mount Sturgeon, Mrs. Heales, Mrs. Stretch and Mrs. J. Robertson of Struan (Vic.), all well-known people. Nangwarry was the Gardiners' place; Krongart the Skenes'; Limestone Ridge belonged to Mrs. Macarthur, widow of the pioneer squatter, and besides other places there is Struan, the immense property of the Robertsons, whose father had been one of the pioneer settlers of the district, and known as "Poor Man Robertson" for what reason I do not know. It was originally called Mosquito Plains. All these places and others about were of course familiar to Gordon.

*Struan.* This place and family had no connection with the Robertsons of Struan in Victoria. The house, which is the centre of a very large property, lies in a hollow just by the side of the main road which, till the days of the railway, was the coach-road between Adelaide and Melbourne. It is a large high stone house with a tower, containing forty-six rooms, one of the drawing-rooms being an exceptionally large room. And this huge house rising up in the Australian Bush was surrounded by a perfect village of outbuildings. The family were renowned for their hospitality. In the coaching days the coach from Adelaide to Melbourne passed Struan House about midnight and halted there for refreshment, tables loaded with hot coffee and everything else always awaiting it by the roadside, all travellers of all descriptions being entertained free. The railway, of course, changed all that. Naturally this generous, frank-mannered family were extremely popular with every one, especially with all who were poor or in trouble. Five miles from Struan are the Narracoorte

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in this book.

Caves, now a tourist resort, maintained by the Government. These limestone caves are extensive and interesting and are gained by descending ladders. One large one, resembling a hall and lit from both ends, has rows of fern-trees planted, which have a very beautiful and strange effect in the half-light. The dried-up body of a blackfellow was found in one cave; and left there with a grating in front of it, but it was eventually stolen. In early days there was much "black-bird shooting" in this district—that is the blacks were often shot. As Mrs. Robertson told me, they were most troublesome, and the dried-up corpse was probably one of those victims practically petrified by the action of the chemicals in the rocky niche in which it was found.

*Gordon's Widow.* A few miles away from Yallum lived Peter Low, an overseer and "boundary rider" on Mr. Riddoch's estate. He had married Gordon's widow and they had several children. I rode to this place from Krongart about six miles away; the whole country under water every inch of the way. The timber in places dense, and fallen logs and snags causing both danger and trouble to the horses, as they could not be seen in the water. Peter Low's house, being on higher ground, stood out above the water and was situated on what for the time being was practically an island. I and my companion had a very cordial welcome and were well entertained and remained all day. Peter Low played the bag-pipes, cornet, concertina, flute and violin for our benefit, his little son danced the Highland Fling and hornpipes, etc., wonderfully, and Elsie<sup>1</sup> the daughter, aged twelve, played with great feeling both the piano and the violin—a more interesting family than this dwelling in their watery kindgom it would be difficult to find.

Mrs. Peter Low was a small, dark, refined looking woman, pleasant in looks and manner. She (and Peter Low for that) was devoted to Gordon's memory; quite ready and pleased to talk about him (as was also Peter Low), but I

<sup>1</sup> Called after a character in the "Siek Stockrider."

regret I remember so little. Round the walls of her sitting-room were various of Gordon's poems printed on slips, framed and glazed, and probably they first were printed in this form, and it is possible that some in this form may have escaped notice. She had all the editions of his poems. Also on the walls hung pen and ink sketches done by him, principally of horses or bush scenes; and as well his smoking cap, jockey cap, whips, bat, spurs, etc.

I believe Mrs. Adam Lindsay Gordon was a famous rider herself, and that she used to ride and enter for the jumping competitions at Mount Gambier agricultural shows.

She cried once in talking of Gordon, for whom she had nothing but the highest praise. He was kind-hearted, gentle, considerate, and had been everything to her. He was very restless, sometimes wild and reckless, sometimes moody. Often in the night he rose several times from his bed, as some idea seized him, and strode up and down the room turning his thought into verse. He was, she said, "the soul of loyalty and honour."

She spoke of "Gordon's daughter"<sup>1</sup> and, as I have noted in my diary, once of "Gordon's two little girls," but I noted and have remembered little more of what she said. She consulted me as to the chance of obtaining—as Gordon's widow—a pension from the Government, and asked me could I use influence in the matter, but I told her I thought her second marriage was a bar to that. She complained of not having been well treated by the publishers of her husband's poems; and had still some unpublished. I advised her to put herself in good hands and publish a new edition, illustrated with the sketches, portraits and caricatures, and include in it those in Miss Riddoch's album. It was with reluctance I bade adieu to this interesting family, and I and my companion set forth to ride the six miles back to Krongart in the glow of the evening. Just after leaving the Lows I noticed

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the illegitimate daughter who is still alive and residing in the district.

a fine old gum-tree standing on a raised bit of ground, an island above the water. The whole sky and the water was one sheet of molten gold; the trees and their shadows so mingling that it was difficult to distinguish what was sky, which were trees, and what only water and shadows. Often we had to push our way through the honeysuckle and other timber, our horses falling over unseen logs, or plunging into unseen hollows, the water up to their bellies for five miles. My companion was supposed to know the country and lead the way, but seemed to me to be, and really was, continually bearing to the right, and eventually we found ourselves at the tree on the island from which we had started, having ridden round in a complete circle! We had therefore the pleasure of doing this ride again in the dark, only getting home very late. Not a sound in the forest but the swishing of our horses through the water—the silence was intense.

*Kalangadoo* was some miles away from Krongart. A roomy two-storeyed house of the usual Australian type; and was owned by Mr. Morris, a nephew of Governor Hindmarsh. In Gordon's time it belonged to the Hunters, and whilst some people said that the "Stockman's Last Bed," so often regarded as Gordon's, was written by the Miss Hunter who afterwards became Mrs. Charles Rome, I find in my diary that this was emphatically contradicted, and that it was stated and believed to have been written by Mrs. James Hunter, in memory of one of her Hunter brothers-in-law. Probably Gordon wrote it and gave it to some member of the family.

Whilst visiting at Moorak, which property belonged to the Brownes, resident in England, and which is situated on the slopes of the extinct volcano Mount Gambier, I visited the place on the Mount where Gordon's monument is erected on the spot where he was said to have made his dare-devil leap, now so famous. He had the width of the road, a post and rail fence, a few feet beyond it and then a sheer drop over the precipice to the deep lake



below. He jumped the fence, turned his horse and jumped back—it does not look even possible. Mr. Trainer who, was with him at the time, persists that this was the spot. Both Mr. Riddoch of Yallum, and Mr. Williams, the manager of the Moorak property, assured me they knew for a certainty it was not the spot, and I was shown one further on which seemed much more likely to be the place. Mr. Riddoch had often viewed with Gordon this spot, as the incident was famous.

The people of this district were all interested in Gordon as the poet and the rider; yet though many of them must have been conversant with other phases of his life, and how he lived, they had little to tell, not deeming these things of any importance or foreseeing the interest future generations might have in him. Gordon was familiar with all this strange country, which becomes a sea of water at certain seasons. The great Dismal Swamp was spoken of as a place where mystery brooded and the Bunyip dragged its folds through slimy water. Where Gordon actually lived with his wife in that district I do not know.

In the small and scattered community of the time he must have been known to every one, and though the old (and the first) generation has passed or is passing away there must be still many who knew him well; and it is a pity they could not be reached. Gordon lived in what was the most interesting period of South Australian history, amongst those who actually made the land and were its first white men, and at a time when the life was really interesting in its wide, free way. Therefore the people surrounding him have their interest in connection with him too, yet little I suppose has been placed on record of those early days

## CHAPTER IX

REMINISCENCES OF GORDON, BY THE HON. SIR FRANK MADDEN, SPEAKER OF THE PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

ADAM LINDSAY GORDON, when I knew him, was a long, lean man, who for the most part affected the costume and the manner of a horse-breaker. He had sharp features, with bushy overhanging eyebrows, deeply-set eyes, with a very peculiar glitter—a somewhat ragged beard completed a most uncommon face. He was moody, taciturn and sometimes melancholy. But when in company with those he liked he could be a most delightful companion. To meet him casually one would never consider him an educated man, as from long intercourse with rough people in the bush he had picked up their way of speaking, and to a great extent he preferred their company to those of his own class, or more properly speaking to those who, because they had money, considered themselves to be of his class.

There is no doubt that he rated horses above men, and his love for them had become the ruling passion of his life, although he was by no means a good judge of a horse. It was very difficult to get him to speak about himself, but he enjoyed telling little episodes of his life when in the humour. I remember his account of his first meeting with one of his humble but most devoted admirers, "Billy Trainor." It was when Gordon was in the police and stationed at Mount Gambier. There was a circus performing in the town and Trainor was one of the company. He had been cast for the usual "drunken man," who intrudes into the circus during the performance. Gordon

was on duty, and not realizing that Trainor was not drunk but only shamming, arrested him and took him to the lock-up. Trainor protested that he was one of the company, but Gordon would not believe him until at the lock-up he threw off the old clothes he was wearing over his tights and spangles, when he was allowed to depart to fulfil his engagement. Gordon was so delighted with Trainor's daring and horsemanship that when seen after he left the police, he and Trainor became fast friends and they went away breaking horses together.

Horse-breaking in those days was no child's play. It was necessary in order to round up the cattle on the stations that they should have good horses, and on every station there was at least one thoroughbred stallion, often more. With horses of the class of King Alfred, Mariner, The Premier, Touchstone, Panie, etc., it was only to be expected that the stock horses like the mare that Gordon rode "from the Wreck" "were bred pretty nearly as clean as Eclipse"—and such horses, having been allowed to run wild until they were four or five years old, when they came in to be broken in took some breaking, particularly when it is remembered that the methods of those days were "short, sharp and very decisive." It was considered waste of time if the colt was not ridden on the third day after he was caught, he was often ridden before that, and at the end of a week he was handed over as a broken-in horse. Certainly the men who had to ride him for many months afterwards were perfect centaurs, and the horses soon came to understand and to delight in the work they were called upon to do. But the first three or four days of the breaking called for all the courage, resolution and dare-devil of men like Gordon and Trainor. When Gordon was buried in the Brighton Cemetery Trainor bought the adjoining grave so that in death he might lie beside his friend and idol.

Gordon could not recite even his own poetry, and often brought me the drafts of poems to read over and recite to

him. When he brought the rough draft of "The Sick Stockrider," I begged that he would let me have it for a few hours to enable me to master its beauty and enable me to speak it to the best of my ability. When I recited it to him he was greatly pleased, although he altered some of the lines.

It is only those who have taken part in the yarding of wild cattle in those days who can fully appreciate the vividness of the lines—

"The running fire of stockwhips and the fiery run of hoofs,  
As we wheeled the wild scrub cattle at the yards."

The cattle-runs consisted of scrub, ranges and mountainous country where the cattle ran at large until wanted for weaning, for market, or other purposes. The plain lands were devoted to sheep. It was a merry time when word went out that the cattle on such and such a station were to be mustered and yarded on a day named, perhaps a month afterwards. The stockmen from all the adjoining stations came to assist their neighbours and incidentally to see if any cattle carrying their brand had wandered on to the run. The country being unfenced cattle often came from a distance and remained on an adjoining run. Before the dawn on the day appointed those who were to take part in the muster would assemble at the stockyard, where their horses had been yarded overnight, and it was great sport to see the antics of the horses which had been specially chosen for the work, because they were fresh, when the saddles were placed on their backs in the cool of the morning, "bucking" and "pig-jumping" round the yard they went, but they were carrying their masters and soon settled down to work. The men were directed to certain outlying cattle camps with instructions to work the cattle on a prearranged plan towards the yards. Gathering the cattle in the hills and through the scrub they came along pretty well until they were driven into the plains. They were quite used to the plain at night as

they came down there to feed. But to find themselves on the plain in daylight with men on horseback surrounding them made them very uneasy and very anxious to get back to their mountain and scrub. They were kept on the move and not allowed to break. This was no easy matter if in the mob there was a five or six year old bullock who, since he was branded, had managed to evade the muster. But when they caught sight of the dreaded yards they would become frantic and dare almost anything to get away. Then it was that the mettle of the men and horses was tested. For it would be counted a dire disgrace if a stockman failed in his duty—"when he wheeled the wild scrub cattle at the yard"—for if they once broke the line of stockwhips no power on earth could stop their wild and united rush and the whole day's work would be wasted. Like the rest of us Gordon loved a muster, and if his sight had been better he could not have been excelled as a stockman.

When he proposed to publish his poems I strongly advised him to leave out "Wolf and Hound," as I did not think it worthy of him. But he would not. I did not know until afterwards that he was the "Hound." "How We Beat the Favourite" came out in *Bell's Life*, and within a few days every sporting man in Melbourne knew it by heart. We were all horsemen then, and looked upon steeplechasing as the acme of sport.

You are mistaken in saying that Gordon "made a living as a jockey." He never received a farthing for riding and I find that the last time he rode a steeplechase was in March 1780, when, on Major Baker's "Prince Rupert," he rode as Mr. A. L. Gordon, ten stone. We were very particular in those days, and if he had ever taken money for riding he would not have been allowed to ride as Mr. Gordon. For a man of his height to ride ten stone showed how lean he was towards the end.

I think the story of his meeting Kendall on the evening before he shot himself is also doubtful as I met him a little

after four o'clock on that winter's day and walked with him as far as St. Kilda. In justice to him I should say that the most unlikely thing he would do was to spend his last few shillings in drink as he never cared for it, and so far as I knew seldom took it at all. He shows his contempt for it in his verses. Of one thing I am clear, that when I left him at St. Kilda, he was absolutely sober, but very much depressed and melancholy. He told me he had asked a friend to lend him £100 to enable him to get to England, but his friend had refused to make the advance and he was most down-hearted and despondent.

He told me he had finished reading the proofs of his poems and that he would be glad if I would send to Messrs. Stillwall & Knight's, his publishers, and obtain the manuscript and keep it as a present. I did not think when he said present he meant a memento.

I learned early next morning that he was dead, and so never applied for the manuscript I should have so dearly prized. He and I had an idea that we might illustrate his book and I have a few rough sketches of what he thought some of the illustrations of "The Sick Stock-rider" might be. But he knew very little of drawing and the sketches are only valuable as mementoes. When in the humour he could be very caustic. At a meet of the hounds on one occasion a lot of us were chatting—Jones being one of the members. Jones was a very excitable Welshman, as good a fellow as ever breathed, but loved talking. He had a new mare on which he ventured to say he would do wonders in the expected hunt. Gordon had been listening and then soliloquized—

"And none like me, being mean like me  
 Shall die like me while the world remains.  
 I will rise with her, leading the field—  
 While she will fall on me  
 Crushing me bones and brains."

Jones felt sick and went home.

I need say nothing of Gordon's daring or his horseman-

ship. In riding over a fence he leaned so far back that I have often seen a sweat mark from the horse erup upon his jaeket<sup>1</sup> between the shoulders. I have often heard it said that he would have made a splendid light dragoon. That might have been so if his regiment was always on active service. But the routine and monotony of barracks would have broken his heart. He was best in his well-beloved bush, where for the most part he lived his short life amid surroundings that were in keeping with his poetic and dreamy nature.

<sup>1</sup> In the *Melbourne Argus*, June 11, 1908, Sir Frank Madden speaks of "his tartan riding-jacket—Royal Stuart Plaid—worn also by the Gordon Clan and the Gordon Highlanders."

## CHAPTER X

### MR. GEORGE RIDDOCH'S REMINISCENCES OF GORDON

ONE of the few really intimate friends of Adam Lindsay Gordon still surviving is Mr. George Riddoch of Koorine Station, near Mount Gambier, South Australia, younger brother of the late John Riddoch, who was Gordon's Mæcenas, helping him out of difficulties and always welcoming him as a guest for an unlimited period in his stately home, Yallum Park, South Australia. Mr. George Riddoch's station was at the time many miles distant from Gordon's various homes in South Australia, but Gordon had a strong affection for him and an instinctive feeling of reliance in the staunch Scot. The poet used to say, "I could keep out of——(whatever it was, going away to steeplechases or what not) if I only had George by me."

Once when he had been asked to ride in a steeplechase at Ballarat about which he had great misgivings, meeting George Riddoch, he asked if he might come to his station for a visit. Receiving a welcome response the two rode together to Mr. Riddoch's place ninety miles on. The day after their arrival Gordon went to his host and said that he felt he ought to go to Ballarat. Might he have a horse sent on for a remount in the early morning. "I won't do anything of the kind, Gordon," said Mr. Riddoch, "you came here to keep you away from that steeplechase."

"Very well, then," said the poet, "I shall go without your help," and as nothing could dissuade him, Mr. Riddoch sent the remount on. And Gordon was in Ballarat a few days after and rode in the race and had one of his worst falls, so his presentiment was right. History re-



peated itself afterwards in Melbourne. Gordon met Mr. Riddoch one day in Collins Street and entreated him not to leave him because people were urging him to ride in a steeplechase and he had a presentiment against doing it. "Well," said Mr. Riddoch, "I have arranged to go over to Tasmania with a friend, but if he doesn't mind waiting, I'll put it off till the race is over." The friend could not wait, so Mr. Riddoch went, and Gordon rode in the race and had another bad fall.

"Gordon," says Mr. Riddoch, "though he was wanting in judgment in his own affairs, was fairly level-headed about general matters. Mr. Riddoch's brother and Gordon stood together for the two seats for the District of Victoria in Parliament in South Australia against Mr. Randolph Stow, the Attorney-General in the Blythe Government. About this election Mr. J. Howlett Ross makes a curious mistake. He says that the electors became dissatisfied with Mr. Stow, "who was considered to be giving too much support to the squatters." As a matter of fact Stow was identified with the crusade against the squatters, to break up their runs, and Gordon stood for the same interest as John Riddoch, who was one of the leading squatters, though neither he nor his colleague, Gordon, were extreme in their views.

One of Gordon's most engaging characteristics was a dislike to hearing disparaging remarks being made about any one. During the election hearing some one make a bitter attack on his adversary, Mr. Stow, he got angry with him and said that abuse was no argument and did not want to hear such remarks.

Mr. Riddoch says that he never heard Gordon say an unkind thing about anybody except once, and that was apropos of Gordon's first speech in Parliament. He, Gordon, was speaking in reply to the Governor's speech, which sets forth the Policy of the Ministry, and corresponds with the King's Speech in the House of Commons at the opening of Parliament. He (Gordon) brought in a good

many Latin quotations, concerning which the Hansard reporter, in commenting upon it, said, he hardly knew whether to characterize the speech as a Latin speech with English quotations, or an English speech with Latin quotations. Years after when they were together Mr. Riddoch asked him (Gordon) if he had quite forgiven the author of the remark. He said, "No, and if I knew who wrote the article I do not think I could keep my hands off him." Mr. Riddoch was surprised and said to Gordon, "That is the first time I ever heard you say such an ungenerous thing."

Gordon had not a good delivery as a speaker. He spoke rather stiffly and hesitated a good deal, but he could make a good point. Mr. Riddoch had many long rides with Gordon, sometimes for two or three days together. On these rides Gordon's behaviour varied a good deal. Sometimes he was quite sociable and would talk freely and naturally on many subjects, at other times he would go off into a sort of reverie and start reciting Byron or something of the kind to himself, sometimes in a clear enough voice to be followed, but more often mumbling the poems to himself. He was always rather a monotonous reciter.

One very extraordinary thing Mr. Riddoch told me was that he never saw Gordon lose his temper, nor was he aware that Gordon had done any fighting with his fists in Australia, though he knew he was a very fine boxer, who had learned the art from celebrated prize-fighters. But Gordon himself tells us in his letters that he had fought a good deal. Mr. Riddoch says that he did not know that Gordon ever was a stockrider, or a station hand of any kind, though he would go from station to station as a horsebreaker. When horsebreaking he did not sleep in the men's hut; he believes that he had separate quarters or camp, and on some stations he may have stayed in the squatter's house, but as a horsebreaker he was naturally thrown a good deal into the society of stockmen, and he had been a constable in the Mounted Police.

But these occupations, and the roughing it he had done in the Bush, had not caused him to lose his fine instincts. When he went to stay with the Riddochs at Yallum there was nothing about him to suggest that he had not always lived in the society to which his birth entitled him.

But he had lost any dandyism he ever had about his dress; his clothes did not fit him very well and he did not wear them well. He was tall and stooped. The men on stations treated him with respect, which Mr. Riddoch attributes more to his mastery over horses, and his reputed learning and poetic talent than to any knowledge of his prowess as a boxer.

Mr. Riddoch regarded Gordon as the soul of honour—a singularly high-minded man, quite incapable of doing anything shady in connection with horses, which goes to discredit the tradition that he left England to hush up some shady episode in connection with horses.

Speaking of Gordon as a rider he says that he never saw him ride in any of his great steeplechases, but he describes him as being a wonderful rider over jumps, though his short sight may sometimes have made him take off at the wrong moment. On the other hand, he was absolutely careless of danger. He had wonderful nerve and extraordinary influence over a horse. He never knew anybody who so dominated horses.

And he could communicate his confidence to others. “On one occasion a kangaroo hunt was got up at Yallum (Mr. John Riddoch’s place). Over twenty-six horsemen were out, amongst the number Gordon, who was riding a very fine thoroughbred mare which had raced, and won on the previous day. There was also a sporting publican who was riding the winner of the steeplechase at the same meeting. We had several runs and kills before we got into a rough stringy-bark range, on the top of which was a fence made by felling trees and drawing them into line. This fence had been lately topped up and I thought was an insurmountable barrier, and tried to whip the hounds (grey-

hounds) off, but failed, and, thinking no horse would jump it, I called to Gordon, who was next to me, that it was no use trying; he looked round, smiled and went on, followed by the rider of the steeplechase winner, who also got over. Stimulated by such an example I would not do less than try and found myself on the other side of the fence and close to the heels of the other two. After killing four kangaroos we rode back to the fence where the other horsemen were, and as there was no gate for some miles on either side, the jump had to be negotiated in cold blood.

“If Gordon had not been there the fence would not have been attempted, and we should not have known the capacity of our horses, as the jump was certainly a very stiff one.”

On another occasion they were out with a certain Mr. Collie, who lived with Mr. Riddoch. Gordon and Mr. Riddoch had just finished the ninety-mile ride alluded to above. Mr. Collie came out to meet them in the narrow drive up to the house which is what they call a “half chain road” in Australia, meaning a road eleven yards (half a cricket pitch) wide. There was a four-foot-three fence on each side. Mr. Collie, who was well-mounted, nipped over it backwards and forwards. Gordon often referred to it asking sarcastically if Collie had left any fence standing.

Gordon was not fond of talking horse; the only thing he cared to talk about much was poetry. He had not a wide range of conversation. Sometimes he would discuss ordinary matters; at other times he got right away into dreamland. He never showed any brisk cheeriness; he was naturally reticent and depressed; at night he showed no desire to sit up or to rush to bed; he simply fell in with the habits of the house. He was a very moderate eater and he seldom drank any spirits, though he smoked a good deal. Mr. Riddoch never once saw him the worse for liquor.

Everybody used to say that Gordon was an ungainly rider. He had very long legs and a very long neck, and used to lean forwards as shown in the caricature which forms the frontispiece of this book. This was dashed off by one of the officers of the 14th Regiment at the St. Kilda Road Barracks, at Melbourne. Gordon wanted the caricature and was afraid that the officers would not let him have it, so he lay down with it on the floor and then suddenly rolled himself out of the door and bolted. He gave it to John Riddoch, who had it lithographed because Gordon was so delighted with it. Mr. Riddoch thinks it is the best sketch of Gordon which has ever appeared. He described Gordon as having a thin, straggling beard, bleached by the sun; brown hair, not very dark, and blue eyes. You only had to dare Gordon to try a jump and he at once went for it. One day he and Mr. Riddoch and a friend went out for a ride. Gordon was on a nasty-tempered mare. The friend said something about jumping, and Gordon turned round and went at a fence. The mare slipped on the greasy road and threw him, Gordon landed on his back with his long legs in the air still holding on to the bridle. He mounted again and put the mare over the fence. When he got back to the house he drew a sketch of himself almost as good as the frontispiece, showing his marvellous versatility.

Mr. Riddoch says that most of Gordon's trouble arose because he was so confiding, and that Gordon's poems did not attract much attention when they came out.

When he was living at Nahang Station Mr. Riddoch went down to visit his brother, the late John Riddoch, at Yallum Park. On June 23, 1870, something was said about Gordon in the evening, and John Riddoch mentioned that he had just got the news that the Esslemont business had been decided against Gordon.

Next morning George Riddoch said to his brother, "Don't you think I ought to ask Gordon up? It is not safe for him to be in Melbourne by himself after this."

John Riddoch said, "It's no use asking him, he's promised to come up here soon."

When this conversation was taking place Gordon was dead, having shot himself early in the morning and a little later John Riddoch got a telegram from Robert Power from Melbourne saying that Gordon had shot himself that morning.

In those days Mount Gambier, which is twelve miles from the Victorian boundary, was a difficult place to get at. To reach Adelaide Gordon once crossed the whole of the Long Desert, ninety miles across, which had a few springs at long distances apart. He is said once to have ridden across it with his wife in a single day. Questioned as to why Gordon says practically nothing about the blacks, Mr. Riddoch says that even in 1865 there were still a good many blacks in the Tatiara<sup>1</sup> District, but that they were fairly civilized, smart, sharp as needles, as docile as whites, ready to do a good day's work for wages. So it was natural for Gordon to have nothing to say about black outrages.

<sup>1</sup> A native word meaning "good country."

## CHAPTER XI

MR. F. VAUGHAN, P.M.'S, REMINISCENCES OF GORDON

[MR. VAUGHAN went to Adelaide in 1855 from England. He was in the bush for over twenty years in the south-east of South Australia, went on to Victoria, and afterwards, Queensland. He held the position of Police Magistrate for over twenty-three years, and retired from the service in 1909. He was one of Gordon's most intimate and beloved friends in South Australia. Gordon went to him for literary talks as he did to Tenison Woods.]

In Marcus Clarke's preface to his poems he makes Gordon the son of an officer in the English Army and educated at Woolwich. Was his father not a *teacher of languages at Cheltenham College*<sup>1</sup>—with two of my cousins, one of whom, Captain Herbert Vaughan, is yet alive and lives at Cheltenham Lodge, Worcester, England, with whom I had a conversation about Gordon two years ago when I visited the old country after a continuous residence in Australia of fifty-four years.

Gordon emigrated to South Australia in consequence of an escapade of his in England concerning a horse—I think a black mare, and entered the Mounted Police Force there I think in 1853. I arrived in South Australia in 1855. I knew Gordon in uniform. He was stationed at Penola and Mount Gambier Police Stations in the early 'fifties; he resigned and went breaking in horses on the stations first at Kilbride belonging to, then, a Mr. Watson. I saw him there at work and afterwards at different places. He never went in for "Gold Mining," "Overlanding," or "Cattle driving" as Marcus Clarke's preface indicates.

<sup>1</sup> He had previously been an officer in the Army.

His father dying he came into some money, £8,000 or about. He joined with a Mr. Harry Mount of Ballarat (whom I knew), and they took up land in West Australia at Cape Leeuwin for sheep farming. This was an unfortunate speculation by which Gordon lost half his money—the country turned out unsuitable for sheep, having poison plant over it. While farming this station (through his partner) Gordon became <sup>1</sup> (in 1861 or 1862, I think) one of the members of Parliament to represent the district of Victoria—this was practically the south-east corner of South Australia—Mr. John Riddoch of Yallum was the other member. Gordon beat the late Judge Stow, the then Attorney-General in South Australia, by three votes, thus breaking up the ministry—this was what was desired. Always racing and principally for pleasure, money slipped through his hands. Gordon married a little girl in Robe, South Australia—Maggie Park, the daughter of a stonemason, who nursed him at a hotel there after he had had a bad fall from a horse steeplechasing. He had a daughter by her who died afterwards at Ballarat. The widow subsequently married an overseer <sup>2</sup> of John Riddoch at Yallum near Penola, and presented him first with twins and an annual present afterwards—her name is now Maggie Low.

In Parliament Gordon was a failure. Well educated, indeed, a classical scholar, but he was too good for his company and talked over their heads. Very few understood him and he resigned. Afterwards he kept a large livery stable in Ballarat and used to race and hunt, but money slipped through his hands and he had to give up business. His capital being now nearly expended he went to Melbourne and used to ride steeplechases but a little, and write for the *Australasian*. As time went on impecuniosity stared him in the face, ill luck, bad health; and the failure of a claim he had made to an estate in the old country unsettled him, and brought about his death on Brighton Beach, near Melbourne 24/6/1870.

<sup>1</sup> Really in 1865.      <sup>2</sup> Peter Low—also employed by Mr. George Riddoch.



I knew Gordon well—intimately—he was hypersensitive, strangely retiring, very quiet, hard to know at first, very genial when well known, clever, brilliant in conversation, when you could get him going, in many ways simple as a child, no idea of business and cared little about anything except horses and writing poetry and prose also. Many sheets of as I thought well-written manuscripts have I seen him tear up as perhaps one sentence or even one word annoyed, exasperated him; the work of hours, perhaps days, thrown away. He was always either scribbling or riding and training horses, of whom he was passionately fond, and he understood horses, their nature, etc. Very long in the thigh, he had not a pretty seat on a horse, but he was a marvellous rider—could ride the rowdiest horse in the world: he was made for buck-jumper riding and steeplechasing *was* his forte, he could *make* horses jump or go through their fences. He had no fear, and although short-sighted rode his fences with great judgment. In “*Hippodromania*,” Part IV. “*Banker’s Dream*,” the words *How Cadger first over the double* refer to a grand steeple-chaser belonging to Gordon. Banker was Major Robins’s horse. Major Robins lived and raced in Melbourne for a long time and Gordon rode for him; the Major purchased Australian horses for the Indian Government in those days. I owe it to Gordon myself that from his teaching I was enabled to ride a buck-jumper and consequently able to break in my own colts and fillies in after years.

Gordon was no bushman; very short-sighted and riding about appeared always dreamy, so on occasion he got off his road and got lost. Once travelling from Penola to Mount Gambier in company with the Rev. J. E. Tenison Woods he got lost, losing the track. There were no roads in those days, but tracks and directions—the latter very *difficult* to understand sometimes. Night came on and they (quite lost) camped and hung up their horses to a tree. They had no food. They stayed together all night, had no sleep, but found their way in the morning and got

to Mount Gambier. Father Woods astonished the whole district by relating what a splendid night he had passed with Gordon, what a classical scholar he found him, and how he had enjoyed his (Gordon's) conversation. I have heard Father Woods speak of this. Hitherto the district had only known him as a trooper (mounted) and horse-breaker. Gordon was welcome everywhere. Many a time after I started a home of my own did he come to see me, sometimes out of his way too; there was always even when he was at his best an apparent undercurrent of sadness which made us sometimes sad ourselves; a condition of mind such as Gordon had is very catching. He was a very kind and considerate man—charitable, honourable to the last degree, never spoke ill of any one, taught his wife all she knew and taught her to ride and to ride to hounds, which both did faultlessly. A cheery man when one knew him in spite of his peculiar temper and moods. He was stationed at Kapunda, fifty miles north from Adelaide once, and while there got a slight sunstroke. This I think accounted somewhat for his strange manner at times, for he was different from other men at times.

His poems have been quoted by the novelist Whyte Melville. I remember him at St. Andrews, he was son of Whyte Melville of Mount Melville, near St. Andrews, and was killed in the hunting field. He was a Captain or Major in the Warwickshire Regiment at the time of his death. Am I right? this by the way.

Gordon's "Ride from the Wreck" was written by Gordon but the ride was ridden by one *Adam Farteh*, a stockman (this, I know, is disputed by some); but lately a son of Farteh's wrote to a newspaper man with the information. I knew Fartch, a bold rider, he was killed in the hunting field at Mount Gambier over a fence. Afterwards Gordon had many good horses at different times; he would never ride a flat race but would ride any one's horse over fences for the love of it.

I fancy Gordon's father had been a military man, but not in the Imperial army. It is so long ago since I knew poor Gordon that I have forgotten much of what he told me of his people, in fact I have forgotten everything almost. I care not to write anything except I am sure of it. I have never known any one whose death affected his friends half as much as poor Gordon's did, myself included; indeed no one in Australia knew him better nor admired him more than

FREDERICK VAUGHAN.

Maryborough,  
Queensland, 12/1/1912.

## CHAPTER X

### LETTERS ABOUT GORDON, CHIEFLY FROM HIS LITERARY CIRCLE

“ Anchorfield,

“ Muir Street, Hawthorn, Vic.,

“ January 25, 1912.

“ DEAR MR. SLADEN,

“ Our mutual friend Henry Gyles Turner has just passed on your letter asking me at the same time to forward to you any Gordon information at my disposal.

“ So much has been said and written about my old friend, that I fear I shall not be able to give you anything not generally known unless it be one thing and that certainly not without a sad interest of its own.

“ We were going together and not so very long before his death to a cricket match on the East Melbourne Ground, near Jolimont and, talking as we went along, he told me of a project he had for a new poem, and from the enthusiastic way in which he spoke of it I thought he meant it for his *magnum opus*. It was to be named after the heroine he had chosen, ‘Penthesilea’—Penthesilea, Queen of the Amazons; a stirring ‘horsey’ poem full of the thunder of hoofs and dust-clouds and the twanging of bow-strings, and, no doubt, he was the very man ‘to the manner born,’ for such a work.

“ Something occurred to interrupt our conversation which was not destined to be renewed, but I have often wondered since whether A. L. G. left a draft or even a skeleton sketch of the Penthesilea behind him.

“ Gordon’s widow, as you have doubtless heard, married

again, and no one seems to know where she is or whether she has any unpublished MS. of his with her. It seems not beyond the limits of possibility, however, that a draft or perhaps some stray stanzas of the *Penthesilea* may turn up years hence in some unexpected quarter—again, even if a draft had survived it might have been destroyed by some person entirely careless about such affairs.

“Here, however, you have a record of Gordon’s intention; if to record such an intention might be within the scope of your work, speaking of Gordon whom I knew very well indeed, I have never yet seen a picture of him that brought the real man before me. There is an early (and awful) photo taken in Adelaide representing him as clean-shaved as a priest. This though a fearful libel is much liked by people who never saw him or watched the play of his features. There is no expression in it whatever. My Gordon was a man with a hairy face—a kind of Esau—not shaved in patches, a bit of clean chin or cheek here, and a small allotment under hair here and there. No! He wore a not too long russet beard, with moustache a little lighter in tone run into one. There is not a single bearded likeness to be seen in Melbourne, but every one who knew him in these parts will be sure to be disappointed, if the statue now projected comes out with an utterly smooth face—Gordon’s eyes, none too large, were of a steely-grey, and lighted up to blue as he became excited in conversation, his nose straight, long, thin and pointed, his lips (what one saw of them) thin and determined, his forehead deeply lined and the crowsfeet at the corner of his eyes, carried at times much merriment in them. His figure and legs denoted a man who had spent much of his life in the saddle. A manly figure and a remarkable one at that—altogether.

“With many kind regards and remembrances and wishing you a glad new year,

“Yours truly,

“GEO. GORDON McCRAE.”

Of course you will remember how Gordon took his jumps in hurdle-racing with the feet jammed completely home in the stirrup and at the critical moment with the back of his head laid actually back on the crupper—from which position he returned easily and gracefully as the horse came over.

Gordon's hair, of a dark brown, was plentiful and slightly wavy, his complexion bronzed; his hands which were large and bony were brown.

He was very short-sighted, yet I never knew him to wear glasses.

Once I asked him how he managed in steeplechasing. He replied, "Well enough, but I see through a mist and never beyond the ears of the horse."

In reading, his book or paper was held up close against his face, his nose almost touching the page.

His rote memory was wonderful. Gordon was no fool, but he could "rote" volumes (the exception to prove the Shakespearian rule).

I remember one day at the Old Yorick he asked me to accompany him to Massina's (the printer's), to get the proofs of "Britomarte," about which he was very anxious.

We got them and returned and in the club there, it was early in the day, and scarcely any one about, he recited "Britomarte" to me from beginning to end fluently and without a trip as he walked up and down the room.

His recitation was a sort of chant or croon, and I think it must have been peculiar to himself. The time in it very well marked. Once one got used to it, one liked it.

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Mr. Henry Gyles Turner, editor of the *Melbourne Review* in its palmiest days and joint-author with the late Alexander Sutherland of *The Development of Australian Literature*—the standard work on the subject, writes—

"Some years ago there was a feverish enthusiasm worked up about erecting over his grave in Brighton a

suitable monument, subscriptions came in very well, and this was done, with the result that on every anniversary of his death some of the members of the literature societies make a pilgrimage to lay wreaths thereon. Recently a bolder project for a national (!) memorial is afoot, as you will see from the enclosed circular. . . . When I was treasurer of the Yorick Club, I used to see Gordon there occasionally in the late 'sixties, about a couple of years before his death. Rather a reticent and downcast-looking man, whose manner did not invite familiarity, though he could brighten up when he got on horsey topics and the glass went round. Like many of the original members of that club you had to 'make a night of it' if you wanted to get the best out of them. All I can say for him is that he was not quite so depressing as poor Kendall, and despite his grievous lack of pence he occasionally let himself go. McCrac can give you more useful information."

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The late Arthur Patchett Martin, whose *Temple Bar* article, published in February 1884, though it was not so early as the first *Baily's* article by fifteen or twenty years, was the first complete study of Gordon's poems ever presented to the British public, says in this article<sup>1</sup>—

"There is little to be told of his life in the Victorian metropolis. Among an essentially sporting community, he was far more famous as a horseman than as a poet. His tall, gaunt figure, and his superb steeplechase riding, became familiar to many colonials, especially to those with 'horsey' tendencies. He published his verses, at first anonymously and always shyly, as though somewhat ashamed of them. His bush life probably intensified his natural habit of gloomy introspection; while he was a sceptic as to religious creeds, he had a strong yearning towards religious aspirations. Saving the occasional society of a bohemian journalist or a trainer of horses, he

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by the kind permission of Macmillan & Co.

was as solitary in the crowded streets of Melbourne as in the wild and lonely bush of Australia Felix; probably he felt more so. . . . He grew poorer and poorer, but was too sensitive to ask the assistance that many a sporting or literary admirer in Melbourne would have been glad to afford. At length he became tired of the struggle and one evening, I think it was the evening of the very day on which his last volume of poems appeared, Adam Lindsay Gordon blew out his brains at Brighton, a marine suburb of Melbourne. This was in accordance with his cherished Pagan creed, that a man should know when the feast was over, that he should not linger at the festive board after the lights were out.

“Most of Gordon’s poems are singularly sombre in character, and seem to be tinged by the bitter reflections and dark forebodings that led to his own untimely end. They are filled, too, with a passionate agnosticism, as of one who cannot but hold that there is nothing beyond the grave, and that life itself is a mockery and a delusion, and yet clutches at any evidence of human love or heroism which seems to show that man is more than the beasts of the field. Such are the verses entitled, ‘Sunlight on the Sea,’ ‘The Song of the Surf,’ ‘Wormwood and Nightshade,’ ‘Quare Fatigasti.’

“As I now write I can, in fancy, hear the delighted tones with which one of these ‘ancient boon companions’ used to burst out in the crowded streets of Melbourne to the astonishment of the passers-by, with what he called ‘Gordon’s Epitaph on a Mutual Friend.’”

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Mr. W. J. Sowden, the editor of the *Adelaide Register*, who is recognized as one of the chief authorities on Gordon, and is heading the movement for buying Gordon’s cottage as a National Museum, writes—

“I may add, as likely to be of some interest to you, that with others I am negotiating for the purchase of Dingley Dell, Gordon’s south-eastern home, close to the



scene of the wreck, immortalized in his poem 'From the Wreck.' This was the wreck of the steamer *Gothenberg* on Carpenter's Rocks, near to Mount Gambier. Dingley Dell has gradually fallen into disrepair, and a generous donor has undertaken with others to pay any reasonable price for it, and preserve it as a national relic and rendezvous of interested tourists from various parts of the world, who will go to see the scenes which Gordon loved to depict, particularly in his lines about the golden wattle which abounds there, and also to inspect MS. and other objects of special interest to Gordonians. I have good reason to believe that our object will shortly be attained. Meanwhile, it may or may not be information for you to know that practically all the movements to perpetuate the fame of Gordon had their origin in South Australia. This relates particularly to the obelisk erected near to the brink of the Blue Lake at Mount Gambier, which is celebrated as the spot where Gordon jumped his horse sideways over a panel on the margin of a steep declivity—a feat which was in recent years imitated by a well-known horseman. You are, of course, aware that the wonder of Gordon's riding was not that he did what many stockmen have done, but that he did it in spite of a nearsightedness which amounted almost to blindness. The other memorial is that at the Brighton cemetery, which was largely subscribed for by South Australians. It will not be news to you either, I suppose, to be told that Gordon's widow, who married again and is now Mrs. Low, is still living in what we call the south-east—the scene of most of his exploits. You are aware, too, of the fact that Gordon was a failure as a member of Parliament, mainly because he had little appreciation of practical affairs.

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A contributor to the *Adelaide Register*, writes—

“The bard, the scholar, and the man who lived  
That frank, that open-hearted life which keeps  
The splendid fire of English chivalry

From dying out; the one who never wronged  
 A fellowman; the faithful friend who judged  
 The many, anxious to be loved of him,  
 By what he saw, and not by what he heard,  
 As lesser spirits do; the great brave soul  
 That never told a lie, or turned aside  
 To fly from danger.”

“Such is Kendall’s tribute to his friend. And, with no wish to exaggerate his good qualities or hide his blemishes, that is the impression—a nobleness of character and straightforwardness of living—received from the plain record of Gordon’s life, and supported by the testimony of those who knew him. Beneath the proud, reserved and usually unattractive exterior was hidden a courageous and clean nature. Even in the scapegrace days of his youth he was “generous and honourable, but reckless and misguided.” His English military instructor found him ‘idle and reckless, but I never heard of him doing a dishonourable action.’”

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A close friend, Mr. W. Trainor, exclaimed of him enthusiastically: “Oh, Gordon was, I think, the noblest fellow who ever lived! Very queer in his ways, though. I have ridden ten miles with him at a walking pace, and he didn’t say a word the whole time, but went on mumbling to himself and making up rhymes in his head.” There was also something, “so generous and noble about him, he was so upright and conscientious amid all the whims of his peculiar nature, that I felt him to be of a stamp quite superior to the men around him, and the closer our acquaintance grew, the deeper became my feelings of respect and admiration.” A fine character, this, for a man who had to earn his bread as Gordon did! In his South Australian days the poet made the acquaintance of the Rev. Julian Tenison Woods, who records that even then Gordon was subject to a restless sort of discontent, which at times almost impelled him to the idea of putting an end to the weariness of life. “This,” Gordon

explained, "was a sort of melancholy through which much of the finest poetry owed its existence." "This conversation," continues the priest, "made a deep impression on me, for I connected it with those sad and moody fits which grew upon him more and more. He was very silent and thoughtful in these times, and often failed to hear half of what was said to him."

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Mrs. M. A. Makin of Mount Monster Station, South Australia, writes—

"He was working for my father, the late G. W. Hayes of South Australia, who was a breeder of horses for the Indian army. Gordon was employed to handle these horses so that they could be shipped to India. He lived for some years with relations of mine, all station people, I was only a child then, but can still remember him, he was altogether a strange character. I knew the woman he married, we had in our house many scraps of poetry he used to sit and compose and write them after his day's work was done. I have his book of poems, also the picture of his grave. Of course you know he committed suicide on the Brighton Beach, near Melbourne. It was a very sad end, poor fellow, and he had many friends who would willingly have helped him. Money matters I believe were the cause. Gordon's home while in South Australia was most of the time with my relations."

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Mrs. E. A. Lauder, of 3, Davison Place, South Melbourne, gives the following account of her first meeting with Gordon—

"Gordon came over to our parts cattle-hunting and the swamps where he got lost and camped alone at our creek. Reddick, Beelish, South Australia, where he was a dear friend of ours for many years. My late father was a drill sergeant whom Gordon knew at home. So our home was a house of comfort to him—we all loved poetry and our

beautiful bush; but we left that part without seeing poor Gordon. I left a letter in our tree<sup>1</sup> we called our post office, but I don't suppose he ever got it. By a piece of poetry I read in the *Australasian*, I found out he was dead and no one here knew where he was buried until I found his dear baby's grave at Ballarat, and his at Brighton."

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Letters have also been received from Miss Phyllis Burrell, of 4, Russell Street, Adelaide, South Australia (whose uncle was in the mounted police with Gordon). Gordon was constantly at her mother's house in Adelaide, and even on the footing of one of the family.

<sup>1</sup> Near this tree was a kind of glade where Gordon and Mrs. Lauder were accustomed to meet. Going to see this place after Gordon's death Mrs. Lauder found in it an emu's nest with the three eggs presented by her to Mr. Sladen and still in his possession.

THE END



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