

LIFE AND TIMES OF SIR A. T. GALT

temper, if his father's son in physique. All accounts picture her as a woman of unusual individuality and strength of character, shrewdly observant and keenly humorous, gifted with a power of quaint and original phrase.

John was the second of the three children, two sons and one daughter, who came to the Irvine household. In early childhood he was of feeble and delicate health, partly because of too rapid growth, so that there was no thought of following in his father's steps. A quiet and meditative boy, he developed early a passion for reading which did not meet with favor from the bustling mother, and an eagerness for following up all the tales and legends of the neighborhood crones, with which she had more sympathy. Neither in the school at Irvine nor in that at Greenock, where the family moved when John was ten, did he display any special brilliance in his studies. He did develop early a remarkable power of observation and a tenacious pictorial memory which gave him in after years the abundant material for his vivid descriptions of the lairds and burghers of Ayr.

While still in his teens, John Galt was apprenticed to business life. After spending a few months in the local Custom House, which was regarded as specially useful as a training school for the penmanship so important in the clerk's equipment in his day, he entered the commission house of James Miller and Company. The routine of the office left time and thought free for other interests, and Galt spent his free hours making walking journeys to neighboring historic scenes, composing rhetorical poetry in rivalry with other literary aspirants of the little town, and forming projects for developing waterpower in the hills behind the town or for redeeming sand banks from the waters of the Firth. The traveller, the writer, the promoter of future years was shadowed forth in his boyish interests.

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