

## AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

said that I was the best letter-writer he knew: Henry tells me I write well; and Symonds said I had *l'oreille juste*; but writing of the kind that I like reading I cannot do: it is a long apprenticeship. Possibly, if I had had this apprenticeship forced upon me by circumstances, I should have done it better than anything else. I am a careful critic of all I read and I do not take my opinions of books from other people; I have not got 'a lending-library mind' as Henry well described that of a friend of ours. I do not take my opinions upon anything from other people; from this point of view—not a very high one—I might be called original.

"When I read Arthur Balfour's books and essays, I realised before I had heard them discussed what a beautiful style he wrote. Raymond, whose intellectual taste is as fine as his father's, wrote in a paper for his All Souls Fellowship that Arthur had the finest style of any living writer; and Raymond and Henry often justify my literary verdicts.

"From my earliest age I have been a collector: not of anything particularly valuable, but of letters,