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his dream-child ? It may be the stoutest of the breed or it may be the weakling ; it may be the first-born, it often is the Benjamin. Fathers in the flesh know this secret tenderness. Many a child and many a book is brooded over with a special love even before its birth.—Loved thus, for no grace or merit of its own, this book is my dream-child.

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Here, by the way, I should like to say my word in honour of Fiction—"fiction" contradistinguished from what is popularly termed "serious" writing.

If, in a story, the characters and the events are truly convincing ; if the former are appealingly human and the latter are so carefully devised and described as never to evoke the idea of improbability, then it can make no difference in the intellectual pleasure of the reader whether what he is made to realise so vividly is a record of fact or of mere fancy. Facts we read of are of necessity past : what is past, what is beyond the immediate ken of our senses, can only be realised in imagination ; and the picture we are able to make of it for ourselves depends altogether on the sympathetic skill of the recorder. Is not Diana Vernon, born and bred in Scott's imagination, to the full as living now before us as Rob Roy Macgregor whose existence was so undeniably tangible to the men of his days ? Do we not see, in our mind's eye, and know as clearly the lovable "girt John Ridd" of Lorna Doone the romance as his contemporaries, Mr. Samuel Pepys of the hard and uncompromising Diary or King James of English Annals ?

Pictures, alike of the plainest facts or of the veriest imaginings, are but pictures : it matters very little therefore whether the man or the woman we read of but never can see in the flesh has really lived or not, if what we do read raises an emotion in our hearts. To the novelist, every character, each