

# JOHN GALT, NOVELIST AND EMPIRE-BUILDER

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JOHN GALT, dramatist, biographer, novelist, empire-builder, now darkly fallen into oblivion these sixty years, is deserving of a better fate. A contemporary of Sir Walter Scott, Susan Ferrier, Christopher North, and Lockhart, he belonged to the band of Scotch magazine writers who did so much for English literature in the early days of *Blackwood's* and *The Edinburgh Review*. So great was the success of "The Annals of the Parish" that the circulation of *Blackwood's*, in which it ran as a serial, was "prodigiously increased," and, as soon as it came out in book form, four hundred copies were sold in Edinburgh and five hundred in London in three or four days, leading William Blackwood to remark, "I have seldom published a more popular or valuable book." One of his later works, "The Entail," had the honour of being read thrice by no less exalted personages than Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron. In his enthusiasm Byron declared that the heroine of this novel, *Leddy Grippy*, was one of the greatest characters in literature outside the pages of Shakespeare. Praise almost as glowing came from the pen of the long-silent Henry Mackenzie, the Nestor of Edinburgh men of letters, who, without knowing the name of the genius, placed his "Annals" alongside "The Vicar of Wakefield." Crowning eulogism of all, the great and terrible Lord Jeffrey hailed him as the first good Scottish representative of the humours of lowly life.



JOHN GALT  
FROM A DRAWING IN "FRASER'S MAGAZINE"

Galt's chief claim to remembrance lies in the newness and excellence of his work in "The Annals of the