

again, and it is interesting to know that his second wife, the daughter of Frederick and Lady Charlotte Locker, and who I believe is still living, was the widow of the Hon. Lionel Tennyson.

Nine years after graduation, that is in 1884, Augustine Birrell published his first bright volume of essays, lectures and papers, gathered together under the graceful title of "*Obiter Dicta*." The book was sent out into the world anonymously to make its way there by its own merits, bearing only on the title page this inviting quotation—so suggestive of irresponsible literary gossip—"An obiter dictum, in the language of the law is a gratuitous opinion, an individual impertinence, which, whether it be wise or foolish, right or wrong bindeth none, not even the lips that utter it." Unpretending and modest as this may seem, there is in these essays much wise and clear-sighted criticism of authors, literature and the tendencies of the times.

The first—that on Carlyle—is perhaps the best in the book. It is not long, but it is an excellent piece of work. Carlyle strongly compels the writer's admiration, yet his critical faculty is not thereby blinded. He sets about his task in the most methodical way—too methodical, perhaps, but for the ease of the writing—considering first "the invariable indications of Mr. Carlyle's literary handiwork—the tokens of his presence—Thomas Carlyle, his mark;" then his actual literary work as critic, biographer, and especially as historian; closing with a word or two on his politics, and saying just a little about the letters and diary, which he thinks Mr. Froude "ought to have read in tears and burned in fire." Such an orderly arrangement is characteristic of Birrell, but shows in this essay unusually clearly.

The other essays in the book are "On the alleged obscurity of Mr. Browning's poetry," "Truth Hunting," the memoirs of Benvenuto Cellini, that charming rogue who so succeeds in "keeping his own atmosphere," that as you read of his crimes so piously told, your moral sense is benumbed until you "smile when you ought to frown, chuckle when you should groan and—O, final triumph—laugh aloud when, if