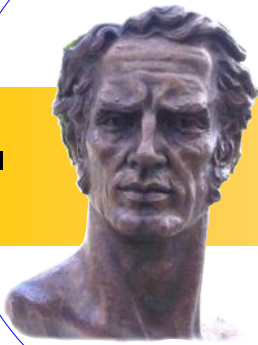




ISSUE 39 – SEPTEMBER 2016



THE WAYFARER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ADAM LINDSAY
GORDON COMMEMORATIVE COMMITTEE INC.

**THE POET OF AUSTRALIA 1833-1870
WHO LAID THE FOUNDATIONS FOR LITERATURE AND THE ARTS
IN AUSTRALIA**

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**THE ADAM LINDSAY
GORDON
COMMEMORATIVE
COMMITTEE INC.
(A0049425F)**

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HERITAGE SITES



80 Howie Street, Miners Rest, Ballarat. Photo Google Maps

Arranmore Gates. Property first associated with Henry Clarke Mount, from 1854-1875.
Known in family as "Wild Harry" Was in partnership with Gordon at Craig's Livery Stables.



Muntham Homestead Complex owned until 1866 by Edward Henty, who lived in
Portland. Managed by Cuthbert Featherstonhaugh, friend of Gordon
Situated between Casterton and Coleraine.

[Information From VHD Heritage Council Victoria](#)



"So the burglar plundered your whole house while you hid under your
bed. But what about the loaded revolver that you keep under your
pillow?" "Ah, he didn't find that."



ADAM LINDSAY GORDON

REJECTION ANONYMITY AND PRAISE

The Complex Life of a Genius

AN UNSENTIMENTAL JOURNEY continued, by "The Hermit".

Pen name of Adam Lindsay Gordon

The Australasian Saturday 6 March 1869, page 11. Trove-National Library of Australia

Part 2 of Gordon's journey from Melbourne to the home of John Riddoch at Yallum Park near Penola, S.A. In January 1869. This account by Gordon is a rare insight into the mind of the poet and to his inner-most feelings.



I have kept silence lately—I don't know that I need sing *mea culpa* on that account. Many unlooked-for contingencies may have arisen since (quite accidentally) "To be continued" was tacked on to my last letter. The columns of *The Australasian* may have been fully stocked with matter more important than my M.S., which may have been held over in consequence; or I may have come to grief in more ways than one, and "Silence after grievous things is good," saith the poet. (Ed. Swinburne). However, I shall patch up my continuations as best I may. True enough, I'm not quite clear about where I left off, nor have I any concise idea of how I shall end. Perhaps some intelligent reader will discover the connecting links between my literary waifs and strays, or I may be allowed to suppose so, on the principle of the Scotch shepherd who, when neither he nor any man, woman, or child of his house-hold could decipher the hieroglyphs of a letter composed and penned by one of his sons to a relative in the metropolis, and submitted to the family council for approval before postage, coolly observed, "They're braw scholars in Lunnun, bairns, aiblins they'll mak sense fra it."



I have an indistinct recollection of a story which I heard when a boy from a schoolmate. A certain painter of mediaeval times was engrossed and absorbed by a longing to impart to canvas the lineaments of a face that haunted him; this he could never do to his satisfaction, and he was constantly destroying his half-finished pictures, and recommencing with a like result. I fancy the weird beauty of the image that vexed his brain was no dream-begotten ideal, but reflection of something seen at "the Bracken," or "Walpurgis," or some other unlawful haunt where witches held their revels, for this man had been a neophyte (Ed. a recent convert to a belief) in what was then termed "the Black Art." One day an enemy in the garb of a necromancer (Ed. communicator with the dead) instructed him how he might carry out the project which was now the aim of his life. Acting on the counsels received, he selected from the best of his models the most perfect features, and painted each feature separately, keeping the whole of the canvas covered except the small space measured out to work upon. I shall not bother you with what happened when the work was completed and the picture uncovered. Neither the sequel of the tale nor the moral (if there be one) have any reference to the parallel I would draw. I think "Teufel's frau" (Ed. Devil's wife) is the name of the legend, should anyone care to hunt it up.



My sketches are all unconnected fragments, shaken together at random. If by any chance I do make anything like a portrait the likeness will be accidental. Thus if I do draw Clarke's nose, I shall be careful to put in Smith's eyes and Walker's mouth. I try to write what at some time or other I have seen or fancied, with no invention and without much exaggeration, but I would purposely spoil a picture past recognition rather than make a true photograph.



Agloomy, gusty day; a sky leaden-hued, save where an occasional lurid sun-gleam flares fitfully through a livid cloud-rack; a wind savage or sullen by fits, that storms or sulks alternately; a burnt-umber waste, flecked with patches of pale yellow ochre, feebly bearing witness of grasses that once lived and since perished; a distance of slow monotonous undulations, thinly sprinkled with stunted trees so few and so far between that all social intercourse between them seems specially interdicted; a mountain of dusky purple looming dimly against the

skyline, and in the foreground—I was going to add “a solitary traveller,” but the shade of the late lamented G.P.R.J. might resent so palpable a plagiarism. (Ed. English Novelist, George Payne Rainsford James 1799-1860)

The spirits of all animals are more or less mercurial, and more consequently, to a certain extent, influenced by the weather. On a day like the one I refer to, by turns chilly and oppressive, with nothing cheering in its warmth and nothing bracing in its cold, a traveller may be excused for seeing without observation and hearing without attention. I rode mechanically, noticing nothing in particular, and I believe my very thoughts were a blank. I envied my horses as, full of rest and corn, they stepped along briskly, and almost cheerfully; the weather did not affect them as much as it should have done. I suppose if it were not for that confounded gastric juice, the animal spirits of man would be at least on a par with the spirits of other animals. As it is, I think they have rather the best of us on that score, if no other.



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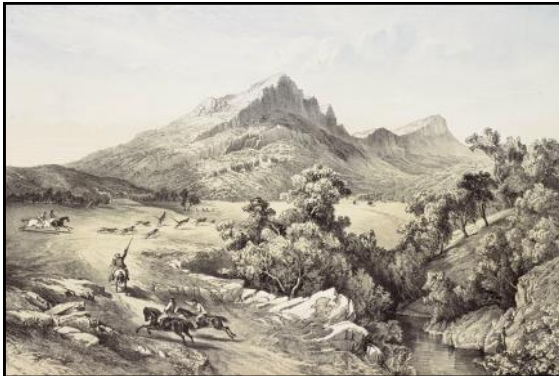
In many respects man is superior to every other animal, but it hardly follows as a necessary sequence, incontrovertible and infallible, that he is more to be envied on that account, nor even that he is (save in his own conceit) intrinsically more valuable. I will not argue this question either way. I assert nothing. I simply surmise that a conviction may be difficult and a doubt feasible. Natural philosophy of nature, is a puzzle which the study of natural history renders still more perplexing. Man reasons; but I would cite many instances of brute sagacity which can hardly be set aside as instinct, because they involve a train of thought. All animals have natural affections, many have reverence, gratitude, and goodwill (towards man, at least); some have memory to a wonderful extent, and, for all we know, they may have hope, and hope, after all, is only expectation magnified. Courage, and a certain amount of forbearance and unselfishness are among the commonest of mere animal attributes. But I am not writing as *The Naturalist*. Man certainly has the power of concentrating thought, and condensing idea, and preserving memory, and nourishing hope in a sort of mental hot-bed; he has also conscience, which is an elastic article, and may be stretched on occasion; and because of these things, and because the whole brute creation is, to a certain extent, subject to him, he has a theory that he is not infinitely higher and better than all other creatures, but is also a being pre-eminently distinct and divided from these by an impassable gulf; and he may be right, although daily and hourly his pet theories are proved erroneous.

“He weaves and is clothed with derision,
He sows and he shall not reap,
And his life is a sleep and a vision
Between a sleep and a sleep.”

Swinburne 1837-1909)

TO BE CONTINUED

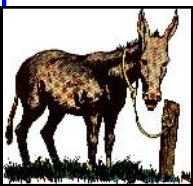
The second day of my pilgrimage was, as far as weather goes, almost a counterpart of its predecessor, but I had left the plains behind, and got into better country, greener and more sheltered. I was in the saddle at dawn, and I pushed on at a smarter pace, for, with an early start given in, I was bound to ride quick in order to make the stage I purposed.



The morning was young when Mount Gudgeon and his twin brother loomed large on my right, (Ed. Southern Grampians) as I passed them at a brisk canter. At midday I fed my nags at "the Grange," (Ed. Hamilton) and the long shades of afternoon found me beyond "the falls" (Ed. Wannon") and between the two rivers, in a fertile hilly country, well watered but sparingly timbered. I was riding a useful sort of hackney in good condition for travelling., and he seemed fresh enough, though he had carried me all the way. I was leading an old mare, with a cross of the Arab, a good one to fall back upon in case the other should tire. Both my horses were borrowed, and I had my

own spurs on, but I wished to save the mare as much as possible, because she is a great favourite with her owner, so much so that I fancy he esteems the loan of her as the highest mark of his friendship. She was very fat, too, and I should have let her carry my wallet (Ed. A bag for holding provisions, especially when travelling,) and a spare saddle the whole journey if she had behaved herself discreetly; but whether she wanted a modest quencher at Muddy-slush Creek, which I passed without drawing rein knowing it to be brackish, or whether it was one of those unaccountable caprices which petted animals sometimes indulge in, any way she hung back, suddenly forcing me to pull up short several times. I humoured her at first, for she is a good leader, as a rule; but she was still awkward, and at last I hit her, upon which she refused to lead at all. I had nearly a score of miles to go, and it was getting late, with a threatening sky and a hilly track, so I shifted the saddles, and mounted the mare without loss of time.

As a rule, I have rather an antipathy to pet animals. They are mostly pampered and peevish. I doubt whether they are better off than their less favoured fellows, and certainly they are not to be envied should they change ownership. Brown has always got two or three four-footed familiars that he pets pre-eminently, exalting them above their fellows, and he believes in them too for the time being, and would



have his friends believe in them also. Of course it would be treason and heresy to speak disparagingly of "Punch", who, if his legs were equal to his carcase, would really make a rather respectable cob (Ed. A powerfully built, short-legged horse) in spite of his muleish shoulder; but it would be also worthy of death or of bonds (Ed. Ropes, chains) to find fault in Brown's hearing with "Scout", the nondescript lurcher (Ed. a cross-bred dog), that

he fondly imagines to be a pure-bred setter. "Scout" is fond of sport in his own way, but his ideas of his subject are slightly confused, and his raids upon the adjoining poultry yards are household grievances with Brown's neighbours; he has a decided penchant for goslings, but I think young turkeys are his chief weakness; he is often taken red-handed, but Brown only pays the damage and fondles the delinquent, remarking, "He'll know better by and by," or "What a splendid dog he'll make when I can find time to teach him." I think justice will yet overtake the mongrel, for Brown is capricious, and when he tires of a pet (which he does soon of late) discards him at once, and supplants him with another.



Jones, on the other hand, is a Philanimalist (Ed. Friend of animals); he is absurdly fond of his horses and ridiculously kind to his dogs; dogs and horses alike are unwholesomely lusty and inordinately lazy, but Jones, at least, treats all alike—for that matter he pets his pigs in a mild way.



Now, Robinson is quite different from either of these, and is one of the last men you would suspect of over-indulgence to anything or anyone, but he has one or two pensioners that are valued, perhaps more from associative memories than for length of service. Thoughtlessly and inadvertently I once made him a fair offer (horses were cheap at the time) for a flea-bitten grey that had the run of a clover paddock, and for change of diet used to go cleverly over the fence surrounding the hat-stack whenever he felt inclined; his condition was so good that you would not have guessed within 10 years of his real age. I have not forgotten the look with which Robinson favoured me before he made answer, "I refused double that for him when I drove my own bullocks sixteen years ago; since then I've been lost with him once, and twice nearly drowned with him." That was all he said, and I stammered a half-apology.



Robinson's worst enemy will not accuse him of undervaluing money, or even overvaluing anything else. He is a hard man and a bear man, a Tartar to work for, and a Jew to deal with. If Gabriel were to come down to earth and offer to carry him on his shoulders straight to Paradise, Robinson would first stipulate that all tollgates and incidental expenses should be defrayed by the angel,



and put his spurs on. And yet I don't think "lamplighter" will ever be asked to earn his fodder; I feel sure that while his master lives no man will bid for him twice.

Mahomet's cat and Couthon's spaniel were probably inverted scapegoats. Mankind suffered for them, and not they for mankind. But after all "small vices are the virtues of some men" and a weakness for pets is in itself a great folly rather than a small vice. There is a touch of real feeling, and perhaps a suspicion of grim pathos, in Colonel Martinet's confession—

"When I tottered home from Rohilcund
With a sabrecut on my head,
I felt, for the moment only, stunned
By the news that Helen had fled;
Yet I shed some tears, being weak from my wound,
O'er the grave of the antelope dead."

In the days of their common bondage the reckless *sabreur* probably voted Leila a confounded little pest; perhaps he gave her an occasional shove with his boot when she got in his way, after obtaining more than her share of caresses; yet his sorrow for the fate of his frailer fellow-favourite was surely half unselfish.

But the borrowed mare, finding she had to go, put a good face on it, and rattled along merrily and easily, stretching her neck and snorting as she surmounted the difficult rises which began to grow longer and steeper as we neared our destination, till with a sharp sweep to the left we bore sideways down the abrupt hill that overlooks the township on the river, (Ed. Prob. Casterton), where our journey ended for the day. As we did so, the last gleam of a bloodshot sun flared through a black and purple rift that mottled the west with weird colouring and fantastic outline—a foul sky, yet not lacking a certain grotesque beauty, half repellent, like a song of Swinburne or an illustration of Gustave Doré.



Image-Microsoft Collection

JOHN RIDDOCH OF YALLUM PARK-NEAR PENOLA-SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The Advertiser Adelaide Monday 19 August 1895, page 6. Excerpts.

Probably no one did more for Adam Lindsay Gordon than John Riddoch, whose generous and genial disposition have made him universally liked and loved. From the time they first met on the hustings till the firing of the fatal shot which made "mute the tuneful tongue" and ended the 'fitful fever' of the unhappy poet's life Mr. Riddoch's assistance and advice were continually sought and as often given. Gordon's writings continue to grow in public favour, and more widespread daily becomes the regret that a life full of such possibilities, but all too long for his own liking, should have had so early and so tragic a termination. His was a nature particularly prone to the faults and failings of mankind, yet he was as generous as he was gifted, and as much above a mean or shabby action as the sky is from the earth.



State Library of South Australia, SLSA: B 9866

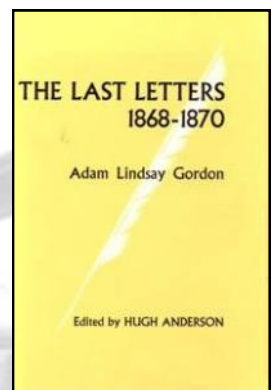
All who know Mr. Riddoch will recognise that there is nothing he would so much shrink from as prominence and publicity in connection with what he did for poor Gordon, and when waited upon a few days ago he expressed the hope that in anything that might be written his name should be omitted altogether. "I am a quiet man," said he, "and don't desire any notoriety of that sort", but this article would be robbed of much of its interest if its readers were to be kept in the dark, so to speak, as to who was the recipient of the poet's letters, which Mr. Riddoch has carefully preserved. These relics brim over with evidence of the generous treatment Gordon received from him.

Mr. Riddoch often used to ride out with Gordon when the muse was upon him. "He would mumble away in the saddle with his thoughts far away, and it was absolutely to get anything out of him then", observed Mr Riddoch.

"I remember when he wrote "The Stockrider" at Yallum. He climbed up a gumtree near my house, as he often did when he wanted to be quiet, and composed it there. He generally went out after breakfast when he had a poetical fit and evolved his verse.

Of course he was a highly educated man, notwithstanding his joining the police force and going in for horsebreaking. His eyesight was remarkably good at night, in fact he could read the smallest print by moonlight. I remember on one occasion he inscribed the Lord's Prayer on a fourpenny bit. Of course that was in the daytime". Lovers of Gordon will read with interest the letters he wrote to Mr. Riddoch from Victoria between July 7, 1868, and May 26, 1870. In one of them he states:- "I do not keep copies of my letters, and do not read them over, once written, as if I do this I generally tear them up, and it is better to write a bad letter sometimes than not at all." That Gordon did not revise his letters in any way is frequently manifest, for there are all sorts of orthographical errors to be encountered:- "July 7th 1868 My dear Mr. Riddoch, I should have written to you long ago, but my hand has been very bad; it was a compound fracture of the third figure bone in the hand (not the actual finger) from a kick, and I was not careful of it at first, so it got very bad, and the doctor said that he would cut off my hand if I did not keep it quiet. I have just got the splints off, and the hand is all right, the bone having set with a big lump. This is my first letter but in a day or two I will write a long account of things in general.

(Ed. 1868, Mar 21, Ballarat- Accident with "Necromancer" trod on Gordon's face.)



Visit Adam Lindsay Gordon's
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Our AGM will be held in Ballarat on Sunday 16 October
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Adam Lindsay Gordon

A gentleman by birth
Became a migrant prince on horseback,
Lord of our countryside.
He brought the old world
Singing to the new,
Giving heart to thousands
Learning to love a land
Many found unforgiving,
Strange to their transplant eyes.

It also challenged him,
And yet he found
Great harmonies of blue and gold
Under its open skies.
The strings and woodwinds of his poetry
Joined tympani of horses' hooves
To make the music,
Vibrant and haunting,
Of his life.

Too short, we say,
Who stand beside him now;
The froth and bubble of our modern lives
Swept far away.
He'll bless our coming
With his timeless hold
Upon the spirit of this procreant land,
Where much was new, and richer too,
Because he came.

Weston Bate
15 June, 2016



Photo by Helen Dehn
Saturday 18 June 2016