

**THE PRIVATE LIFE OF
HENRY MAITLAND:
A RECORD**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649680344

The Private Life of Henry Maitland: A Record by J. H. & Morley Roberts

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**THE PRIVATE LIFE OF
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A RECORD DICTATED BY J.H.

**REVISED AND EDITED BY
MORLEY ROBERTS**

SECOND EDITION

127095.
9/4/13

**LONDON
EVELEIGH NASH**

1912

INSCRIBED
TO THE MEMORY OF
MY WIFE

PREFACE

THIS book was dictated by J. H. mostly in my presence, and I consider it well worth publishing. No doubt Henry Maitland is not famous, though since his death much has been written of him. Most of it, however, outside of literary criticism, has been futile and uninstructed. But J. H. really knew the man, and here is what he has said of him. We shall be told, no doubt, that we have used Maitland's memory for our own ends. Let that be as it may; such an accusation can only be met by denial. When there is no proof of guilt, there may well be none of innocence. The fact remains that Henry Maitland's life was worth doing, even in the abbreviated and censored form in which it now appears. The man was not eminent, only because he was not popular and did not live long enough. One gets to eminence nowadays by longevity or by bad work. While Maitland starved, X or Y or Z may wallow in a million sixpences. In this almost childishly simple account of a man's life there is the essence of our

literary epoch. Here is a writing man put down, crudely it may be, but with a certain power. There is no book quite like it in the English tongue, and the critic may take what advantage he will of that opening for his wit.

At any rate here we have a portrait emerging which is real. Henry Maitland stands on his feet, and on his living feet. He is not a British statue done in the best mortuary manner. There is far too little sincere biography in English. We are a mealy-mouthed race, hypocrites by the grave and the monument. Ten words of natural eulogy, and another ten of curious and sympathetic comment, may be better than tons of marble built up by a hired liar with his tongue in his cheek. In the whole book, which cannot be published now, there are things worth waiting for. I have cut and retrenched with pain, for I wanted to risk the whole, but no writer or editor is his own master in England. I am content to have omitted some truth if I have permitted nothing false. The reader who can say truly, "I should not have liked to meet Henry Maitland," is a fool or a fanatic, or more probably both. Neither of those who are primarily responsible for this little book is answerable to such. We do not desire his praise, or even his mere allowance. Such as are interested in the art of letters, and

in those who practise in the High Court of Literature, will perceive what we had in our minds. Here is life, not a story or a constructed diary, and the art with which it is done is a secondary matter. If Henry Maitland bleeds and howls, so did Philoctetes, and the outcry of Henry Maitland is more pertinent to our lives. For all life, even at its best, is tragic ; and there is much in Maitland's which is dramatically common to our world as we see it and live in it. If we have lessened him at times from the point of view of a hireling in biographic praise, we have set him down life size all the same ; and as we ask no praise, we care for no blame. Here is the man.

MORLEY ROBERTS.

NOTE.—The full manuscript, which may possibly be published after some years, is, in the meantime, placed in safe custody.

CHAPTER I

It is never an easy thing to write the life, or even such a sketch as I propose making, of a friend whom one knew well, and in Henry Maitland's case it is most uncommonly difficult. The usual biographer is content with writing panegyric, and as he must depend for his material, and even sometimes for his eventual remuneration, on the relatives of his subject, he is from the start in a hopeless position, except, it may be, as regards the public side of the life in question. But in the case of a man of letters the personal element is the only real and valuable one, or so it seems to me, and even if I were totally ignorant of Maitland's work I think it would yet be possible for me to do a somewhat lifelike and live sketch of him. I believe, moreover, that it is my duty to do it, although no doubt in some ways it must be painful to those connected with him. Yet soon after his death many came to me desiring me to write his biography. It was an understood thing that of all his friends I knew him best, and was certainly the greatest and chief authority on his career