

IV.—*Memoir of the late Mr. JOHN JUST, of Bury.*

By Mr. JNO. HARLAND.

[*Read January 11th, 1853.*]

WHEN honoured by an intimation on the part of this Society, of its desire to have some memoir of its late corresponding member, Mr. John Just, a ready compliance with the wish that I should prepare a brief sketch of his life and character, was given—from no confidence of being able to do him justice; but rather from the feeling that I had no right to decline the sacred duty of offering a tribute, however feeble and inadequate, to the memory of my departed friend.

Before commencing the brief and imperfect sketch thus undertaken, permit me to observe that it is of necessity limited to what may be called the external biography, the outer life, of the man. Apart from autobiography, a man's own portrait of himself,—all biography which professes to be internal, seems to me to be not a little presumptuous. For one man to attempt to represent the life's thoughts and feelings of another, to depict all those countless attributes that make up the personal character, the deep inner being, of a human individuality,—this implies indeed a rashness so great, that the most gifted may naturally shrink from attempting the task. To say nothing of the differing powers, the various capacities of men; even to overlook the peculiar incapacity of some minds for rightly comprehending a man with whom they may be in daily and intimate intercourse;—we cannot forget that there must lie hidden in every human being, many



secret sources of life and motive, many deep founts of feeling and affection, which are only rarely, if at all, revealed even to the closest intimates, the oldest and most valued friends. Wise as beautiful is that saying of the Old Scripture—"The heart knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy." This difficulty (not to say impossibility) of interpenetrating another's mind, is greatly increased, when, as in the present case, that mind is veiled in the folds of a shrinking and reserved disposition. Were it asked or expected, then, that our deceased friend should be portrayed as he was, in all his relations to the unseen world of thought, no less than to this visible and palpable world of action, the task must have been relinquished from a fitting consciousness of inability to perform it. All that can be offered here, is a brief memoir derived from personal knowledge and observation, and the recollections of friends and kindred—a record of the outer life alone, of what the man said and wrote, accomplished and suffered, rather than of what he thought and felt, struggled for and aspired after,—in short, a sketch not so much of what he *was*, as of what he *did*.

Diffidently is this rendered to the Society, with the sole desire to place before it, however defectively and feebly, a true and faithful record of the life's pursuits and labours of its departed associate. For no tribute can be honourable to the memory that fails in fidelity or departs from truth. If less of direct eulogium be made than is felt by the writer, or is thought meet by this Society, let it be attributed to no coldness of regard, to no blindness to rare merit; but rather to a desire to shun any semblance of the inflated exaggeration of the French *éloge*, and to keep to the honest simplicity of a plain English memoir. Our loss,—the loss of science and of society,—will be far better estimated and appreciated by a bare record of what our friend laboured to effect, and what he really did accomplish, than by the most laboured eulogy or highly-wrought panegyric.



The late Mr. John Just was the eldest son of Mr. Jonathan Just, formerly a respectable and industrious farmer, residing at the village of Natland, in Westmorland, two miles south of Kendal. The family had been long settled there, and the subject of this memoir was born on the 3rd of December, 1797, in the same house in which both his father and his grandfather had resided, the farm having been in the occupation of the family for nearly a century, and it is still tenanted by a brother. John Just obtained the mere rudiments of an English education at the endowed school of his native village (then kept by the late Mr. James Ward, an artist of some repute); and as he grew up, strong and robust, he was employed, when not at school, in ploughing, harrowing, and in such other agricultural pursuits as the sons of farmers usually follow. He early manifested so intense a love, and so great an aptitude, for learning, that he was afterwards, when about fourteen years of age, sent to the grammar school at Kendal, where he commenced his classical education under the able tuition of the late Rev. John Sampson, its master; remaining in this school about twelve months. It is but right to state that, in after years, Mr. Just always spoke in grateful terms of Mr. Sampson, to whose care he acknowledged himself indebted for all his mathematical knowledge, in which he was no mean proficient.

Whilst here, the late excellent Carus Wilson, Esq., of Casterton Hall, near Kirkby Lonsdale, the owner of the property of which Mr. Just's father was tenant, had frequent opportunities of seeing the boy and judging of his talents and disposition; and, finding him to manifest so strong an intellect, and so remarkable a desire to acquire various knowledge, that gentleman liberally took him into his house, when he had nearly completed his fifteenth year, and sent him at his own cost to the neighbouring grammar school of Kirkby Lonsdale for about five years. While an inmate of Casterton Hall, he manifested his versatility of talent, and his



constant desire to be useful, in various ways. For instance, he amused himself by engraving the cypher upon a great portion of the family plate there; and brought his taste for the mechanical arts, and his skill in several of them, to bear practically in the manufacture of several barometers, which he constructed, graduated, and engraved himself, and which are still possessed by friends of his youthful years, who highly value them, not only for the sake of the maker, but also for their accuracy and excellence. One gentleman informs me that the best barometer he ever possessed was wholly made by Mr. Just. At the Kirkby Lonsdale School he completed his scholastic education, under the care of the late Rev. John Dobson. During this period, the change of his circumstances, especially the leisure he possessed and the exemption from farm labour, greatly favoured his studies, and he continued to be distinguished for indefatigable industry and for good conduct. At this early period of his life he manifested a taste for antiquarian pursuits, by commencing his investigation into the Roman Roads in the neighbourhood;—doubtless stimulated to this branch of archæological inquiry by the existence of a Roman station at Natland, in a bend of the river Kent, called the Water Crook, supposed to be the site of the ancient Concangium, where the ramparts of the square fort are still discernible, and various relics have from time to time been found. While a pupil at Kirkby Lonsdale, he took advantage of a holiday one winter's day, and walked thence to Borrow Bridge, on the Lune—a distance of sixteen or seventeen miles—to examine the fine Roman remains still existing there, and home again in the evening. Those only who know this mountain road can adequately estimate the arduous labour of this undertaking.

Mr. Just possessed a remarkably retentive memory, and whatever he once read he seemed thoroughly and permanently to make his own. A somewhat amusing instance of



this faculty is related by a gentleman, once a pupil in the Kirkby Lonsdale Grammar School, and a firm and kind friend of Mr. Just during nearly a quarter of a century. It was the practice at this school, at the beginning of every half-year, for the pupils to repeat the Latin grammar, in such portions daily as they were able, till they had gone through the whole book. On one of these occasions young Just commenced, and continued his unflagging way so long that (after having gone through more than one-half of the grammar) he utterly tired out the patience of the master, who at length, suspecting that the boy meant to repeat the whole grammar at once, stopped him, quietly remarking that he had said enough for one lesson, and that he might repeat the remainder on the morrow!

When only about twenty years of age, Mr. Just became classical assistant to Mr. Dobson, and remained two or three years in that capacity, having during this time large opportunities of pursuing his own favourite studies. Whilst at this school, both as scholar and teacher, he manifested a strong attachment to natural history and botany; and even as a boy, his indefatigable perseverance in everything he undertook, was a striking trait in his character. His readiness to help other lads with their lessons, and his serious demeanour and manly deportment, made him universally beloved and respected among his schoolmates. He was also pre-eminently distinguished by a love of truth and a very strong religious feeling; and these qualities were manifested in every action, so as to raise him greatly above the level of his youthful companions. In connection with his pursuit of natural history, he used to relate some amusing anecdotes (unconsciously illustrating his own kindness of nature) of his obtaining birds and small animals, when a boy, and keeping them some time, with a view of testing the effects produced on wild creatures, by domestication and kind treatment. While assistant to Mr. Dobson, he used to rise in the summer months at four



o'clock, to pursue his favourite study of botany, not from books, but from nature. So thoroughly had he botanised the district, that there was not a habitat of any plant at all rare, within many miles of Kirkby Lonsdale, with which he was not well acquainted. He examined and named every plant himself, and in after years, whenever teaching botany, he made his pupils do this; urging that unless they acquired this habit, instead of trusting to others, or to books or engravings, they would never make sound botanists. As a young man, he was very fond of athletic and field sports; was a stalwart wrestler, an excellent shot, and a most skilful and successful angler. While yet a very young man, circumstances, to which it is unnecessary to allude, closed his connection with the grammar school; and he remained some years in Kirkby Lonsdale as a private teacher, dividing his time between his pupils and his studies, which were already multifarious. He was a very early riser, and thus secured many hours of uninterrupted reading, before his daily professional labours commenced.

Such was the smooth and even tenour of his life till about the year 1831, when the friend already referred to, who had, from reading with him and rambling with him, become greatly attached to him,—removing from Kirkby Lonsdale to the neighbourhood of Bury, and regarding that place as a wider sphere for his friend's talents and exertions than the remote and quiet little town where he was then resident,—induced Mr. Just to settle at Bury, where he received private pupils, and continued his own literary and scientific studies and pursuits with that avidity and perseverance which were amongst his most striking characteristics. He was thus occupied for about twelve months, when the Second Mastership of the Bury Grammar School becoming vacant, he was induced by friends to offer himself as a candidate, and was unanimously elected, in the year 1832; and this situation he filled with credit and honour during the remainder of his life.



His vacations were usually spent in pedestrian excursions, in which his love of nature, his taste for agricultural avocations, his eager pursuit of botany, and his keen zest for antiquarian researches, had full scope of enjoyment. In the midsummer vacation of 1834, he and the friend already referred to, made a pedestrian tour to the Highlands of Scotland, staying a few days at Fort William, on the Caledonian Canal. This being a convenient starting-point from which to ascend Ben Nevis, it was agreed that the friends should make a nocturnal ascent, so as to witness the sublime spectacle of sunrise from the summit. They left the hotel about seven o'clock in the evening, reached the top in time, greatly enjoyed the prospect, and got back to their hotel between six and seven o'clock on the following morning. Here they found another party preparing to make the ascent, and Mr. Just was so delighted with what he had already seen, and so ready to be useful as guide to the strangers, that before nine o'clock the same morning, after a short rest of little more than two hours, he was again *en route* for the mountain, actually accomplished the toilsome ascent a second time, and once more reached the hotel between five and six o'clock in the afternoon, apparently not more than comfortably tired by the extraordinary physical exertions of the twenty-four hours! It is right to add, however, that Mr. Just, on subsequently describing to a friend his two ascents of Ben Nevis, said that on coming down the second time, he walked as it were mechanically, and even seemed to himself to sleep whilst walking. This anecdote may convey a fair impression of the great muscular strength and power of endurance which he possessed, doubtless at times overtasked by that persevering energy which excited him to overcome every difficulty, and to fulfil whatever he undertook to do, however arduous the labour it involved.

Mr. Just could not long remain unknown, in his new position at Bury, and his literary and scientific acquirements soon



brought him into intimate and honourable connection with several of the literary and scientific societies and institutions of Manchester. He was appointed Lecturer on Botany at the Pine-street, now the Royal Manchester School of Medicine and Surgery, in September, 1833, as successor to Mr. William Thompson; and he delivered his first course of lectures there (always a summer one) in the summer of 1834. His course, which usually comprised from forty-five to fifty lectures, was regularly delivered by him yearly, till the summer of this year, when his health had become so seriously impaired, that he was unable to give a single lecture of the course for which he had been as usual announced. For the last few years of the eighteen,—during which period he was quite remarkable for the punctuality and regularity with which he fulfilled this engagement,—Dr. Hardy was associated with him in the course, his department being the descriptive; while Mr. Just developed the structural and more purely physiological branch of the science. Here his indefatigable exertions and habit of early rising, were taxed for contributions that might aid his botanical demonstrations; he would rise with the sun, traverse miles to collect the specimens he required for his lecture of that day, and return home in time to receive a private class of pupils at his own residence at the still early hour of seven in the morning. In his class he was never content that the students should accept his *dictum* on any matter capable of proof, and he therefore made it a rule invariably to demonstrate what he advanced. To the students he was ever accessible, and not merely willing, but ready and desirous, to give further explanations as to any points that might not have been fully understood during the lecture. Those who have been connected with Mr. Just in this institution, both as students and colleagues, speak of his lectures and teaching with gratitude and pleasure, and of his performance of his duties as a professor as most exemplary, and ever distinguished by zeal for the interests of the school, an earnest



desire to promote the advantage of the student, and the most cordial good feeling, friendship, and confidence towards his colleagues. At the annual distribution of prizes to the students, in November last, the founder of the school bore the fullest testimony to the merits, rare mental acquirements, and high moral character, of his deceased associate. To his connection with this institution Mr. Just looked back with much pride and pleasure; and as life ebbed away, he gave a characteristic recognition of his unfailing interest in that school where for eighteen years he had been so able, indefatigable, and successful a teacher, by bequeathing to it his valuable collection of dried botanical specimens—one of the best and most extensive in the country.

It was on the 22nd January, 1839, that Mr. Just was elected a corresponding Member of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester, and he soon began to demonstrate that he was worthy of this position. In April of the same year he read his first paper to this Society; whose printed Transactions now include seven of his Essays,—three on Agricultural Science; two on Philology; and two on Roman Roads; besides two others on philological and archæological questions, not printed. These will be noticed under their respective subjects; but the fact of nine papers, bearing on four distinct branches of knowledge, and all contributed in thirteen sessions of this Society, will, to some extent, justify its desire to have a brief memorial of their deceased member, permanently recorded in their published Transactions.

In October, 1848, the Lecture Committee of the Royal Manchester Institution recommended that an Honorary Professorship of Botany should be instituted therein, and that it should be offered to Mr. Just; and the Council having unanimously confirmed the appointment, it was tendered to Mr. Just, who, in acknowledging the honour and accepting the office, expressed his earnest desire to discharge whatever duties might consequently devolve upon him, to the full



amount of his ability. And well did he redeem this pledge. In September, 1849, in his character of honorary professor, he delivered gratuitously a course of three evening lectures on Botany, at the Institution. In May and June, 1850, he delivered a more extended course of six afternoon lectures on Botany, and its various systems of classification. He delivered another afternoon course of six lectures in April and May, 1851, on the various organs of Plants. The syllabus of another course of six evening lectures, to be delivered in the May of the present year, shows another interesting grouping of subjects,—being notices of some of the great families of Plants.

But, alas! when the period came, the teacher was utterly unable to fulfil his engagement,—his days were already numbered and rapidly drawing to a close. He writes, on the 11th of that same month (May),—"I have been an invalid upwards of nine weeks, and can scarcely walk; whether I shall get out again I consider very uncertain." And again, on the 15th, having been urged to avoid such an excess of work as would wear out the strongest man, he writes—"I have been three weeks at home, and am no better. I can walk and that is all. It may be true that I am 'killing' myself with my labours. Mr. Goodlad [his medical attendant] urges most strenuously the necessity of giving up some portion of my labours. Of course, if required, I must do so. I must draw into a cottage and content myself with a little. The main consideration at present is getting out again." On the 27th, from Guy Hill, Tatham, near Lancaster,—“I have been here nearly a fortnight. Mr. Goodlad sent me hither to be out of the way; and whether I shall ever get into the way again is very uncertain. I am worth nothing, because I do nothing. I am in the midst of antiquities, and long to be on my legs; but I cannot walk more than a mile.”

Returning to his connection with the Royal Manchester Institution, it should be stated that it was through his



medium, and probably on his recommendation, that the Institution received as a present from the family of the late John Roby, Esq., of Rochdale, in August, 1851, a collection of botanical diagrams, illustrating the classification and arrangement of plants, designed and executed by Mr. Roby and his son. At the monthly meeting of the Council, on the 3rd November last, a resolution was unanimously passed recording their deep regret for the loss which the Institution had sustained by the death of its late eminent Honorary Professor of Botany, Mr. Just, "whose profound knowledge of vegetable physiology peculiarly fitted him for the appointment;" and a copy of the resolution was forwarded to his widow.

Having noticed his botanical connection with two of our local public institutions, it may here be added, that his powers of discrimination, and of remembering the distinguishing marks and properties of plants, were most remarkable. On gathering any plant, even a moss or lichen, which he had ever before examined, even in years long past, he would, without any reference to books, at once name the plant; and if his correctness were doubted, he would then point out its distinguishing marks, and show wherein it differed from other similar plants. He was quite delighted whenever he was fortunate enough to discover the habitat of a scarce plant, and greatly disappointed and annoyed if by any means it became eradicated. He discovered a habitat of the Ladies' Slipper (*Cypripedium Calceolus*), at Arncliffe, in Yorkshire; but, unfortunately, on its becoming known, the plant was soon extirpated by gardeners from the vicinity of Manchester. Many years afterwards he pointed out the place to a friend, expatiating on the delight he had experienced on discovering this *cypripedium*, and expressing his strong regret that so rare a plant should have been eradicated for the purpose of sale. The friend who was with him when he found this plant (he thinks in the year 1835) thus describes the discovery:—"It was on a fine morning in July. We were quartered at Arncliffe, and before



breakfast had rambled into a *scraggy* limestone wood, for the express purpose of looking for the *Ladies' Slipper*, which, we were told, had been found there within the last ten years. Imagine the eagerness with which every nook, both likely and unlikely, was searched. We had separated from each other, a distance of perhaps twenty yards, when I was attracted by a joyous scream; at the same time, I saw my friend's hat high whirling in the air; and, with a school-boy's delight, he thrice shouted—'Eureka, Eureka, Eureka!!!' And sure enough there was the envied prize,—two plants in beautiful bloom, and five smaller seedlings. We each brought away one of the blooming plants; and I am afraid the news of our success proved fatal at length to the seedlings."

The same botanical friend has recorded of Mr. Just that—"As a vegetable physiologist, he might be placed in the first rank, although he never extended his acquaintance with plants beyond those that are indigenous to Britain; but in every department of British Botany he was thoroughly versed. The plants of our own country afforded him a field ample enough to study the *laws* of the vegetable kingdom, which were the great objects of his research, and in which he made many interesting discoveries. To know the names of a great number of plants, or to have dried specimens pictorially laid down upon paper, was not what he termed Botany. A precept of his, which deserves to be remembered, and which he once repeated to me, when I remarked that I knew a particular plant from a certain resemblance that it bore to some other, was—"If you wish to become a botanist, you must learn to distinguish plants by their *differences*, and not by their *likenesses*;"—a piece of advice I have found useful on many occasions since. He was especially fond of Cryptogamic Botany, as exhibiting the wonders of Creative Wisdom, displayed in these pigmies of vegetation; and many a new species was discovered by him, before it made its appearance in any English work, or was considered as a British plant."



His pursuit of botany and the associations of his boyish years on his father's farm, must naturally have combined to turn Mr. Just's attention both to the science and the practice of Agriculture; and (as in all his other studies), he qualified himself to teach the philosophy of their operations to farmers themselves; to point out their faults and mistakes; and to offer them many valuable practical suggestions for their guidance, in various farming operations. He was well acquainted with chemistry, and paid considerable attention to its application to the analysis of soils and manures, and other purposes connected with the science of agriculture. As a geologist, he was also well informed, and made his knowledge of this science contribute its quota to his investigation of the philosophy of vegetable culture. Of the results of his observation, inquiries, and experiments in this branch of science, a few only can be indicated here. Three of his agricultural essays enrich the Transactions of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester.

On the 18th November, 1845, Mr. Just read before this Society, a long and able paper "On the Philosophy of Farming," printed in its Transactions, (New Series, vol. vii., p. 574.)

On the 10th August, 1847, Mr. Just read before this Society another valuable paper "On the Maturation of Grain and Farming Produce, so as to be most beneficial to the Cultivator;" and it is printed in the Transactions, (New Series, vol. viii., p. 297.)

On the 9th May, 1848, Mr. Just read an admirable practical paper "On Faults in Farming,"—chiefly as observed by him in the neighbourhood of Bury,—in the waste, the collection, and the application of manures, solid and liquid,—concluding with useful hints on the waste of manures in large towns. This is the last printed paper of your corresponding member, being included in the ninth volume of the Transactions, (p. 93.)



On the 27th September, 1850, Mr. Just delivered before the Bury Agricultural Society, "A Lecture on the value and properties of Lime, for Agricultural Purposes," with analyses of several specimens; and so highly did that Society estimate the great amount of valuable information contained in this lecture, that it was printed in a separate form, as a pamphlet, (pp. 16.)

Connected with this investigation, Mr. Just analysed more than thirty varieties of lime, obtained in the neighbourhood of Clitheroe, for a gentleman resident there; and here, as in many other ways, he made his scientific knowledge directly applicable to the promotion of practical improvements in the industrial operations of ordinary life.

Every busy man who looks forward at all, delights to think of a time when he may have leisure to pursue his favourite studies; and Mr. Just often expressed a hope to his intimate friends, that at some future time, after his child's education had been completed, he should be able to give up his more arduous duties, and retire to some quiet spot in his native county, where he could complete the great philological work on which he was engaged, and enjoy botany and agriculture as healthful recreations.

As his knowledge of chemistry, geology, botany, and even mathematics, were all brought to bear on his researches into agricultural science,—so Mr. Just made his investigations in philology, and his archæological pursuits, give to each other mutual aid and light. His knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages and literatures, was the ready handmaiden in numismatical inquiries, or in the investigation of the traces which the Romans have left behind them of their rule, in the North of England;—while his extensive familiarity with the Teutonic tribe of languages, enabled him to comprehend much of the life and manners of those whom he was wont to call "our Saxon fore-elders." His long study of the ancient tongues of Scandinavia, and his thorough acquaintance with



the theory and linguistic rule of that profound philologist, Rask, coupled with his intimate familiarity from childhood with the peculiar dialect of Westmorland, qualified him to point out many unsuspected affinities between the proper names of men and places, still existing in the North of England, and the old Norse and Danish tongues,—enabled him to trace many archaisms to their Scandinavian origin, and greatly assisted him in the decyphering and translation of old Runic inscriptions. From this close interweaving of kindred sciences and branches of knowledge, it is by no means easy to note separately his acquirements in each. But first as to philology, it may be observed that while at the Kirkby Lonsdale Grammar School, he became a good Latin, Greek, and Hebrew scholar; after taking up his residence in Bury he acquired a sufficient knowledge of French, German, Italian and Spanish, Swedish and Danish, to read any author in those languages; and his strong desire to trace to its various sources his own vernacular tongue, led him to acquire a thorough knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon and other Teutonic languages; of the old Gothic and Scandinavian tongues, no less than of their modern forms; and even to extend his researches into the structure of the ancient British and other Celtic languages and dialects.

The gentleman of whom he took lessons in French, was struck with his great power of acquiring and retaining the more difficult parts of the language, as the idioms, the irregular verbs, &c. So extensive was his knowledge of various languages, that being once asked how many he knew, he enumerated upwards of twenty of which he had some knowledge, seventeen of which he knew structurally. But, though of these he could not only read but write many, he was unable to speak any but his native English, and those who knew him will remember that he retained much of the pronunciation of his native county,—the broad Doric of his Anglo-Danish birth-place.



In order to keep up an intimate acquaintance with the various languages he had acquired, his custom was to read them in rotation, devoting a certain time (it is believed a week) to each; and he said that by thus taking them in succession, he managed to retain all, and found his mind relieved by the change from one to another. On Sunday he always read the Hebrew Bible.

These philological studies, as might be expected, were eagerly pursued, with all the avidity and perseverance of his energetic character and ardent temperament. And, widely different from those churlish natures by whose selfish studies the world never profits, Mr. Just's rapidly extending knowledge of languages, soon began to bear fruit.

On the 4th April, 1843, he read a paper before this Society entitled "A brief history of certain Anglo-Saxon roots, nearly obsolete in the English language," which was printed in the Transactions, (New Series, vol. vii., p. 391.)

On the 12th November, 1844, Mr. Just read to the Society his "Dissertation on Anglo-Saxon Patronymics," printed in their Transactions, (vol. vii., p. 440.)

On the 16th April, 1850, he read before this Society a paper (not published) "On the Self-acquirement of languages," which was curious and interesting as an indication of the means for such acquisition which had been so singularly successful in his own study.

His latest philological essay was contributed to a local society of antiquaries, calling themselves "The Rosicrucians," and was written late in August, and read at their meeting on the 6th September, 1852. It consisted chiefly of brief expositions of the origin and derivations of local names, especially those common within the hundred of Salford.

But his great labours in philology were connected with the compilation of a Dictionary or Lexicon of English words, and their derivations, with similar words, of similar meaning, in cognate and kindred languages. To this end he was for many



years engaged, during the little leisure he possessed, in making a collection of words, which he was tracing through different languages and dialects to one common root. Of late years, as the Herculean character of this labour pressed upon his mind, together with the growing consciousness that the springs of life were beginning to fail, he used to say that if he did not live long enough to complete his work, at all events he should leave something by which to be remembered after he was gone; and that if he should not live to publish it himself, he should leave it to some society, on condition that they gave it publication. I have had an opportunity of examining this "Dictionary," which, in four quarto volumes, contains several thousand words. First is given the English word; next its immediate derivation, and from what language; third, its meaning, and lastly the words of like significance from other languages, all traceable to the same root. He appears purposely to have omitted from his plan all words derived from the Latin or Greek, or from the British; and his Lexicon comprises mainly the words having their origin in the Teutonic, Scandinavian, and Gothic tongues. At an earlier period, he had begun in the same volumes to note down Hebrew words having affinity for English ones. In this work he was engaged even till within a few weeks of his decease,—as long, indeed, as he could hold the pen; and its last thirty-two pages contain some two hundred words, the derivations of which, and their roots, must be traced, if at all, by some other hand.

Subordinate and auxiliary to this, he was engaged in another philological compilation, which occupies two quarto volumes in MS., and which he has himself entitled "A Glossary of the Westmorland Dialect, as spoken in the neighbourhood of Kendal." This is alphabetically arranged, and under each archaic word is given a short illustrative phrase or sentence in the Westmorland dialect; and to this is occasionally appended the derivation of the word from some Scandinavian or Anglo-Saxon root. So long ago as August, 1843, he writes to a



friend—"Tho' idle while in the 'North countree,' I picked up many provincial words; having constantly before me the purpose of severing the Northern dialects into their true original parts; provided I live long enough to be able to accomplish my task *just* as I wish, and *just* as *Just* ought. The Danes have had long possession of the Vale of Lune,—using the stronghold of Lancaster as their head-quarters, and leaving behind them six or seven 'haughs' or artificial mounds of their peculiar character. This accounts for the superabundance of pure Danish words in the district. Want of information on this head, has led authors into errors in their conjectures respecting the people who constructed the *tumuli*,—some saying they are British, others Roman."

On this subject, he briefly enunciated his views in a paper entitled "The Danes in Lancashire," read before the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, at Liverpool, on the 6th May, 1852,—his last contribution to the published Papers of that Society, and which is posthumously printed in its recently issued Vol. iv., p. 121. From July, 1843, to his decease, he was a member of the Chetham Society; but did not contribute anything beyond an interesting note or two, to any of its printed volumes.

Akin to his philological pursuits, on the one hand, and to archæology on the other, was his decyphering and translation of various Runic inscriptions in England and in the Isle of Man. His first essay in this direction was upon a number of plaster casts, taken by Mr. William Bally in the summer of 1839, of all the Runic inscriptions on crosses in the Isle of Man. Various attempts had been made to decypher some of these; but without success, owing in some cases to ignorance of the Runic characters, and in others to want of acquaintance with the language in which the inscriptions were graven.

That which Gough's *Camden*, Mr. Beauford, Sir John Prestwich, and Professor Torkelin successively failed to elucidate, yielded to the sagacity and perseverance of Mr. Just,



who first saw the casts in the autumn of 1842, and sent copies of the inscriptions, with translations, in January, 1843, to Joseph Train, Esq., F.S.A. of Scotland, which are published in that gentleman's "*History of the Isle of Man*," (vol. ii., pp. 32—36,) in juxtaposition with the previous attempts.

On the death of the late Dr. Edward Holme, a stone cross was found in a box in his cellar, which had formerly stood in the churchyard of St. Mary, Lancaster. In August, 1848, this Runic cross was presented by Dr. Holme's residuary legatees, the Council of University College, London, to the Manchester Natural History Society; and a few plaster casts having been taken of the inscription, the cross was placed in a glass case, in that Society's Museum, Peter-street. This inscription had been repeatedly engraved, and had long been the subject of examination by antiquaries. The late Dr. Whitaker, the historian of Whalley, offered one attempt at decyphering and translation, and held it to be Danish; Baines's *Lancashire* gave another, terming it Runo-Danish. In 1836, the late Professor Finn Magnusen, of Copenhagen, having received a cast of it from the late Dr. Hibbert-Ware, offered a fourth interpretation, regarding it as Scandinavian. A fifth was given in 1847, by Mr. Kemble, the learned translator of *Beowulf*, who pronounced it Anglo-Saxon. In August or September, 1848, Mr. Just received a cast of this inscription, and another was transmitted to the learned Dr. Grimm, whose interpretation has not been given to the world. In January, 1849, Mr. Just published his decyphering and translation, agreeing with Mr. Kemble that the language of the inscription is Anglo-Saxon; but differing with that learned Saxon scholar as to the characters themselves.

On the 12th April, 1849, Mr. Just read before the Lancashire and Cheshire Historic Society, and on the 1st May, before the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester, a paper "On the Reading of the Lancaster Runic Inscription,"



which is printed in the Transactions of the former Society, (vol. i., p. 121,) accompanied by a wood engraving of the cross and another of the inscription,—and giving the various readings already referred to.

Having taken some part in these investigations, it is to me a matter of regret, that this Runic inscription should still have appended to it, in the Museum, two erroneous translations, when, in point of fact, that of Mr. Just, made nearly four years ago, has the highest claims to accuracy.

The latest labour of this nature undertaken by him, was during his last illness, in September, 1852. A friend, having seen in the *Illustrated London News* of August 28th, 1852, a wood engraving of an ancient slab found in St. Paul's Churchyard, London, with a fac-simile of two fragmentary lines of Runes upon it,—transmitted to Mr. Just his decyphering of the characters, which was promptly verified and returned with a translation of the Runes, which, in the form of a joint letter to the Editor of the above periodical, was published in the *Manchester Guardian* of September 4th, 1852. This was but six weeks before his decease, and is believed to be his last contribution to archæology, or, indeed, to any branch of science.

The circumstance that both at Natland, his birth-place, and at Bury, where he resided during the last twenty years of his life, Roman roads and remains exist; seems to have induced him, with his characteristic energy, to devote himself to the careful examination and tracing of the great military roads traversing Lancashire from north to south, and from west to east. The information which he thus collected by personal inquiry and examination of the district, led to his temporary connection with the Officers of the Ordnance, while they were engaged in the survey of Lancashire. This gave him an opportunity of verifying the conclusions he had formed; and these conclusions are now transmitted to posterity in a permanent, official, and authoritative form; the lines of



road as demonstrated by him having been laid down on the Ordnance Maps. It was in connection with this subject that Mr. Just first contributed to the Transactions of this Society.

On the 2nd April, 1839, Mr. Just, recently elected corresponding member of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester, read before it "An Essay on the Roman Road in the vicinity of Bury, Lancashire," which is printed in its Transactions, (New Series, vol. vi., p. 409.) He accompanied this essay with a sketch of the line and remains, not only as an illustration of his paper, but valuable as a guide for any future investigator.

On the 22nd March, 1842, Mr. Just read before the Society a paper "On the Roman Military Road between Manchester and Ribchester," which was printed in their Transactions, (New Series, vol. vii., p. 1,) illustrated by an engraved map of the line and remains.

On the 1st February, 1849, he read before the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, (of which he was a member from its formation in June, 1848, till his death,) the first part of a paper "On the Roman Roads in Lancashire, with a particular account of the Tenth Iter of Antoninus."

On the 17th November, 1850, he read the second part of his paper before the same Society, which treated of the Seventh Iter of Richard of Cirencester,—in other words, the military road traversing Lancashire from west to east,—from the Portus Sistuntiorum (on the Wyre?) to York.

The British Archæological Association having fixed its seventh annual congress to be held in Manchester and Lancaster, in August, 1850, and its President of the year having offered a donation to defray the cost of excavations at Ribchester, for Roman remains, provided Mr. Just would undertake the superintendence of such operations, he made several visits to Ribchester for this purpose; and the results were exhibited to the Association on their visit to Ribchester;



the foundation of the outer wall being laid bare; a quantity of Roman pottery found, chiefly fragments of Samian ware, many marked with the potter's name; an ampulla, &c.; five Roman coins, three of silver, (Vespasian, Titus, and Vitellius,) and two of copper, &c. A paper "on Roman Ribchester," the joint production of Mr. Just and a friend, was read before the congress at Manchester, on the 22nd August, 1850, and is published in the *Journal of the Association*, (vol. vi., p. 229,) with various illustrations of Roman altars and inscribed stones found at Ribchester.

The catalogue of Mr. Just's varied learning and acquirements is not yet exhausted. A friend writes of him that "he was not less diligent or less successful in scientific pursuits, than in the acquirement of languages. He was well versed in mathematics, and in natural philosophy there was scarcely any branch of science that he had not thoroughly studied both practically and theoretically. \* \* \* If his circumstances or the help of his friends had given him [in youth] the means of pursuing those studies, for which he had so great a taste, and accompanied with the advantages in due course of a university education, he would not unlikely have gone on in the same career of distinction with some of those pains-taking scholars of the North, who, like a Sedgwick or a Whewell, have gained for themselves the highest distinction for their contributions both to literature and science." In early life it was his intention to have entered the Church as a profession; but circumstances, greatly to his disappointment, prevented his carrying this strong desire into effect.

Although during the whole of his residence at Bury, he was so unremittingly engaged in the work of teaching, both at school and at home, he was a regular teacher at St. John's Sunday School, twice a-day. He also occasionally lectured at the Church Institute at Bury, and to the Bury Mechanics' Institution. In 1836 or 1837, he was one of the promoters of a Literary and Philosophical Society in Bury. It only



existed a short time, but during its continuance he was one of its ablest contributors. He was also a member of a society for giving and receiving instruction in science and literature, and generally answered his full quota of the questions proposed, although some of them required great research. Amongst his multifarious pursuits, he found time to record in a book kept for that purpose, a series of daily meteorological observations, taken at his residence at Chesham Green, near Bury, from February, 1838, to February, 1851; and in looking over this volume, extending over thirteen years' daily observations of both barometer and thermometer, I have found no blanks unaccompanied by an explanatory note to the effect that he was from home at the time.

Mr. Just was from boyhood a very keen and successful angler; and a friend states that many an experienced fisher on the Lune and the Kent, would suspend his sport, in order to watch Mr. Just's more artistic and successful casts of the line. For many years he made an annual fishing excursion for a week at Easter, and generally for a couple of days, at the annual Bury fairs in March and September, when he could get released from the Grammar School. He always looked forward to these excursions with great delight, because they served to recruit his health, as well as to afford him the enjoyment of his favourite sport. He was generally the first on the stream in the morning; the last to leave it at night. He brought his energy and his powers of observation to bear even on his amusements, and had formed the opinion that colour and size were the only essentials in flies. He thought that the flies fell upon the water in so many planes relatively to the eye of the fish, that it was impossible for the fish to distinguish their form. He therefore regarded it as waste of time to make *winged* flies, and never used any but hackle flies, and those generally small. He was so much occupied at home, that he usually had to make his flies before going out to fish in a morning. On these excursions he examined



all the antiquities and curiosities in the neighbourhood, and also collected plants, more particularly of late years, the Cryptogamiæ, which he examined at night, or (if any of the party had no taste for such pursuits) in his bedroom in the morning. Such was his ambition to excel in anything he undertook, that he has seemed as much annoyed by any one doubting his skill as an angler, as if his capabilities as a botanical lecturer, or a philologist, had been called in question. The same conscientiousness which was conspicuous in the graver transactions of life, was manifested in the midst of his amusements. His strong love of truth was ever apparent, and though passionately fond of angling, whatever others might do, he always attended Church on the morning of Good Friday.

In all that has been enumerated of Mr. Just's favourite pursuits and remarkable acquirements, nothing more has been done than to give a feeble and imperfect portraiture of the immense amount of actual work accomplished by him in those brief snatches and intervals, those "strays and waifs of time," which so many allow to slide away, as too short and insignificant to attempt to render available to any important or useful end. To him alone, nine-tenths of whose time is mortgaged to the duties and business of life, can leisure have a peculiar value and a charm, that even wealth without it cannot compensate. Besides his daily duties at the Bury Grammar School, which, (distant nearly a mile and a half from his residence,) may be said to have consumed his whole day, he gave private lessons at his own house, both morning and evening; teaching the mathematics, classics, modern languages, &c., preparing young men for college, reading with others who wished to keep up their scholastic acquirements,—and thus even the hours before the morning and after the evening meal, still found him labouring at the drudgery of tuition. In the summer months he had a class at his own residence at seven o'clock in the morning,



and again evening classes extending till nine, and often even until ten o'clock. His whole ordinary day thus absorbed, the wonder is how and when he snatched the time for acquiring his varied knowledge, or even for communicating some of its stores to others in the shape of papers and essays. So early as March, 1840, he wrote of stealing an hour from his bed to examine some Runes; and at various times he expressed to his friends his regret at being unable to correspond with them more fully, as every letter he wrote was penned during the time which should have been devoted to repose.

In October, 1834, he writes—"Now that my lectures are ended for the present, and I was anticipating leisure and repose, I find myself almost as busy as ever; so that I seem fated to constant and uninterrupted labour. I, however, console myself by being thankful to a good God for fitting my shoulders to the burden; so that, like the ass in the fable, I trudge contentedly on with my panniers, indifferent who are my masters."

There is no need of multiplying extracts through a series of years to show that each succeeding season seemed to accumulate new labours and additional tasks,—even his Saturdays, the only day of the six on which he was relieved from school duties, being at length engrossed by an engagement as actuary at the Bury Savings' Bank. If it be asked why he should have taken this immense amount of labour upon him, the answer, resolving itself into the old "*res angustæ domi*," may be given in his own words, September, 1840,—"I have brought cares upon me such as you feel and know to be all-absorbing,—those of husband and father,—and it is in these relations that I exert myself for others in such a way as nothing on earth could induce me to do for myself." To a friend who frequently urged him to give up some of his engagements on the score of ill health, he always said he would do so, as soon as his child was educated, but that until then he *must* work, and he thought his constitution was strong enough to bear it.



It will naturally suggest itself to the minds of all who have watched the physical consequences of a mind o'erwrought,—that these whelming and unremitting labours must, sooner or later, tell on even the hardest frame and strongest constitution. And such was the inevitable consequence in this case. So long back as July, 1843, Mr. Just writes,—“I feel like a breaking-down horse, a want of putting-out to grass for a short period, to repair my exhausted energies.” After a month's holiday, spent in the North, he writes,—“Being returned from ‘grass’ to ‘gear,’ with the gain of 7lb. of animal matter, as a store to consume during the current half-year in mental pursuits, I have straightened up arrears.” In this way half-year after half-year passed over, making every vacation necessary to repair the wear and tear undergone. Close confinement, a hard-worked if not an overwrought brain, and a want of sufficient bodily exercise, had the usual result of inducing a sluggish state of the liver, with other concomitant derangements of the digestive functions. For the last two or three years he was subject to attacks of faintness, especially when, during his vacation excursions, he over-exerted himself, and he was sometimes obliged to seat himself on the river's brink till the attack passed off. Usually he was most liable to these attacks for the first two or three days of the excursion, and at times they unhinged him, and he became very nervous. He generally attributed them to indigestion, and at times he said he was sure he had disease of the heart. He became better after taking considerable exercise. Last Easter his fishing excursion was to Whitewell, and there he did not recover after a few days as usual; he could not retain his food, and apparently derived no real benefit from this excursion; and he observed, that it was the first time he had ever come home with his strength unrecruited. Still he fished as keenly as ever; and he manifested his love of science to the last. A friend calling to see him on the 21st September, on his



return from an excursion in Devonshire, Mr. Just, whose recovery was then known to be hopeless, took great interest in the plants his friend had collected, and made various inquiries about the geological formation of the county. Long after he was forbidden to read, he rejoiced in being allowed to use his pen, in extracts and transcription, and he employed it as long as he could wield it, in registering philological facts for the information of others.

To prolong the narrative of his latest hours is at once painful and unnecessary: suffice it to say, that after calmly arranging his affairs, even to the naming of those friends whom he wished to be invited to attend his remains to the grave, he expired on the morning of Thursday, the 14th October, 1852, in the 55th year of his age.

From the preceding April he had been unable to discharge any public duty, and during the greater part of this time he was confined to his room. During his last illness he manifested an exemplary patience and unrepining submission, with earnest faith and trust in God. His conduct and conversation impressed his friends with the conviction of his strong religious feeling, and serene and unaffected piety. He ever recognised the union between science and religion, and often expressed his surprise that any one who had pursued truth in science, should fail to recognise its holy presence in religion. He was warmly attached to the Established Church, and a regular attendant on its ordinances, and he took much interest in the welfare of the young men who formed his class at St. John's Sunday School. His remains were interred in St. Paul's Churchyard, Bury, on Wednesday the 20th October;—being borne to the grave by four of the teachers of St. John's Sunday School. The funeral was attended by many of his friends from Bury, Manchester, and other places, and also by the Masters and Scholars of the Bury Grammar School, who met the procession before it reached the church, to show their respect for his memory. He has left a widow and one daughter, now fifteen years of age.



So much has the length of this memoir exceeded my intentions, that only a few extracts from his private correspondence can be given here; and they are selected as revealing some of the phases of his mind and character. Writing to a poetic correspondent, he asks—

“Is poetry a sound of words?  
Or is't a happy thought?  
There's poetry in many a soul  
That rhymed not what it wrought.”

“Real poetry (he observes) flashes through the mind, like lightning through the heavens;—it comes only at intervals, unsought for, unpremeditated. Like the rod of Moses, it only works miracles when inspiration is upon it. You may strike the rock at other moments, but there is then either no flow, or the few drops which follow are but muddy water.”

\* \* “I still feel and enjoy poetry—the poetry of the mind and of fine feeling—aspirations devout, kindled by nature, burning with the fragrance of her incense, and ascending, like the smoke of the altar, towards heaven, waiting for admittance there.”

In reply to a correspondent who had spoken of his genius, he denied the possession of that high attribute, adding—“If knowledge has thrown some rays of her light upon me, so that daylight shines around me upon subjects which are in midnight darkness to many others, it is labour which has struck out the treasure from a barren mind—like Moses striking out rivers of water from the flinty rock;—it is diligence and perseverance that have surmounted all. A man knows nothing of himself till he tries himself. Want of exertion,—that idleness which springs from the cowardice of our nature,—ruins all.”

Writing in April, 1834, to a friend, he says—“You rally me upon the gaiety of the life I am leading. It is far from being congenial with my feelings, and instead of adding to, subtracts very materially from, my happiness. I often envy



the days gone past, when alone, in woods and wilds, I took my solitary rambles, unnoticed by any one, and conversing with God and his wonderful works, in nature alone. Such a course gives an elevation to the mind and a tranquility to the conscience, which not all the flattery of the great and the approval of the wise in this world, can produce. Often have my friends, when I lived in retirement in Kirkby Lonsdale, scolded me for the apathy and indifference which I manifested towards my own welfare in the world, and my advancement in society; but, spite of all, I was then wise. The improvement of my own heart and mind was then the sole object of my ambition, and would it still were so! I would I had the chance of retiring into some sequestered vale, with the prospect of a pittance for life, just sufficient to keep me from the meanness of poverty, without the power or the temptation of becoming rich; that every night I might lay my head upon my pillow with the satisfaction of knowing that I was becoming wiser and better every day."

Again:—"We live not by time, but by thoughts; and a truth once felt,—it lives with us and becomes a part of our being."

One more extract:—"Happiness is within the reach of all. Affliction may impair our relish for one kind of happiness; but if we improve it, it sharpens our relish for another kind. Bad health may becloud one sense; but it throws brightness and daylight upon others. Whatever betide, happiness may be ours, if we be but resigned. Nay, give us all we desire,—make our wishes start up into realities, fast as we form them,—and instead of being happier, we shall be more miserable. We are all placed by Providence just in that situation which is, on earth, calculated to furnish us with most happiness. Whether we make it so, depends upon ourselves, and is one of our many responsibilities. \* \* Nature is my garden; and who or what man or woman, or destroying spirit, can spoil it? I may have no pet place wherein to



shelter my favourite flowers; but they are still as beautiful in my eyes,—wherever seen,—wherever they may blow. Give me a cot in the country, and quiet, and I desire no more. The fields around will furnish me with delight, as I visit the flowers which none knows or sees, but the industrious bees and myself."

In all his pursuits, he seemed ever to set before him the injunction of the Hebrew Preacher—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy *might*." Immense energy, indomitable perseverance, unrelaxing industry, a keen and omnivorous appetite for knowledge, and the active and economic use of every moment of disposable time,—these furnish the real solution to the problem of his extraordinary attainments and labours, during the small surplusage of a life spent in scholastic teaching. He was gifted with extraordinary powers both of arranging and classifying the knowledge thus acquired, and of retaining it in his memory ready for immediate use. But he evidently regarded his work as only half done, so long as it was limited to acquisition; for here again his practice was invariably in accordance with the apostolic precept,—"*To do good, and to communicate, forget not.*" Hence his disinterested readiness to share the fruits of his erudition and his scientific acquirements, with all who sought his aid. His intellectual nature seemed delighted to gather honey everywhere; his moral nature to share the sweet product with all who could derive nutrition from it. He cared little for fame; much for opportunities of usefulness. In the simplicity and manliness of his nature, he could be equally the cheerful companion of youth, of manhood, or of age; and those who knew him most intimately, oft rejoiced in his sportive sallies, as well as listened with a reverence,—the more earnestly paid because never sought to be exacted,—to the lessons of wisdom which were freely and spontaneously uttered in his hours of friendly intercourse. No branch of study in his hands was barren; all acquisition was rapidly



assimilated, converted into the practical and the useful, and disinterestedly diffused with a cordial desire to serve his fellow-men.

In his social and domestic relations he was most exemplary; and whether in the domestic sphere, as son and brother, husband and father; or in the wider and constantly widening circle of friendship,—he has left a memory that must ever be cherished with the tenderest regard, as it will be revered with the involuntary respect which we cannot withhold from those, whose lives have been pure and constantly dedicated to the advancement of knowledge; to the intellectual and the moral improvement of others; and in these ways,—imperfectly it may be, but still faithfully, zealously, and piously,—to the honour and glory of God.





Harland, JNO. 1854. "Memoir of the Late Mr. John Just, of Bury." *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester* 11, 91–121.

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