



Walter Murdoch, c. 1904
by courtesy of Lady Murdoch

Alfred Deakin, 1907
by courtesy of Mrs Herbert Brookes



Walter Murdoch
and Alfred Deakin
on
Books and Men

Letters and Comments
1900-1918

Edited by
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¶ [A.T.] Quiller Couch: *From a Cornish Window*, London, 1906.

¶ Van Dyke: J. C. Van Dyke (1856-1932), American art historian and general writer, *The Opal Sea*, London, 1906.

¶ Balzac: probably Mary F. Sandars, *Honoré de Balzac: his life and writings*, London, 1904.

¶ Brunetière: Ferdinand Brunetière (1849-1906), French literary historian and critic, whose *Honoré de Balzac* was published in the French Men of Letters series, London, 1906, and reviewed by Faguet in *Revue Latine*, V (1906), pp. 257-79.

¶ Everyman's Library: the series, edited by Ernest Rhys, began in 1906.

10. To Walter Murdoch

Commonwealth of Australia.

Prime Minister

Aug 19. [190]6

Dear Mr Murdoch,

There is no mystery as to Elzevir—for you referred to some notes—on Granville I think—which had appeared in that column—as being yours. I have always enjoyed the gossip & think many others who have time to read must find it useful—Please go on—Nietzsche I found very valuable for though to me he acts as 'advocatus diaboli' he pricks so many conventional bubbles & sounds the shallows of masquerading 'morality' so well that he helps to drive one to deeper foundations & more sincere inspiration. 'Democracy in the light of Science' interested me but I think the 'Limits of Biology' goes further—How well this matches in essence with

Faguet's very fine eulogy of Corneille also in the last Revue—

Pardon my bad memory but I do not recollect your having noticed Quiller Couch's 'Mayor of Troy' a fine piece of sane sad semi historic realism or Clifford's 'Heroes of Exile' a series of very fascinating studies of out of the way episodes in the East—When travelling I sometimes miss a Saturday's 'Argus' & you may have dealt with both without my knowledge—As you may guess I have little leisure for reading anything but blue books or equally distressing matter—But when I can pick up a volume time & space disappear taking with them all anxieties & responsibilities except those transferred to me by the author into whose hands I have delivered myself—I have had to be content with the Revue notice of 'The Saint'. Bullen was to return before this & I had promised myself the pleasure of asking you to meet him—The only lit[er]ateurs I have seen are not such as would commend themselves to you so far as I can guess—With regards

Yours very truly
Alfred Deakin

Walter Murdoch Esq M.A.
Torrington Avenue Canterbury

¶ Elzevir: Murdoch began to use this pseudonym in the 'Books and Men' column of the *Argus* in June 1905.

¶ Granville: Lord Edward Fitzmaurice's *Life of Lord Granville, 1815-1891* had been reviewed in the *Argus* in two articles, 18 and 25 November 1905, but they were not by Elzevir and do not seem to be by Murdoch. Deakin may have mistaken his reference. He read Fitzmaurice's book in 1906.

¶ 'Democracy in the light of Science': C. Bouglé, *La Démocratie devant la Science*, reviewed by Faguet in *Revue Latine*, V (1906), pp. 129-63.

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¶ 'Limits of Biology': 'Les limites de la biologie', article by Faguet in *Revue Latine*, V (1906), pp. 321-31.

¶ Corneille: Faguet published 'Discours . . . de la statue de Corneille' in *Revue Latine*, V (1906), pp. 346-50.

¶ 'Mayor of Troy': London, 1906, reviewed in the *Argus*, 6 July 1906.

¶ [H.] Clifford: *Heroes of Exile: certain rescued fragments of submerged romance*, London, 1906. Clifford wrote extensively on life in the Malay states.

¶ leisure for reading: Deakin noted the titles of only 66 books in general literature read this year, but by 1908 he made better use of his leisure and noted 103 titles.

¶ 'The Saint': by Antonio Fogazzaro (1842-1911), Italian novelist. The English translation, London, 1906, was reviewed in the *Argus*, 10 August 1906.

¶ Bullen: Frank Thomas Bullen (1857-1915), author of *The Cruise of the Cachalot* and other sea stories, was visiting Australia; Murdoch dined with Deakin, Bullen and others on 4 September.

II. To Alfred Deakin

Torrington Avenue
Canterbury
31.viii:[19]06

Dear Mr Deakin

I posted to your address to-day, along with 'En Lisant Nietzsche', the little schoolbook which—Heaven knows why—I promised to send you. It seems supremely ridiculous to put before you such a futile production. I hope some day—if the gods be other than venomous—to do a bit of serious work which may be worthy of your acceptance; but—let not him that putteth on his

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armour'—I may be condemned after all to spend and end my days in futilities.

I am reading 'From a Cornish Window' and find it delightful, except the deliberately humorous parts, which strike me as hardly up to the mark.

What you say about Nietzsche is most interesting.—All I can say is, he didn't perform that service for me. I suppose everyone needs a different kind of advocatus diaboli. It was Ibsen who shattered the world of convention in my case, and set me upon rebuilding the universe for myself. I can't think of him without profound gratitude.

However, I have read to-day's paper, and I know you are too busy to listen to personal confessions just now. Thanking you for your two notes and the suggestions contained in them, I remain

Yours very truly
Walter Murdoch.

¶ 'En Lisant Nietzsche': by Faguet, Paris, 1904.

¶ schoolbook: Tucker and Murdoch's *New Primer of English Literature*, Melbourne, 1906.

¶ 'From a Cornish Window': this was reviewed by 'Elzevir' in the *Argus*, 15 September 1906.

¶ too busy: there had been a 'stonewall' in parliament; Deakin got to bed at 5 a.m. on 29 August; on 30 August measures for tariff preferences for Britain and New Zealand were introduced and a controversial bounty bill was passed.