



Yours truly  
H. W. Patterson

## HUGH LEE PATTINSON.

BORN A.D. 1796. DIED A.D. 1858.

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“ The mould of a man’s fortune is in his own hands.”-LORD BACON.



THE wedge-shaped portion of territory at the south - eastern extremity of Cumberland, abutting on the county of Durham, and separating the counties of Northumberland and Westmoreland, constitutes the district of Alston Moor. No part of inhabited Cumberland surpasses Alston Moor in bold, rugged, and mountainous character ; it includes the northern portion of the old “ British Alps ” or Apennines, now designated the Penine chain of hills, extending from Derbyshire to the northern counties of England ; and has its western defence in one of the highest of these—Crossfell, 2900 feet above the level of the sea. Being so inaccessible, few’ travellers cared to visit Alston, and those who ventured so far from the beaten path of tourists got the notion of perpetual mists prevailing in its valleys, and perpetual snow resting on its highest summits. Thus a county historian, at the close of the last century, described the town of Alston \* as “ a small market town meanly built, situated at the declivity of

\* Aldstone, Aldeston, and other varieties of spelling used to prevail; the modern mode is Alston.

a steep hill, inhabited by miners. The fatigue of passing bad roads was in nowise alleviated by the scene which presented itself here. Pent in a narrow valley, over which mountains frowned with a melancholy sterility and nakedness ; the wind tempestuous, impending clouds stretching forth a dark and disconsolate curtain over the face of morning, rain beating vehemently against the windows, which were not able to resist the storm ; a few trees standing near the inn tossed by the heavy blasts which howled down the valley : such were the objects which presented themselves to us at Aldston. . . . We might be bold to challenge Derbyshire or even Cornwall to produce so peculiarly a wild spot as Aldston Moor; where all that the earth produces is from its bowels and where the people also are so generally subterraneous.”

Alston Moor, however, claims a place in history, In constructing the greatest of all their works in Britain-the Wall and Vallum of Hadrian and Severus, extending from the German Ocean to the Solway Firth-the Romans were in close proximity to Alston Moor, and most probably knew of its metallic treasures ; at any rate, they made a military road, known as the “ Maiden Way,” that traverses the district from the Great Wall towards Westmoreland and the south, After the Romans came St Augustine and his forty missionaries, who achieved the miraculous feat of expelling the demons of the storms, from which Fiends’ Fell had its ancient name, and of erecting upon it a cross, a belief that led to the modern name of Cross-fell.

The chief interest attached to Alston Moor is its possessing rich lead-mints. These mines were worked

in the days of the last of the Norman kings, and have continued in operation to the present time. In the twelfth century there was a mint at Carlisle, and in the year 1226 the Northumbcrland Pipe Roll contains a charge of A2154 for "the rent of the Mine of Carlisle," which is identified with the Alston Mine by a record of 1356 A.D., and another of 1414 A.D.

In the year 1768 there were 119 lead-mines in the parish of Alston, 103 of which were held on leases under Greenwich Hospital; and in the last decade of the eighteenth century the clear yearly produce of the Alston mines was stated at £ 16,000, and the number of persons employed in the mines at 1100. The quantity of land under tillage in the whole parish of Alston did not exceed 100 acres in the year 1796, when the population, independent of the 1100 miners, was calculated to be 4500 ; and in the same year a boy named Pattinson was born in Alston, who lived to raise the reputation of his native place, and to contribute no small amount of wealth to the kingdom at large. His life and character form the subject of this memoir.

Hugh Pattinson\* was born on Christmas Day 1796, when the " Waits," with their violins and flageolets and rural carols, heralded the morn, and lent soothing influences to the expectant mother. His birth came auspiciously at the great feast of the year when the Yule log blazed on the hearth, and the larder was replenished ; when dried legs of mutton, wheat-flour

\* The name is spelled Patison in the records of the Society of Friends ; sometimes you find Pattison and Pattinson, and occasionally Paterson—all synonyms. The modern spelling, Pattinson, is retained in this memoir, as it is generally in use in Alston district and elsewhere.

cakes, currants, and honey, displaced the ordinary fare of bacon, oatmeal porridge, and barley bread. Hugh was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth ; moreover, at his advent, Alston Moor was still living in the age of horn spoons, pewter plates, and brown pottery ware. Rough and substantial fare was needed to rear the sons of toil, men of bone and sinew coping with the hardships of manual labour, burrowing the earth for its uncertain yield, and living among the fells, the habitat of wild game and black-faced sheep.

The population of Alston Moor consisted chiefly of miners; customary tenants of small holdings of land ; and here and there a yeoman, or “ bit of a statesman,” who managed his own acres: the market town had its shopkeepers and artisans. The miners were thrifty men, with a good deal of rough practical intelligence, and that kind of independence that is not altogether devoid of rudeness of manner. Shrewd and apt in remark, they were not without a large share of prejudice, superstition, and profanity of speech.

The Pattinsons were a family of Quakers, sober-minded people of good repute, residing in the little town of Alston. Thomas, the father of Hugh, kept a shop for groceries, drapery, and other goods suited to the requirements of a working population. It is probable that he also had a share in some mining venture, as was the custom of the Alstonians who had saved money; and who, by the way, often lost it in such precarious speculation. Margaret, the wife of Thomas and mother of Hugh Pattinson, was of the family of Lee, lon, known in the district as well-to-

do farmers or yeomen. Mrs Pattinson's grandfather, William Lee, was " moor-master " under Lord Derwentwater.

They were respected members of a self-denying religious body. The father showed industry and thrift; the mother was a capital instance of the old school of matronly Quakers, thoughtful, good-tempered, kindly in manner, and full of neighbourly offices ; So that Hugh was blessed with a nice guiding hand on the maternal, and to him the most influential, side of the house.

Hugh got his A B Cs with Dame Turnbull, a Quakeress; and his three Rs and some knowledge of mensuration under Mr Guy, who had a private school in the town. He was afterwards at Tirrel school, near Penrith. He reaped great advantage from his parents being of the Society of Friends, all of whom are well taught, neat and orderly in person, and much given to mental improvement. Now exactitude and culture were distinguishing features in Hugh's character from his earliest days. His active brain and sanguine temperament felt the sobering influences arising from his home lessons in industry, and reading, and thoughtfulness. In those days lads were soon turned to practical account, and Hugh was called upon to aid in the management of his father's shop, a service dreary in details and highly distasteful to him all along. With the accession of his teens arose a growing impatience for a definite pursuit more bracing to his nerves than the daily arrangement of small merchandise. He early showed himself to be a lad of good parts, ready to avail himself of any opportunity in his way ; but his growing mind was not likely

to rest its nutrition on the sap flowing from the indoctrination of others. He was shrewd and observant, painstaking in effort, and always inquiring after information on all subjects. This thirst for knowledge, and a wish to mingle with his superiors in age, led him to approach the small groups of men who used to meet in the summer evenings in the market-place, or occasionally under the quadrangular roof of the old market-cross, resting their backs against the rude Doric columns supporting its quaint architecture. Listening to their conversation, the little curly-headed boy, with face radiant as his light auburn locks, would interpolate his remark, and now and then call in question both the accuracy and the logic of the statements set forth by men more than twice his age. His method was to sift everything to the very bottom, and nothing less would serve him from infancy upwards to old age. His boyish companions, afraid to approach adult groups, were amazed at his assurance ; but Hugh wanted to know things, and did eventually come to know very much more than any of his compeers-nay, even to surpass "the oracles" of the market-cross.

Hugh had the elements that go to the formation of character-elements out of which could be raised a right good composite structure, requiring but manly training and fair play to give it breadth and practicability in the world. The drawbacks to his education and progress lay in the isolation of his birthplace, and the stagnation of ideas predominating around him. Material interests naturally ruled the Alston community, and so far wisely and well ; but these exclusive tendencies were apt to blunt rather than develop the

faculties of ingenuous youth, and assuredly gave little scope for the higher cultivation of the mind.

In his sixteenth year Hugh lost his worthy father, who died on the 19th May 1812, at the age of fifty-seven years. In the register of the Society of Friends, Thomas Pattinson is described of "Alston town, merchant, and of Allendale monthly meeting ;" and his place of burial is further specified as "near the Meeting-house door." Widow Pattinson was left with two sons, Thomas and Hugh. Thomas, her oldest son, was married to Rachael Watson at Allendale meeting-house on the 16th September 1812, and subsequently lived at Allendale Townhead. He died in early manhood, leaving a son and daughter. The former, W. W. Pattinson, manifesting great ability for "manufacturing science," rose to be the manager of the Felling Chemical Works, of which he has been for many years an active partner. On her son Thomas leaving her, Mrs Pattinson had but one prop to her house, her loving son Hugh, and what to do with his precocious ability oft puzzled her. She was content to go on with the business, but she clearly saw that he was meant for something higher and better.

Hugh outshone his schoolfellows in many ways, and enjoyed special repute as the only youth in the town who could measure the extent of the drift in mines ; and in this capacity he earned useful cash, and more useful credit for ability. The miners, it should be explained, were in the habit of labouring for long periods on a weekly-subsistence payment, and then had their work, say for three or even six months, measured and paid for accordingly. It was on these



settling-days at Alston, when hundreds of men had to be paid in gold and silver brought from Newcastle, that an armed protective force of the money-bags became needful across the hilly country. The arrival of the posse comitatus of musketeers and golden liveries was a great day for Alston.

For a time Hugh served something like an apprenticeship to a joiner ; but on acquiring a tolerable use of the carpenter's tools, he abandoned it in favour of more delicate mechanical operations, where skill and knowledge should play a larger part. In mending and in the construction of clocks and watches he showed considerable ingenuity, and in the belief that this artisanship was his forte, formed a sort of co-partnery with George Greenwell, a watch and clock maker in Alston. Hugh was obliging, ingenious, and clever, hence his services were in demand in the adjustment of household contrivances of various sorts, or other "natty " work that baffled ordinary artisans, In time he came to be looked upon as a lad of genius who could turn his hand to the most cunning work,

Like all youths who could work with a will and a success, he had time for leisure and play. His companionship was much solicited on account of his superior ability-indeed, the best-educated lads of Alston and its vicinity thronged to his side.

In his early adolescence he established a debating society, consisting of a dozen or more young persons, whose meetings were held in the upper room of his mother's house, He was the life and soul of the society, and it thrived vigorously under his direction. His good mother doted on Hugh, and when she got a hint from some of his companions that he was likely

to address the meeting, she crept near the door to hear him, and this was a great satisfaction to the maternal heart. She saw in him a lad of real promise, and took interest in all his doings, watching over him ever so tenderly. Though more than once afraid of the third storey of her house parting company from the rest of the building under his blastings and hot furnaces, she never could say "nay" to his experimental efforts.

His industry was indefatigable ; then he was so clear-headed, and ready to grasp any theoretical opinions and reduce them to practice. With a fine perception and a facile hand, he was doubly armed in the cause of knowledge : such rare advantages bore their true fruit in his constructing apparatus of various kinds to illustrate the doctrines of science, and to prove their practical operation and utility. Given a moiety of information, which some men possessed and could not extend, and he would make up a whole. To him the history of a subject was nothing unless rendered complete to his comprehension.

It was a proud day to Mrs Pattinson when the curiosity of her neighbours was excited to visit her up-stairs room, for the purpose of examining the electrical machine that Hugh had constructed in his seventeenth year ; and prouder still was she to see her young electrician sitting on an isolated stool, like a magician in his weird's circle, whom nobody' could approach without drawing a spark from him, What a lad, and what wonders ! Well might the fond mother be puzzled by so strange a phenomenon. Did Hugh borrow his work from studying an instrument in the possession of the Alston doctor? or had

he picked up a stray volume of an encyclopædia treating of electricity, and mastered the leading principles, like the Fifeshire lad, John Leslie, who, similarly favoured, laid the foundation of a fame that was recognised by the world of science?

Hugh studied the works of Gall and Spurzheim on phrenology along with a young medical student of Alston, and for a time would examine the heads of his companions and friends with the view of testing the new psychological doctrines.

An opinion has prevailed that Hugh received his first impetus in the direction of chemistry from listening to a lecture on the subject at Alston. His companion, Mr John Pattinson, has no remembrance of this ; and it is curious, if true, as a lecturer of the itinerating class would no doubt try to astonish the natives by his doctrinal exposition, his detonations, and sensational devices. The only lecturer heard of in Hugh's juvenile period was William Martin, a brother of John Martin the great painter, who, by the way, styled himself in his public announcements a "professor and philosopher,"\* and whose lecture was as high-flown and grandiose as his assumed titles. Hugh had as much faith in his own knowledge as the peripatetic philosopher, and did not attend. Martin had heard something of Hugh's powers, and when his lecture was disturbed by some noisy lads outside the premises

\* "Philosopher Martin" recalls an itinerant lecturer on electricity, hailing from Newcastle thirty years ago, who experimented successfully, and gave very practical expositions of the ordinary phenomena of the science, but whose self-esteem and candour were fully shown when, after describing an experiment and the explanations in vogue, he would say, "Dr Faraday thinks or affirms so and so, but *hus* and *huther* philosophers don't agree with him on the subject."

of the Turk's Head, where he was holding forth, he got angry and said the disturbance was caused by a young Alstonian, evidently meaning but not naming Hugh Pattinson, whose rivalry he seemed to fear!

The mining operations, the smelting and other chemical processes carried on in the district, afforded a large field of inquiry upon which he would gladly have embarked; but where were the means to guide his hands, or the science that was essential to the exact interpretation of the phenomena around him? Much cosmogony and mystery ruled the Alstonian mind; but Hugh looked with anxious gaze for more tangible ideas of the physical structure of bodies, their actions and reactions upon each other, also their composition and uses. Now, the knowledge he aimed at was either locked up in the laboratory of the chemist or clothed in the vernacular of expensive octavo volumes; and to him both were pretty much alike inaccessible. Probably some simple treatise or catechism of his young Esculapian friend's gave him a clue to elementary chemistry, and at a very early age; moreover, his chemical penchant bore direct home, and was almost entirely confined to metallurgy. He attempted a laboratory up-stairs, erected furnaces and other apparatus for manipulating lead ores to a new purpose; he also constructed an engine, the motive power of which should be not steam but gunpowder. The latter effort proved rather too fiery an ordeal, and though he saved his person and limbs, he nearly blew up the roof and gable of his mother's dwelling. "Nothing venture, nothing win," was Hugh's motto, and he stuck firmly to it during the days of his self-

dependence and long-continued search after the laws of mechanics and chemistry.

At the age of eighteen years Hugh Pattinson fell in love, and showed right good taste in selecting for that love the prettiest girl around Alston Her name was Phœbe Walton. The Waltons, a hearty lot of fellsiders, were small landed proprietors, and long held the estate called "The Nest." Phoebe's grandfather, John Walton, was a liberal-minded, jolly personage, who took a leading part in all the sports and fun of Alston Moor, and was known as "the old Cock of the Nest." He held large shares in mines, and when he and his partners found a good vein of ore, they brewed a peck of punch in its honour !-generally on the Saturday or pay nights of the miners. Unfortunately this jollification of the laird's was apt to extend over Sunday and Monday-nay, Tuesday sometimes witnessed his "homeward bound"-and then he feared to encounter the ruffled feathers of his "Nest " mate. Approaching very cannily the threshold by a small flight of steps, he would open the door of the house and cry, " Mary, lass !" then throwing his cocked hat into the kitchen, where he expected his spouse Mary would be sitting in the "doldrums," would ask, " Is that welcome, Mary ? " If there was no response after repeating the question, the silver-headed stick followed the cocked hat, and, " Is that welcome then, Mary ?" On the first trial of this mode of conciliation on the part of the " Old Cock," who had absented himself for three days, Mary was in no melting mood, and sat silently ; finding no welcome, jolly John picked up his head-gear and stick and returned to Alston for another carouse. This was a home lesson not lost on

Mary, who being appealed to on similar occasions, would call to John, standing behind the door, "Come in wi' thee, thou ne'er-dui-weel, and hae some tea!" and all was straight again.

phœbe Walton was the observed of all observers at church and market, and the belle of the happy social meetings in and around Alston at Christmas-tide. She was tall and fair, with beautiful blue eyes; her brown ringlets adorned a splendid complexion; and, in short, she was a fascinating person. Of course she had lots of suitors, and the fact of her sometimes helping her brother, who had a draper's shop in Alston, afforded bashful wooers and blither lads the double opportunity of buying handkerchiefs and courting the fair saleswoman. The coy maiden, pleased with the pretty attentions of handsome fellows, felt all the more indignant that a person of feeble body and feebler mind should solicit her hand in marriage. Being determined to get rid of his importunities, she sought the aid of her brother and his friends-Hugh among the rest-and it was managed that she should feign compliance with "Dicky's" proposal of a Gretna Green marriage. Accordingly the expectant bridegroom hired the best nag and the softest pad for his Phœbe's comfortable sitting behind him, and waited punctually at the trysting-place. The "young doctor," who personified the bride, mounted, and "Dicky, so elated with his prize, could only dwell on the prospective pleasures of bliss without giving a moment's thought to his partner's silence; at length this silence was broken by a burst of laughter that had long been repressed, a sudden descent and flight of the supposed bride! Further

description is uncalled for, as Shakespeare has drawn the picture in his "Merry Wives of Windsor," in the character of Mr Slender finding a "big lubberly boy" instead of his "Mistress Anne Page."

Hugh and Phœbe knew each other from infancy, and were under Dame Turnbull's tuition when he joked her and said she must marry him when the time came. This childish regard of Hugh's found no response in Phœbe when age might have revived his wish ; nor did he show her any marked attention till Martinmas 1815, when he had the good sense to declare his love. There were other suitors in the field for the lass with the tocher and good pedigree, but Hugh's abilities were of a winning order, and far eclipsed the efforts of the slow and bucolic competitors in the race for Phœbe Walton. Having faith in the old song, "Happy's the wooing that's not long a-doing," the young couple would get married before the end of the year.

A difficulty arose as to the marriage of a Quaker with a Church of England woman. Either Phœbe must become a Quakeress—a procedure to which dancing and gaiety would hardly be a suitable precursor in the eyes of the elders of drab-or Hugh must be brought within the fold of mother Church by adult baptism. The latter mode was deemed best, and on December 23, 1815, the Rev. Benjamin Jackson, vicar of Alston, met Hugh and his friends at the Angel Inn—an appropriate signboard for the occasion of changing, as Cobbett would have said, an "un-baptized," if not "buttonless," fellow into an orthodox Christian—and there performed the ceremony. The novitiate entered the room as Hugh Pattinson ; after

baptism\* he stood forth Hugh Lee Pattinson, having adopted his mother's maiden name of " Lee " in her honour.

On Christmas Day, Phœbe, attended by a numerous party, rode on her gallant steed from the Nest to Alston through the snow, dressed very gaily in a Leghorn bonnet, white veil, and handsome riding habit, and in the parish church of Alston took Hugh Lee Pattinson as her husband for better or for worse. The bridal party were entertained at Mrs Pattinson's, and it may be added that chocolate was served up at breakfast as a great treat. The bride and bridegroom having both been born on Christmas Day 1796, completed their nineteen years on their marriage-day.

\* Hugh Lee Pattinson, on his baptism, was registered in the parish books as a draper; but in the baptismal registers of his oldest children, in 1817 and 1818, he is described as watchmaker; whilst registering a daughter in 1820, he ranks as yeoman.