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*BACKWARD GLANCES*

*JAS HEDDERWICK LL. D.*

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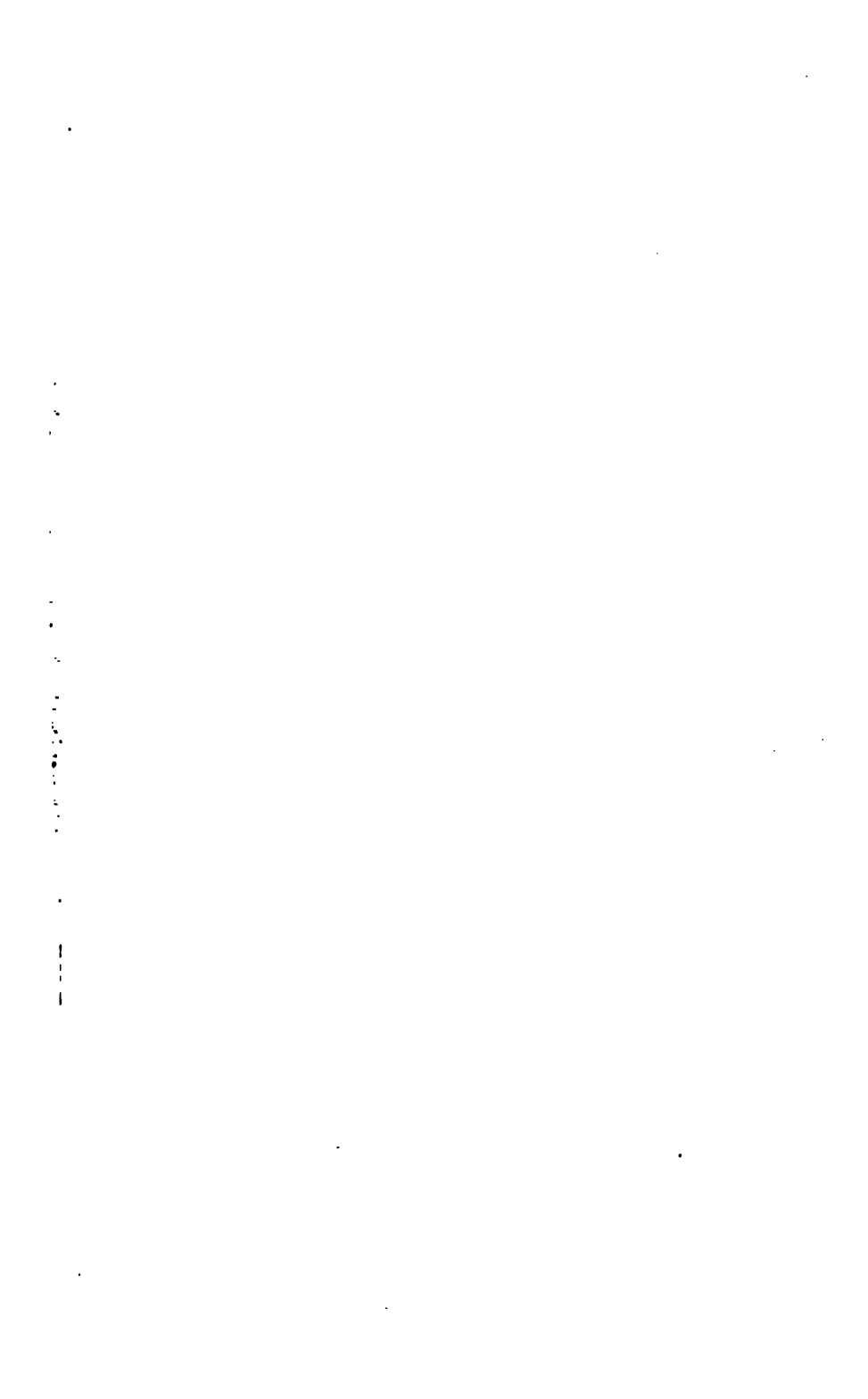
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**BACKWARD GLANCES**









James H. Wood

Truly Yours,  
James H. Wood





Truly Yours,  
James McDevitt

2/11

# BACKWARD GLANCES

OR

SOME PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

BY

JAMES HEDDERWICK, LL.D.

AUTHOR OF 'LAYS OF MIDDLE AGE,' ETC.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS

EDINBURGH AND LONDON

MDCCCXCI



TO THE HELP-MATE OF MY LATER YEARS, WITHOUT  
WHOSE SWIFT PEN AND SKILFUL CO-OPERATION IT  
WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, I AFFECTION-  
ATELY INSCRIBE THIS MEDLEY OF OLD MEMORIES.

J. H.



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# BACKWARD GLANCES.



## I.

### AN EARLY NEGLECT.

I ONCE knew a venerable gentleman who had kept a diary during a great part of his life. He could tell, on consulting its pages, with whom he had dined on any particular day for nearly forty years back, together with any special incident which had characterised the feast. The quantity of convivial information his industry had accumulated was incredible, and had its interest been equal to its amount, what a treasure might it not have been to the curious!

Most things in this sublunary sphere are too trivial for preservation even in manuscript.

Yet many a man's private retrospect may possess, in its more salient features, a human value for individuals with kindred experiences; and hence I have often regretted that some good angel did not prompt me to jot down daily memoranda of facts and observations during periods of my career rich in at least personal reminiscence. Who knows but that, with the material thus collected, I might have become a Samuel Pepys in a small way, minus his unique capacity for prying everywhere, knowing everybody, and seeing everything?

Among the singular characters I have met in my time was a certain literary genius, with eyes and hair in a frenzy, who every now and then defied the most copious English dictionary to supply him with words adequate to the expression of his thoughts. But his faculty of invention was prompt and fearless; and with a peculiar nasal defect in his speech he would exclaim, when challenged on the score of his verbal novelties or monstrosities, "Shakespeare made words, and why shouldn't I?"

To any such heroic originality I lay no claim. I must take my facts not from imagination but from memory only. That veracious chronicler, Mr J. L. Toole, proclaims that "everybody is

relating his reminiscences nowadays;" and it may be that I am moved to unpack the stores of my recollection by a mere irrepressible impulse to be in the fashion.

## II.

## EMIGRATION.

Some years before I had reached my teens, I was conveyed, with or without my consent, from Glasgow, the city of my birth, to the United States of America. Five weeks' trip in a sailing-ship, when deep-sea steaming was believed to be impracticable, was a big thing to a child just beginning to open its eyes on the universe. I remember the tumbling porpoise, the spouting whale, the flying-fish making its long low curve in the air, as if it had come up for an atmospheric bath. Once or twice we came within hail of another ship, when those in charge took to their speaking-trumpets, and exchanged salutations and inquiries. A monstrous iceberg, or one which seemed to me of enormous size, we passed so closely as to experience a chill and a fear. Then a death took

place among the steerage passengers. It was that of a man of massive proportions called Samson. Whether this was his true patronymic, or a nickname suggested by his stature, I never knew. But the event subdued the laughters on deck, and deepened into weird meanings the lappings and the gurglings of the waves.

The inevitable sequel came, and I had my little experience of a burial at sea. Neither brother nor friend of the deceased was on board ; and it was sad to watch the large figure of the stranger, swathed in its thick blankets, sinking and shimmering down into the sunless depths. Every one, standing with head uncovered, looked solemn and impressed : though now, at this distant date, I can fancy that there would by-and-by, as intelligence of the death was received, be bitterer sorrow elsewhere.

### III.

#### A BRIEF SOJOURN.

America ! O country of huge proportions, of infinite aspirations and possibilities ! Was it now in very truth to be the country of my

adoption? I have a vision of its "corduroy roads," and of other primitive developments. Since that date everything, like Topsy, has "grewed." Yet even at the time I speak of, New York, where we landed, was the "empire city"—a great commercial centre of unlimited ambitions and strivings. Its Broadway was a thoroughfare of interminable and unceasing traffic; its City Hall was pointed out to me as having a front of white marble. In a spacious apartment of that building I saw long tables laid out for a feast, for it was the fourth of July, the anniversary of American Independence. Sunshine prevailed, and the city was *en fête*. Bands and processions attracted holiday crowds, while flags flaunted their gay colours from the public institutions and shipping. Much patriotic oratory would doubtless be expended in New York and elsewhere that night, but I was too juvenile to have any thoughts beyond the local show. That, of course, soon passed, and then we—the prospecting party of which I was a small unit—had more to see of America.

Something we in due time discovered of the growing greatness of the United States, though without railways to abridge the formidable



distances. We voyaged up the Hudson to Albany, drove into the interior, came upon a group of native Indians encamped by the roadside like gipsies, observed where young towns had laid the foundation of great cities among the roots of the primeval forest, and stumbled upon not a few Scotch people—for the most part toiling, grumbling, and home-sick.

But our future was ere long to be changed. It became evident that my father sympathised with such of his dissatisfied countrymen as he had met. The heat of the summer of 1822 oppressed him. In the outhouses of the farmers he noticed sledges which told of an opposite extreme of weather in winter. Then, besides fretting at the climate, he began, I fear, to have unreasonable prejudices against the people. Some of the sharp practice which Sydney Smith lashed with such unmitigated scorn in the case of a certain repudiating State, he fancied he detected at that early period in individuals. In a word, his experiences of Transatlantic life were not fortunate, and failed to satisfy far less to fascinate him. The result was a sudden determination on his part to recross to the old home.

Gone long ago were the illustrious men—the

Washingtons, the Jeffersons, and the Franklins—who had built up the great Western Republic; while Channing, Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell, and the cultured spirits of Boston and the new era, had not yet risen above the horizon. In the interregnum of the duller present the disappointed emigrant could discover little material wherewith to realise his glowing hopes. The scales had fallen from his eyes. Scotland with all its faults had his affections still. Accordingly, after six months' sojourn and travel, his "wheel-about" became *un fait accompli*, and I fairly and for ever lost the chance which I assume to have been at that juncture mine, of acquiring a facility for go-ahead enterprises, rising to the position of a millionaire, and achieving distinction, perhaps in dear Caledonia itself, as the lessee of innumerable brown acres of Highland mountain and heath.

## IV.

## GLASGOW IN THE THIRD DECADE.

Nineteen days from New York to Liverpool! —a notable run when the century was merely

adolescent. We had a hurricane at our back almost all the voyage; but how could we grumble at a storm which was blowing us rapidly homeward?

Our ship, the William Thompson, was a famous Liverpool packet. It had carried the elder Charles Mathews to America, and that powerful comedian afterwards introduced it in one of his popular "At Homes." The entertainment disclosed, in a whimsical way, the fact that the name of the vessel, the name of its owner, and the name of its skipper were all identical. To each fresh question roared through a trumpet the answer was always "William Thompson."

Yet, notwithstanding its wind-driven speed in our case, the strenuous "liner" arrived too late at Liverpool to enable us to catch any of the Glasgow steamers. These had all, according to custom, knocked off for the winter; and as railways were no more known at that time than in the days of Queen Elizabeth, our only economical alternative, looking at the number of our goods and chattels, was to take passage for the Clyde in a smack.

Owing to the comparative smallness of this vessel, our brief coasting-trip seemed rougher and more terrible than anything we had en-

countered in our Atlantic experiences of three thousand miles that were shoreless. Almost every one was sea-sick, prostrate, helpless. But what an elysium of relief to swim at length into smooth water !

By-and-by friends of whom we had taken an eternal farewell in spring were not a little bewildered to recognise us once more in the familiar precincts of St Mungo. We had shrunk disappointed from the land of exaggerated promise ; but in our own city there was still, to use the delightful phrase of a local magistrate, "plenty of room for scope." Glasgow was beginning to exhibit the thews of an infant Hercules, and scarcely has the Chicago of the western world displayed a more marvellous growth.

Not only was the city of that day different from what it is now, but the very climate was different. In winter the snows fell to a greater depth, and the frosts were more protracted. As a schoolboy I sometimes, along with others, found amusement in rolling snowballs until they grew into icy and immovable boulders. The Clyde was alive with skaters. Then, when a thaw set in, down in a few days came the river in fragments, rejoicing in its strength,

and expanding as with a dream of the sea. During the "spates" thus occasioned the low-lying but thickly peopled riparian districts became flooded; and in various streets—Stockwell, Bridgegate, and Main Street, Gorbals—I have seen men in row-boats communicating with the first-storey windows of semi-submerged dwelling-houses.

Years of dredging and drainage have long since transformed the picturesque and erratic Clyde into an orderly and useful drudge; while the city itself has, as I have hinted, been "translated." On all sides I behold busy and eager thoroughfares where I rambled erewhile among verdant fields. I pause at the head of Queen Street, and hear the shriek of steam-whistles instead of the cawing of rooks. Have the innocent sheep that were wont peacefully to graze in St Enoch Square been frightened away by the continual clatter of cabs? Jamaica Street is all day in a roar with traffic, and I muse on the disappearance of the grass which grew between the stones. I stare at St George's Church as a leading business centre—the Stock Exchange is close to it—and think of a friend lately deceased who gathered blackberries at the digging of its foundation. Wan-

dering to Blythwood Square, I recall the grassy hill it has supplanted, and which I remember a gang of navvies engaged in levelling some dozen or twenty feet down. On the broad pavement of Sauchiehall Street I contemplate the flaring fashions of the hour, and mentally go back to the time when it was not a street at all, but a country road with hedges, unpaved footpaths, quiet suburban villas, and a walled-in botanic garden of over six acres. In no part of Glasgow was there a cab-stand; city omnibuses or cars were non-existent; the private carriages of the gentry and the doctors might be counted on the ten fingers. When darkness closed over the town, it became feebly illuminated with blinking oil-lamps; the night-watchmen, or "Charlies," dozed in wooden boxes at certain street corners, sounded their clappers along their beats and underneath our windows on the occasion of a fire or a row, and bawled out at intervals the hour and the state of the weather—such as "Half-past three, and a fine morning!"—until the day-star rose in the heavens, and the cocks began to crow on neighbouring farms.

## V.

## STEAM NAVIGATION AND HENRY BELL.

Within my recollection the Clyde in the near vicinity of the city was during the summer months a stream for bathers. I remember seeing a lad wade from one side to the other below the harbour, carrying his clothes on his head. It would now take a Gargantua to perform that feat.

Drownings in the river were then not infrequent, and the Glasgow Humane Society awarded a guinea for every case of successful rescue, until it was discovered that some drunken fellows were in the habit of getting up mock strugglings in the water, for the sake of the guinea which they were always at hand to earn!

A winding and silvery stream was the Clyde in those days, with emerald banks feathered here and there with broom. One morning at an early hour I observed a fisherman draw his net at Govan, and land a salmon of such beauty and proportions as would have delighted the heart of Thomas Stoddart or "Christopher

North." Govan, with its handsome church and spire among the trees, was likened to Stratford-on-Avon. I knew a family who took a house there for country quarters. But what a change have the cyclops of Coatbridge and Gartsherrie brought about!

The Clyde has been straightened and widened and deepened into the semblance of a huge ship canal. Govan has been swallowed up and amalgamated. The little harbour itself has grown into miles and acres of quays, docks, shipbuilding yards, and engine-works. Masts, funnels, and ferry-boats—cabs, clerks, lorries, stevedores, and miscellaneous crowds—make up an extraordinary and perpetual scene of mercantile animation. The river has become something wonderful, but its charms are no longer idyllic; and I can understand how the poet Campbell, on revisiting that locality of his green and happy memories, should have exclaimed with saddened emotion—

“And call they this improvement?—to have changed,  
 My native Clyde, thy once romantic shore,  
 Where Nature's face is banished and estranged,  
 And heaven reflected in thy wave no more;  
 Whose banks, that sweetened May-day's breath before,  
 Lie sere and leafless now in summer's beam,  
 With sooty exhalations covered o'er!”



At this epoch of the world, indeed, poetry and sentiment, and the loveliness of nature itself, must give place to the vulgar utilities. When Henry Bell put forth his tiny Comet, he introduced a distinctly new era in the progress of mankind. He was not, it is true, the inventor of the steamboat. Symington and Taylor, with the aid of Mr Miller of Dalswinton—a fine old gentleman whom I once met—had made their momentous experiments on Dalswinton Loch. Fulton carried the knowledge of these to America, where he anticipated the triumph of Bell. It is difficult to place the laurel on precisely the right brow. The glory of steam navigation I believe to be chiefly attributable to James Watt. He it was who took the wild vapour born of fire and water, threw over it the lasso of exquisite mechanical contrivance, and sent it forth into the world on its stupendous mission. The application of the newly mastered force to navigation, as afterwards to land travel, was inevitable. Whoever might take the initiative, the steamboat as a matter of fact was due.

Yet, when all is said, the merit belongs to Henry Bell of having been the first to place a practicable steamer on British waters, and thus to pioneer the way to the astounding steamship

industry which has bridged over all seas, and built up the colossal navies which are a protection and a terror to the nations. What I may call his little Clyde experiment was the precursor of the "Cunarders" and "Anchor Liners" which have made the transit of the Atlantic a pleasure-trip; but these grander results of his achievement he did not live to witness.

Most of the immediate successors of the Comet were inconsiderable craft plying to the scattered watering-places on the Firth,—Gourock, Dunoon, Largs, Rothesay, and the rest; and it was while going coastward in one of these that my attention was directed to a little man on deck, who wore a long greatcoat of blue serge, and whose face beamed with intelligence. This was no other than Henry Bell himself. He travelled in all steamers free, and had a pension from the Clyde Trust. Perhaps I then regarded him as a great original inventor, but in any case I could not be wrong in viewing him with interest. Both ingenuity and enterprise he must have possessed in no ordinary degree, and he must also have been largely endowed with the tact and foresight to seize and shape to his purposes a transcendent opportunity.

Two granite obelisks bearing his name—at Dunglass, and at Helensburgh where Bell lived and died—now look out upon the waters which he helped to make famous; nor will any man grudge these tributes to one who has contrived to associate himself in so remarkable a way with the material progress of his race.

## VI.

### HOW THE WORLD GOT ON.

Young folk are apt to wonder how the world got on before this restless and daring age had developed for daily use its miracles of discovery and invention. Something of the same feeling has probably been experienced at every previous stage of our human progress. Men are hugely inconsistent. They look back to the past as to a golden time, yet never weary in comparing, contrasting, and pitying its primitive conditions.

Did all the centuries which preceded the introduction of gas or electric-lighting belong to the dark ages? A number of years ago a gentleman who had spent a night as the guest of Mr Disraeli at Hughenden, told me he had

sixteen wax-candles in his bedroom! Some of my venerable townsmen may also remember how, in their "salad days," they whirled through the mazes of the dance under wax-candle constellations, diffusing from crystal chandeliers a soft and delicious illumination. These were the luxuries of the rich. Yet the masses of the people were not altogether sunk in Cimmerian gloom. They had their "penny dips" and their oil-crusies; while for special occasion the Yule-log cosily burned or the bonfire merrily blazed. As in still ruder times the world managed to get on—but, alas! what a different world!

At this moment I can kindle my cigar without toiling laboriously over flint, steel, and tinder-box. Few individuals think nowadays of the obligations they owe to their Congreve or Lucifer. Then, O thou happiest of swains! what bliss to be enabled to carry with thee, wherever thou goest, the features of thine adorable reflected from her identical self! Am I wanted elsewhere? I can, without fatigue, scour the intervening space with the rapidity of a Flying Childers. But is locomotion required at all? Through a small instrument on my parlour table—obedient to my will as an

Ariel—I can spirit my mutton-chop from my butcher's down town, or talk confidentially to favourite, friend, or man of business at a distance of scores, or it may be hundreds, of miles!

In the years before Daguerre brought his camera, Stephenson his locomotive, or Morse, Wheatstone, and Edison their wires, there might, let us hope, exist noble compensations in the virtues that endured or the valours that conquered. Yet I, who remember how matters were at a period antecedent to most of our modern marvels, can speak *ex cathedra* of the blessings which we at this day have reason to be thankful for. Our scientists have been our servitors beyond all language of gratitude to picture. Far-reaching victories of peace are our new and invaluable portion. The age to which we have been born is a peculiarly fortunate one; and with regard to the apparent puzzle as to how this old planet struggled to exist in the absence of so many things now held to be indispensable, I can only suggest that people never missed conveniences and appliances which neither they nor their ancestors, through all the generations since Adam, had known or could conjecture in their dreams.

## VII.

## EDINBURGH AND SCOTT.

On one of those fine pre-railway days which were not without their old-fashioned attractions, I found myself trundling towards Edinburgh on the top of a stage-coach drawn by four horses. It was my first visit to the Scottish capital, and the journey occupied about four and a half or five hours.

Edinburgh was my father's native place, and the sight of its noble outline from the ordinary road, for some miles before it was reached, filled me with glowing anticipations and rapture. The name of "Modern Athens" had been conferred upon it as at once classic and appropriate; but not even "Athens, the eye of Greece," to quote Milton's beautiful phrase, could, I conceive, have matched its manifold graces and grandeurs. Whichever way I turned, I felt overwhelmed with a sense of the picturesque. I never wearied promenading Princes Street, looking upward at the old battlemented castle, climbing the Calton Hill, or making the more arduous ascent of Arthur's Seat. How mag-

nificent the ever-varying, the ever-new panorama!

But Edinburgh had other distinction than that of scenic and architectural splendour. It was the city of Sir Walter Scott, who had followed Burns in singing its praises. And Scott was still walking its streets, adorning its lettered society, feeding on its historical associations, and making it and the whole country famous!

My acquaintance with his brilliant romances was limited. I am not aware that I had quite mastered 'Waverley' or 'Guy Mannering,' the 'Bride of Lammermoor' or 'Ivanhoe,' for I was still in my term of boyhood. With only snatches of 'Marmion' or the 'Lady of the Lake' could I be said to be familiar. But the shadow of his great name was over me! I felt under the spell of the mighty enchanter, and I soon made my way to Parliament House, in the hope of seeing him in the flesh.

Fortunately I was not disappointed. The moment I entered the Court of Session I recognised him at once. Portrait and bust had made his face familiar. He sat as one of the clerks of court in front of the Judges' bench. Above him were divers senators, in the dignity of their official robes, and eminent, no doubt,

in law ; but my gaze was fixed on the sagacious features, ruddy complexion, and high silvery head of the one man who, while occupying a lower professional level, towered above them all.

A homely and unpretentious man Sir Walter looked, though crowned of Apollo and the gods. With what awe did I contemplate the hand that had taken the "harp of the North" from its witch-elm and struck immortal music from its cords ! Yet that hand was now engaged putting past vulgar papers. I even declare that I beheld Scotland's greatest living son repeatedly yawn like an ordinary mortal, as if weary of his drudging occupation ! Perhaps it was of that day he wrote in his journal, "The court lasted till half-past three : exhausting work in this hot weather." Strong man as he was, how often must his work have been exhausting !

In a little while up he rose, found his hat, and made for the door, passing close to where I sat. For a moment he paused within a few inches of me, on meeting a professional friend in gown and wig. With this gentleman he exchanged a few words whisperingly, but loud enough to enable me to hear his voice, with its soft, south-country burr.



Then out the great man went into the open air and street. In person he was tall and stoutly built. Attired in black dress suit, and wearing a white cravat of sundry folds, he had much the appearance of an old country clergyman. His lameness was conspicuous. In his right hand he carried a strong staff, pressed it to his side, bending over it at every step, and proceeded down the High Street at a leisurely pace, with a lofty swaying motion.

I followed him across the North Bridge and along Princes Street westward. Many eyes were turned respectfully towards him as he passed. He appeared to move along haloed by an atmosphere of reverence. His humour, his pathos, his power, and his immense variety; the range, originality, and vividness of his creations; his beauty, purity, and tenderness of sentiment; and the depth, and height, and strength of his chivalrous devotion and patriotism—have all expanded in my imagination ever since.

It was not my good fortune to encounter Sir Walter Scott again. But the recollection I have recorded was a sacred one. The actual living image of the illustrious "author of Waverley," as witnessed in his "own romantic

town," has been enshrined and lovingly cherished in my memory from that hour. "Scotland," said his clear-headed contemporary, Lord Cockburn, "never owed so much to one man."

### VIII.

#### DISTANT EPOCHS CONNECTED BY INDIVIDUAL LIVES.

I think it is Robert Chambers who remarks, in one of his delightful essays, on the fact of far-distant epochs of time being often connected, or linked as it were together, by one or two individual lives.

Within five years Burns will have been a century in his grave. It is not probable, therefore, that there is now a single person in Scotland, or the world, who ever beheld him alive. Yet I knew two of his sons, and have met with people who had spoken to the Scottish poet himself.

One of these was Mrs Hunter, the mother-in-law of a deceased brother of mine. She had some acquaintance with him at Sanquhar, and described him as "a black-a-vised man, marked

with smallpox." On some one observing that none of his biographers made any allusion to his having had smallpox, her reply was that "they would never think of mentioning it, as everybody was pock-pitted then."

The Rev. Dr Hatley Waddell, whom I got introduced to this old lady, was greatly pleased by her allusion to the smallpox. He was engaged at the time on his sparkling life of Burns, and her observation was confirmatory of a statement which had been made to him by an aged man with whom he had conversed in Ayrshire. "Here, then," he congratulated himself, "was a new and well-attested fact concerning the personality of the poet!"

My worthy friend, Mrs Hunter, lived to the great age of 98, with her faculties unimpaired; and it seemed strange to hear her relating anecdotes of one who had been born so far back as 1759, and who had died in his early manhood.

But the period when the Ayrshire bard flourished may still be considered comparatively recent. There must exist to this day many who have at least listened to the stories of those who knew or had seen him in their youth. Will it be believed, however, that I once witnessed a venerable English clergyman,

I think from Sheffield, get up in my father's drawing-room and give a forcible imitation of David Garrick, whom he perfectly well remembered? He recited, with appropriate gesture, a passage from "Richard the Third," and conveyed what appeared to be a vivid idea of the great actor's style.

This carries the mind back, through the link of a single life, to the days of the eloquent Burke; of Goldsmith, with his little vanities and admirable genius; of Sir Joshua Reynolds, the renowned artist and writer on art; and of Dr Johnson, the strong talker, with his oddities, his prejudices, and his marvellous authority as the "literary colossus" of the period—a period which the graphic industry of Boswell has kept strangely alive, but which, nevertheless, through the long vista of subsequent events, looks like distant history.

Garrick was born when the eighteenth century was in its teens—we are now getting very near the end of the nineteenth—and perhaps few persons at present living can have seen, as I have, a single authentic eyewitness of his wonderful histrionic power.

## IX.

## A LITERARY "HOWF."

If Glasgow is our Bœotia, it is consolatory to think that its ancient archetype, in spite of its proverbial want of Promethean fire, produced some men of exceptional eminence. Although not an Athens, Glasgow has rarely been without its representatives of something like Attic brilliancy. The heroes, Sir John Moore and Lord Clyde; Campbell, who wrote England's naval odes and Ireland's "Exile of Erin" and "O'Connor's Child"—not to speak of other celebrities, up to my genial friend Professor Blackie—were all born in Scotland's commercial capital. As the seat of an ancient university it has, for upwards of four hundred years, been a centre of scientific, theological, and intellectual force; while here, as elsewhere in Scotland, there have always been little knots of kindred spirits meeting together from a love of song, of anecdote, of antiquities, or of the literary recreations which impart a grace and an interest to social intercourse.

Many Glasgow people will remember the

firm of Robertson & Atkinson, booksellers, opposite the Tron steeple. Atkinson was a local luminary in his day. His ambition and belief in himself were unbounded. I happened to meet him in 1827, when the news had just come to town of the decease of George Canning, who had succeeded Lord Liverpool as Prime Minister, and he declared that for the fame of that great statesman he would willingly have died his death. He wrote much, had a considerable gift of speech, and tried unsuccessfully to enter Parliament as the representative of the Stirling burghs in opposition to Lord Dalmeny. His life altogether was an aspiration and a defeat. Leaving his native city for Barbadoes in a desperate search for health, he died on the voyage out at the early age of 32. Thus was the keen aspirant for position and fame

"cut off from glory's course,  
Which never mortal was so fond to run."

But his partner, David Robertson, from whom he had previously separated, aimed at no such lofty career. The latter was content to pursue the even tenor of his way, and as the projector and publisher of 'Whistle Binkie,' 'Songs of the Nursery,' and the 'Laird of Logan,' his

shop near the foot of Glassford Street became a noted "howf" for poets, editors, clergymen, and *litterati* generally. He had a private apartment or snuggerly, furnished with newspapers and periodicals, where under fitting circumstances he could turn out a comfortable glass of port; and the kind of persons that gathered round him, almost daily, gave the assurance of much interesting and vivacious chat.

There might be seen William Motherwell, whose ballad of "Jeanie Morison" makes

"the heart grow grit  
Wi' dreamings o' langsyne;"

but being in advance of me in years, my acquaintance with him was necessarily slight. His great friend, William Kennedy, author of 'Fitful Fancies,' I knew better. This gentleman, reddish-haired and bald, with a finely shaped head, had suffered, it was alleged, from partial sunstroke, incurred in Texas, where he had held a British consulship. It was on his return home that I acquired his friendship, and it was then he wrote the admired monody on Motherwell, the concluding stanza of which is inscribed on his monument in the Necropolis :

"Not as a record he lacketh a stone!  
'Tis a light debt to the singer we've known;  
Proof that our love for his name hath not flown,  
    With the frame perishing—  
    That we are cherishing  
Feelings akin to the lost poet's own."

Another of the coterie whom I recall was Alexander Rodger, whose pronounced Radicalism had at one time brought him into trouble, but whose racy song of "Behave yoursel' before Folk" had attracted notice in the "Noctes Ambrosianæ" of 'Blackwood,' and who had the further distinction of being entertained in 1836 at a public dinner in the Trades Hall, with no less a personage than Professor Wilson of Edinburgh in the chair.

This was the first time I had met the Professor, who showed, I thought, admirable tact in praising the guest of the evening with apparent effusion, yet with a certain parenthetic reserve which left no sentence or passage which could afterwards be quoted as extravagant.

Most of the other noted Whistle-binkians were regular frequenters of Mr Robertson's lounge—J. D. Carrick, author of 'A Life of Wallace'; Edward Pinkerton, poet and Greek scholar; William Miller, whose "Wee Willie Winkie" won for him a name as "laureate of



the nursery," and other well-known Glasgoweians. These were occasionally supplemented by visitors from Edinburgh, including Robert Gilfillan, author of "Why left I my Hame?" James Ballantine, of "Gaberlunzie Walleet" celebrity; and Captain Charles Gray, whose song, "When Autumn has laid her Sickle by," I have more than once heard him sing with vivacity and vigour. The captain was a retired officer of the Royal Marines, and an enthusiast in the lyrical lore of Scotland.

Often, too, among the group might be noted the prominent and inquiring eyes of Dr Strang, author of 'Glasgow and its Clubs'; and the keen sparkling features of Thomas Davidson, whose letters to the press, under the signature of "Lucius Verus," had made some noise. Then there were certain humorists, who raised from time to time the loud "guffaw," chief among whom were Dr Græme, a loyal Scotchman who made and sang the most comical of Irish ditties, and Andrew Henderson, the compiler of the 'Scottish Proverbs,' a large, soft, fair-haired, unbearded man, with a high falsetto voice, and with an overflowing fund of caustic banter which enlivened many a memorable symposium.

David Robertson himself, with his profound

love of Scottish song, and his immense appreciation of all kinds of wit and drollery, was the central figure around which the host of worthies were wont to cluster. He could warble forth a plaintive Lowland ballad with a great deal of expression and tenderness, or give out with characteristic accent an amusing rhyme of Gaelic blundering and oddity of speech. His "Bonnie Mary Hay" was, for example, always popular; while his "Twal' o' August," with its diverting narrative of unsuccessful sport, was a still greater favourite. But while his own agreeable personality was an unfailing bond of union, his manner was singularly modest and retiring, and it was with no little surprise that I learned on one occasion of his having consented to take the chair at the annual dinner of the Perthshire Benevolent Society.

He would fain have shirked this obligation, for, unlike his late partner, he was diffident of his capacity for speech-making. Nevertheless, he braced himself manfully to the task; and when the eventful evening came, he appeared fully armed with all his little orations carefully written out and enclosed in a small black-leather case, such as is used by clergymen for their sermons. These he read with difficulty. Was his writing

not quite legible, even to himself? or was his double eyeglass at fault? Every time he rose he seemed embarrassed and uncomfortable. This, however, was only when grappling with his formal toasts. The moment he had struggled through these, and his manuscript had disappeared in his pocket, it was obvious to all present that a weight had been lifted from his mind. He became all at once easy, self-possessed, and jocular.

Later on it fell to the lot of Mr William Campbell of Tullichewan to propose Mr Robertson's health. This he did in a few cordial and laudatory remarks; but when he came to descant on the excellent manner in which he had discharged the duties of the chair, he paused, looked him straight in the face, and, after a suitable compliment, wound up by observing confidentially, and in a tone of homely vernacular, "But, O Dauvit, nae mair o' that black book!" This sally set the table in a roar.

## X.

## THE TWO KEANS.

On the west side of Queen Street, a little to the north of where the Exchange now stands, a stately and handsome building was situated. I allude to the Glasgow Theatre Royal—in its day one of the finest theatres in the kingdom. It was one afternoon destroyed by fire, and were I an artist, I could easily sketch from memory both the lofty edifice and its scarred and shattered remains.

No great structure is ever so speedily consumed by fire as a theatre. With its intricate air-passages for bellows, it roars up like a furnace. All its properties—the bridge over which Amina walked, the windows through which Harlequin leapt, Juliet's balcony, Desdemona's bed, the cottages of village girls, and the thrones of stalwart kings—are quickly devoured. The trees of Arden Forest show fiercer flames than burned in Orlando's bosom. The moon which heard Nerissa's vows flickers and expires, while even the chalky cliffs of Dover redden and glow like coal. Not all the tears shed through imme-

morial tragedy within its walls can stay the progress of the spoiler.

A drop-scene by Alexander Nasmyth, the painter of Burns's well-known portrait, perished in the Queen Street disaster. The large canvas presented a view of Dumbarton Castle and the Clyde from Dalnottar, and was esteemed a noble work of art. A London manager was said to have offered £500 for it.

In my boyhood I was taken twice to the Queen Street "Royal," and the appearance of the spacious interior, and of Nasmyth's charming delineation of a scene very familiar to me, are fresh in my recollection. It was in that theatre I first saw the beautiful Miss Foote, afterwards the Countess of Harrington. She personated the part of Aladdin in what was to me a truly gorgeous spectacle. The effect of the performance, and of the wonderful achievements of the slaves of the Lamp and the Ring, was to

"Pour all the Arabian heaven upon my nights."

In justice to my powers of discrimination, I must say that I equally enjoyed the after-piece, in which Billy Lackaday (Mr Meadows), with no end of conundrums, achieved a crowning

success by shouting out, "Why is this theatre like a shoe?" Then came the answer, given with roaring gusto, "Because it is filled by a Foote!" It was obvious from its reception that the audience considered this quite a brilliant interpolation on the part of the "funny man."

But my second visit to the "Royal" was more memorable. Edmund Kean, the most meteoric and phenomenal tragedian of the century, had forbidden his son to follow his own profession. Whether from a knowledge of its hardships, or from a fear that genius was not likely to prove in his case hereditary, is uncertain; but it soon became current that young Charles's appearance on the London boards, in defiance of his repeated injunctions, had given him dire offence. There was, in fact, a serious quarrel between them, and it occurred to the Glasgow manager, Mr Seymour, a good-hearted Irishman like the great Edmund himself, that it would be a mighty thing if he could succeed in bringing about a reconciliation.

Edmund was at that time residing in Bute, where he owned a cottage on the banks of Loch Fad, to which he occasionally resorted. Having engaged Charles for the "Royal," the oppor-

tunity seemed to be a highly favourable one, and off accordingly went Seymour to Rothesay on his delicate but laudable mission.

The result exceeded his expectations : he returned in triumph, and Kean the elder was forthwith announced to appear on a certain night for his son's benefit.

"Brutus, or the Fall of Tarquin," was the piece selected for the occasion. This tragedy is by an American dramatist, John Howard Payne, better known perhaps as the author of the tender ditty of "Home, Sweet Home." Lucius Junius Brutus, the Roman Consul after the overthrow of Tarquin, sacrifices his son Titus, who has been detected in a conspiracy against the republic. Hence the tragic situation ; and the idea of such a father and such a son, with a veritable father and son for their representatives, was enough to cause a sensation among playgoers.

The theatre was packed to the ceiling. Edmund was then at the zenith of his popularity, and the struggle between the tenderness of the parent toward his child and the duty of the patriot towards his country was at times painfully realistic.

At this representation of "Brutus," Mr, after-

wards Sir Daniel Macnee, happened like myself to be present, and through the later years of our long acquaintance I found he had made it the foundation of one of his most mirthful anecdotes.

Could any pleasanter reminiscence of the grand old house be preserved? He had gone to the theatre accompanied by Mr Miller, a gentleman in business in Glasgow. Miller was a man of unusually keen feelings, and the mimic manifestation of distress proved too much for his susceptible nature.

“Isn’t that splendid?” whispered Macnee.

“I wish to goodness I had never come!” sobbed poor Miller. “It’s the most painful spectacle I ever witnessed. The auld man canna act. He’s completely done.”

More overwhelming agony on the stage, and more enthusiasm on the part of Macnee and the pit.

“He can hardly speak!” groaned Miller in affliction. “The auld ass! It’s high time he was leaving’t to his son.”

Then with recovered firmness he declared, “The son’s a capital actor! Even at the most pathetic bits he’s no’ the least put about.”

This was as delicious as Partridge at the



play in 'Tom Jones.' I remember Macnee telling me that he had related the incident to Charles Kean after he, like his father, had become famous, but he was not sure that he relished it, so sensitive are men apt to feel in regard even to non-successes which they have magnificently retrieved.

In reality, however, the exhibition in question was not a novelty. It reminded Macnee himself of the soft-hearted rustic who, bent on an evening's amusement, went to see Mrs Siddons. Unfortunately the tragic queen was in one of her most touching parts; and with tears streaming down his face, the poor fellow at length blubbered out, "You long-nosed thafe! do you call that divarsion?"

## XI.

### LONDON AND SOME EARLY CELEBRITIES.

Prior to the advent of railways, London could be reached by three principal routes. A traveller could go all the way by coach; he could break the journey by taking the steamer to Liverpool, and then proceed onward by road;

or, starting from Leith, he could make the whole trip by water. Each of these routes had its interest, and in good weather its charm. On different occasions I tried them all.

Casual runs to London introduced me to a greater world than I had known. In 1830 I saw the popular "Sailor-King," William IV., going in procession to his coronation. Beside him sat Queen Adelaide, with her yellow ringlets. His countenance was broad in the lower part, giving rather a narrow appearance to the forehead; but his expression as he passed where I stood was tranquil, bland, and not without dignity. The crowds were naturally immense; yet, as far as I observed, there was little or no jostling, while entire good-humour seemed everywhere to prevail.

On one occasion I was taken to a meeting at which the Rajah Rammohun-Roy was to speak. This celebrated Hindu, who ultimately died at Bristol, was arrayed in rich oriental robes, and wore a large turban. Tall, handsome, with a clear but deeply bronzed complexion, his appearance was intellectual and commanding. He had written works in Persian, Arabic, and Sanscrit, chiefly against the idolatrous beliefs and practices of the East; acquired a remark-

able acquaintance with the English and other European languages ; and embraced the Christian religion, though not in its most orthodox form. I suppose he moved some resolution at the meeting in question ; but my chief recollection is the manly sonorous voice and deliberate emphasis with which he made intimation of his having “had many and great obstacles to encounter.” He strongly accentuated the second syllable of the word “obstacles,” though his pronunciation in general was fairly accurate.

At another time I had the good fortune to dine at Clapham with a remarkable Englishman, Mr W. J. Fox. He was of short stature, yet of godly presence, and greatly renowned for his platform appearances. I remember him, on the evening of my visit to his house, chasing one of his boys playfully under the table on his hands and knees—an incident which recalled the story of Henri Quatre careering on all-fours, with one of his children on his back, when a dignified ambassador entered, to whom he put the question, “Are you a father?” On learning that he was, the king had no hesitation in completing his gambols. By profession Mr Fox was a preacher. In his church at Finsbury he proclaimed a Christianity independent of

creeds or sects ; and whatever might be thought of some of his tenets, there can be no doubt that he drew around him highly intellectual audiences. Both as a writer and as a speaker on other subjects he gave promise of a distinguished career ; and this he to a large extent achieved, particularly during the great Free Trade demonstrations in Covent Garden Theatre, in which he took part in conjunction with Messrs Cobden and Bright. All the three speakers were unrivalled in their several ways—the first for simple persuasiveness and the second for brilliant declamation ; while Fox's power of sarcasm, invective, and thrilling rhetoric was undoubtedly of the first order. Afterwards Mr Fox was for many years M.P. for Oldham, and it is curious to remark that M. Guizot regarded him as the most finished orator that the anti-corn-law controversy had evolved.

During one of my visits to London I accompanied a friend to a lecture delivered by Robert Owen, the once famous socialist. Owen was an enthusiast, a schemer, and a dreamer. A spare, intelligent, and well-meaning man, I was struck by his simplicity and earnestness. That he thoroughly believed in his own fallacies was obvious. The little hall in which he discoursed

had many plausible mottoes painted on its walls. One of these was that "A man's character was made *for* him, not *by* him"; and the others were equally expository of socialistic theories. After the lecturer had expounded his visionary state of society, in which there would be neither greed nor want, poverty nor crime, he sat down confident of its practicability, and inviting questions.

Thereupon a man rose in the gallery and said: "Mr Owen, I understand that under your system we are all to be ladies and gentlemen. Now, in that case I should like to know who is to do the dirty work — such as the digging of drains and cleaning out of cess-pools?"

Similar interrogatories had often, I daresay, been listened to and answered. At all events, Mr Owen rose with perfect complacency, as if having to deal with nothing either new or puzzling, and entered into an elaborate argument to prove that inasmuch as what his friend called "the dirty work" would, under his system, "be ranked as the most useful, it would come in due time to be regarded as also the most honourable; and that, so far from any difficulty being felt, there would be a positive

competition for the performance of uncleanly but necessary, and therefore perfectly dignified, operations."

This logic seemed satisfactory to the one-idea'd philanthropist; but it was palpably the sheerest "flamfoozle"; and, alas! all the practical and preceptorial efforts of his benevolent life to create a new world and a new human nature ended in dismal failure.

The theory of socialism which every now and then crops up is founded in an amiable yearning after the power of enchantment which Irish superstition ascribes to the four-leaved shamrock—a power, as interpreted by Sam Lover, to

"scatter bliss around,  
Till not a tear nor aching heart should in the world be  
found."

It is beautiful, romantic, but unattainable. Men have tried to picture something like it in a Utopia or a New Atlantis; but it is, after all, nothing but a dream, and is to be perfected only in dreamland.

## XII.

## MORE PEOPLE OF MARK.

“ I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous boy,  
The sleepless soul that perished in his pride.”

So warbles the poet Wordsworth ; and many others who are not poets have thought of Chatterton with something of the same feeling of surprise. Critics will always pronounce some of his work remarkable ; yet little of it, I fear, is destined to secure a permanent place in the popular anthologies of the country.

England has a better and a greater boy-poet in John Keats. The latter lived, it is true, to the age of twenty-six, while Chatterton was only eighteen ; but looking at Keats's ill health during the closing period of his life, after he had coughed up the little spot of arterial blood which he interpreted as his death-warrant, I cannot but think of him as a boy-poet still, and perhaps the greatest of that designation which the English-speaking peoples have known. The peculiar and sovereign merit of Keats is, that he has produced lines and passages stamped with an affluence of imagery, and a maturity of

execution, only to be paralleled in the pages of some of the poets who have written "for all time." Although misunderstood and assailed on their first appearance, the finer and more delicate and eloquent masterpieces of his muse have vindicated their title to take rank among the gems of English verse which the world has accepted as precious.

Of two of Keats's early friends, eminently noteworthy also on their own account, I entertain some gratifying reminiscences. Leigh Hunt and Charles Cowden Clarke had both recognised and encouraged the genius of the author of "Endymion," when others of critical authority were either apathetic or adverse. To the fine-souled bard of "Rimini" Keats dedicated his first published volume, in a sonnet in which he speaks to him in this wise—

" And I shall ever bless my destiny,  
That in a time when under pleasant trees  
Pan is no longer sought, I feel a free,  
A leafy luxury, seeing I could please  
With these poor offerings a man like thee."

To win the lavish admiration of a critic of such exquisite taste and acumen as Hunt, was at once a triumph and a consolation. With him I spent a long evening in his library at



Kensington. The goodly-sized cup of tea with which I was regaled soon disappeared, but Hunt showed a Johnsonian thirst. He indulged in what Hazlitt calls "libations of tea." Every half-hour or so his servant-maid entered with a fresh cup, which she exchanged for his empty one, and this continued from about six o'clock until after ten, when I left. The cup that innocently cheers was thus scarcely ever absent from his hand, and in this way he sat and conversed, or rather rambled on in a rich and sparkling monologue, to which it was a rare treat for me to listen.

On the preceding night I had witnessed one of Macready's famous Shakespearian revivals at Drury Lane. The play was "King John," with Macready himself in the leading part, while Mr Phelps was glorious as Hubert, and Miss Helen Faucit, whom I saw for the first time, full of excellent promise as Constance. As regards Macready's powerful acting, Mr Hunt freely discussed it with me; but he reverted with glowing admiration to several of the marvellous impersonations of Edmund Kean which I also vividly recalled. I then made some reference to his own dramatic critiques in the 'Examiner,' and asked if these had ever been republished.

“No,” was his response. “They failed to satisfy me on reপরusal. At the time they were written I demanded too literal a representation of nature. I did not make sufficient allowance for the atmosphere which should surround truth like a fragrance.”

On the subject of poetry and Keats he expatiated in even a more charming way, and I now only sigh in vain for the pen of a Boswell, that I might give some value to my casual recollections through a few of his weighty and beautiful deliverances.

Charles Cowden Clarke was a still older friend of Keats. It was he, indeed, who introduced him to Leigh Hunt, and also to the spiritual Shelley, who, after Keats's too early death, enriched with his noble “Adonais” the elegiac poetry of the land which has produced the magnificent requiem of “Lycidas” and the golden numbers of “In Memoriam.”

Good Mr Clarke—good by credentials of benevolent expression—I heard lecture genially and enjoyably at Liverpool, and I had afterwards sufficient intercourse and correspondence with him to enable me to take him to my heart as a most critically gifted and lovable old soul. To him I was indebted for a tiny scrap of

Keats's poetry in the poet's own handwriting ; and also, at a later date, for an interesting little portrait of Leigh Hunt, in his young and handsome years, photographed from an early pencilling in the possession of that famous Novello family from which Clarke had taken the eminently congenial wife by whom he is survived.

In sending me the Hunt portrait, he wrote, "It was made for his friend Vincent Novello by the celebrated Wageman. The name of the artist," he added, "is a sufficient guarantee in itself for its fidelity : moreover, my Mary saw Hunt add his subscription. It has been a household prize for more than half a century ; and we conclude with both testifying that we have rarely beheld a more satisfactory portrait-likeness."

"Friend Charles," as Keats addresses Cowden Clarke in one of his "Epistles," was long resident in the Villa de Novello, at Genoa, where, weaving his happy fancies, he at length faced the great change full of years, a gentle and philosophic nonagenarian. Of his widow I have heard through her musical friend Fanny Davies, who visited her on a late occasion. Some years ago, too, she sent me a couple of

photographs of herself—one showing her in a serious, the other in a laughing mood. Looking at these, I think of her as the Mary Cowden Clarke of old—sister of the Countess Gigliucci, once the brilliant Clara Novello of the lyrical world—and herself the admirable Shakespearian expositor and poetess familiar to literary England. In my mind's eye I can see her in the classic land of her adoption, exercising a kindly hospitality in her charming "villa," surrounded by dear household memories of her ever-loved husband, under those sweet Italian skies beneath which his ashes rest, and where rest also the ashes of Keats and Shelley, his early and immortal friends.

### XIII.

#### BELFIELD COTTAGE, KIRKINTILLOCH.

What a host of happy recollections rise to my mind at the name of Belfield Cottage, Kirkintilloch! It was a hospitable abode, and its proprietor, Mr William Thomson, a liberal, sagacious, and unique landlord.

He was a bachelor, lame and limping in his

gait, delighting in the society of young people of parts, and keeping a singularly open table. At every week's end, from Saturday till Monday, he had seldom fewer than ten or a dozen guests.

To be an artist, a musician, or a man of letters, was an "open sesame" to Belfield. Of his numerous circle Mr Thomson was himself the autocratic ruler, very precise and stern in his household regulations, but outside of these allowing the largest amount of freedom and even latitude.

Daniel Macnee, pushing to the foremost rank as a portrait-painter, and already renowned for his social qualities, was one of Mr Thomson's frequent visitors. His rich geniality, and the amazing collection of stories which he told with a dramatic effect amounting to genius, rendered him the delight of all societies. In one of his anecdotes he described himself as brought professionally into contact with a plain-spoken Scotch farmer. A neighbouring gentleman had his horse at the farm, and it was arranged that Macnee should make a sketch of it with a ploughboy on its back, so as to make the effect more picturesque. On presenting himself, the artist was thus accosted :—

“Is’t you that’s come to tak’ aff oor Jock an’ the meer?”

A reply in the affirmative was of course given.

“Man,” continued the farmer, “ye’re a big buirdly chiel; ye nicht be workin’. The only painter I ever kent was a bit humphy-backit cratur. There was some excuse for him; but as for you, ye nicht be haudin’ the pleugh.”

From this it may be inferred that in person Mr Macnee was of superior height and build. His countenance was capable of great variety of expression; he imitated all sorts of people, but gave offence to none; indeed, he was almost as much valued for his vigorous good sense and judgment as for his variety and brilliancy as a *raconteur*.

But if Macnee was *facile princeps* as an entertainer, there were some others who gave no little *éclat* to Mr Thomson’s lively board. Horatio M’Culloch, a great master of Highland landscape; John Sherriff, young, good-looking, and of fair promise as an animal-painter; and Robert Maxwell, an amateur in still life, but leading a life the reverse of still,—all made Belfield from time to time jovial. Maxwell, in particular, had mimical and musical gifts which rendered his society something to be coveted.

Among those whom he could portray to the life was Mr Thomson himself, the excellent host who was beloved and respected by us all. This became known to the old gentleman, who one merry evening insisted on being treated to a little of his own "counterfeit presentment."

"I can understand," he said, "an imitation of any one with some peculiarity of manner; but for myself, having no peculiarity at all, I do not see how imitation is in my case possible."

This was spoken with a prim and staccato but not unpleasing mode of utterance peculiar to him, which Maxwell, after much pressing, proceeded to echo in an entertaining, though no doubt somewhat exaggerated style.

Mr Thomson scowled, and at the conclusion remarked, "A good personal imitation I enjoy above everything, but I can see nothing amusing in a gross caricature." Though the resentment thus exhibited was easily laughed away, the imitation was never, so far as I am aware, repeated.

Among those, too, whom I occasionally met at Belfield were Dr Macnish, the racy and ingenious "Modern Pythagorean" of 'Blackwood,' and Andrew Macgeorge, a more local celebrity, of literary and antiquarian tastes, and possess-

ing a bright and facile pencil for caricature. But strangers of wider note had likewise been now and then attracted thither. A Russian prince had been Mr Thomson's guest, while his small drawing-room had rung with a voice which had fascinated the capitals of Europe—that of the famous Madame Pasta, for whom Bellini had composed "Norma," and one or two other of his finest operas.

A large album formed one of the usual attractions at Belfield Cottage. To this all and sundry were invited to contribute. Eminent artists from a distance sometimes adorned its pages, and any one looking over the volume with an apparent lack of appreciation was apt to irritate Mr Thomson to an extent which he could hardly conceal.

That the Laird of Belfield was easily moved to anger I discovered on my first visit. We were at breakfast, and he noticed that the hot ham-and-eggs had been served on cold plates. It was too late to correct the mistake, and we all protested that it made little difference. "Little difference?" he exclaimed in an excited tone,—“doited deevils!”

Truth to tell, Mr Thomson was one of the most amiable of men. His flashes of anger



were momentary ; his benevolence showed itself always. One Sunday afternoon in August I had a walk with him in the direction of Kirkintilloch. We had not gone far when we met a couple of decent men, probably handloom weavers belonging to the village. He was not conscious of having seen them before, but he stopped, made an affable remark about the weather, and then handed them the key of his garden, mentioning that "the gooseberries were ripe," and that they might "enjoy a little treat."

They looked astonished, profusely thanked him, and after being assured that they were entirely welcome, were requested to "hand the key into the house on leaving."

I ventured to express a hope, as we strolled on, that the men would do nothing unworthy of the privilege he had given them. But his answer was characteristic. "I have always observed," he said, "that if you put confidence in human nature, that confidence is never apt to be abused."

In the evening, when we were all assembled, Mr Thomson proposed to read aloud for our edification either a sermon or one of Burns's poems. The young rogues—we were all young

then—declared a preference for the latter ; when he selected and read with muchunction the “Address to a Mouse,” accompanied every verse with a little ejaculatory comment, such as “There’s a world of fine philosophy there !” and concluded by exclaiming, “O Lord ! it’s worth a thousand sermons.”

It was easy to perceive from the pathos of the worthy man’s voice that he intended no irreverence. He was impressed with the beautiful moral of the poem, and his exclamation was pious and sincere.

#### XIV.

##### 'TIS FIFTY YEARS SINCE.

My early peeps at Edinburgh prepared me for taking up my residence in that city of cities. This was in 1837, the year in which Queen Victoria ascended the throne.

It was the commencement to me of five happy years spent in the literary and artistic atmosphere of the Scottish capital. Sir Walter Scott had closed his illustrious career five years previously ; but there were great men before

Agamemnon and great men after him. Scotland is prolific in ability and worth, and I accordingly still found persons of note to awaken my curiosity and share my admiration. The commanding figure of Professor Wilson was often conspicuous in Princes Street or on the North Bridge. In church or General Assembly the rugged but earnest voice of Dr Chalmers might be heard, riveting the attention of all hearers. The great Disruption debates were in progress; and it was in one of these that I remember the Doctor forcing out between his teeth the emphatic declaration that "the storm which was blowing over the Church would only serve to spread out its banner more broadly, inscribed with the words—No surrender!"

Occasionally, too, might the eye be attracted by Hugh Miller, of geological and polemical fame, with his strong contemplative features and stalwart physique. The slim figure of Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, whose musical, artistic, literary, and antiquarian tastes had endeared him to Sir Walter Scott, was also frequently to be observed. Many other notabilities of more or less prominence enriched the society of "Edina, Scotia's darling seat."

De Quincey was there, vindicating in se-

questered ways his title to high rank as a master of impassioned prose. Twice I was asked to meet this remarkable man at dinner, but on both occasions he failed to appear. No one could take offence. Unpunctuality, or facility in breaking engagements, was, I learned, a foible of his strangely constituted nature.

For some years Francis Jeffrey had relinquished command of the 'Edinburgh Review,' but he still wore, under his Judge's robes, the reputation of the critic who had excited the rancour of Byron, set his teeth in the weak places of Wordsworth, and wielded generally an authority which was alike a terror to pretence and an encouragement to genius. If only for his tender appreciation of Keats, and his beautiful *éloge* on James Watt, I greatly honoured the man.

Lord Cockburn, his friend, who lived to be his biographer, occupied even a more unique place among the celebrities of that city the beauty of which he laboured to preserve and to enhance. It was he who, delighting in the blending of foliage with street architecture, declared with startling hyperbole—"I would as soon cut down a burgess without a fair trial and a verdict as cut down a burgh tree."

With Mr John Ritchie, proprietor of the 'Scotsman' newspaper, and Mr Charles Maclaren, its able and widely informed editor, I enjoyed continual intercourse. Both were charming men—the one distinguished for his shrewd sense and delightfully pawky humour; the other for his simplicity, single-mindedness, and admirable ability as a political and scientific writer.

Mr Maclaren, if I may borrow Hamlet's phrase, was "one man picked out of ten thousand." His geological investigations enabled him to indulge in not a few profoundly interesting theories regarding the volcanic and glacial developments of Scotland during the primary æons of our planet; while his love of archæology found a peculiar gratification in tracing, with the guidance of the 'Iliad' and of existing geographical and topographical facts, the true site of Troy. But Mr Maclaren's studies were not confined to the abysmal past. His habitual life was occupied with the present and the future of his country and his race. In politics he laboured to enlarge the boundaries of regulated freedom, and he lived to see many of his prophecies of the world's betterment fulfilled.

As early as 1824, when railways were first suggested, he wrote a series of elaborate articles, proving by a minute study of the laws of friction that on these iron roads a speed of twenty miles an hour, and probably a higher velocity, might be attained. The articles created a sensation. They were translated into French and German, and were republished in America. But the views promulgated were generally set down as visionary. One scientific sage held them to be simply "nonsense"; and yet how soon were these views brilliantly realised, together with the magnificent advantages to civilisation and to mankind which the far-sighted writer was the first man in Europe to predict!

Not long after, I made the acquaintance of Mr Duncan M'Laren, a large-brained, public-spirited man, who was rapidly mounting the ladder of municipal preferment, and constituting himself a power in the city. He was a friend and namesake, but not otherwise related to the editorial chief. With the excellent and highly gifted brothers Combe; with Mr Robert Cox, their nephew, the genial and popular editor of the 'Phrenological Journal'; and with Mr John Hill Burton, historian and

miscellaneous writer, I likewise became on friendly terms.

It was impossible not to be impressed with Mr George Combe. His principal book, the 'Constitution of Man,' was accepted by a considerable section of his countrymen as embodying, with much clearness and force of exposition, what seemed to be a philosophy of powerful common-sense. On spending an evening with him, I was struck with his tranquil sagacity in conversation, and with the strength and vividness of his remarks on whatever subject he touched. His wife was a daughter of the renowned Mrs Siddons, and I had no difficulty in tracing the dignified Kemble features in her face. The interesting couple were on the eve of starting for what Mr Combe stated was his fourth sojourn in Germany, on the attractions of which, including its music and its open-air life, he pleasantly descanted.

Not less notable as a man of superior intellectual power was his brother, Dr Andrew Combe. Both were leaders of the Scottish phrenological school; and the writings of the doctor on medical subjects generally are still widely known and valued. The latter suffered from an affec-

tion of the lungs, yet contrived to enjoy a fair amount of health, through the knowledge and careful application of what his constitution required. Dr Combe held the appointment of physician to the King of the Belgians, and I remember hearing it told that on the occasion of his visits to Brussels, there being always a royal carriage to convey him to and from the palace, he sometimes received an unexpected public ovation, owing to a resemblance which he bore to old King Leopold himself!

In Mr Burton I found a delightful companion, and his rapidity of composition was often a marvel for me to contemplate. He always wrote with a quill pen, and was not sparing of ink. His custom was to use no blotting-paper, but to spread his wet manuscript round him like a fan. Nor was it uncommon to see him finish in this way an article of some length before the first page of it was dry.

Born into the same set, and just beginning to make his mark, was my friend Mr J. R. Findlay, the grand-nephew of Mr Ritchie. While yet in his boyhood, he gave evidence of literary aspiration and taste; and in various departments of the paper of which he is the proprietary head, he has in his more mature years done excellent



work. Lately Mr Findlay stepped grandly to the front as the donor of £50,000 for the establishment of a Scottish National Portrait-Gallery; and of the 'Scotsman' circle as I then knew it, he is now, if I mistake not, the only survivor.

To Mr Robert Chambers I carried a note of introduction from a Glasgow friend. This I duly delivered, and met with an amiable reception. But it nevertheless occurred to me that I was slightly an intruder. He was a fully engaged man, and, from his business and other connections throughout the kingdom, I knew how exposed he must be to this kind of bombardment. Some courteous words ensued, he expressed a hope that I would like Edinburgh, and we parted with little expectation on my part that we were soon again to meet.

A week or two afterwards I encountered Mr Chambers in Princes Street, when he shook my hand with extreme cordiality, and invited me to his house. He had seen something in print bearing my initials, and flattered my youthful ambition by telling me he had selected it for quotation in the 'Journal.' Out of this little incident, which I mention with hesitation, grew

a friendship which warmed into intimacy, and which, I am happy to say, broadened and deepened with the passing years.

## XV.

## THE EGLINTON TOURNAMENT.

I had not been much more than a year in our lovely Scottish capital when everybody was making arrangements to attend the projected tournament at Eglinton Castle. The idea of producing a great medieval spectacle was a happy one on the part of Lord Eglinton, and for weeks, and even months, the popular imagination had been stimulated with glowing paragraphs in the newspapers descriptive of the forthcoming event.

All the world was expected to be present. There was to be a rush from England, from the Continent, from America. Railways in 1839 were in their infancy, and every other public mode of conveyance was certain to be taxed to the uttermost. My cheery poetical friend, James Ballantine, agreed to accompany me; and we gladly availed ourselves of a golden

opportunity, which we owed to a gentleman of influence, of proceeding to Ayrshire in an open landau with a liveried postilion.

The momentous morning arrived. All the wishes for good weather appeared to be realised. A bright sunshine broke over the sylvan grounds of Eglinton. The multitudes were overwhelming, but the arena for the pageant was ample. Glancing here and there among the trees were "bright dames and crested chiefs," in every variety of rich and many-coloured garb. Numbers of the spectators had come newly posted up in their 'Ivanhoe,' and had no difficulty in identifying "Wamba, the son of Witless," swimming about among the foliage on his mule. An actor named M'Ian was engaged to represent this part, and he certainly looked it to admiration. His great character on the stage was Robin Oig, in the dramatised version of Sir Walter Scott's tale of the "Two Drovers." It was a performance which so competent a judge as Charles Dickens pronounced quite "wonderful and most affecting"; and more than once, I confess, it had brought moisture to my own eyes. Mr M'Ian, I may add, had humour as well as pathos, and it soon became evident how admirably he was fitted for the new *rôle* he had

undertaken. Everything, in fact, went bravely forward, and expectation was on high tiptoe for the display which was to dazzle and be historical.

But, alas for the malign Fates! Heavy clouds began to gather. Still more heavy clouds came "labouring up." Every vestige of blue sky disappeared. The sunshine was extinguished in the heavens, and in the human faces underneath the heavens. Of a sudden the prospect became dismal.

Down at length burst the rain in a deluge. All the scores of thousands there assembled for enjoyment had been betrayed by the morning's brightness into holiday costume. The poet tells us that

"When clouds are seen wise men put on their cloaks."

But there were no cloaks. Topcoats and waterproofs had been left behind, and the feeling became universal that never had adverse skies been so entirely inopportune.

The rain continued for hours. Further delay was tried, but delay was unavailing. The pluvial elements refused to be conciliated. So, forth at length emerged the gay and undaunted cavalcade from the castle, with Lord London-

derry as King of the Tournament—protecting his costly crimson-velvet robes with the anachronism of a green umbrella!

I pitied Lord Eglinton himself as he afterwards rode up, handsome and chivalrous, to the front of the grand stand, and announced to his Majesty and his brilliant *entourage* that the pavilion in which he had expected to dine them all was hopelessly flooded.

Not a moment's cessation took place in the determined and deadly downpour. The tilting nevertheless went gallantly on, and a good few lances were broken; but the glory of the magnificent entertainment which had cost the Earl some thirty or forty thousand pounds of outlay was felt to be annihilated.

The poor half-drowned Jester flitted about the lists in his quaint attire, with all the gaiety he could muster. After flashing past where I stood, he turned in his saddle and flung at the crowd the cynical remark—shot like a Parthian arrow—“There are mair fules than me here this day!”

Bravo, Wamba! “There were mair fules in the Laird's ha' house than Davie Gellatly.” For that saying an old woman had been set in the jougs. But thou, Wamba, wert safe! I felt

the accuracy of the hit, and looked about for Ballantine to appreciate with me the Jester's joke. But my companion was not to be seen. He had ceased, and probably for some time, to be one of the fools; for, on reaching the town of Ayr, I ascertained that he was comfortably ensconced in bed—his wet habiliments emitting volumes of steam in front of a heaped-up blazing fire!

## XVI.

## AN INTERIOR PEEP.

After toasting myself like a "bannock," and drowsing my mind into comfortable dreams, I next morning took rail for Irvine, and made my way with all reasonable speed to Eglinton Park.

The great rain-storm of the previous day had subsided into ragged clouds and desultory showers. But the flooded fields and a hundred thousand trampling feet had mashed the ground in a manner to make walking laborious. To venture in certain places was to extemporise not only shoes but boots, and even gaiters, of mud.

Numerous groups rambled about on the wet grass in a vacant and distracted search for their lost fairyland. But how had the glory departed! Those who lounged near the Castle, and the large temporary pavilion adjoining, anxious to know what further was to be done, could only ascertain that the actors in the magnificent play so ingloriously spoiled were making merry over their lamentations within doors.

By happy chance I gained admission to the pavilion. The splendid and high-born company assembled on its spacious floor were amusing themselves as they best could. Military music sounded, and gallant fencers were preparing for conflict, each striking an attitude of determined valour, like that of Fitz-James when he put his back to the rock and defied all comers.

Standing in the gorgeous circle which surrounded the performers, Lady Seymour, the "Queen of Beauty" of the tournament, was among the chiefly observed. Stately, though not tall, she seemed to repose in the consciousness of her superior charms. She was a Sheridan, a granddaughter of the famous Richard Brinsley, and a sister of the Hon. Mrs Norton and Lady Dufferin, with whom she might have made up a classical trio of the Graces.

I drew respectfully near her queenship with the fealty of a mute admiration. But in the midst of the flower of the nobility of the United Kingdom there assembled, I could not aver that she reigned alone in physical attraction. One I at all events remember who shone in superb rivalry. Like Rosalind, this lady was "more than common tall," and had noble aquiline features. She was the Hon. Miss M'Donald, to whom rumour had at one time assigned the crown which Lady Seymour wore.

Some one told me I had missed a scene of grotesque tilting with broomsticks. No doubt this would be undertaken by the Mark Tapleys of the party, who would naturally be desirous to embrace the opportunity of being jolly under depressing circumstances.

But when I entered, grave business was in progress. Two gentlemen, both "armed in complete steel," were commencing a friendly but keen encounter with broadswords. One was tall, the other under the middle height. When they paused, rested on their weapons, and raised their visors for a little breathing-time, I observed that the former was youthful and full of fire, while the latter was pale, with heavy unemotional eyelids.



Again they were at it—the huge blades striking now and then forcibly against the clinking armour!

Prior to the succeeding bout, a tall grey gentleman, whom I learned was Sir Charles Lamb, the stepfather of the Lord of the Tournament, advanced into the centre of the ring, holding a brass instrument in his hand, borrowed from one of the band, and said in a loud clear voice, “I fear you are beginning to lose temper. Now, the moment I see you striking hard I shall sound this horn, and that instant you stop!”

Questioned by some one *sotto voce* as to who were the combatants, Sir Charles answered in tones that every one could hear, “Oh, the one is Prince Louis Napoleon, and the other is Mr Lamb, my son.”

With what interest did I look from that moment at the lesser of the swordsmen! The inheritor of a wonderful name, and with a personal history already remarkable, who could tell what kind of career was before him? Now that the Fates in Europe have executed their final and for him their fatal decrees, I may be permitted to conclude that had the fighting I have

described been *à outrance*, it must have gone hard with the man who, being spared, rose to be Emperor of France.

## XVII.

IMPROMPTU *VERSUS* PREPARATION.

When Thomas Babington Macaulay delivered his great electioneering speech in the Edinburgh Music Hall in 1840, he was in the full vigour of his years. Sturdy of build, swarthy of complexion, and with eyes clear, blue, and lustrous, he had all the appearance of a man born to attract, to fascinate, and to command.

His delivery on that occasion was measured, occasionally inclined to drawl, and with a seeming consciousness of the stately march of his periods. The speech, as a manifesto of his political principles, had obviously been carefully prepared. It was, indeed, a prevailing belief that all his speeches were slowly concocted in his study, written out with the deliberation of one of his highly wrought literary essays, and spoken entirely from memory.

With regard to his more formal orations, all this might be in a measure true. It cost him no effort to remember anything; but I saw enough of Mr Macaulay, at his subsequent meetings with the electors, to convince me that he was gifted to an extraordinary extent with the power of extemporaneous rhetoric.

In his young days, when a student at Cambridge, he had acquired celebrity as a ready and powerful debater; while his facility of conversation in later years is well illustrated by the anecdote of Sydney Smith finding him in bed with headache, and remarking afterwards how agreeable he had been, having actually had "some glorious flashes of silence!"

At several of the Edinburgh meetings at which the Chartist element was apt to make itself obnoxious, Macaulay's impromptu replies were rapid, impetuous, volcanic. With swinging hammer-strokes of logic he drove his arguments home like nails. Never shall I forget the vehemence with which he pounded one unfortunate "heckler." True, he had been previously roused by the discussion of some sentiments which had been loudly promulgated, — sentiments which he declared would lead, not to freedom, but to anarchy; not to

a democratic government, but to a military despotism: sentiments which, if carried into action, would cause every man with a tiled roof over his head or a decent coat upon his back to rally round a Duke of Wellington or a Sir Henry Hardinge in order to stay the tide of spoliation or massacre.

It was after this (I have not the exact words, but have attempted to give their spirit) that the free and independent elector, groaning under imaginary tyrannies, demanded of the candidate whether, if returned to Parliament, he would do his utmost to abolish the "Six Acts."

This was the orator's opportunity. "To what six Acts does the gentleman allude?"

"Castlereagh's six Acts. Everybody knows them."

"I know them," cried Macaulay. "But what I wish to ascertain is whether *you* know them. What *are* Lord Castlereagh's six Acts?"

No response.

"In wishing these Acts abolished, I take it for granted that you feel them to be oppressive."

"They are bad Acts."

"In what way? What *are* they? Mention one of them."

Dead silence.

More peppering of questions, and more dead silence.

I wish I could give an idea of the scene that ensued. Never was poor heckler so mercilessly heckled. But the candidate at length relented, released him from his torture, and having shown that he knew nothing whatever of the matter, he proceeded patiently to enlighten him, by detailing the nature of the "gagging Acts," as they were called, and showing that most of them had been long ago repealed; that all the others had utterly fallen into desuetude; and that the alleged grievance was therefore purely historical, non-existent, and preposterous.

Macaulay, I take it, was not seen at his best in his prepared addresses, but rather in his sudden and absolutely extempore outbursts, when his rush of language had the fire of some of his own martial verses—of the splendid "Battle of Ivry," or that noble antique lay which tells

"How well Horatius kept the bridge,  
In the brave days of old."

## XVIII.

## ROYAL VISIT TO EDINBURGH.

In 1842 Queen Victoria made a royal progress through Edinburgh. She was accompanied by Prince Albert, to whom she had been married two years before, and the young couple met with a storm of welcome.

Sir Robert Peel, who had succeeded Lord Melbourne as Premier, and who followed the royal equipage in an open carriage, was a prominent figure in the procession. The conflict between Toryism and Liberalism then ran high, and Peel, though he had joined with Wellington in conceding Catholic emancipation, was still the nominal representative of the former political persuasion. He had not yet abolished the corn laws, and the crowd, it was obvious, was against him. This hostility was further aggravated by the activity and aggressive attitude of the Chartists. The result was a good deal of hissing and "booing," mingled, of course, not only with Conservative cheers, but with the applause of all who knew what was due to her Majesty on such an occasion,

and who recognised in the present holder of the office of First Minister of the Crown the integrity, patriotism, and culture of an essentially great man.

Conspicuous at one of the open windows of the 'Scotsman' office, then in the High Street, was Charles Maclaren, editor of the leading Whig organ, clapping his hands vigorously as the Conservative statesman passed, showing that the zeal of the political partisan in no way detracted in his case from the courtesy of the high-minded gentleman. I remember John Hill Burton calling my attention to this fact—not in any tone of disapproval, but simply as an amusing incident.

One misguided *prolétaire*—perhaps some pot-house oracle—I saw rush up close to the Premier's carriage, and with upturned shirt-sleeves shake a menacing and ridiculous fist in his face. Sir Robert, touched possibly with pity, patted the air between them deprecatingly; but vulgarities and impertinences of this kind were fortunately of rare occurrence. The heart of the mass of the people was, as it usually is, thoroughly sound. Victoria's first visit to the Scottish capital was a brilliant success; and it was only a few seasons pre-

viously that I had heard Macaulay, in the political address to which I had listened, allude in thrilling tones to the young Queen who had recently ascended the throne, as one in whom he beheld the promise "of a better, a wiser, a happier Elizabeth."

These generous and loyal words were nobly prophetic of that reign which has now passed its jubilee, and which has proved in an eminent degree not only protracted but glorious.

## XIX.

## A READY MEMORY.

Early in the century books made up of well-known quotations, alphabetically arranged, were less common than they are now. I am not aware, indeed, that they existed at all. Hence frequent dilemmas. A friend from Glasgow—Mr John Birkmyre, some of whose relations still flourish in Port-Glasgow or Greenock—called upon me in despair for the authorship of certain familiar words.

Perhaps a bet was depending on the result. For weeks past he had been making inquiries of



editors, clergymen, schoolmasters, and literary people generally in the west of Scotland, and not one could give him the information he desired.

The anonymous phrase, the origin of which he could not trace, was that of—

“Ample room and verge enough.”—

a phrase which every one uses, and should therefore know. Most people suggested Shakespeare as the author, but no proof was forthcoming. My own memory for such things is considerable, but after some cogitation I was nonplussed. I felt sure that I not only knew the words but their context, and I was naturally annoyed that I could not hit upon the passage in which they occurred.

Mr Birkmyre came back to dine at my rooms ; and although I had been thinking the matter over in the interval, I continued utterly at a loss.

The evening was drawing on when a ring came to my door-bell, and immediately no less a person was ushered in than David Vedder, the Orcadian sketcher and poet. Vedder had been a seafaring man, but was now in H.M. Customs. He was over six feet high, strong and stout,

with a large, ruddy, weather-beaten countenance. Dr Chalmers had made him happy by quoting a stanza from one of his poems in a sermon which was afterwards printed ; and knowing his range of reading and retentive memory—“Here,” I exclaimed as he entered, “is the very man to solve the difficulty!”

Before he sat down I put him to the test. He paused near the door, looking grave and puzzled ; but at length, after tapping his huge grizzled head, he thundered out with triumphant emphasis—

“Weave the warp, and weave the woof,  
The winding-sheet of Edward’s race ;  
Give *ample room and verge enough*  
The characters of hell to trace !”

“Gray, of course,” I murmured, astonished at my own stupidity, for I had really had, in my schoolboy days, all “The Bard”—the poem in which the words appear—by heart. The honour of the ready memory, however, belonged to Poet Vedder. My Glasgow friend loaded him with no end of congratulations ; and I venture to think he was a mightily proud man that night.

## XX.

PRINTING-OFFICE *SOIRÉES*.

There was a *soirée* in the 'Scotsman' Office, attended by all the employees, together with their wives and sweethearts. The apprentices, or "P. D.'s," formed a noisy contingent. Mr Charles Maclaren, the editor, occupied the chair, and charmed every one with his unaffected simplicity and numerous quaint pleasantries; while good Mr Ritchie, the proprietor, shed a sunshine round him where he sat.

One of the staff had prepared some off-hand rhymes for the occasion, in which the various heads of departments were hit off in a ludicrous fashion. I cannot recall many of the words of this "scannel-pipe" effusion, but a single quatrain, making allusion to the chairman's scientific proclivities, comes partially to my mind. It referred to the worthy gentleman's delight in digging up "the fossil bone," but expressed surprise that he had not been able

"to find some rib  
That was weary lying alone."

Cleverly and pointedly sung as the verses

were by a young compositor, much laughter ensued, and it afterwards appeared that the touch about the "rib" was opportune. Mr Maclaren had reached nearly, if not quite, three-score, when his happy marriage to Mrs Hume, an amiable widow whom some of us knew and admired, was announced to the joy of his friends.

Another *soirée* of a like kind I remember in the printing-office of the Messrs Chambers. The elder brother, William, presided, and several known orators had been requisitioned. One of these, Mr James Simpson, advocate, was a man of fine parts and generous impulses. He had published, years before, a book descriptive of a visit to the Field of Waterloo—a book which became popular, and which brought him, as he supposed, an ovation on his appearing in the boxes of the Theatre Royal—an ovation which would have been remarkable, but for the trifling circumstance that Sir Walter Scott happened to enter the box at the same moment! As a speaker he excelled; and he had promulgated, in different parts of the country, many wholesome and philanthropic truths. His views on education were advanced for his day; and in reference to a letter which

he sent through the Edinburgh press in defence of the opening of female classes in the High School of Glasgow, he declared to me privately, but with a beautiful emphasis—"The Glasgow Exchange will ring with it!"

It was in keeping with Mr Simpson's character that he should at the *soirée* in question have been seized with a sudden "happy thought." The proceedings were, as usual, conducted on teetotal principles; and, in the course of the evening, up he started with a bound, and declared that he "did not see why the drinkers should have all the fun to themselves." He accordingly "begged to propose a toast in the old convivial fashion." (Great applause.) It was that of the health of a gentleman whose name I forget, but whom he declared to be "the Father Mathew of America." He saw no reason why they might not be "merry, jovial, nay royal, on such simple beverages as were before them;" and after a glowing eulogium on their American friend, he gave the toast, and entreated that it might be drunk hilariously and "with all the honours."

The whole large party sprang to their feet at this appeal, drained their lemonade-glasses

to the bottom, no heel-taps, and cheered with vociferation.

On silence ensuing, the distinguished stranger solemnly arose. He looked poison-chalices and daggers. In Transatlantic accent he thanked Mr Simpson for his good intentions, but expressed his regret that he "could not accept the honour proposed, owing to the shape which it had taken. (Sensation.) It was one of the rules of the society to which he belonged, that they should give no countenance whatever, in any form, to what were known as the drinking usages; and he had therefore no alternative but respectfully to decline their compliment."

Some mutterings obviously hostile to this attitude followed. Mr Simpson indulged, to the renewed enjoyment of the company, in a chaffing vindication of his teetotal proposal; and the great Father Mathew of the United States disappeared incontinently under the wet blanket he had spread.

## XXI.

## SEEING THE LIONS.

My friend Mr Thomson of Belfield was a merchant in Glasgow, whose business involved a large amount of foreign correspondence. In his house at Kirkintilloch were numerous curiosities which had been sent to him by grateful young gentlemen for whom he had obtained situations abroad. Accordingly I cannot say that I was surprised when one forenoon he called upon me to ask if I could introduce him to the Messrs Chambers, as he had some foreign friends waiting outside who were desirous of seeing their establishment.

I gladly offered my services, and on reaching the street found a row of carriages—I think four in number—into one of which I was conducted. There were two gentlemen already inside—one, short and stout, grey-headed, in black dress costume, with very large diamonds sparkling on his fingers; the other tall, thin, spectacled, with a look of keen intelligence. To the first of these I was introduced. He was General Bustamente, ex-President of Mexico; while the other, whose

name I did not catch, was likewise made known to me as his Prime Minister. The General spoke only French, but his friend had sufficient broken English to be able to make himself understood.

The conversation on which we entered gave me the pleasurable surprise of discovering in the worthy Laird of Belfield a tolerable proficient in the French tongue. We all got on remarkably well together; and when I thought of the long and fierce struggle between Bustamente and Santa Anna, the victorious general who had succeeded him in the Presidency, and remembered the old and horribly bloody annals of their country, I could not but think it pleasant that the two Mexican gentlemen in whose company I found myself should be such mild, courteous, and entirely civilised human beings.

Mr William Chambers, when we called, was fortunately in his apartment, and he no doubt esteemed it an honour to conduct his visitors over the premises, and to explain to the General, in the best French he could command, the various processes of printing, stereotyping, and publishing. The details afforded an instructive glimpse of a large concern admirably systematised, and Bustamente seemed greatly interested in everything he saw and heard.



Our numerous party afterwards visited the Advocates' Library, over which we were taken by Professor Spalding, to whom I introduced the distinguished strangers. Everything that was curious and noteworthy was fluently explained by the professor, and we were all gratified by the inspection. From the Parliament House we proceeded to make a complete round of the "lions" of the city, the bearer of a long purse in the General's suite franking us wherever a charge was made; and, for my own part, I thoroughly enjoyed the few hours thus spent.

Before parting with my new friends, I formed a most favourable impression of the man with whose name I had been long familiar in connection with the tangled politics and sanguinary strife of the country of "stout Cortes." "Bustamente," said the ex-Prime Minister to me, "is honest, which makes the difference between him and Santa Anna."

## XXII.

### CHARLES DICKENS FEASTED.

It was when all the world had just been shedding tears over the death of "Little Nell" that

a public dinner was given to Charles Dickens in Edinburgh. The author of the 'Pickwick Papers,' 'Oliver Twist,' and 'Nicholas Nickleby' had increased his reputation for pathos as well as for humour by the publication of the 'Old Curiosity Shop,' and he might be said, at the date of the banquet, to be in the early freshness of his great and growing popularity.

A flutter of excitement prevailed among the literary circles of Edinburgh in connection with the event. Lord Jeffrey was to have presided, but he lay indisposed at Craigmook. Failing him, it was natural, if not inevitable, that Professor Wilson should take the chair; while it was considered a fortunate circumstance that Mr Patrick Robertson was secured as croupier. The latter was the Falstaffian wit and humorist of the Court of Session. It was he who, in allusion to Scott's high and pointed forehead, had hailed him as "Peveril of the Peak,"—a salutation which drew from Sir Walter the happy retort of "Peter of the Paunch!"

After Peter ascended the judicial bench as Lord Robertson, he produced a volume of "Sonnets," not, certainly, of supreme excellence, but still remarkable as disclosing an entirely novel feature of his genial and jovial existence. But this characteristic remained as

yet undiscovered; and while every one expected both eloquence and poetry from the chair, only the richest drolleries were looked for from the opposite end of the table.

Dickens came with little or no celebrity as an orator; but such a man could not be commonplace, and all who had the privilege of being present were in high expectation of being treated, if not to "the feast of reason," at least, and in large measure, to "the flow of soul."

In person the guest of the occasion was striking and attractive, with flowing dark-brown hair having a tendency to curl, high prominent features, cheeks shaven like those of a comedian, black stock surmounted by no collar, in accordance with the fashion of the day, elaborate shirt-front, and generally showy get-up. He might have been mistaken for a professional actor with a *souppçon* of dandyism. All the proceedings were interesting; but I could not help feeling that some of the local speeches would have been more appropriate at a Burns Club or a St Andrew's Society dinner.

Sir Archibald Alison had on one occasion to move a vote of thanks to Mr Dickens, and to say something laudatory of his writings; while, as he confesses in his 'Autobiography,' he was

“very little acquainted with them,” and did not anticipate for them “any durable fame.” Professor Wilson, it seems to me, must have been in a similar predicament; for, while doing honour to Mr Dickens, he showed a disposition to carp and criticise—to argue against popularity as a test of merit—and to exaggerate the value of any compliment to an Englishman from a people so clannish as the Scotch. The *perfervidum ingenium Scotorum* was just a trifle too pronounced. Eloquence, of course, there was, nor was eulogy by any means wanting. Yet the impression produced on my mind was that either Wilson was not very deeply read in Dickens, or that Dickens, with his Sam Wellers, his Mantilinis, and his Artful Dodgers, was not altogether in his way.

Nor did Patrick Robertson, when his turn came, do anything to put matters in a less questionable light. He had to give the “Memory of Scott,” and his estimate of the genius of his great countryman was apparently designed to dwarf that of every other fictionist. No doubt he made much diversion out of imaginary and fantastic colloquies between certain comic characters of Scott’s and certain comic characters of Dickens’s. But he never-

theless betrayed a willingness to indulge in slightly "odorous comparisons," and to exalt his own idol at the expense of the master of fictitious literature to whom they were met to do homage.

The spirit of the worthy Caledonian who maintained that Shakespeare, from his remarkable abilities, must have had Scotch blood in his veins, was manifest throughout, and it occurred to me that Dickens himself, with his lively sense of the ludicrous, could hardly fail to be amused at some of the maladroit things said. His letters to his friends, however, written immediately afterwards, and since published, have demonstrated that he was in no mood to quarrel with anybody. For obvious reasons he felt in exuberant spirits. Edinburgh was at his feet. The dinner-tables of the best people in the city and its neighbourhood were open to him; on his entering the theatre one night the house was thrown into a ferment, while the orchestra struck up "Charlie is my darling"; the Town Council voted him into the ranks of its burgesses by acclamation; and the rush for tickets to the dinner had left scores of his admirers disappointed. How could the object of all this enthusiasm be otherwise than uplifted? Wilson,

he declared, "spoke famously"; all the other "crack speakers" delighted him; and perhaps he was not altogether without an unexpressed consciousness that several of them had furnished foils to his own superior style of elocution, for in one of those private letters, the immortal "Boz" could not help the quiet and significant chuckle, "I *think* (ahem!) that I spoke rather well."

Of this fact, indeed, he could not be ignorant. I have rarely if ever listened to a finer after-dinner speaker than Dickens. To the advantage of a mellow voice he added consummate skill. His language and delivery were alike choice, while an exalted yet rollicking nature seemed to twinkle in his eye. What I may call Dickensish touches were frequent in the course of all his speeches; and when he wound up his first address with the words—"and I drink to you with a heart as full as my glass, and far less easily emptied, I do assure you," the company was enraptured.

## XXIII.

## THE FORCE OF HABIT ILLUSTRATED.

Let no man try to assure me that snuffing is a graceful accomplishment. Courtiers and gentlemen of breeding in more artificial eras took their pinch out of jewelled boxes with a grand air, and not without refinement of manipulation. But an inordinate snuffer, especially when feeding his nostrils with a diminutive spoon, was too slovenly and unlovely a creature for fastidious people to contemplate with equanimity.

In my early days, snuffing, when not carried to excess, might be pronounced a respectable institution. The handing of the snuff-box, or snuff-mull, from one person to another, was an overture of courtesy ; while in church, supplemented by a friendly nudge, it had often the effect of averting an untimely lapse into the land of "drowsyhead" and dreams.

But snuffing, not commending itself generally to modern æsthetic tastes, has almost as much gone out of fashion as the nauseous "quid" in which sailors indulge, and which not even

the sea and the salt breeze can rescue from unclean associations. Of all the shapes in which the narcotic weed presents itself, those of the pipe, the cigar, and the cigarette alone keep the ascendant. Tobacco for smoking purposes has conquered the world. It dominates the classes and the masses. That brilliant Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr Goschen, is responsible for the astounding calculation that during 1890 there were smoked in these islands no fewer than five hundred and sixty million "fills" of a pipe more than in the preceding year! But, to say truth, no statistics are required to prove the growth and prevalence of smoking. I once asked a gifted American friend, now resident in this country, if he smoked, and he replied, with frank emphasis, "Perpetually!" How many people do not all of us know who could make a similar avowal! Carlyle, who was himself a devotee of the pipe, has recorded of the poet Tennyson that he "smoked infinite tobacco." Surely, then, however contrary to general belief, there must be something in the practice not inimical to brain-power.

Shakespeare, the universal, gives forth no voice on the subject of smoking. A rather



interesting fact this, seeing that tobacco-pipes were not unknown in the time of Queen Elizabeth. To drinking in all its varieties the master overflows with allusion; but I infer that smoking must have been, when he wrote, an extremely rare experiment. How else could it have escaped his superlatively ubiquitous vision?

Musing under the shade of my own serene cloud, I wonder if the poet of the ages was as happy as he was sovereign. Gloriously constituted as he was, had he no nerves that sometimes needed to be tranquillised? Little things may be great even to great men, and what a blissful nepenthe might not a pipe have proved to the mighty playwright, after the awful, incomparable travail of a Hamlet, a Macbeth, an Othello, or a King Lear!

As a young man I was not given to hanging white curling wreaths in the air. But gathering years, and perhaps some growing susceptibility to worry, have taught me to relish the sweet contentment of a cigar. I am not sure that there is not longevity in its anodyne for care. Idleness is not rest, but a cigar is rest plus occupation. Hence, perhaps, the universality of smoking. It has survived

periods of persecution. The thunders of the Vatican and the penal laws of secular Governments failed to prevent its original use. And now, in this advanced stage of human progress, the most enlightened nations have taken to tobacco with a zeal almost equal to that of some Indian tribes who regarded the fumes of the weed as a savoury offering to their gods.

Long ago—so long ago, indeed, as to be almost “once upon a time”—there flourished in the Trongate of Glasgow a club not commemorated by Dr Strang, the title of which was “The Smoke.” I knew one of its members—my old friend of the quotation-hunt, Mr Birkmyre—a gentleman of good intelligence and valiant powers of conversation. Through him I was a guest at one of its sederunts. Some dozen members were present, each half-smothered in “reek” like a racing steamboat. Yet in the midst of the thick atmosphere, how sprightly was their talk! They were, for the most part, elderly citizens, who mixed wise observation of current affairs with frequent outbursts of hilarity. During the day they had their business to attend to; they were, I assume, except in the matter of tobacco, temperate men; and, in spite of the wit-combats of their crowning hours of relaxa-

tion, they led peaceable and orderly lives. But in their stuffy Trongate resort—to think of it!—how they one and all blazed out “in glory and in joy,” as they smoked their nocturnal calumets!

*Ay de mi!*—to borrow a favourite sigh of Carlyle’s—has that jovial fraternity vanished like its own palpable exhalations? Does the apartment in which it nightly nestled still exist? and about the dingy wainscots of it hang no spiritual echoes of the uproarious merriments that were?

Though my particular friend of “The Smoke” outlived his innumerable weedy carnivals, these remained to the last among his brightest memories. A paralytic affection grew upon him, and deprived him eventually of his powers of locomotion. But he continued clear of intellect, and delighted, as he sat or reclined on his sofa at home, to hold animated discourse with any good Samaritan who visited him in his infirmity. To his sore privation, his doctors positively forbade him to smoke. When most in need of soothing, he was deprived of his accustomed soother. Always when I looked in upon him, he called, it is true, for his habitual pipe. Alas! it was handed to him—new, clean,

and with no spark of spirit-life in its immaculate bowl! Even this sorry memento of "departed joys" seemed to fire, to some extent, his imagination. Without it he was mute, fidgety, and helpless; armed with the vacant tube, how he puffed the innocuous wind, and heroically argued and harangued!

Was there ever such an illustration of the force of habit? Very strange to my youthful eyes appeared the Barmecide spectacle. As the clever old gentleman sat with his make-believe of sucking inspiration from emptiness, I can now liken him to the stage-representative of the king in Hamlet, whom Dickens or some other observer has described as "drinking long draughts of nothing out of a paper goblet."

## XXIV.

## PEEBLES AND ITS SONS.

The brothers Chambers, who were natives of Peebles, were about to be presented with the freedom of that burgh. They were afterwards to be entertained at a dinner, to be followed by a ball, in the principal hotel; and they

took out several coachfuls of their acquaintances to witness the ceremony and share in the festivities.

It was beautiful midsummer, and the drive was enchanting. James Ballantine, Robert Gilfillan, David Vedder, Captain Charles Gray, Thomas Smibert, and other bards and *littérateurs* more or less known to fame, were present. On Vedder getting his great bulk from the top of one of the coaches, some one called out, "Here comes a ton of poetry!" But Vedder had a quick wit, and, turning round before alighting, he sharply responded, "Poetry, sir, goes by measure, not weight." Seen by me for the first time—

"Tweed's silver stream,  
Glittering in the sunny beam,"

was an unspeakable contentment. At one point I observed a solitary angler, with patient outstretched rod, serenely doing nothing. The neighbouring hills, verdant to their rounded summits and mirrored in the placid river, made the scene one of prevailing beauty and sweetness. To the poets of the party it must have been replete with inspiration. As I contemplated the utter stillness of

the landscape, I thought of Lord Cockburn's remark, "As quiet as the grave, or even as Peebles." Nothing was visible of life or audible of sound except what we had brought with us. It was only, in fact, at the hotel that all was noise and bustle—friends meeting with friends, new friendships being formed, and congratulations regarding the weather finding everywhere joyous voice.

By-and-by a little procession, marshalled by a red-coated officer, marched to the town building, and there the two distinguished brothers were duly installed as burgesses. In the quaint process of initiation, each of them had to dip a "birse"—or hog's bristle—in a glass of wine, and pass it between his lips, a proceeding at which they seemed curiously amused.

During the interval before dinner, some of us went for a stroll to Neidpath Castle. Ballantine, Smibert, and I were in advance; while Gilfillan, Captain Gray, and one or two others leisurely brought up the rear. At a deep window in the staircase of the old, half-ruinous, but still partially tenanted building, a lubberly boy sat busy at his book. Ballantine, taking a copy of Gilfillan's volume of songs from his pocket, thrust it into his hand, desiring him

to keep reading it diligently. Poor Gilfillan! He came up quite unsuspectingly, and at once fell into the trap. Clapping the little man on the shoulder, he asked, in his kindly way, what book he was reading. He then started into an ecstasy. "Good life!" he shouted, "it's my poems. There's fame, gentlemen! there's fame!" All this was great amusement to Ballantine; but whether the amiable author of "Why left I my hame?" and "Peter M'Craw" was afterwards undeceived, I am unable to recall.

The dinner and the dance which followed were what my youth made them. But it's O for the diary which I forgot to keep! The speeches have become like undecipherable palimpsests in my brain; and as for the Terpsichorean music, can the sunshine of fifty years ago be brought back? Like most country towns in that primitive epoch, Peebles had a reputation for protracted conviviality, a dinner usually lasting "till to-morrow"; and I understood that the ball on the present occasion was a cunning device on the part of William Chambers to draw the gentlemen from their potations at a reasonable hour, by melodious appeals to their gallantry. This effect may or

may not have been produced. I can only aver that the ball-room had abundant attractions for myself, and that I was not slow to accept an invitation to the County Ball, which took place at a later period of the year.

Among the gentry at the latter assembly was Mr Forbes Mackenzie, M.P. for the shire. I had the honour of being his *vis-à-vis* in a quadrille, and he afterwards presided at the supper. He made a cordial and sympathetic chairman, and nothing is more impressed on my mind than the vigour with which he called upon us to fill our glasses. This must have been about one or two in the morning; and how much later we kept it up, it would serve no purpose now to particularise.

It is enough for me to remember that in those days there was no restriction of hours save what good sense might impose. But *tempora mutantur!* Who could have thought, listening to the shout of "Bumpers, gentlemen!" from the mouth of Forbes Mackenzie, at an hour so considerably beyond midnight, that his name was destined, through the whirligig of the years, to get itself embodied in the language throughout broad Scotland as a synonym for eleven o'clock?



## XXV.

## A QUEER SENSATION.

Many a man has had a queer sensation. Hamlet must have had a feeling of that kind when he saw his father's ghost; so must Macbeth, when he beheld the spectre of the blood-bolter'd Banquo; so must Tam o' Shanter, when he stared at Alloway Kirk "in a bleeze." These were exceptional cases. But sensations that are queer are of frequent occurrence, being usually felt in eerie places—those, for example, in which the schoolboy is described by the poet Blair as

"Whistling aloud to bear his courage up"—

or under circumstances when the uneasy feeling may be accounted for by a too protracted acquaintance with "inspiring bold John Barley-corn." To be left a thundering legacy by an old uncle abroad, to be asked in marriage by an heiress to untold thousands, or to be found out in some peccadillo or piece of meanness which will no longer hide, must all, in their turn, be productive of very queer sensations indeed.

No such solitary or ignominious position, no such good or bad fortune, ever befell myself; and yet I have not been without my "queer sensation." It occurred in no darksome or fearful place. I never had occasion to lament

"My light gone out in a mistrustful wood."

Neither did it result from any over-jovial carousal. However strange it may appear, *my* "queer sensation" assailed me in a well-lighted drawing-room, and in the midst of a lively and enjoyable company. It was at a tea-party in the house of Mr Maclaren, editor of the 'Scotsman,' in the northern district of Edinburgh. The hour of eight had lately struck. Most of the party had arrived, and were seated round the room, leaving the centre clear, as if for the dance which was shortly to ensue. I was crossing the carpet with a cup of tea in my hand, and when just about midway, the "queer sensation" brought me to a standstill. How shall I describe it?

I was young, of good nerve, no unpleasant incident had disturbed me, and there was nothing but happy influences on all sides. Yet I paused, staggered a little, tried to recover myself, and carefully balanced my cup of tea,

which had been tilted and shaken. My first idea was that I was becoming giddy, for the room actually appeared to oscillate. The feeling was uncomfortable, but I soon overcame it. No one noticed my sudden surprise and tremor; and never having felt better in my life than I did immediately afterwards, I made no allusion whatever to the strange and mysterious occurrence.

What with delightful music, a little vivacious dancing, and much lively discourse, the evening passed pleasantly. Mr Maclaren's parties were always pleasant. They were never very late, and that night I got away at quite a reasonable hour.

But with regard to the "queer sensation"? Well, it was so very queer—so unlike anything I had ever before experienced—that I could not get it out of my head. Again and again, even in the midst of the dance, I had thought over the incident, and once or twice I had been joked about falling into "a brown study." Of course I joked too, in self-defence, yet trying all the while to determine what the matter had been, and unable to come to any other conclusion than that it must have arisen from some nervous disturbance, altogether incompre-

hensible, but fortunately only of momentary duration.

Next morning all was made plain. On opening the local newspapers which I found on my breakfast-table, I learned the startling fact that I had been involved in an earthquake! Shortly after eight o'clock on the preceding night, according to the accounts given, a smart earthquake shock had been experienced at Leith, and partially in some parts of Edinburgh. It was *terra firma*, not my frail self, that had suddenly staggered and reeled. Had I known at the time, I must have felt greatly awed. No other phenomenon in nature can inspire such an emotion of terror and helplessness. One thinks of the great earthquake at Lisbon, with its loss of 30,000 lives, and of other seismic disturbances which have caused tenements to topple or towns to be swallowed up. Fortunately, we in Scotland enjoy a blessed immunity from such appalling *terremotos*. Slight shocks, no doubt, take place occasionally at Comrie, Inverness, and some other select parts; but let us hope that their effect will never be such as to produce anything more alarming than a brief, though, it may be, singularly "queer sensation."

## XXVI.

## DUELLING EARLY IN THE CENTURY.

The more I saw of Charles Maclaren, the more I appreciated his worth. Those who knew him only by his writings could have little notion of the variety and interest of his private discourse. He was slightly under the middle height, with a spare, gentlemanly figure, handsome facial outline, and deep-set eyes glowing with keen wisdom. In his hours at home he always seemed most in his element when giving forth some new fact in science, dwelling on some book beloved of his ardent youth, or indulging in some little personal jest which "gave delight and hurt not." Many of his blunt and amusing sayings, made more piquant by his homely Edinburgh accent, became current among his friends; and these Mr J. R. Findlay—perhaps the one man living who knew him best—has attributed to "his simple directness of thought, finding utterance in equally direct speech." He was, if I may further interpret, too downright and sincere for delicate or euphemistic periphrase.

*Exempli gratiâ.* On one occasion he was met by Mr Hill Burton, who, referring to an article of unusual sprightliness in the 'Scotsman' to which he was a frequent contributor, remarked, "The Parliament House people are giving *me* the credit of it."

"Out of the question," said Mr Maclaren; "there was wit in that article."

At another time Mr Burton, as he used gleefully to tell, offered him a sketch which he had written of a holiday tour. This sketch was afterwards published in the favourite 'Maga,' but Mr Maclaren handed it back to him, with the comforting observation, "That won't do, Burton. The fact is, it requires some talent for that sort of thing."

Professor Spalding had a similar experience, which he was accustomed to relate with equal gusto. He had produced in the pages of the 'Edinburgh Review' a Shakespearian criticism, for which he had received much laud from Professor Wilson. On afterwards meeting Mr Maclaren, he naturally expected some commendation of a like kind; but the latter contented himself with saying thoughtfully, "I've read your article, Professor; it's very long."

An anecdote of an almost identical type was in the *répertoire* of his friend, Alexander Russel. He, too, had a treatise, I think on angling, in the great quarterly organ of criticism and politics north of the Tweed, in reference to which Mr Maclaren thus accosted him, "Well, Mr Russel, I've read all the 'Edinburgh'"—then added, after a pause, "except your article."

But the good man was too gentle to really wound. If any one had taken umbrage at what he said, he would probably have been as much surprised as the innocent artist described, I remember, by Sir Daniel Macneac.

"Are you offended?" quoth this worthy to a friend who approached him with a scowl. "I'm sure I'm not a person who would give offence to any one."

"Didn't you call me an old humbug?"

"Well," was the rejoinder, accompanied by a look of wondering simplicity, "are you not an old humbug?"

When complimenting Mr Findlay on something which he had written in a light and bantering vein, Mr Maclaren confessed that he himself "joked with difficulty." This little anecdote was a catch, and it spread from mouth

to mouth. Mr Findlay tells me that James Payn, who was resident for some years in Edinburgh as one of the conductors of 'Chambers's Journal,' was tickled with it. Soon afterwards he worked it into one of his popular novels, and the result is that the amusing phrase is now, in some circles, as well known as Sydney Smith's joke about the "surgical operation."

But Mr Maclaren, in reality, bore no resemblance to the typical Scotchman of the witty divine. He had, on the contrary, a quaint and spontaneous humour of his own which was always a treat to those who enjoyed his incisive style. Death having deprived him of a doctor in whom he had confidence, he was a good deal exercised to find a new medical adviser; and on a certain physician of remarkable promise being suggested, he declared, "No, no; he is far too young: he must practise for a long time yet among poor people before he can expect to be employed by me."

This was simply one of his little jocularities; but it is curious to think that it referred to Dr W. T. Gairdner, a gentleman who now fills an important University Chair, and who occupies otherwise a foremost place in his profession.



For these and one or two other characteristic stories I am indebted to Mr Findlay's younger memory. On some one telling Mr Maclaren that old W. was dead—"What a pity!" he exclaimed; "he was one of the finest specimens of the ravages of smallpox that we had left in Edinburgh."

Again, on a friend discussing the merits of a gentleman of position who had begun to take an interest in politics, and adding, "His ways are very peculiar: he is in the habit of gathering his servants and people about him on the lawn, and preaching to them from his dining-room window"—Mr Maclaren pleasantly observed, "That, surely, is a very harmless amusement."

For myself, I always found in the first able and erudite editor of the 'Scotsman' everything to admire and love. Conceit or jealousy had no place in his finely balanced mind, and his liberality in praising all honest intellectual effort on the part of younger people was a marked and amiable feature in his character. However bold and steadfast were his opinions on political or scientific questions, he had the largest toleration for diversity of sentiment. In the cause of what he believed to be truth,

he knew how to argue and hold his own. What he aimed at, however, was not to triumph but to convince. His nature was essentially conciliatory ; his language, as a rule, temperate and courteous ; and his keenest controversy too calm, philosophic, and lofty to degenerate into personal recrimination. It was therefore with a feeling of surprise, and almost of incredulity, that I heard of his having, some eight years prior to my acquaintance with him, actually fought a duel !

I could as readily think of the Moderator of the General Assembly engaging deliberately in a pugilistic encounter in the Queen's Park. The only manner in which I could account for a proceeding so extraordinary was to remember that in the early decades of the century the barbarous practice of duelling was still held to be a necessity of the recognised code of honour. In the concerns of social life no tyranny is stronger than that of fashion. Not very many years before, Daniel O'Connell had in a duel killed Mr d'Esterre, a member of the Dublin corporation. So likewise, at a somewhat later date, had that patriotic Hotspur, Mr James Stuart of Dunearn, in revenge for a mere political pasquinade, perpetrated a similar and

equally lamentable deed—his victim being Sir Alexander Boswell, son of Johnson's famous biographer, and himself a racy Scotch poet, several of whose songs have a place in the national minstrelsy. Such appeals, however, to the perilous arbitrament of pistols were not always murderous. Jeffrey's hostile meeting at Chalk Farm with the author of the 'Irish Melodies' and 'Lalla Rookh,' led only to a lasting friendship between them; and Mr Maclaren's fiery encounter with Dr James Browne of the 'Caledonian Mercury' was fortunately in like manner bloodless.

Indeed, so far as I could discover, the duel between the two Edinburgh journalists—now more than sixty years ago—left behind it no rancour on either side. Of Dr Browne I had an evening's experience. Besides being a newspaper conductor, he was known for his 'History of the Highlands and of the Highland Clans,' as well as for other respectable contributions to literature. I met him at the house of Mr R. W. Jameson, W.S., author of 'Nimrod,' a powerful dramatic poem, and also the 'Curse of Gold,' a novelette exhibiting equal force of conception. This gentleman was, apart from his authorship, a local orator of distinction who

kept alive that habit of social toast-giving which was beginning to drop into desuetude. Encouraged by his host, Dr Browne, in a fluent and eulogistic speech, proposed the health of his old antagonist, Mr Maclaren, whom he had seen "courageously stand fire," and with this toast he coupled my name. Such an amount of oratory as that which ensued I had not often heard at a private dinner-party; but Jameson had a reputation that way, and his example was infectious among his friends.

On the other hand, Mr Maclaren discussed with me, without a shade of bitterness, what seemed the strange and scarcely intelligible episode in his thoughtful and beautiful life. His second on the occasion was Mr Lawrence Macdonald, the eminent sculptor, afterwards long settled in Rome; while that of Dr Browne was Mr Alexander Peterkin, author of a 'History of the Church of Scotland.' Each gentleman, in addition to his immediate friend, was attended by a surgeon—Mr Maclaren by Mr Syme, and Dr Browne by Mr Liston; and it is interesting to record that both these knights of the scalpel afterwards rose in their profession to European fame.

The quarrel, I may explain, was originally

between Mr William, brother of Mr John Ritchie, and the 'Mercury' people, the former being editorially connected with the 'Scotsman'; and it was only taken up by Mr Maclaren from a feeling of chivalry on behalf of a colleague whose hands had become accidentally tied. Mr George Combe made a laudable attempt to negotiate between the belligerents, so as to prevent matters proceeding to extremity. But their blood was up, and it was useless. The place appointed for the hostile meeting was a point on the Ravelston Road, near what was known as Bell's Mill; and I wondered what must have been Mr Maclaren's thoughts as he drove out with his supporters to the possibly fatal field. It was early morning, the day was just beginning to waken up over a chilly landscape, the pulse of comparative youth was beating in his veins, and the impressive lines of the poet came, as he told me, to his recollection—

“For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,  
This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned;  
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,  
Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind?”

Although, however, Mr Maclaren was thus grave, as befitted the occasion, an anecdote was

told at the time illustrative of his singular deliberation and coolness. Shortly after alighting, he was picking his steps with gingerly care along the top of a dwarf wall with marshy surroundings, when his second called to him, "Jump, Charles, and come on! the other party is already on the ground." But Charles was not disposed to be precipitate. "What!" he cried—"jump and get my feet all wet?"

After both sides had arranged preliminaries, including the important business of loading pistols, Mr Macdonald requested Mr Peterkin to measure the twelve paces which were to separate the combatants. In this there was a touch of *naïveté*, as Peterkin, whom I remember well, was a tall man with uncommon length of limbs. In fact, he was known among his associates as "lang Sandy Peterkin," and no doubt he would not be guilty on this occasion of abridging his colossal strides.

However this might be, the parties, when signalled to fire, were at a sufficient distance from each other to mutually miss their aim—not a hair of either was harmed. The seconds agreed that both principals having acted with calm fortitude, their honour as gentlemen had been sufficiently vindicated; and the feeling

of all concerned would probably be—how well it had been that the momentous interchange of shots had brought neither the defeat which was dared nor the victory which was feared!

We now live in happier times, nor is duelling ever likely to be seriously revived among any section of the Anglo-Saxon peoples. The last attempt of the kind which I remember ended in simple fiasco. A duel was arranged some time in the thirties between Mr William Weir, the original editor of the 'Glasgow Argus'—a paper which became extinct many years ago—and Mr John Douglas of Barloch, a local lawyer, politician, and wit. The latter was physically a large and dignified personage, and it was wickedly suggested that either he himself or some of his trusty *confrères* had got the public authorities informed quietly and timeously of what was about to take place. The consequence was, that as he sat in his parlour, with his pistols displayed on the table before him, waiting for the appointed hour, and eager for the fray, the minions of the law broke in upon his heroic meditations, and *volens volens* bound him over to keep the peace.

## XXVII.

## COSY SUPPERS.

An evening at Robert Chambers's was one of my most pleasurable experiences. It was at his table that I met for the first time our perennial Scottish celebrity, Professor Blackie. His facility, variety, and animation struck me with amazement. Mrs Chambers was a charming hostess, and possessed the peculiar and finely flattering faculty of drawing out her guests.

To her tact in this way we were indebted for a capital German song from the Professor, then quite a young man. Prior to his beginning, I observed Mrs Chambers softly moving back the glasses for a considerable radius round him. The meaning of this I was not long in perceiving. She was clearing the decks for action. The song was of the martial order, animated, and even of an uproarious kind. How the lively Professor smashed the table was exhilarating. What chance would there have been for any unfortunate crystal in his way? Winding up with a grand charge to the other



end of the room, Blackie exhibited all the *élan* and verve which have since made him famous on many an applauded platform.

Mr Chambers was fond of entertaining people of eminence generally, and on one occasion he had as his guest a foreign musician who stood high in his profession. He was a master of the French horn, which was his special instrument. In the course of the evening this gentleman was attracting much admiration in the drawing-room by the beauty and fulness of the tones he produced, when all of a sudden a scream was heard in the nursery. Mrs Chambers hastened to see what was the matter, when one of her little girls, starting up in bed, exclaimed, "Oh, mamma! mamma! what are you doing with a cow in the house?"

All and sundry were, of course, a good deal amused by this compliment to one of the first horn-players in Europe.

But it was at what I may call his cosy little suppers, when no special star was present, that I chiefly enjoyed Mr Chambers's society. The *habitués* on these occasions included Robert Cox — everybody's favourite — Dr (afterwards Professor) Hodgson, and Alexander Ireland, who has since written happily on Emerson and

Carlyle, and who has told the story of that remarkable book, the 'Vestiges of Creation,' in connection with the publication of which he assisted Mr Chambers in preserving his anonymity. Our excellent host had a knack of introducing to this select circle any matter which chanced at the time to be simmering in his mind as a subject for one of those social essays which were becoming a prominent and greatly appreciated feature in the 'Journal.' The conversation which ensued had now and then the effect of supplying him with some hint or anecdote which he had the genius to turn to account, and it was interesting for some of us to notice our duller and poorer ideas efflorescing after a while into print, so beautifully transmogrified as to make us astonished at our own cleverness.

The *petit souper* was a favourite Edinburgh meal, and whether at Mr Chambers's, Mr Ritchie's, or Mr Maclaren's, the Findon haddock, the poached egg, or the Welsh rabbit had a relish which for me these dainties have long ago, I fear, lost. *Eheu fugaces!* our very memories are shadowy and fugitive.

## XXVIII.

## THEATRICAL NOTANDA.

I think it would be about the beginning of the forties that a young man of no celebrity was engaged by Mr Murray, the popular Edinburgh manager, for what are called "the singing parts." Braham, magnificent in his day, was getting past his best; Wilson and Templeton, the great Scottish vocalists, were sliding out of stage business and giving entertainments on their own account; Mario was of course supreme in high-class opera; but there seemed to be a distinct opening for a good English tenor.

The new aspirant had, it was confessed, a voice of rare quality and compass. On meeting him privately, shortly after his *début*, I took leave to compliment him on the possession of so valuable a gift, when he remarked, "Yes, I think I ought to make something of this organ of mine."

That the early confidence in himself thus displayed was not without justification will be admitted when I mention that his name was Sims Reeves—a gentleman whose career has

since continued, for some fifty years, to be an almost unbroken success.

“Few men,” according to Rochefoucauld, “know how to be old.” To persons advanced in life, the example of Mr Reeves is instructive and comforting. He has shown how age may be sweetened by a wise prolongation of the qualities associated with youth. The lyric stage abounds in cases of reckless physical overstrain and breakdown. Mr Reeves has carefully husbanded his admirable faculty of song. He has again and again chosen to disappoint his audience rather than injure his voice or reputation. Fine tenors, like fine china, are fragile. The finer they are, the more apt they are to give way. It is to the credit of this great *primus musico* that he has contrived, by an intuitive prudence, to nurse and cherish his youthful beauty of intonation, while adding to its artistic management the maturity and culture of years.

If it was not in Edinburgh that Mr Reeves made his first public appearance, it was there that he first succeeded in making for himself a name; and in reference to Charles Kean, one of the few leading tragedians of this century, a similar observation may be hazarded. In his early performances elsewhere, the younger of

the two Keans met with indifferent approval, and it was reserved for the Scottish capital to put the hall mark of unstinted commendation on his splendid representation of Hamlet. He accordingly always spoke of Edinburgh as his "reputation's home." The sensation, indeed, which his Hamlet created amounted to a *furor*. Nor is it too much to say that anything more perfect in the highest department of tragic art has seldom been exhibited on the stage.

Charles Mackay used to tell that he had been cut by Charles Kean because he had called him, in some critique, "*One of* the greatest actors of the day." This was a curious instance of professional vanity and weakness; but perhaps the great actor—for great he undoubtedly was—may have got into the habit of measuring himself too exclusively by his extraordinary Edinburgh triumph.

Old usage has constituted Hamlet a test character for tragedians. Its thoughtfulness, its passion, and its mystery, have alike contributed to its attractiveness. The first distinguished Hamlet of which we have any adequate record was that of which Colley Cibber has left a distinct and apparently faithful monograph. It was the Hamlet of Betterton, a Hamlet which

was said to have carried with it a prestige of Shakespearian tradition. John Philip Kemble, it is probable, followed on something of the same lines, and on the shoulders of Charles Young his mantle may be assumed to have fallen. The latter, whom I have seen, gave what may be called the classic rendering of the difficult and puzzling part. Though

“Prompted to his revenge by heaven and hell,”

though always faltering in his terrible purpose, Young never forgot the philosophy and dignity of the Danish Prince—never forgot the fact that he was

“The glass of fashion and the mould of form.”

But the Hamlet of Charles Kean was a new departure. It was impulsive, erratic, brilliant, as ready to burst into frivolity as into fire. Yet, with all its frequent suddenness of outbreak, it was an impersonation studied in the minutest detail. His “points” were elaborately arranged, and accordingly they never varied. But in spite of their high finish, they had all the effect of spontaneity, and uniformly “brought down the house.” Hamlet was never one of his father’s successes. In Shylock and Sir Giles Overreach,

in Othello, Sir Edward Mortimer, and King Lear, no one could ever come near Edmund Kean. But his Hamlet, when I saw it, did not suit either his figure or his age. That of his son undoubtedly surpassed it; while our new tragedian, Henry Irving, has supplied an original and not a less striking interpretation of the greatest and most bewildering creation of the tragic muse.

Equally connected with Edinburgh and Glasgow, though long resident in the western city, James Sheridan Knowles takes his place as a prominent theatrical figure in my remembrance. He had the flaming eyes, together with the abrupt and demonstrative utterance, of a man of genius. *St Pierre* and *Master Walter* he had perhaps written with a view to his own peculiar elocutionary style. In these characters he showed quickness and force. But his mannerism was too strong to admit of any attainment of greatness in the Thespian art. It was as a dramatic writer that he won his laurels; and his "*Virginius*" and "*William Tell*," his "*Hunchback*" and "*The Wife*," will always, it is probable, keep a position in the acting drama of the kingdom.

Late in life Knowles wrote a religious book,

'The Rock of Ages,' and became an occasional preacher. He attached himself, I believe, to the Baptist persuasion, and hence arose a rumour that he desired to suppress all his stage plays. This, however, he strongly denied in a casual conversation I had with him. On the contrary, he referred to a scene in "Tell" in proof of the religious feeling by which he had always been actuated. He also declared to me, with jerky and determined emphasis, that he had never engaged in the composition of any dramatic work without first going down upon his knees and "asking help whence help alone could come."

A similar instance of Knowles's colloquial fervour occurs to me. A critique had appeared in an Edinburgh newspaper which displeased him; and on ascertaining that the writer was comparatively young, he vehemently burst forth—"A man, sir, to be a critic, should be grey-headed and grey-thoughted."

Still another example. At an Edinburgh party Knowles met a gentleman who sang and joked with such good effect that he bounded up in his enthusiasm, and embracing his entertainer, exclaimed, "You're an angel, ye devil, you are!"

This strenuous manner of expressing himself



was no doubt due to his Irish blood and to the extreme warmth of his feelings. To the same source might be traced his power in dramatic authorship, and the eagerness which he always manifested to throw open his heart and his purse at any tale of distress. Personally Knowles was everywhere popular, and more particularly among his old Glasgow students, with whom he was at all times full of ardour and friendliness.

## XXIX.

### AN UNEXPECTED GUEST.

The completion of the railway between Edinburgh and Glasgow was a great event for me. It diminished the distance between the two cities by considerably more than one half, and to that extent I was brought nearer to my Glasgow home.

I was present with the directors at their inaugural trip on the line, and at the great dinner in the Glasgow Station, fitted up as a banqueting-hall, and presided over by Mr John Leadbetter, the first chairman of the Company.

Those were the days of the horrible "stand-

ups"; and I recollect a friend who had been in one of those unseated tubs, on the occasion to which I refer, alighting at an early station, and soliciting, with "most petitionary vehemence," to be admitted to an inside seat. It was a cold season of the year, and the argument of necessity in support of his appeal was visible in his face, which was pinched and blue, while the *tremolo* in his voice made me feelingly participate in his shiver.

The "stand-ups," however, gave rise to jocularity as well as to terror and objurgation. I think it was Dr John Ritchie, of "Voluntary" fame, who on being asked how he had travelled from Glasgow, replied, "I came in the congregation of the upright!"

My few years in Edinburgh had been years of great pleasantness, but the Fates decreed that my final abode should be in my native city. This was in 1842. I had a consolatory dinner with my friends to alleviate my regret at parting. Dear old Charles Maclaren took the chair; John Hill Burton acted as croupier; and Simpson, Spalding, George Harvey, and a number of other well-known gentlemen, including a sprinkling of lawyers, joined in the convivial tear.

I shrink from further details. Be it enough to say that all such gustatory farewells have their commonplaces of profession and panegyric. But one incident occurred which may be needed to justify any allusion to the demonstration at all.

In the middle of the programme Mr Ballantine requested permission to interject a toast. This was the health of our distinguished countryman, David Roberts, R.A., a man known to artistic Europe, and whose splendid illustrations, architectural and otherwise, of the Holy Land, were at that time confirming and extending his reputation. He had been brought to our little symposium by his friend D. R. Hay, whose skill in decorative art had found favour with Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford. So unexpected an addition to our party gave it further *éclat*, and was considered a fortunate accident.

Mr Roberts looked, and in reality was, under fifty years of age. He had greyish hair, a ruddy countenance, and very white teeth. His smile was winning, and he spoke with good sense, without affectation, and in no way ashamed of his native Doric. I felt disposed to like the man, and was desirous to enlist him

into the circle of my friends. But our ways from that night lay asunder. Our first and very happy meeting proved to be our last.

## XXX.

## A HIDDEN CORD.

In breaking with my old Edinburgh connection I made a humiliating discovery. A contributor to a great journal speaks not only through its columns but with its voice. He finds himself listened to, and is apt to fancy that it is his individual self that engages attention.

There can be no huger mistake. Let him only set up, so to speak, for himself, and he will soon find that the influence he wielded was not actually his own, but that of the organ which it had been his privilege to use.

That organ has the force not of one voice but of a chorus. All previous contributors have added to and fashioned its strength. It has been built up through a process of years, not by one intellect, but by the intellects perhaps of more than one generation. The fresh

fancy of youth has fed it; the mature wisdom of age has governed it. These are the sources of its power.

In Edinburgh I sometimes heard far and near echoes which I was under the hallucination of thinking I had raised. Returning to Glasgow, I found I had left a commanding platform, and that I was, in fact, without an audience to address, except such as I should be able to gather by slow and uncertain degrees, involving the patience, the fortitude, and perhaps the sacrifice of a life.

But while thus awakening to the conviction that certain edifices require a succession of lives to rear, there is always a deeper pleasure and a more joyous hope attendant upon initial achievement. In the midst of difficulties and discouragements the reflection may not unworthily be cherished, that it is a higher gain to conquer than to inherit fortune. This may be held to be a veiled biographic reference. But the allusion, or any other allusion of a like kind, will, I hope, be regarded as not wholly avoidable, and as only adopted to serve as a hidden cord on which the beads of my few personal recollections may be strung.

## XXXI.

## NEWSPAPERS AND MONOPOLIES.

The days of vast circulations in the newspaper press had not as yet come, nor had the machinery that was necessary for their production. There were no daily papers in Scotland. The Edinburgh 'Scotsman' was issued twice a-week, so also was the Glasgow 'Herald,' and the usual circulation of neither exceeded 3000. All newspaper circulations were then authentic. None could be printed without the red penny stamp, and the quarterly returns issued by the Government of the number supplied to each left no room for exaggeration. Paper in itself was taxed and not cheap, and with the penny stamp on every sheet in addition, there existed a formidable check on over-printing for purposes of boast.

In my juvenile years the Government stamp on every newspaper was fourpence, and its price sevenpence. The reduction of the stamp to a penny, and of the price of the ordinary paper to fourpence-halfpenny, would give an impetus to newspaper circulations. But four-

pence-halfpenny was still too much for everybody to expend on what, by a little co-operation, could be got more cheaply. People accordingly contented themselves with clubbing together so as to make one paper serve for two or three households, or independently arranging for penny "reads" from the nearest book-shop, or for a visit to some coffee-room, or perhaps public-house, where newspapers were taken in for the benefit of their customers.

The entire emancipation of the press from the clutches of the tax-gatherer was stoutly resisted by every flourishing journal. It was argued that the press would thereby become "Americanised"; that anybody with a printing-press could send forth a newspaper; and that the inevitable result would be a pandering to the popular taste and a lowering of the public tone.

But even the most intelligent organs of opinion are not always right in their prophecies. Strange to say, too, it was those whose interests were most likely to be promoted that were chiefly alarmed. Having the lead, which they no doubt thought well, they were anxious to let well alone. In the atmosphere of freedom they imagined multitudinous oppositions springing

up in every district and village, and dragging the whole press of the country down to a low level of demoralising and ruinous rivalry.

As matters have turned out, it is seen that the reverse has been the case. There are now, as a rule, fewer newspapers than under the old restricted system. If it is easier to start a new journal, it is infinitely more difficult to establish it. No fresh aspirant has a chance against established concerns, with organisations increasing every year in efficiency and costliness, and with readers that have mounted up in numbers, by years of growth, to several or even to many scores of thousands. Advertisers, with the old and the new before them, know which to prefer; statesmen and doctrinaires know where to court and secure publicity; it is the nature of success to command success; and the venerable mouthpieces of opinion, with their prestige, their backing, and their resources, have grown, in fact, under the state of things which has arisen, into gigantic and all but invulnerable monopolies.



## XXXII.

## ARTISTIC DINNER AND ADJOURNMENT.

Towards the close of 1843 an artistic dinner took place in the Assembly Rooms, Glasgow. The Marquis of Douglas, afterwards the Duke of Hamilton, agreed to preside, and there was a goodly gathering of Scottish artists on the occasion. It was not, however, until a full hour beyond the time announced for dinner that the Marquis entered and took his seat. There was much irritation among the company owing to this delay, but the chairman's explanation was a point scored to his advantage.

It turned out that the hour had been altered, and that he had received no intimation of the change. The committee had taken it for granted that he would observe it in the newspapers or hear of it otherwise, but the noble chairman held by the terms of his invitation. It was that invitation he had accepted, and there he was—"punctual to a moment." Cheers followed this statement, and what seemed a misfortune was in reality the means of giving him quite a triumphant start.

In other respects his lordship made a most favourable impression. He had black hair curling round a pale forehead, together with features beautifully moulded, and strongly resembling, it was said, those of Lord Byron. In his clever papers, published by Blackwood under the title of 'In the Days of the Dandies,' Lord Lamington mentions Lady Jersey, who knew them both, as considering this resemblance "wonderful." As a speaker the Marquis further established his popularity with the audience. With his high and prospectively higher rank, my expectation was that he would soon be classed with the Duke of Argyll, the Earl of Eglinton, and the more universally esteemed of our resident nobles. His marriage with the Princess Maria of Baden took him much to Paris, and rendered him in the end almost a stranger to the land of his birth and his inheritance; but, to judge from that evening, no promise of a career could have been more interesting and brilliant.

Among the toasts in the programme was the "Memory of Sir David Wilkie," given by a venerable baronet long since gone to his rest. He was not the first after-dinner speaker whom I have seen err on the score of too great length. Sir David, whose genius had attracted him to

Abbotsford, where he painted Scott and his family, and for whose "Chelsea Pensioners" the Duke of Wellington had paid him twelve hundred guineas, was a good subject for any reasonable rhetorician. As a delineator of life and character in such pictures as the "Rent Day," the "Card Players," "Blind Man's Buff," the "Penny Wedding," and others of that class, he might be likened to Scott himself. Then the ambition which took him to the East, his death on the voyage home, and his burial in the waters of the Mediterranean, so splendidly commemorated by Turner, might all have been touched upon in sympathetic and eloquent terms.

I make no question of the speaker's fitness as regards a knowledge of the subject for the task he had undertaken. But he was undoubtedly too forgetful that there were many others to follow, and after a time the application of the *clôture* through the jingling of glasses became painful. To so small a matter I would not have alluded but for an anecdote which followed, and which I suppose had veritable foundation. The self-satisfied old gentleman sat down, it was alleged, remarking to those near him, "I had no idea that Sir David Wilkie was so unpopular."

But there was discontent in the air. It was

felt that the seats of honour at the chairman's table had been almost exclusively allotted to persons of county and aristocratic connection, and that the artistic element had been unduly kept in the background.

As a consequence of this dissatisfaction an adjournment afterwards took place to a hotel in George Square—The Crow; and there all snubs were resented, all odds made even, and some jovial hours spent. The renowned Edinburgh wit, Peter Fraser, was voted to the chair, most of the leading artists of Edinburgh and Glasgow were present, and the unreported proceedings were such as would have made a sensation in print.

What I chiefly remember is, that I myself was made the victim of a clever but quite innocent jest. Among the artists was Thomas Duncan, who had something of the head and complexion of Professor Wilson, of whose style of address he was capable of giving a first-rate imitation. Of his remarkable talent in this way, however, I was not in the least aware. I had known him years previously, and more than once I had been with him in his studio when he was engaged on his great picture of an imaginary incident, the "Entrance of Prince

Charles into Edinburgh"; but I had never happened to meet him socially, or when his powers of entertainment were likely to be called into requisition. Perhaps it was for this reason that a pencilled note, of which the following is a copy, was handed to me from the chairman: "Please propose Tom Duncan's health. As an historical painter whom have we like him?"

In all simplicity, and I may add with all gravity, I complied with this request. What I said I don't know. The moment, however, I sat down, Mr Duncan rose to his full height, shot forward his chin, thrust his hand into his breast, and in a muffled tone of voice poured out a copious flood of fervid and patriotic oratory which brought "Christopher North" before us to the life.

While feeling slightly taken in, I could not be displeased at being made the instrument of eliciting so vivid, so noble, and yet so entertaining a speech. Not even the great Professor himself could have been more enthusiastically cheered.

XXXIII.

LOCH LOMOND AND THE VALE OF LEVEN.

All the west of Scotland was on the *qui vive*. I omit the Hebrides advisedly. To the curious visitor the outlying isles have their autumnal attraction. They have their unfooted sand, their pearly shells, and their softly murmuring surf. Yet to the lover of his kind they may be said, when viewed a little way off, to be bare of everything but rock, heather, and sea-fowl. In Lewis and Barra there was, I could believe, as little popular commotion as in the remote St Kilda. Even Rum and Eig, and Canna and Coll, would present, it was safe to infer, no aspect of hurry-scurry or preparation. But over the mainland—where men make railways, run villas up the slopes, and build cities on the plain—a wonderful excitement prevailed.

In August 1849, the Queen and Prince Albert were looked for in the Scottish west. They had arranged for two remarkable contrasts of scene—Loch Lomond with its loneliness and grandeur, and Glasgow with its human turmoil and mul-

tifarious industries. Two days were set apart for these; one to contemplate the quiet inland sea and its mountainous environments—the other

“To view the mighty city of the Clyde,  
The great metropolis of plodding folk,  
Tall chimneys, cotton, enterprise, and smoke!”

Unhappily the Loch Lomond trip was a disappointment. How many pleasurable “functions” occur in Scotland to be marred or destroyed by the weather! Had Lord Salisbury been at Loch Lomond on that day of rain, he might well, as he did lately when discussing the state of London, have admitted the climate to be “indefensible.” On such a day it must have been that the two immortal weavers from Paisley, on board the Loch Lomond steamer, went down below for refreshment, desiring the captain to call them up “when the scenery began.” A wet day on Loch Lomond is one of the most dismal of earthly experiences. I know what it is to behold its scenery nowhere, like the steeples and the ends of streets in Hood’s London fog; and I have come to the conclusion that what the “drouthy” pair from the classic banks of the Cart really wanted, was simply to be summoned on deck the moment the cur-

tain of the rain should rise and the glory of the landscape be revealed.

As if to aggravate the vexation of the little crowds gathered heroically at various commanding points, the Queen failed to appear. The steamer *Waterwitch* came dimly through the grey drizzle to Balloch pier, where Prince Albert, in tweeds, with double-breasted coat and strong-soled boots, stepped out alone! A brilliant Brussels carpet having been spread for the landing, the strong-soled boots of his astonished Royal Highness had the advantage of it. Two rival carriages were in waiting—one with six horses from Mr William Campbell of Tullichewan, the other with four horses from Sir James Colquhoun of Rossdhu. The Prince, handsome and courteous, looked puzzled on observing the competing vehicles. His face beamed with the magnanimous sentiment, "How happy could I be with either!" Sir James, however, was Lord Lieutenant of the county, and for his sufficient though sedate turn-out a right of precedence was claimed. Off accordingly drove his Royal Highness in the latter conveyance amid mutterings of Celtic thunder; while Mr Campbell and his sons, in their more stylish equipage, white-silk lined,



with scarlet-jacketed postilions, and themselves in picturesque Highland costume, drew vigorous cheers as they careered towards the county town.

I had a young friend with me, Alexander Mackay, a promising scion of the great clan whose name he bore. Some years previously I had made his acquaintance in London, where he was in training for the English bar. I found him delightfully companionable, and we climbed to the top of St Paul's together. He was the "Alister" of his friend and namesake Charles Mackay the poet :—

" Thus Alister, a Templar keen and young,  
Of a clear head and of a fluent tongue,  
Subtle logician, but with earnest mind,  
And heart brimful of hope for all mankind."

A fine sprightly fellow was Mr Mackay, with a career before him ; but that career, alas ! is now long since over. He wrote ably and with good effect on the Oregon boundary dispute ; produced three valuable volumes on 'The Western World' ; was sent by the Manchester Chamber of Commerce on a mercantile mission to India at the suggestion of Mr Bright, and died on the voyage home. On this day of drench, however, in the Vale of Leven, his

opportunities had not come. A very picture he presented of health, animation, and hopefulness. He was on the staff of the 'Morning Chronicle,' a paper of high influence in those days; and as we were both in the heyday of our years, we were enabled to extract amusement from all adversities.

It mattered little to us that the Vale, which Smollett made famous by his birth and beautiful by his song, was thickly veiled. The clouds which darkened the scene were but one cloud. They were not plural but cumulative, and not even John Ruskin, who has written so gloriously on cloudland, could have dipped his pen in colours to make them picturesque. But fancy is sometimes more bright and luminous against a dark background. A good many among the scattered groups who had witnessed the last of the show, with its slightly comical *contretemps*, seemed to have become jollier for the rain. They had obviously found means to qualify the much water that was everywhere, and thus to make for themselves at least a temporary sunshine within. For myself, I was hauled on board the *Waterwitch*, where I was promised the greatest treat I had ever had in my life.

“There,” said my jovial entertainer, putting a reaming quaich of costly workmanship in my hand, “taste you that! Prince Albert’s lips were the last that touched it.”

Of course I both tasted and touched. Neither I nor my lively companion could be undutiful to the true Prince.

### XXXIV.

#### THE QUEEN IN GLASGOW.

Had the skies been propitious, and the Queen been fortunate enough to visit Loch Lomond, she would have seen it as God made it. Both the loch and its famous Ben are too big to be affronted with petty decoration. You cannot dress a mountain in red calico. The purple heather and the green bracken are its appropriate draperies. Its apparellings are the sunshine and the clouds, the moonlight and the starlight. Where nature in her sovereign pomp displays her beauties and her splendours she admits of no artificial interference. But if the poet Cowper has told us that “God made the country,” he has also told us that “man made

the town"; and the town is still within the province of man to remake, transfigure, and adorn.

On the day succeeding the Loch Lomond rain, Glasgow, under kindlier weather auspices, arrayed itself for holiday. The Queen was positively coming. All its vast population was eager to greet her. Up the Clyde she accordingly came in her little gilded "Fairy," drawing a surge of people along the banks in her progress, until sucked into the great human maelstrom.

On reaching the south side of the harbour, at the place appointed for the landing, what blazonry of preparation and turbulence of welcome awaited her! Ships were ablaze with bunting. Military, police, civic officials, and incalculable motley crowds were everywhere; but before entering on the royal progress through the streets her Majesty had sundry deputations to receive. I stood on the edge of the wharf and looked down upon a scene which interested me. There, on the deck of the small steamer, stood the Queen of the British Isles, with Prince Albert near, and her children gathered about her, including the little Prince of Wales in blue jacket and white

trousers. She looked for all the world like an anxious young mother just returned from the seaside. Her Home Secretary, Sir George Grey, smart but wearing a look of care, presented the local dignitaries one after one, invariably lifting his hat when he approached the presence. On the Lord Provost of the city coming forward in black velvet costume and dutifully bowing his best, he was about to retire, when, being recalled, he dropped on one knee. I of course inferred what was about to take place. A sword was handed to her Majesty, and laying it first on his left, then on his right shoulder, she commanded him to rise—at least I took the command for granted—in all the dignity of knighthood as Sir James Anderson.

After the ceremonial proceedings were concluded what an ordeal had her Majesty to face! The line of procession was strongly barricaded, and her escort of civilians and soldiers was of stately proportions. The great city threw its hundreds of thousands out upon her. It was that which gave the *cortège* its meaning and magnificence. The gathered multitudes bordered the great route with a dense conglomeration of heads. They filled the galleries rising

up against the houses; they squeezed through windows till not a corner was vacant; they beaded ledges and architraves with a strange order of animated architecture; they formed a new roofing for old houses, and filled up the interstices between inebriate chimney-cans. Every space looking out upon the pageant was darned with legs, every aperture was patched with a face; where even a knot had slipped from a deal board, the hole was jewelled with a human eye!

Such masses and miles of roaring and yelling loyalty, under flags, banners, and floral and dyed calico devices, were staggering to the imagination to contemplate. To be the sovereign of a mighty kingdom and a mightier empire is an unimaginable position. But while the glory of it is supreme, fancy the feeling of awe inseparable from the homage of such multitudes! It is not the risk of confusion or accident that engenders a feeling akin to fear. What awakens emotion is the immensity of the spectacle. To ordinary eyes it is like gazing on Niagara and hearing its majestic thunder. But while I compassionated the young Queen on the royal occasion, I somehow seemed to feel that she was equal to it. Not only had

she her husband by her side, but to such as are born to thrones there comes an inevitable training which lifts them to the level of their destiny, and fits them for its exalted and responsible toils.

## XXXV.

## ONE MORE DEATH.

On 17th February 1849 some indiscreet person in the upper gallery of the Theatre Royal, Dunlop Street, lit his pipe and dropped a burning paper at his feet. It ignited a small leakage of gas, and a tiny flame burst forth. This was immediately put out, but not before an alarm of fire had been raised. Those sitting near saw that no danger existed; but it was Saturday night, the gallery was crowded, and all became uproar and confusion. From both the stage and boxes the scrambling and yelling people aloft were appealingly exhorted to keep their seats, while the orchestra continued to play cheerful tunes with affected unconcern. But in the gallery itself an unreasoning panic had set in, and there was a wild rush for the

stair. An overmastering terror of death made every one fly to it. The fugitives from a position of safety into the jaws of destruction were mostly apprentice lads in their teens; and their very physical strength, activity, and dash hastened and consummated a catastrophe which could not be otherwise than fearful.

Mr J. H. Alexander, the proprietor and manager of the theatre, hastened by a private passage to the gallery. He was a tall strong man, and wrought frantically in arresting the stampede and saving life. But while he roared himself hoarse to quell the alarm, the work of murder was in progress. Deep in the staircase the first fliers had been thrown prostrate; others were piled above them, driven down by the superincumbent weight; and in a few minutes or seconds the place became a huge Black Hole of Calcutta, a confined and seething mass of groaning, suffering, and dying humanity. No fewer than sixty-five persons, a few minutes before in the bloom of youth, health, and gladness, perished in that hideous struggle.

It was early in the night. Only the first act of the play was over when this unparalleled tragedy was enacted. The streets were



thronged, as on Saturday night they usually are; the news spread like wildfire, and round where the theatre stood unconsumed, and the holocaust of dead lay in horrible silence, a vast and anxious multitude congregated.

Next day the whole city was in gloom. A thousand hearts were too sore to be consoled. The feeling of commiseration was universal over the city, and in a short time over the kingdom. But there was one individual on whose big heart the blow had fallen like a thunderbolt. Mr Alexander was a man to whom his theatre was his world. It had been built at his own cost, under his own directions, and with every known precaution against danger to the public. His dwelling-house was adjoining, and he may be said to have spent day and night in the building, every corner of which was as familiar to him as his clothes. He lived in it, toiled in it, slaved in it. Perhaps no working man in Glasgow or elsewhere underwent such a life of downright hard labour.

His versatility was prodigious. Every day he was rehearsing and drilling his company, high and low; every night he was playing in at least three pieces. He stuck at nothing. Any kind of character he was ready to represent,

from a clown to a king. A Cockney, a Yorkshireman, a Lowlander, a Highlander, an Irishman, it was all one. High tragedy, low comedy, opera, nothing histrionic came amiss to him. In the course of a single performance I have seen him beat a drum, blow up a scene-shifter, interview a stranger, adjust a light, direct the orchestra, take up his cue on the stage, or rush to the gallery in picturesque dressing-gown to allay some trifling disturbance. Nay, I have seen him die before the audience without even then taking rest, being borne off singing aloud with others his own dolorous requiem!

A man of such industry, combined with inflexible integrity, and so intensely devoted to his profession, could not fail of success. He took other towns in circuit, and had during his career redeemed four theatres from bankruptcy. To the profession he became known as the "Napoleon of managers!" Pecuniarily and otherwise he was at the height of his prosperity, when in an instant this terrific calamity came to blast his life. The conqueror stood crushed with defeat. He still continued in harness, but more from old habit than capacity to carry on the fight. His widow, who had been a brave helpmate to him, assured me that he

never recovered from the shock, and that the fatal staircase he always shrank back from as from a place accursed.

For readiness of dramatic quotation Mr Alexander had all along been distinguished, but this habit became suffused with a melancholy humour which was touching. His wound, like that of Mercutio, was "not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door, but 'twas enough." Perhaps he remembered that Shakespeare had put a joke into the mouth of the dying Falstaff, and even into the grinning skull of Yorick. But the quaint spirit of liveliness in the stricken comedian was sadder than tragedy. He went to London for exhilaration and health, but only to find a sick-bed. The strong man was no longer strong; the brave man was no longer indomitable. His days of sight-seeing were ended.

Returning speedily home, and feeling the shadows gathering, he spoke of having reached the "last scene of all," then added with a wan smile, "I die, Horatio." Old age was not his ailment. He was only fifty-five. It was on the night of the colossal disaster that he received his death-stroke. The sixty-five lives then recorded as lost were not the sum-total. But

when, little more than two years afterwards, John Henry Alexander went sick and weary to his grave, there fell to be added, alas! one more death to the awful number of fatalities.

## XXXVI.

## BURNS WORSHIP IN SCOTLAND.

Two great Burns demonstrations have occurred in Scotland in my time. The most noteworthy of these was the centenary commemoration on 25th January 1859. Not only was the banqueting universal in Scotland in honour of the poet's hundredth birthday, but it was universal among Scotsmen throughout the world.

Glasgow took a prominent lead, and a grand festival was arranged for in the City Hall. I was on the committee, and one or two literary magnates had accepted invitations to be present whom I should like to have seen and heard. Among these was Sam Lover, of Irish celebrity, whose speech on the occasion, as afterwards reported, abounded in happy strokes of humour. But at the eleventh hour I was drafted off to preside at a smaller dinner in the Royal Hotel,

George Square, where Bailie Harvey, Daniel Macnee, William Cross, Patrick P. Alexander, John Mossman, and other men of at least local note, distinguished themselves in a way which they could not have done at the greater feast; while Mr H. Lambeth, who had but lately settled in the city as a musician of rare ability and attainments, made the ballads, trios, and choruses of the national poet a thrilling and beautiful feature of the programme.

The other and earlier demonstration I was, I am happy to say, free to "make a note of." Robert Burns had three sons. One, the oldest, was settled in Dumfries. The others, Colonel and Major Burns, had been absent for thirty years in the East India Company's service. In 1844 the last two had just returned to this country, and the whole three, after this long interval, were in Scotland together. Hence the idea was suggested, and enthusiastically carried out, of a great Burns festival on the banks of the Doon.

The day fixed was the 6th of August. All the poetic world flocked thither. There was to be a monster procession, and a monster banquet in a colossal pavilion, over which Lord Eglinton was to preside. At the King's Arms

Hotel in Ayr I found Robert Chambers, and was introduced by him to Mr and Mrs S. C. Hall, Mr Douglas Jerrold, Mr (afterwards Sir) J. Noel Paton, and other eminent people. Dr Carruthers, Theodore Martin, James Ballantine, and sundry old friends of my own, I also met. After a time, Martin, Jerrold, and myself set out to witness the crowds, the triumphal arches, and the procession, nearly a mile in length. We had likewise to listen to the strains of the military, to the bagpipe-players, and to the equally strong-winded brass bands from the Ayrshire towns and villages. Douglas Jerrold's wit was keen as a razor.

“What is this fellow?” he exclaimed, as a youth passed in shabby brown coat, who looked like a shopkeeper's assistant, though belted, and with a formidable weapon in his hand. “Why, what's he carrying? The sword of Justice, I suppose. But, like a grocer, he has left his scales behind him!—he! he! he?” for Jerrold always laughed at his own joke, and peered curiously into the listener's face to see if he had caught the point.

Other processionists were similarly commented upon. But the weather must have recalled to Lord Eglinton the unhappy day of the Tour-

nament itself. Yet no; it was not so wofully bad. It threatened, it rained fitfully, but it did not wholly damp the spirits. "Bon Gaultier" with his flashing merriment, and the author of the 'Candle Lectures' with his amusing quips and quiddities, were sufficient to make "a sunshine in the shady place."

The three of us jested under the trees, making the most of our situation. The rain was doing poet's work. It was washing the leaves for the festival, and decking them with countless pearls; it was inviting the sun to make rainbows; it was covering the highways with mirrors wherein he might trick his golden hair; it was flouncing the dresses of pretty Burns worshippers with the classic soil of the poet!

No doubt we came upon sundry groups of people who looked dolorous enough, and as if ready to weep with the clouds. But the day was not relentless. It was a day of smiles and tears, of alternate sunshine and sorrow—a type of the poet's life—a punishment to the Scottish people for neglecting the bard while living, mingled with sunbursts of joy that they thus honoured him when dead.

Douglas Jerrold accompanied me to the banquet, and carved a fowl which he declared to

be "touched with antiquity." Lord Eglinton, with his high clear voice, which told well over the vast assemblage, elicited commendatory "hear hears" from my cynical companion. The voice of Professor Wilson, who acted as croupier, was baffled by the bad acoustics, and his oration, however brilliant afterwards in print, proved ineffective in delivery. Jerrold, who saw how many of the seats of honour right and left of the chairman and croupier were filled, might possibly feel that he was not quite in his rightful place. Perhaps there were not many men of equal mark present. As a wit he had scarcely a living equal. He was a small acute rheumatic person, and not a little inclined to snarl at what he saw, as he subsequently did pungently in the pages of 'Punch.' But to me, while acknowledging his peculiar talent, the pertinacity of his puns became a fatigue. I felt my risible muscles getting stereotyped into an almost painful grin.

Yet the success of that Burns festival, in spite of all drawbacks, was conspicuous. It was of national proportions and significance. Only the oldest and the second son of the poet spoke. The one, who had attempted some lyrics, was a large-headed, stoutish little man ; while the other



was taller, spectacled, and spare. Neither of the elderly gentlemen was an orator, and they readily confessed that the genius of the father had not descended to the sons.

The true hero of the hour was asleep in the mausoleum at Dumfries. It was the author of "Tam o' Shanter" and the "Cottar's Saturday Night" that inspired the proceedings. No man has ever had such homage as that accorded to "rantin', rovin' Robin"; and that homage is more likely, as far as I can see, to be overdone than moderated in the near or far future. He has the loves, the patriotisms, the virtues, even the sins, and, above all, the irrepressible convivialities, of his perfervid countrymen on his side.

### XXXVII.

#### AN ORNAMENT OF THE GREEN ISLE.

It was a vexation to me that I had missed Samuel Lover. At a later date, however, my opportunity came. The Scotch can sing their songs of Flodden, celebrate their Burns birthdays, and drain an annual glass in honour of their patron saint. Our Irish friends are, as a

rule, more highly gifted with patriotic fire, and I confess to enjoying it most when it takes an equally amiable shape. Mr Lover was in this respect a model son of Erin, and did something by his genius to sustain its reputation as the "first gem of the sea." Many must love Ireland better for his minstrelsy. He was an artist, a musician, a novelist, and a poet; and all his excellent gifts were devoted not only to the glorification of his country, but to the cultivation of the brotherhood of men. So far as I remember, there are no race hatreds in his song.

When time began to touch him, though with a lenient hand, the author of 'Rory O'More' came out as a public entertainer. It was in this capacity that he again visited Scotland; and I need not say with what curiosity and delight I went to hear him. He was not tall, though taller by some inches, I could fancy, than his lyrical countryman Tom Moore, and there was a sparkle of kindliness and glee in his eyes which at once invited and secured for him a sympathetic greeting. His voice was said to have lost a good deal of its fulness and charm. As a singer he could not of course compare with our Scotch Wilson or Templeton, who both had

figured conspicuously on the operatic stage—the one with Braham and the other with Malibran. But in his own way he stood on a higher platform than either. His stories and his songs were his own; alike in pathos and in humour they were racy of the soil that gave them birth; and his “Irish Evening” was an evening of piquant and unalloyed enjoyment.

At its close, Mr Lover was entertained privately at supper. The occasion afforded me an opportunity of introduction to him. There was no programme, and our host suggested that I should give Lover’s health. It is probable that in doing so I made some remarks on the combination of gifts required for the production of a good song. This, at all events, was the theme on which he specially dwelt in his reply, and it was interesting to learn his theory of lyric composition, considering the position he occupied as a master of the art.

In everything he put his hand to—and he put his hand to many things—Sam Lover excelled. But it is chiefly as a song-writer that he is remembered. In the neat, artistic blending of wit and humour, with a frequent poetical touch, he shows a quality which Moore, with all his unquestionable beauty, has not ap-

proached. This we find in "Molly Bawn," "Molly Carew," "Widow Machree," and other songs of that class. Lady Dufferin has the same characteristics, with an added element of pathos in her "Terence's Farewell." Ireland generally is indeed rich in this kind of lyric. Take him all round, however, the name of Sam Lover must chiefly come to the front in connection with the genuine Irish blend of deliciously sly humour with quaint and fanciful sentiment.

With this ornament of the Green Isle I formed a subsequent friendship, and sundry letters passed between us. His communications to me were dated mostly from Jersey, where he had gone in failing health. I could have wished to know more of him; yet for me and for the lovers of song everywhere, his voice still vividly lives, and his heart still warmly beats, in his merry and melodious strains.

### XXXVIII.

#### LIGHTHOUSE EXCURSIONS AND "HIGH-JINKS."

Turning the kaleidoscope of my memory, I am presented with many agreeable pictures of

the old lighthouse trips on the Clyde. They were for the ostensible purpose of inspection, but were more useful as supplying a well-deserved holiday, and sweetening with a brief period of relaxation the anxious and responsible intercourse of public official life. It was the Lord Provost and Magistrates of Glasgow who issued the invitations, and the company on board the steamer chartered for the occasion was usually made up of the municipal and river authorities, the officers of the regiments in garrison, and the provost and bailies of Renfrew, Dumbarton, Port-Glasgow, and Greenock, together with any strangers of distinction who happened to be in the neighbourhood.

For example, among the guests one year was a French *savant* whom a prominent city magnate described on the return voyage, at a late hour and after some reasonable festivity, as “a man not only with a British but a European !”

It is but fair to state that the various lighthouses—the Cloch, the Toward, and the Cumberae—were always in first-rate condition, with their reflectors shining like mirrors, and each presenting, I could imagine, on nights of storm and darkness, to the keenly puckered visage of

the mariner, a kindly and beneficent beacon, whether of welcome or warning. Longfellow's "great Giant Christopher," wading out with his lantern, could furnish no friendlier guide.

My first lighthouse excursion was during the civic reign of Mr James Lumsden. His son, who bore the same name as himself, was also in later years Lord Provost, and received in addition the honour of knighthood. But my associations are with the elder Mr Lumsden, the chief of the family, a man of indomitable public spirit and of singularly pronounced character. He was one of the few remaining gentlemen who in 1812 had accompanied Henry Bell in the trial trip of his famous little Comet. For energy, shrewdness, and mother-wit he had not many equals amongst us. In walking with him along—say Trongate or Argyle Street, I used to be struck with the extraordinary number of persons whom he met and could not allow to pass. He seemed to know almost everybody, and to have something to say to each. He had always a dozen irons in the fire, and the business of his life was apparently to keep them all at white-heat. One man he would pounce upon to transact a piece of private business, another to wrangle with over some public

question, a third to tempt into sitting for his portrait to some rising artist in whom he was taking an interest. He would have pleased Dr Johnson in so far as he was a good hater, but he was also a most wide-awake and determined friend. Our great landscape-painter, Horatio M'Culloch, was wont to tell how, in his apprentice days, Mr Lumsden put a ten-pound note into his hand to take him to the Trossachs and enable him to extend his acquaintance with Highland scenery. His zeal in whatever cause he took up was unrivalled. For nearly twenty years he was honorary treasurer of the Glasgow Royal Infirmary, and I could see that he rarely allowed any gentleman to escape him in the street from whom he thought he could extract a subscription in its behalf. No wonder that his memory and services should be perpetuated in bronze, by Mossman, in front of an institution so noble.

That first lighthouse trip of mine was when the Provost had just returned from Paris, where he had dined with Louis Philippe. His invitation to the Tuileries was consequent on his presentation to his Majesty of an address from the Glasgow Town Council congratulating him on a recent escape from assassination—a piece

of happy fortune at which all Europe had rejoiced. An evening spent in such high company was an event in Mr Lumsden's career, and his fellow-excursionists on the Clyde were both interested and amused by his homely and graphic account of his experiences in the French palace. He wore a Court costume stitched together hastily by Parisian tailors ; and after ascending the broad staircase in his scarcely finished garments, was shown with due ceremony into the reception - room, where a large party was assembled. Thereupon the King advanced, held out his hand, and said, "My Lord Provost of Glasgow, welcome to France !"

Introductions to sundry of the royal dukes, to the statesman Guizot, and to other eminent people followed, together with much interchange of bowing. On dinner being announced, our lively Provost was a little puzzled as to how he should proceed ; but his embarrassment was quickly relieved by the King's sister, Madame Adelaide, slipping her arm gently into his, with the remark, "My Lord Provost, you and me." This his lordship told with much *naïveté*, and added, "A nice body ; I was at hame wi' her in five minutes."



Another incident Mr Lumsden related as curious. When dinner was practically over, all the carving having been done at side-tables, a piece of ham beautifully decorated was placed before the King, who cut two wafer-thin slices. These were put before the Provost, who was in the act of declining the compliment, when he was stopped by his fair partner, who whispered in his ear, "Oh, dat is from de King, special for you."

"May I ask," cried a caustic town councillor, "whether you spoke French or English at the Tuileries?"

But Mr Lumsden was equal to the occasion. In the midst of an outburst of laughter he retorted, "I spoke gude braid Scotch."

Sometimes the lighthouse inspectors dined in a spacious marquee on the platform of the Lesser Cumbrae, with childish eyes gleaming through the chinks of the canvas. Where the inhabitants were so few we naturally presented a grand assembly, and the youngsters, I could imagine, would find it

"pleasant through the loopholes of retreat  
To peep at such a world."

On one of these occasions, while strolling on

the greensward prior to the banquet, Bailie Harvey, the excellent brother of Sir George, and an adept in natural history, puzzled the concentrated wisdom assembled with a specimen of what seemed to be a singularly rare flower which he had discovered on the island. The amusement was naturally considerable when he terminated the vague speculation which ensued by intimating that the beautiful anonymous plant was simply a potato-flower from the lighthouse-keeper's vegetable garden.

Almost every succeeding excursion was enlivened by the presence of some important guest. At one trip, my old friend Mr Duncan M'Laren, who had become Lord Provost of Edinburgh, was the most noted person on board. In spite of a somewhat dry and even austere manner, his ability and mastery of affairs had earned for him a position of mark and influence in Scotland, and I was delighted at the opportunity of having a chat with him over old times.

After the Clyde lights had been found unexceptionable, and the feast as ample and oratorical as was customary, our steamer, the Thistle, one of the bigger sort, being in the

Londonderry trade, returned through the Kyles of Bute, and arrived at Greenock just as the shades of evening were closing. Here our Edinburgh visitor and a considerable section of the party bade us good-bye, and started townward by special train.

But a difficulty came to be discussed. Owing to the state of the tide, the narrowness of the channel at Port-Glasgow, and the size of the steamer, the captain was desirous that the provost and bailies of that burgh, three or four in number, should likewise land at Greenock and proceed home by road, the distance being only three miles.

But these gentlemen stood on their dignity. From time immemorial they had been put ashore at their own wharf, where the public were waiting to receive them; and were they now, forsooth, to sneak into the town by a back street in a Greenock cab? "Perish the thought!" was their impulse; for they were clearly in the Ercles vein. All remonstrance was therefore unavailing, and the huge Thistle had no choice but to go steaming on its way. Many remained pacing the deck, but not a few others went below for greater sociability, and I fear I must have been among the number.

To be quite candid, I very distinctly recall that, just as we were contriving to get happy, a sudden grinding sensation was felt, then a complete stoppage of the engines. All of us rushed on deck. We found that in turning into Port-Glasgow we had run aground. The Thistle was indeed hard and fast. We were commanded to run from one side of the boat to the other, which, being impatient to get home, we all did with a will. One of the most active in this way, I remember, was the venerable Principal M'Farlan, keen to make himself helpful; but, although the engines were vigorously backed, the vessel refused to budge. Mr John Ure, the Civil Engineer of the Clyde, predicted continued detention owing to the ebbing tide. The well-known shipbuilder, Mr John M'Gregor, gold chronometer in hand, took a similar view. Meanwhile, small boats from Port - Glasgow came about, in one of which the provost and bailies to whom we owed our dilemma, slunk silently and discreetly ashore, under cover of the growing darkness.

At that moment a modest yet audacious young member of the party was struck with an idea. Was it an impertinence or an inspiration? Again and again had the rocking of the

vessel from side to side been renewed without effect, and it occurred to him as odd that the crowd on deck had not been ordered to the stern. This, he thought, could at least do no harm. So after slipping to the bow and consulting one of the crew, he boldly took advantage of the fading light and set up a cry—"To the stern! to the stern!" Other voices joined in chorus, a rush took place in the direction indicated, once more the engines were backed, and immediately the large steamer floated off triumphantly into mid-channel!

Merit, alas! is not always recognised in this world. I had heard the captain himself shouting "To the stern!" and the poor youth was unable to convince any one that, had he not taken the initiative, we might have been sticking at Port-Glasgow yet!

The satisfaction of every one was indescribable. In the cabin jorums and "high-jinks" abounded. Toasts and "nonsense speeches" prevailed. Flashes of electric wit were frequent. Dr Strang was in his element. A handsome young officer in uniform, Captain M'Donald, voted himself into the chair by acclamation; and so hilariously flew the time, and so near did we find ourselves to our desti-

nation, that the gallant gentleman proposed, amidst much glee, "That the Very Rev. Principal M'Farlan, Dr Davie, town clerk, and Dr Strang, city chamberlain, should be sent as a deputation to the captain, to ask him to—SLOW THE BOAT"!

## XXXIX.

## POETS AND THE PRESS.

Had Robert Burns lived in this age of newspapers, I wonder whether he would have become either a flax-dresser or an exciseman. Certain it is that to persons of literary ability the newspaper press has in the present century—and particularly in the later half of it—opened up a new, a ready, and to those adequately equipped, a not unattractive field.

It is possible that Burns, with all his genius, might have shone less in everyday prose than in song. Yet, if Carlyle's estimate of his powers is in any degree accurate, the temptation might have been strong upon him to acquire competency as a journalist, rather than

face penury or starvation as a "gauger of ale-barrels."

The number of born poets who, from necessity rather than choice, have taken to newspaper work, is great. Thomas Aird, one of the sweet singers of 'Blackwood,' to whom I was introduced at the Burns festival, was editor of the 'Dumfries Herald'; Charles Mackay, the author of "Cheer, boys, cheer!" was, when I first knew him, sub-editor of the 'Morning Chronicle'; my townsman William Motherwell, of "Jeanie Morison" fame, conducted the 'Glasgow Courier'; Robert Nicoll, whom Ebenezer Elliott called "Scotland's second Burns," became a journalist in Leeds; George Outram, whose song of "The Annuity" is one of the most ingenious and entertaining pieces ever penned, was at the head of the 'Glasgow Herald'; William Weir, whom I remember as a man of decided poetic faculty, drifted from the bar to the press, starting as editor of the 'Glasgow Argus,' and ending his career as editor of the 'London Daily News': and this catalogue of bards who wrote verses for love, and leaders for bread, it would not be difficult to enlarge.

Outram was a member of the Faculty of Advocates, but for nearly twenty years had

resigned himself to newspaper occupation. His knowledge of law is conspicuous in his amusing 'Legal Lyrics,' and he excels in the delineation of various humorous phases of Scottish life. Of a female termagant and her violent propensities he says—

“The stools spend the best o' their time in the air;”

and most of his comic verses are rich in similar strokes. His love of everything Scotch was shown in a famous dinner which he once gave to a number of choice spirits, at which cockie-leekie, sheep's-head, haggis, black pudding, and howtowdie abounded; the guests being all attired and made up to represent well-known Scottish characters. It was not my luck to be there. Mr Outram was a retiring man, and had been little seen in public. I never indeed met him but once. This was accidentally on board a steamboat. Being down the Firth for an airing, and not going anywhere in particular, I allowed myself to be persuaded to accompany him to Rosemore on the Holy Loch, his place of residence in summer, where I shared his hospitality and spent a pleasant evening with his family. His good-humour and kindness were engaging and attractive, but I expected



of the doomed man himself, and when all was over he returned to prepare his report. But the pallor he exhibited, and the horror which possessed him, were beyond his power to conceal. The "livid face" of the condemned murderer haunted him; he was simply ill; every attempt to begin his narrative proved a failure; he was incapable of any kind of work whatever; and all that could be done was to let him go quietly home in order to recover his equilibrium.

Not long afterwards M'Donald proposed for himself the appropriate task of writing a series of articles descriptive of the habitats of the Scottish wild flowers in our neighbourhood. A love of botany was deeply rooted in his nature, and the idea seemed excellent. I suggested, however, an enlargement of the scheme, so as to include the scenery, the antiquities, and the memorabilia of each locality; and the result was the delightful 'Rambles round Glasgow' with which his name is associated.

It would be foreign to my plan to allow these merely casual recollections to expand into veritable biography. Suffice it, therefore, to say, that Hugh M'Donald became a local celebrity, was drawn into much company, and made a host of friends. Among these were the poet Alex-

ander Smith, whom his old foe Gilfillan had been the first to make famous, and Patrick Proctor Alexander, a rare and peculiar man of ability. Everywhere was M'Donald courted and beloved; and when, after many changes, and not a few struggles, he passed

“From sunshine to the sunless land,”

a considerable fund was raised for behoof of his widow and family, while a “press amateur” performance of “Guy Mannering” was successfully got up in furtherance of the same object.

In this entertainment the amateurs were greatly assisted by Miss Margaret Aitken, a gifted professional, and the daughter of a singularly able but unfortunate actor whom M'Donald had on some occasion befriended. A representation in which so many pressmen and rhymesters were taking part would not, it was thought, be complete without an original prologue. To supply this was undertaken by me in response to an urgent appeal; its delivery was assigned to Miss Aitken; and as Hugh's biographer, Mr W. W. Scott, declares it to have been her “greatest appearance on the stage,” I am induced to preserve, for what it is worth, the ephemeral production here.

Ladies and gentlemen ! a word, I pray,  
 Before we lift the curtain for our play.  
 Some trembling amateurs are here to-night,  
 Eager to please, yet in a woful fright  
 Lest their best efforts should offend the gods.  
 Therefore have they entreated me, with nods,  
 And serious head-shakes, and beseeching looks—  
 Thinking that I stand well in your good books—  
 To urge a brief petition for their sake.  
 What can I do, the fiery edge to take  
 From your keen wits, that needs must criticise ?  
 If I have e'er drawn tears from any eyes,  
 Or moved the tyrannous Fates to gentle deeds,  
 'Twas when great Shakespeare lashed the wingèd steeds  
 Up to the heaven of deathless argument,  
 And with my feeble voice his thunder blent !  
 But now I feel so helpless here alone,  
 No character enacting save my own.  
 How very strange ! Could I but something sham :  
 I should be anything but what I am !  
 I should be haughty Pauline Deschappelles ;  
 Or Desdemona, loved, alas ! too well ;  
 Or sad Ophelia, singing to her doom ;  
 Or Janet Pryde, within her cheerless room ;  
 Or Jessie Brown, who heard the pibroch clear,  
 And raised the welcome cry that help was near !  
 I should be queen or slave, gipsy or elf—  
 I'm not at home, I am so much myself !  
 Yet though some other part I less might quake in,  
 'Tis my own fault that I am plain Miss Aitken !  
 Your kindness cheers me ; in your smiles I bask,  
 And feel there's nothing that I might not ask.  
 Well, 'tis a woman's task I have to do ;  
 But if I, Juliet-like, too boldly sue,

Remember it is leap-year, and be dumb !  
Nay, don't mistake ! not for myself I come,  
But on behalf of certain novices :  
If you have plaudits, keep them all for these.  
I've tasted them full oft—they're wondrous sweet :  
But oh ! to younger palates what a treat !  
Should any snarler utter aught like this—  
"I've paid my money ; I've a right to hiss !"   
Into his ear I'd whisper if I could—  
To buy the privilege of being rude  
Is but a sorry use to make of gain.  
Yet wherefore reason with a thing so vain ?  
Is there no way to punish ? Were't not best  
That we at once should bring him to the test ?  
At public meetings, I have heard men tell,  
Where cries of "Order" the disorder swell,  
And silence dies from shouting of its name,  
Whene'er some rash intruder, wild for fame,  
Fuming and furious, bounces up to move  
Some false "amendment" which he swears he'll prove,  
The people "Platform" cry, with all their throats,  
That they may see the fool who claims their votes !  
And so, if any here should utter blame,  
Or interrupt a single worthy aim,  
Just ask him, please, to step upon the stage,  
Nor heed his modest struggles nor his rage ;  
Let him come here to show, in form and feature,  
How *he* would "hold the mirror up to nature !"   
Let him arise—a Thespian star, a sun—  
To teach the world how acting should be done !  
Thanks, gentles, thanks!—there's none such in the house ;  
Or if there be, he's quiet as any mouse !  
If not the actor's skill, the widow's cause  
Will thrill your pulses and command applause !

If not my feeble plea, the orphan's tears  
Will move your hearts to sympathy and cheers.  
O heaven! what miracles of beauty lurk  
In nature, when her delicate fingers work  
To heal the scars by storm and winter made!  
Even now, by day and night, through sun and shade,  
O'er woods and fields and streams, now here, now there,  
The angel Spring goes whispering everywhere,  
Till earth makes answer in her bridal dress.  
But where is he whose heart of tenderness  
Beat to her joyous steps through every scene?  
Ah me! within her robe of softest green  
Her favourite she has folded to his rest,  
And with the simple blooms he loved the best  
Made him a little garden all his own.  
You knew the RAMBLER? Oft in summers gone  
He brought delicious sunshine from the hills,  
Gladdened our homes with music of the rills,  
Through all our city sent the breath of flowers.  
We are his heirs—his riches all are ours;  
More fine the heritage than any gold!  
Mourn for the heart that ne'er till now was cold,  
And for the lone ones left to fears unkind!  
Yet in our mimic scene this night you'll find  
Thalia laughing for sole sovereignty!  
Oh, why is this? and where's Melpomene,  
Stately and buskined, her grand eyes afloat,  
Melodious thunders in her mellow throat,  
To loosen all the flood-gates of our woe?  
Her grief is real to-night, and her voice low  
As murmurous music of the distant wave.  
Far off she sitteth by our poet's grave,  
Nursing its flowers to wear celestial dew,  
And pale as when on sculptured tomb we view

A widowed grief immortal in the stone!  
But she approves our joy, and bids go on  
Our comic business, to enchant the night,  
Well knowing that some portion of the light,  
Drawn from the laughing Muse's lustrous eyes,  
Will fall, where life is dark, to illumine its skies!

The effect of this somewhat lengthy effusion was, as Mr Scott has hinted, very remarkable, and was no doubt largely due to the tact, ability, and fervour of the fair reciter.

## XL.

## THE BEARD MOVEMENT.

Mr Frith, in his clever book, tells how difficult it was during his early struggles as an artist to fall in with a bearded model. This may seem curious to the younger generation of the present day, when beards have become so universal. At the time of which he speaks every respectable face was bare, except in the case of military men and foreigners. For any native civilian to sport a moustache was considered a piece of arrant foppery.

Of any such "hirsute appendage" Frith's friend, John Forster, had, it seems, "a great

horror," and a similar strong prejudice was by no means uncommon among persons of high intelligence.

Shortly after my return to Glasgow, my invaluable friend Charles Maclaren had taken a house for a short time near Gareloch-head, and thither I proceeded by invitation to spend a day or two with him. On Sunday morning he proposed a walk across the isthmus to Loch Long. His conversation, added to the beauty of the scenery, rendered our stroll very enjoyable. By reason of his geological knowledge he everywhere, like the exiled duke in 'As You Like It,' found "sermons in stones." *Apropos* of something said, he related how the great scientist, Dr Buckland, had been out one Sunday in Scotland with his slim hammer, when he was accosted by an old woman who asked what he was doing. "Oh," he replied, "I'm only breaking a stone." "Na," she exclaimed; "you're doin' waur than that,—you're breakin' the Sawbath!"

This rebuke, addressed to an eminent divine of Oxford, was amusing; but the anecdote was authentic, Mr Maclaren having got it from himself.

Beguiling the way in this fashion, we soon

reached the hilly part of the road, when we met a large family carriage and a couple of smaller vehicles, apparently conveying a numerous company of ladies and gentlemen to church. Sitting obliquely on an Irish jaunting-car was a portly personage with a dark heavy fringe on his upper lip, and otherwise of distinguished appearance. I suggested that this might be Sir Henry Pottinger, the celebrated diplomatist and colonial governor. We knew he had returned to England, and I had heard that he was visiting in Scotland on the banks of Loch Long. "No, no," said Mr Maclaren, "it's quite impossible it can be he. A civilian of his great intelligence and sense would never wear a moustache."

In reality, I believe it was no other than Sir Henry; and although engaged in the civil service of the Crown, it may be assumed that some of the exalted positions he had filled might entitle him to the military privilege of wearing a moustache without offence. The remark, however, of so astute and largely tolerant a man as Mr Maclaren is worthy of being noted, as showing the kind of estimation in which these facial adornments were held.

Let me give another illustration. Adam Daw-



son of Bonnington, long Provost of Linlithgow, was a man of many anecdotes. I used to meet him often. He was a cousin of Mr Maclaren's, of a lively sense of humour, and having reached a goodly age, his memory was unusually well stored. One of his stories was touching a notable moustache. Some time in the early half of the century there was a contested election in Linlithgowshire, and the candidate whose cause Mr Dawson espoused was an officer in the Lancers, and wore a heavily hirsute upper lip. He was a man of ability, family, and fashion; but Mr Dawson, nevertheless, ventured to give him a hint that his moustache might prejudice him in the eyes of a rural population. The candidate replied that he had already considered the point, but that it was the rule of his regiment, that it would be cowardly to succumb, and that he was "determined to face it out!"

Yet in spite of the opposition to the beard movement and the courage required for its adoption, it has undoubtedly been a boon and a blessing to mankind in this insular kingdom. What ease, what comfort has it not given to many a man's early toilet since its introduction! For myself, my horror was never at the "hirsute appendage" which roused Forster's indignation,

but only at the operation of shaving on mornings often cold, and with razors usually blunt.

Leigh Hunt has somewhere given an entertaining description of the misery of getting up in winter to shave, notwithstanding the hot water resorted to as a partial alleviation. The professional barber had a busy time of it, but even he was not uniformly a success. Has the reader heard Professor Hodgson's story of the shaky village knight of the razor who gashed the minister's cheek? "John, John!" cried the reverend sufferer, "it's a dreadful thing that 'drink!'" "'Deed it is, sir," mildly assented John; "it maks the skin unca tender."

In a charming little book entitled 'Personal Recollections of Thomas De Quincey,' published some years ago, Mr J. R. Findlay of the 'Scotsman' tells how the great "English Opium Eater" joined, late in life, what was called the "moustache movement,"—not, he was careful to explain, from the "utter imbecility" of being in the new fashion, but solely on account of "the old difficulty of the razors." He disliked the trouble of shaving, and abhorred the indignity of being shaved.

To every one, indeed, the necessity of "the barber's sheer" was an annoyance. My old

Edinburgh companion, Thomas Smibert, whose "Scottish Widow's Lament" will surely live in the ballad literature of the country, was on an excursion with me to Dunblane. Many of his best verses were composed while walking by himself in the country, and this feat he could accomplish without putting pen or pencil to paper. In the morning, out went Smibert to get shaved, but returned after a time with his fair beard still showing some sixteenth of an inch of stubble. "I have not," he explained, "got a shave, but I think I have got a song." He thereupon repeated, with his leisurely Tweed-side accent, several melodious stanzas beginning—

"There's ne'er a barber in Dunblane ;"

and I now wonder if the wooers of Tannahill's "Jessie," of flowery and beautiful memory, had anticipated the beard movement in that ancient burgh, and starved the poor barbers out !

## XLI.

## FIRING IN THE STREETS.

Many years ago a friend of mine was in a hotel in Paris, when an *émeute* broke out in the city. He kept within the building, but heard volleys of musketry in the streets. The tumult was close at hand, and the panic and terror which prevailed, particularly among some Frenchmen in the hotel, he described as dreadful.

However familiar to our Gallic neighbours, we can hardly in this country, within living memory, be said to have come through any similar experience. Yet I and many not so old have seen firing in the streets of Glasgow,—not the firing of squibs, crackers, or Queen's birthday pyrotechnics, but the firing of veritable muskets, primed with disloyalty and revolt.

This was in 1848, a year of commotion and trouble to Europe. Louis Philippe had resigned his crown, and fled in disguise from the barricades and bloodshed of his capital; while to three scientists and doctrinaires—Arago, Lamartine, and Louis Blanc, an astronomer, a poet, and a socialist—were confided the destinies of

France. The shock of this convulsion was felt far and wide, diffusing a revolutionary spirit in communities, and making monarchs "tremble in their capitals."

Even Glasgow caught the infection: trade was bad, much distress existed, and violent speeches were delivered by shallow and misguided demagogues in the Green. But while the materials for revolution were wanting, the materials for riot were abundant. The mass of the inhabitants stood faithful to the obligations of common-sense; and what was travestied by Chartists and Repealers as an uprising of the people, degenerated into an overflow of the blackguardism of the slums. Street lamps were shattered, windows smashed, and shops of all kinds, including those of gunsmiths and jewellers, ruthlessly broken into and plundered. The police, who might have crushed the affair had they taken it at once, were unskilfully handled. For the moment some of the leading thoroughfares were in possession of pilferers, cut-purses, and ruffians.

On the day in question I walked into town from my suburban residence. Everything was quiet in my own locality. But on proceeding to cross the Broomielaw Bridge, I encountered

a rush of respectable people, including many ladies, warning everybody back, and in a state of wild excitement. The city was declared to be in insurrection. Observing shots fired in Jamaica Street, with every indication of serious conflict, and finding myself swept back by the fugitive crowd, I was met by the carriage of Dr Laurie, a leading physician in town, whom I exhorted not to advance. He had his wife along with him, and, eager to hear the news, invited me inside. We drove at his desire to the horse barracks, which was then situated at the head of Eglinton Street. On getting there the doctor alighted, to interview some of the officers whom he knew, while I remained with Mrs Laurie in the carriage.

But appeals for the help of the military had preceded us. The barrack-square was in commotion. Men and horses were preparing for immediate and decisive action. As a spectacle it was magnificent. With extraordinary alacrity the soldiers were donning their red jackets, buckling their sword-belts, leaping into their saddles, or catching the helmets pitched to them by women from the windows. I felt as if sharing the enthusiasm. The discipline was perfect. In an incredibly brief space of time

every man was accoutred and in his place. Then like an avalanche out rushed the whole troop, jingling and clattering over the stones, and with drawn swords dashing down Eglington Street at a gallop. Never, surely, was a detachment of the forces of order exhibited in more splendid fettle. Wherever the cavalry appeared, the rioters and the plunderers were scattered like chaff. Hosts of special constables were all the afternoon sworn in, and, parading the streets, assisted in preserving tranquillity. The night was undisturbed.

But on the following day a further outbreak of violence took place in the east end of the city. The police and the old pensioners—a body of veteran heroes who had been called out—were battered with stones and otherwise brutally assailed. At one point an alarming crisis arose, when, in defence of their lives, as was alleged, the sturdy old pensioners fired. The result was effectual, but fatal. Three lives were lost, one of them that of a perfectly inoffensive man, in fact a special constable doing loyal duty to his country. This was painfully lamentable, but the guilt lay with the disturbers, not with the preservers, of the peace.

At the same time the lesson was worthy to be learned that in cases of popular tumult, when the police are found to be insufficient, a single troop of dragoons is infinitely preferable to any number of infantry in overawing and dispersing a mob which it would be madness to tolerate and barbarous to kill. Why, then, risk level collision and bloodshed? With even a small body of mounted men towering in view of the crowd, the gleam of the scarlet uniforms and the glitter of the brandished sabres are enough of themselves to intimidate the disorderly and violent.

## XLII.

## A TRIUMPHANT CLIMAX.

In the "village Hampdens" and "mute inglorious Miltons" of the poet I do not profess to have much faith. Neither in Stoke-Pogis in the time of Gray, nor in any existing village with which I am acquainted, could men easily be found capable of swaying "the rod of empire" or producing any tolerable rivalry to the majestic numbers of 'Paradise Lost.' Geniuses



of the sort that are "born, not made," it is not in the power of any density of village dulness to hide.

But Gray only gave poetical exaggeration and licence to a truth which has some foundation. In all societies are to be discovered men of such strong natural powers, together with such acquired addition of culture, as to mark them out as fitted for a higher station than they occupy. This is particularly the case, not in the sleepy hamlet, but in the midst of the stimulating activities and influences of city life. I have in my time known not a few persons who, but for the dwarfing discouragement of circumstances, might have figured in larger stature to the world.

One of these was Mr Archibald M'Lellan, a magistrate, and, for many years prior to his death in 1854, a prominent citizen of Glasgow. He had the advantage of a university education; his reading and information were extensive; his memory was something above common. The business to which he was trained under his father was that of a coachbuilder, and in that capacity he had acquired great proficiency as a heraldic painter. A love of art in its higher departments became after-

wards one of his distinctions, and an extensive collection of pictures and statues in bronze and marble he ultimately bequeathed to the city.

Bailie M'Lellan was also an accomplished musician, but it was chiefly as a debater that he became a power in the municipality. His temperament was impulsive and irascible, and to this source may have been due much of that bold rhetoric which at times thrilled and charmed his fellow-councillors and associates. Although a high Tory in politics, he was a man of large sympathies, and among his personal friends he numbered Sir Francis Chantry; Sir David Wilkie, occupying a foremost place in Scottish art; R. A. Smith, the eminent composer; Motherwell, the chief of our local poets; and other artists, musicians, and literary men without number.

As chairman of the City Parochial Board, the Bailie tried hard to get the poor-rates levied on means and substance instead of rental. These, he held, pressed unduly on highly rented shopkeepers; while great merchants, grubbing perhaps in small and obscure counting-houses, enjoyed comparative immunity from the tax.

It was while the controversy on this subject was at its height that I met Mr M'Lellan at

the hospitable table of Lord Provost Stewart of Omoa. Among the guests was Mr W. S. Lindsay, M.P., who, in allusion to the Bailie's reputation as a speaker, expressed to me a desire to draw him into discussion. In the conversation which followed, his favourite theme was introduced, and I noticed the nervous facial excitement and flashing grey eyes of the eloquent advocate of means-and-substance rating. But at one point Mr Lindsay struck in with a pertinent remark. He did not pretend, he said, "to have studied the question." It merely occurred to him "that any wealthy merchant who objected to a local income-tax might easily move outside the city parish, and escape it altogether."

"Well suggested," observed Mr William M'Lean of Plantation, who was present. "I know for a fact that a certain very wealthy firm," which he named, "meant to remove to the south side of the river if the means-and-substance proposal was carried."

This was like a bit of red rag to a bull, and gave rise to a scene, which was exactly what Mr Lindsay wanted.

Up started Bailie M'Lellan to his feet with

the exclamation, "And the curse of the poor go with them!"

The effect was startling. His eyes were in a flame, and he proceeded, with menacing gesture, to expatiate on "the despicable meanness of men, whom Providence had so largely favoured, plotting, for the sake of a few dirty coppers, to escape their just obligations to the poorly born and unfortunate, forgetful of their duty to the city, to the country, and to the spirit of that Christianity which they professed to reverence."

After this burst of oratory the company became excited, and it seemed all at once to flash upon him that the exhibition was out of place at a private entertainment. So, glancing significantly at the head of the table, he put his thumb to his nose, spread out his fingers, twirled them with comic effect, and resumed his seat with the triumphant climax, "Pass the bottles, Provost!"

An explosion of laughter followed; this "one touch of nature" on the part of a city dignitary distinguished for his gentlemanly bearing had the effect of cooling down the heat in a moment; and the genial good-humour which had previously prevailed was at once cleverly restored.

## XLIII.

## THREE FOREIGNERS OF NOTE.

When the popular orator and reformer, Alessandro Gavazzi, was in this country, he spent an evening in my house. At that time he had no acquaintance with the English tongue. I had, however, a countryman of his own, Signor Assolari, to meet him, and also Mr William Anderson, who had translated Béranger into English verse, and who spoke French with ease and accuracy, together with Dr Strang, who was known as a good linguist.

Gavazzi was a large man, strongly built, and with features indicative not so much of refinement as of force. The conversation was chiefly carried on in French, and before he left I ventured to propose his health in English, which Assolari interpreted for his behoof. To my few remarks the Padré replied, no doubt, to use Hamlet's expression, in "very choice Italian." He spoke briefly, but with firmness, like a man accustomed to use his voice.

It then fell to the lot of Signor Assolari to let us all know what he had said, and it soon

became apparent that our amiable Italian townsman had been carried away by his local knowledge and enthusiasm, and had considerably expanded the observations of his great compatriot. After the two foreign gentlemen took their leave, Dr Strang assured us that Assolari's translation was ample, able, and, above all, original.

It is needless to say we were all struck with the obvious deep-seated fire and prowess of the man who had been called the *Pietro Eremita* of the Italian crusade for freedom.

Another noted stranger whom I met was of quite a different type. This was Louis Blanc, the ex-member of the French Provisional Government of 1848. He was a very little person—I should say not much, if anything, over five feet—with a spacious forehead, and round, fresh, kindly countenance. Like many of his brother socialists, he seemed peculiarly amiable. He spoke English slowly and distinctly, though with a laboured pronunciation. But any splendour of eloquence he possessed was not on that occasion displayed. On the contrary, he abounded in happy anecdote; and had I not been aware of his reputation as a writer of intellectual power, I should probably

have set him down as a chatty little gentleman delightfully adapted for a party of admiring ladies.

I had met Louis Blanc at dinner at the house of a friend ; and a similar private opportunity, though at an hotel, brought me into contact with the great Hungarian patriot, Louis Kossuth. I am not aware that I ever conversed with any man with whom I was more impressed. This was due to his dignity of demeanour, and the pathos which thrilled in his voice. His touch of foreign accent gave a charm to his language. He who had, as he said himself, held the fate of the house of Hapsburg in his hands, looked and spoke like one who had suffered reverses. His bearing was that of a man born for triumph, but whose fate it had been to struggle with adversity and sorrow.

Kossuth was slightly above the middle height, and of easy but imposing deportment. His rhetoric was simple, yet elevated. It was obvious that he had drunk of the "well of English undefiled" to an extent beyond that of most people to the manner born. He was profoundly conversant with Shakespeare, whom he had studied when in prison. With the writings of Burns he also showed some acquaint-

ance, for he mentioned that his song of "A man's a man for a' that" had its counterpart in an old Hungarian lyric. His sentences were at times tremulous with emotional beauty; and I could not feel surprised that the voice to which I listened, rich and moving even in colloquial discourse, had held vast English audiences spell-bound with a sweetness and a majesty which came upon them as a wonder, and which no other foreigner of our time had ever, I think, equalled.

## XLIV.

## AN ACCIDENTAL TREAT.

What's up? A carriage-and-four at the entrance to the Merchants' Hall in Hutcheson Street!

This was at two o'clock in the day; it was not a usual sight in the city; and I stepped forward to interview a policeman who was engaged in keeping back some youngsters from the door.

In reply to my question as to what was going on, I was told it was "a Mr Chopin giving a concert."

Unlike the Edinburgh lady who spoke



“Frainch wi’ a Pareesian awccent,” the policeman’s pronunciation of the name Chopin was peculiar. To my Scottish ear it was suggestive of a quart measure, but it nevertheless sufficed to remind me that I had tickets for the *Matinée Musicale*, which, somehow or other, I had overlooked.

On entering the hall, I found it about one-third full. The audience was aristocratic. Prince Czartoryski, a man whose name was patriotically associated with the Polish struggle for independence, was present ; so likewise were some representatives of the ducal house of Hamilton ; while sitting near were Lord and Lady Blantyre, the latter a perfectly beautiful woman, and worthy of her lineage as one of the daughters of the Queen’s favourite Duchess of Sutherland. Others of the neighbouring nobility and gentry were observable ; and I fancied that many of the ladies might have had finishing lessons in music from the great and fashionable pianist in Paris.

It was obvious, indeed, that a number of the audience were personal friends of M. Chopin. No portrait of that gentleman had I seen ; no description of him had I ever read or heard ; but my attention was soon attracted to a little

fragile-looking man, in pale-grey suit, including frock-coat of identical tint and texture, moving about among the company, conversing with different groups, and occasionally consulting his watch, which seemed to be

“ In shape no bigger than an agate stone  
On the forefinger of an alderman.”

In this small grey individual I did not hesitate to recognise the musical genius we had all come to see. Whiskerless, beardless, fair of hair, and pale and thin of face, his appearance was interesting and conspicuous; and when, after a final glance at his miniature horologe, he ascended the platform and placed himself at the instrument of which he was so renowned a master, he at once commanded attention.

I had frequently seen Thalberg sitting with serene countenance while banging out some air with clear articulation and power, in the midst of perpetual coruscations of the most magnificent *fioriture*. Liszt, too, I had often beheld tossing his fair hair excitedly, and tearing the wild soul of music from the ecstatic keys. Dohler, with his hammer-strokes, and a rapidity which took away one's breath, was also known to me. But the manner of Chopin was different.

No man has composed pianoforte music of more technical difficulty. Yet with what consummate sweetness and ease did he unravel the wonderful varieties and complexities of sound! It was a drawing-room entertainment, more *piano* than *forte*, though not without occasional episodes of both strength and grandeur. He took the audience, as it were, into his confidence, and whispered to them of zephyrs and moonlight rather than of cataracts and thunder. Of the whirl of liquid notes he wove garlands of pearls. The movements and combinations were calculated to excite and bewilder. They were strange, fantastic, wandering, incomprehensible, but less fitted, on the whole, for the popular concert hall than for the *salon* of a private mansion.

Poor Chopin! the friend, and perhaps the slave, of the extraordinary Madame Dudevant, it was clear to me that he was early marked for doom. His compositions live and will live; but he himself, with all his fine inspirations, was in a little while to be laid where neither applause nor criticism, neither glory nor trouble of any kind, could come.

## XLV.

## BOWLERS AND CRICKETERS.

Some thirty years ago and upwards I resided in a quiet suburb, now much changed. There was then a grassy enclosure instead of a wet dock, shipping, and sheds, opposite the windows. The locality of an individual's abode sometimes determines his relationships and affects his destiny. More commonly, however, it governs merely the minor actions of his life, and makes him acquainted with new scenes and experiences.

The Kingston Bowling Green happened to be in my neighbourhood, and hence it came about that I found myself within its precincts when a great match was in progress. This match was between the Ayrshire and Glasgow Bowling Greens, and it turned out that it had fallen to the lot of the Earl of Eglinton to have to play with his special Ayrshire contingent against the Kingston club in the big city. Lots had been drawn, I suppose, for the arrangement of sides, and I heard some regret expressed that his lordship's party had not been pitted against

one of the more aristocratic of the Glasgow clubs.

No matter : I found the Earl and his Ayrshire friends in amicable conflict with the Kingston Bowlers, comprising decent shopkeepers from Tradeston, some of them with cutty-pipes in their mouths. The bearing of the handsome nobleman was, no doubt, in marked contrast to that of several of his competitors ; but what of that ? They were all, I take it, respectable in their sphere, and nothing could exceed the unaffected courtesy of his manner to the humblest, as if in recognition of the fact that on the bowling-green the highest and the lowest were for the moment on perfectly level ground.

On Lord Eglinton's side was a well-known Ayrshire worthy—Mr Hugh Conn, belonging, I understood, to Kilwinning. Hugh was also a respected member of the Eglinton curling rink, and was a favourite with the noble and popular Earl.

At a critical point in the game his lordship, under Mr Conn's directions, was playing a decisive shot. Hugh was in high excitement, and exclaimed, "First-rate ! capital ! man, I like ye ! I like ye !"

At that instant the ball took a wrong bias, played the deuce with the game, and caused the Kilwinning enthusiast to pirouette in his despair, and shout in a loud angry voice, "Oh, damn it, Eglinton, you've spoiled it a' thegither!"

This gave rise to much merriment, the party who enjoyed it most being, apparently, Lord Eglinton himself.

In connection with the Earl of Eglinton's patronage of the national sports generally, another anecdote may be related. I do not know whether he was personally a cricketer, but I remember attending a dinner given to the "Eleven of all England" in the Trades Hall, over which he presided. Mr Stephenson Dalglish, elder brother of Mr Dalglish, the popular M.P., was croupier, and in a voice of remarkable depth, reminding me of that of the elder Lablache, he created much laughter among the "professionals" by alluding to a game, prevalent in his boyhood, which he described as "a kind of cricket without wickets." But otherwise the speaking was indifferent, with the exception of that of the noble chairman, who had unquestionably a considerable gift and facility of graceful and cultured speech.

The cricketers, professional and amateur, had, with one or two exceptions, little fluency of utterance, and it soon became obvious that their mental training had, as a rule, been inferior to their physical. There was compensation, however, in store. To an amiable young aristocrat from a northern shire had been intrusted the important toast of "the health of the chairman."

He had come primed with his subject, and well posted up in the commendation due to his lordship as a patron of the national sports of Scotland. Plunging, then, *in medias res*, he began: "The toast I have the honour to propose—we all know—as regards the turf (loud cheers)—Lord Eglinton (enthusiastic applause)—I say, as regards the turf—national sports—we all know (hear hear)—ahem—as regards the turf—the toast which I have the honour—we all know—I say—as regards the national sports—the turf—I may add as regards cricket (loud cheers)—we all know, I say, as regards Lord Eglinton (deafening cheers)—the toast which I have the honour—as regards cricket—the turf: gentlemen—confound it! I've broken down!"

Patted on the back by the noble chairman, up

started the youthful orator again, and, bracing himself to his task, gave the toast in a determined voice "with all the honours."

The applause which followed what might be held to be in some respects the speech of the evening was immense, and drew from his lordship a happy and characteristic response.

## XLVI.

### PAISLEY—ITS CELEBRITIES, AND HOW AN ACTION WAS QUASHED.

"I visited to-day your enterprising suburb of Paisley." Such were the words used by Lord Brougham when presiding in the Glasgow City Hall at a dinner of the Social Science Congress. However prosaic and commonplace the words were, they yet formed the most memorable phrase in the noble and learned lord's opening address.

Brougham spoke with fluency and force, as if he liked speaking; and with an argumentative theme—with something to inspire him with a feeling of combat—I can imagine that he might have risen to eloquence. As it was, the tone



of his speech was manly and vigorous, but without any pretence of high rhetoric, or without breaking into any passage calculated to take a permanent hold of the mind.

Its one immortal touch was, in point of fact, the reference to Paisley. At the moment of its delivery it struck me as a palpable success in the way of rechristening; and to this day the *sobriquet* of "the suburb" is almost as recognisable as the name Paisley itself.

The truth seems to be that the Paisley people themselves, who have a natural fondness for fun, have taken quite kindly to it, not as diminishing the importance of the town, but rather as indicating its superior dignity and independence—just as an old lady of my acquaintance used to call her youngest son "wee Hughie," the said "wee Hughie" being a perfect grenadier in physical proportions.

Professor Wilson, at a convivial meeting, spoke of his native Paisley as having a population of over "forty thousand souls." "Bodies, you mean," interjected the poet Campbell, who was present. This was a fair hit for the occasion, the good people of Paisley being known as "Paisley bodies" far and wide, in association with the formula of "Edinburgh people"

and "Glasgow folk." But how this old nickname originated is probably unknown.

Certain it is that neither the venerable capital of St Mirren nor its population is in the least degree open to any derogatory appellation. I agree with an old friend of mine who used to run over the names of the eminent men that Paisley had produced—Tannahill, the two Wilsons, and the rest—and assert that "Paisley had, in proportion to its size, produced more distinguished men than any other town in Scotland." True, my friend uniformly wound up with the addendum, "And I'm a Paisley man mysel'!" which might or might not strengthen his argument. But in downright earnest, when I think of some Paisley folk I have personally known—the philanthropic brothers, Thomas and Sir Peter Coats; admirable old William Fulton of the Glen, with his rich humour, strong sense, and large heart; the fine poet and thinker, William Cross, author of the novel of 'The Disruption'; and David Gilmour, whose inimitable 'Pen' Folk' induced Dean Stanley to visit Paisley with the view of making his acquaintance; and when I think, too, of the Clarks, munificent local benefactors, and some others whom I know by reputation, I cannot avoid the con-

viction that the town has reason to be proud, and even legitimately boastful, of its sons.

I have a special satisfaction in naming William Cross among those who have conferred distinction on the place of their birth. He was one of my oldest cronies, and one whom I always held in the highest regard. Several of his comic songs, such as "The Dainty bit Plan" and the "Canting Auld Kimmer," are not surpassed by many things in the Scottish tongue; though his natural reserve and modesty gave little indication of the higher flights of poetry of which he was capable. As he himself finely says—

"Small things at hand conceal great things afar.  
A rosebud or an ivy leaf can hide  
Vast Jupiter."

Like many of his townsmen, Mr Cross was a most interesting speaker. His custom was to start with some fine vein of thought, but without further preparation. He had thus to find language as he went along, and although often hesitating and at a loss, it was always delightful to notice how unfailingly the right word came pat into its right place.

In talking of the Paisley people generally, I confess to some sympathy with the native

bard who lamented that his wife had no appreciation of poetry. "I really believe," he remarked, "that she would have been quite as well pleased had she married a common man!"

This anecdote, which I got from Mr Cross, had its counterpart in a story told of Dr Goldsmith. The Doctor, according to the immortal chronicler, Boswell, gave expression to a serious complaint that he had been treated "as if he had been an ordinary man" by Lord Campden, whom he had met at a friend's country house. No ordinary man was Goldsmith, and not all common men are the Paisley worthies.

But besides its "men of light and leading," Paisley has always had its characters. At a great open-air demonstration in the "Suburb," a certain gentleman was described as "sprawling on the grass," and as "once a respectable writer in town, but now gone all to the dogs with drink." For the publication of this libel I was unfortunately responsible. In a few days in burst the insulted sprawler, full of evil intentions and threats. "Gone all to the dogs with drink!" he exclaimed, in a furious voice. "A libel, a libel! I know the law."

While I was doing what I could to soothe his exasperation, my eldest brother, who was at

that time associated with me, and who had overheard the colloquy, stepped forward and declared that "the libel was a very gross one, and that it was "quite inexcusable."

"Hear, hear, hear!" shouted the aggrieved party; "there's sense, there's sense!"

"I therefore propose," continued my brother "that in reparation of the deep wrong done to Mr —— (hear, hear) he should be presented on the spot (hear, hear, hear), in full of all claims——"

"Of course."

"With the sum of five shillings sterling!"

"Hurrah, hurrah! a very admirable suggestion—a first-rate proposal. I accept, I accept!"

Seizing a pen which was offered to him, the jubilant lawyer wrote out the acknowledgments desired, duly clutched the two half-crown doled out to him, and congratulating all concerned in the just and amicable arrangements arrived at, straightway departed with an air of infinite satisfaction and triumph.

## XLVII.

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS.

Public meetings are not entertainments that I have ever much affected. Only on rare occasions have I gone near them, and even then my object was, I fear, not so much to advance any particular cause as to hear some well-known speaker.

It was in this spirit that I went to listen to part of a long, formal, and exhaustive debate on the subject of American slavery in what was Dr Wardlaw's church in West George Street, many years ago transformed into North British Railway offices. For four nights the wrangling continued, but I was present at only one of the meetings. The great anti-slavery orator was Mr George Thomson, widely celebrated in that character; while his antagonist was Mr Breckenridge, a very able clergyman from the United States.

It was undoubtedly an intellectual enjoyment. Mr Thomson, who had been across the Atlantic in support of Negro emancipation by immediate decree, was a powerful declaimer,

and above all he was on the popular side. On the other hand, Mr Breckenridge had the advantage of knowing thoroughly the state of feeling in America, and the practical difficulties attending the question. Their difference in manner was striking. Mr Thomson—tall, thin, and with long, pointed chin—thundered and gesticulated. Mr Breckenridge was shorter, apparently in very delicate health, and spoke incisively, but with calm self-possession.

As a debater, Mr Breckenridge seemed to me to be the superior. He was no supporter of slavery in the abstract, but he held that the fury of Mr Thomson's crusade in the United States had only stimulated resistance, and deferred, for an indefinite period, that boon of freedom to the slave which the best minds of America were labouring to bring about.

For a time the speakers kept their tempers well, and Mr Thomson never neglected to speak of his opponent as his "friend." The latter, however, was either less conciliatory or more candid; for he declared, with inimitable coolness, aggravated by a strong Yankee accent: "I will not call that man my friend who makes his bread by traducing my country."

How opinions went I cannot tell, but I dare-

say the verdict would not be in the least unanimous.

At another time I attended an anti-slavery meeting, where the great Irish agitator, Daniel O'Connell, was to be presented with an address. I had little sympathy with his general politics, but these were for the moment in abeyance, and regarding him simply as an orator, I could not wonder at the enormous influence he wielded. He was a man with a large head and wig, and a correspondingly large chest and waistcoat, together with a broad, genial, and scintillating countenance. What struck me as the chief peculiarity of his style was its variety. He rambled with quick facility—

“From grave to gay, from lively to severe.”

Endowed with an extremely rich voice, capable of the finest modulation, he would at one moment delight his audience with samples of the most laughter-exciting Irish blarney or blundering; while the next moment he would have every listener melted, or almost melted, into tears.

No one while listening to O'Connell could feel him to be dull or tedious. On this occasion, when he resumed his seat after a beautiful



peroration, my own impression was that he had spoken about twenty or perhaps thirty minutes, while in reality his address had extended to upwards of an hour.

Not much unlike Daniel O'Connell in physical massiveness, in breadth, and expressiveness of feature, and in his rich and copious blending of humour, pathos, and eloquence, was my popular townsman, the Rev. Dr Norman Macleod. At a private dinner I admired the latter for his power of enlivening conversation with apt and happy anecdote. "That reminds me," he remarked, in reference to some point which had arisen, "of a dispute which took place at one time between a Churchman and a Dissenter. 'There can be no truth in Dissent,' said the Churchman, 'because Dissenters are never once mentioned in the Bible.' 'What!' cried the Dissenter, 'did you never read of the seceders of Lebanon?'"

Of Dr Macleod's high animal spirits I remember a happy instance. The Marquis of Lorne, shortly before his marriage with the Princess Louise, consented to take the chair at the annual dinner in Glasgow of the "Argyleshire Benevolent Society." On the right he was supported by the genial Doctor, and I had the

good fortune to be one of the company. The Marquis, with his youthful complexion and soft golden hair, looked like a picture; and at such a crisis in his life nothing could be more natural than that the forthcoming event should have been uppermost in all minds.

Prominent among the toasts was, of course, the health of the Princess. It was neatly proposed by Mr Archibald Orr Ewing, and followed by such honours as only Highlanders know how to bestow. The outburst of loyalty, considering the selectness of the company, could hardly have been exceeded. After the noble chairman had modestly and gracefully replied, it became Dr Norman's turn to speak. He was in what is called great form. "Mr Ewing," he said, for he was not Sir Archibald then, "had spoken of the delicacy he felt in alluding to her Royal Highness in presence of our happy chairman. Now, for myself, I feel no delicacy at all, for I know that a young man delights in nothing so much as to hear people talk about his sweetheart" (laughter). Then after much loyal fun, which gave rise, of course, to further merriment, he exclaimed, "I have had the honour and the happiness of meeting with her Royal Highness, and I can only say that if I had been the

Marquis of Lorne instead of the minister of the Barony Kirk, I would have gone in for her myself!"

This crowning joke threw both the chairman and the clansmen into uproarious good-humour. But the comic side of the Doctor's character was not that by which he produced his greatest effects. Did any of my readers happen to be present, twenty years ago, at the "Scott Centenary Banquet" in the Glasgow City Hall? If so, they will agree with me that Lord Provost Arthur made an excellent appearance in the chair, that Mr Henry Monteith of Carstairs delivered a masterly and high-toned address, and that speeches worthy of the occasion were likewise given by the Marquis of Bute, Mr Sheriff Bell, and other rhetoricians. They will also recollect, and will equally agree with me, that it was reserved for Dr Norman Macleod to cap the oratory of the evening with a grand climax descriptive of Sir Walter Scott's heroic and superhuman effort, in old age, with enfeebled health and with shattered nerves, to repay the prodigious debt in which he had become involved—a debt overwhelming to him, but which would not have cost some gentlemen on that platform a night's sleep.

The whole audience were touched and thrilled, and every one must have felt that the high-water mark of rich and effective oratory had been reached.

## XLVIII.

## A PEERLESS DANSEUSE.

The supremacy of Shakespeare in his own lofty walk is confessed. It is a world's truism. In the presence of that mighty luminary, all other dramatic poets, from Æschylus downward, "pale their ineffectual fires." No postulate in literature is more admitted.

Some learned musicians assign a similar pre-eminence in music to Beethoven. But when I think of Handel, Mozart, and several other composers of kindred inspiration, I question whether Beethoven, profound and wonderful as he is, can be said to stand so absolutely alone.

A like remark, I apprehend, may be made in reference to sculpture and painting. Phidias, Michael Angelo, Raphael, and a whole galaxy of immortals rush upon the memory, and seem

to dispute the title of any one in particular to be pronounced the Shakespeare of his special art. There are too many crowding to the front for any voice of preference to be declared.

My notion is that in every department of mental and emotional force, while high and even exalted averages are frequent, it is something phenomenal to find any human wonder so surpassingly wonderful as to dwarf the accumulated rivalries of ancient and modern times.

Yet in some humbler departments of effort, I am tempted to fancy that the pinnacle of unapproached excellence has in several instances been reached. Paganini, for example, on the violin, Ducrow on the circus-horse, and Blondin on the tight-rope, not only outstripped contemporary competitors, but, as far as can be ascertained, all preceding and subsequent aspirants, in their several spheres of achievement. These three I have seen; I have never looked upon others nearly their equal; and in the same category of elevation, I am inclined to place the peerless *danseuse*, Taglioni.

Only once did I behold that beautiful vision. Splendid tripping on "the light fantastic toe" I had often witnessed. All the curious gym-

nastics of it were familiar to me. To something of the arduous training which makes a hippodrome clown or contortionist I could attribute every well-known feat of the Italian ballet. But Taglioni! no tyranny of tuition could account for her ethereal movements. Physically a woman, she was spiritually a sylph. Not so much did she appear to spring from the earth as to alight upon it. I thought of her as a magnificent creature of the air—who, like the Queen of Love herself, could

“Dance on the sands and yet no footing seen.”

How she glided and floated! What art above art did she exhibit! Athletes conquer difficulties under visible perspiration, but here was a new and sparkling world opened up through incomparable strength and agility, yet without a symptom or semblance of effort!

Then her bounding *pas*—can I forget the joy of it? Who could witness such fervour of *abandon* without sharing in its ecstasy? Mind was roused, heart was captivated, and applause broke vehemently forth, not as a compliment to the performer, but as a relief to the excited spectator.

My impression is that no one could contem-

plate Taglioni, in the high enthusiasm of her art—in the indubitable genius of it—without feeling lifted for the moment into a purer sphere of poetry, exaltation, and emotion.

### XLIX.

#### THE SIMPLE AND THE GRAND IN VERSE.

Many of my more happy recollections are associated with Mr Henry Glassford Bell, Sheriff of Lanarkshire. He was a glorious host. Six feet one or two inches in height, and otherwise a large man, he ate well, drank discreetly, and enjoyed the most unbounded spirits.

At his table one was sure to meet persons worth meeting. Sir Daniel Macnee, with his inexhaustible *répertoire* of original stories, and Professor Macquorn Rankine, with his songs equally original and admirable, were among his habitual guests.

Of Macnee I have more than once spoken, but Macquorn Rankine likewise deserves a word. He was short, and inclining to be stout all over rather than paunchy. With a pro-

fusion of auburn hair, he had a head like imperial Jove. As Professor of Civil Engineering and Mechanics in the Glasgow University he was learned in mathematics, profuse in his use of algebraic symbols, and profound in all kinds of equation and analysis. Some of his calculations were too deep for ordinary understandings to fathom. Yet his social character had a light and airy side. He wrote rhymes of infinite jest; some of his original songs he sang to tunes of his own composition, accompanying himself on the piano; while he was also the author of a little series of 'Fables,' very brief and very pointed, which, as he repeated them with quaint gravity, were always received with relish.

A dinner at the Sheriff's was often followed by a supper of oysters for a select three, four, or half-dozen whom he persuaded to remain behind. It was then that Macnee, Rankine, and the Sheriff himself came out in full force. Mr Bell, like his friend the Professor, was a poet, and his verses have a bright and healthy ring, though not without their serious moods, and a tender and pensive appreciation of the fleetingness of earthly things. At the head of his own table his temperament was uniformly joyous.



In connection with one of the meetings of the Social Science Congress in Glasgow, Mr Bell gave a series of breakfasts. Generally speaking, a breakfast is not a jovial meal. But Mr Bell's breakfasts were jovial. I remember how, at one of these, he kept the fun going. He got Macnee to tell one of his best stories, and Lord Neaves to sing one of his best songs. Mr Hughes, the author of 'Tom Brown's School Days,' was there, and there too were other heirs of fame who assisted in making the morning memorable.

But while warmly acknowledging contemporary merit, it was to the great departed that Glassford Bell delighted in his public speeches to refer. His mind revealed itself on such occasions as a very portrait-gallery of the undying dead. When he was in the bloom of his years he had mingled much with eminent people. He had presided at a festive meeting when Sir Walter Scott sat on his right, and the able painter, Sir William Allan, on his left. To Moore's exquisite singing of his own melodies he had more than once listened. With Thomas Campbell he had heard the midnight chimes. By the most beautiful of Scotland's streams he had rambled, rod in hand, with

the Ettrick Shepherd. It was also one of his boasts that he had trod a measure with "L. E. L." when his figure was slimmer than it became, and that he had walked on the Calton Hill by moonlight with the gifted Mrs Hemans. With John Gibson Lockhart, who, apart from his *magnum opus* of 'Scott's Life,' wrote that gem of Scottish word-painting, the "Lament for Captain Paton," he had held happy communion. Of Jeffrey, Cockburn, and other ornaments of the earlier part of the century, he had likewise much to tell. But of all the distinguished people he had known, Professor Wilson, whose conversation, as he said, "excelled his best writings," appeared to be the special god of his idolatry.

Perhaps it may have been due to the influence of the Professor that Mr Bell became, like himself, an enthusiastic Wordsworthian. On one occasion he undertook to give a lecture on the bard of Rydal Mount in the City Hall; and he invited a few friends to dine at his house on the evening fixed, and accompany him to the platform. It was winter, and "across the walnuts and the wine" we learned that the snow was coming down as if all the winged clouds of heaven were moulting their innumerable plum-

age. On reaching the drawing-room we peeped out. Not only was the ground white with its "new-fallen mask," but the air continued thick and wavery with the heavily descending flakes. Within, the fire burned cheerily, the curtains were drawn, and warmth and comfort prevailed; without, people hurried under the gas-lamps like sheeted ghosts, and everything had an aspect of desolation.

The Sheriff thought that on such a night very few persons would dream of attending a lecture. He therefore proposed that he should send down to invite the City Hall audience to "come up," where it would at least have the advantage of a good fire. As usual he was in splendid spirits, and joke upon joke was exchanged until the carriages were announced. Mrs Orr Ewing, Professor Nichol, Bell's future son-in-law, and other "fit audience" were of the party, and off we at length drove towards Candleriggs through the massive snowfall.

To our surprise we found the spacious hall fairly well filled, and Mr Bell's address found eager listeners. It was a vigorous and effective lecture, wanting the episodes of amusement with which Professor Blackie is wont to keep his hearers alive on similar platforms, but full

of just criticism, and illustrated with noble extracts.

This occasion was noteworthy to me, as it seemed to open my eyes to a new experience. Every student of Wordsworth knows that in the "Excursion," "Peter Bell," and even some of his small poems, he carries his notions of simplicity to excess. It was that tendency which drew from Jeffrey the memorable stricture, "This will never do." Now, as if for the sake of variety, and what he might conceive to be the popular taste, several of these passages or pieces were comprised in Mr Bell's selections. They were the only verses that fell flat. The story of "The Sailor's Mother," for example, failed to rouse the audience. To the poor mother the bird and cage that had gone many voyages with her son were a prized inheritance. Talking of the bird, she says—

"He to a fellow-lodger's care  
Had left it, to be watched and fed,  
And pipe its song in safety ; there  
I found it when my son was dead ;  
And now, God help me for my little wit !  
I bear it with me, sir ; he took so much delight in it."

So the little tale ends. The incident is affecting, but it neither drew visible sympathy nor

audible cheers. This may have been a revelation to the Sheriff himself. His object was, I presume, to come down to the supposed level of his audience, and not always to shoot over their heads. But this proved to be a mistake. Their heads were higher than was guessed. They had perhaps, like Alexander Smith, found that in the far-stretching city—

“The stars were nearer to them than the fields.”

The passages which really stirred them into rapturous applause were those in which the poet rises to Miltonic heights of eloquence—when he seems, as it were, to descry

“The light that never was on sea or land,”

and to disclose, in golden moments of inspiration,

“Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.”

## L.

### DR GUTHRIE ON NATIONAL EDUCATION.

One of the most noted preachers in Scotland during many years was Dr Thomas Guthrie of

the Free Church. He was not a Chalmers in rugged imaginative force, neither was he a Caird in sustained elevation and power. Perhaps he was more allied to Norman Macleod in a certain wealth and fearlessness of homely illustration.

Guthrie also greatly excelled as a platform speaker. He was the originator of "ragged schools," and took a conspicuous part in various philanthropic movements. One of his hobbies was National Education, and the only time I ever heard him at a popular meeting was in advocacy of that great question. It was in the Trades Hall of Glasgow. A full audience had assembled, and although his *forte* was a peculiarly effective quality of argumentative wit, he, on this occasion, produced a number of solid statistics to show how much this country had fallen behind in the matter of education compared with France, Prussia, the United States, and some other countries.

After proving by authentic figures that the percentage attending school was comparatively small in Great Britain, a gentleman, with a thin sharp voice, rose in the back part of the hall, and desired to know "between what ages the children were."

Dr Guthrie explained that he "was not talking of ages." He was talking "of the proportion of those attending school to the whole population."

"Yes, yes," reiterated the sharp voice; "but between what ages are the children?"

"The ages of the children!" cried the Doctor. "What has that to do with it?" He then put the extinguisher on his interlocutor by adding, amid a roar of laughter, "I don't care although the bairns are as auld's Methuselah!"

Sallies of this kind were not infrequent in Guthrie's platform addresses, and to his readiness of racy retort not a little of his popularity was due.

## LI.

### SENSITIVENESS OF THE CELT.

"Although we're poor, we're no' to be made a fool of."

Good heavens! as if I could ever have tried to make a mock of poverty or misfortune! Yet this bitter remark was hurled at my head by a decent Highland woman, who obviously fancied I was intending to insult her.

She belonged to a primitive clachan situated in a nook of the Cowal Hills above Dunoon ; and thither a bevy of us, including boys and girls, had proceeded, in my juvenile days, in quest of a draught of milk. Sundry cows were grazing near, and to our young eyes and thirst the place had an inviting look. Her manner was not without dignity, as she invited us to step in, arranged some chairs and stools for our accommodation, and politely dusted them with her apron. The floor was earthen, but hard, dry, and carefully swept ; while the arrangement of plates, bowls, and other appurtenances evinced neatness and taste.

In a little while a couple of large jugs of milk were produced, followed by bread, butter, and oaten cake, together with the requisite number of tumblers. I need not say how we all enjoyed the repast ; but in an unfortunate moment I happened to observe, "You have a nice snug place here, my good woman."

My intention, of course, was to be complaisant, and the abrupt and scowling rebuff which my words of courtesy drew forth was surprising.

At a somewhat later period of my life I was on board the Loch Lomond steamer on a special occasion. The Grand Duke Constantine, son of



the Russian Emperor Nicholas, and a numerous suite, were to be picked up at Inversnaid. The locality was interesting. Wordsworth had been there, and his "Highland Girl" was there still, and would be there always. A crimson-covered platform had been erected on the quarter-deck, from which to view the scenery, and from the bow of the boat came the lively strains of a brass band.

When the Muscovite party arrived they were received by the passengers with becoming respect, the Grand Duke—a young man of twenty, and of medium height—revealing himself by courteously raising his Glengarry bonnet. He was attired in a Scottish tweed suit, and, with the exception of a very yellow and massive watch-chain, exhibited no mark of distinction. His Imperial Highness, however, made himself modestly agreeable; and the perfect facility and fluency with which I heard him converse in Russian, French, or English, according to the person he was addressing, gave me a high idea of the linguistic faculty which is said to be inherent in his house. In his English I scarcely detected any betrayal of foreign accent; while his French, as far as I could judge, was equally good.

On reaching Ardlui, at the head of the loch, where the steamer was to remain an hour, we all landed, Duke Constantine bounding boyishly up the hillside and throwing himself among the heather; while I, with the Baron Frederick, one of his friends, proceeded towards a humble cottage in which we heard the skirl of the bagpipes. The Baron was an attractive youth, older, he told me, than the Duke, but less tall, and with full fair moustaches, a clear complexion, and large cerulean eyes. He wore light-blue trousers, loose and wide but tight at the ankles—a kind of trousers known, I believe, by the name of “peg-tops”—and his appearance altogether was more conspicuous and taking than that of the son of the Czar.

It turned out that a wedding-party was at Ardlui, and we observed that the bagpipes within the lowly thatched dwelling were putting life into the heels of a crowd of dancers. This, I thought, would be a treat for the young Russian nobleman, and the door being entirely open, in we peeped, and were greatly entertained by the bobbing, the whirling, the finger-snapping, and the “hooching” inseparable from a Highland reel.

I am afraid that an inconsiderate smile was

visible on our faces, for all at once a stalwart native rushed forward, and, elevating his hand, authoritatively cried out in a loud tone, "Stop the dance! there's gentlemen outside laughing at us." Now the idea of any rudeness on our part was out of the question: if we smiled, it was only because we were amused and pleased; and yet the revels were ended as abruptly as those over which Prospero presided in his Haunted Isle.

My own mother was of Highland extraction, with a gift of song natural to the Gael. Against the race I have therefore no prejudice whatever. Even their occasional impatience—of which the good old lady had none—I believe to be born of that lofty and intuitive pride which has made their soldiers heroes and kept Caledonia unconquered.

Although a native of Glasgow, Sir Colin Campbell, afterwards Lord Clyde, was largely endowed with all the grander characteristics of the Celt. Among other honours showered upon him by his fellow-citizens when he returned from his victorious exploits in India, he was prevailed upon to allow his features to be perpetuated in marble. I saw the sturdy veteran, with the broad forehead where time had delved

its parallels, on the occasion of the great banquet in the City Hall, at which he was presented with a sword of honour.

But the bust—well, Mr G. E. Ewing was selected as the sculptor, and he assured me that he had never had so reluctant a sitter. When the work began at Lord Clyde's own residence in London, he busied himself with his papers, and seemed worried at what he had agreed to. Under the circumstances, Mr Ewing wrought with all his might, and after making some progress with the model, ventured to ask his lordship if he thought it like. He was too busy to look at it, but on the request being modestly repeated, the hero of Lucknow turned sharply round, exclaiming—"I tell you I don't care a damn whether it's like or not. Your friends in Glasgow wished to give you a job, and I am made the victim."

It was customary for the "upper ten," in those days, I may explain, not to be squeamish in regard to their expletives. I once heard a young lady remark that she "liked a gentleman who swore a little."

## LII.

## TWO BOOKWORMS.

I do not undervalue books. Without them the past would be a blank, and the future unrelieved by any prophetic illumination. Religion, philosophy, poetry—the experiences that guide and the hopes that strengthen—would languish or disappear; while man would remain between two dismal eternities—one stretching behind through the innumerable unrecorded ages, the other lying before and darkening into the mist and abysses of the infinitudes to come.

Byron tried to picture a universe without a sun, and any attempt to realise a world without books could only result in a similar dream of darkness. But while civilisations may pass away, races die out, and volcanoes become extinct, no Alexandrian conflagration can ever put an end to books.

That which mankind have cause to fear is not a scarcity but rather a superabundance of book-lore. Scripture tells us that “of making many books there is no end;” and a next highest authority supplies the judicious reflection

that "they are as sick that surfeit with too much as they that starve with nothing."

Not long ago a controversy arose as to the best "one hundred books" to read. The mere mooted of such a question was evidence of its necessity. It is when too many good things are presented at a feast that selection becomes imperative and wise.

Yet I have known individuals whose appetite for books was declared to be omnivorous, and who professed a capacity to devour indefinite libraries. Of such literary gourmands I fancy I would have a horror, provided I believed in them at all. Mentally, I imagine, they would be swollen, plethoric, diseased. But when I meet with any person pretending to know every book in existence, I take his assertion with a colossal grain of salt. One ancient library was said to contain 700,000 volumes: add the accumulations of twelve subsequent centuries, and fancy how honest readers ought to despair!

Two bibliophiles I knew who have long since carried their load of learning to the shades. One was always, in the most amiable way, calling my attention to some curious, valuable, and unknown work; the other, in a way less amiable, was always expressing astonishment

that I had not read this, that, or the other tome, of which I had never perhaps heard. With the first I had one day a political controversy. I refrain from mentioning the theme, as I wish to eschew politics. The result was, however, that he promised to send me a book he had been reading—written in a very fair spirit—and the arguments of which he was sure would bring about my conversion. Well, the book came, and what was my surprise to find that he had been misled by a few sentences in the preface setting forth the views which the author had set himself to controvert, and that the volume itself was entirely and overwhelmingly on my side! He had thus provided me unwittingly with a stick for his own back, and didn't I lay it on?

My other bibliomaniacal friend, whose acquaintance with books, or their titles, was continually asserting itself, I caught in a still more ludicrous trap. A gentleman who had held some official position in India became a candidate for the representation in Parliament of a certain Scotch constituency. Of his chances of success I happened to make extremely light, on the ground that he was altogether unknown.

“Altogether unknown!” exclaimed my book-

ish critic ; “ I am astonished that you should say anything so absurd. No candidate could be better known. He is a man of letters, and of wide reputation. His principal work is quite celebrated.”

“ Indeed ! what is its title ? I must get hold of a copy.”

“ Tut, what a memory I have ! I shall let you know to-morrow.”

“ Oh, don't trouble. It will be enough if you tell me what it is about.”

“ Well, I should not like to describe it off-hand.”

“ Is it a history or a volume of essays ? ”

“ I should like to be exact. I will see you to-morrow.”

“ Yes, yes ; but if the book is so well known, you can surely tell me whether it is a novel, an epic poem, a five-act tragedy, a treatise on algebra, or a collection of comic songs ? ”

“ Come, now, you are making a joke of a serious subject.”

“ Oh, the subject, then, is serious—sermons, perhaps, or statistics ? ”

“ Nothing of the sort.”

“ Well, I am sorry you should not know anything whatever of so celebrated a work.”



Rarely have I seen any one make so hasty and confused a retreat. But I was not sorry. There are indefatigable readers—men of large information—whom I greatly respect ; but your professed bookworm should be careful not to betray his superficial knowledge, or, it may be, his no knowledge at all, of the books about which he speaks.

## LIII.

## THE RIVAL STATESMEN.

“Were you the first?” This question was put to me by Mr Gladstone, looking keenly through those dark wonderful eyes which Sir John Millais has so powerfully depicted on canvas. He had come to Glasgow in order to be installed Lord Rector of the University ; and a great torchlight procession of students had accompanied him from the railway station, at which he had arrived, to the residence of Lord Provost Sir James Watson, where he, Mrs Gladstone, and their daughter were to stay during their brief visit to the city.

Sir James had a numerous company to meet

his illustrious guest in the evening, and he was good enough to introduce me to him in connection with the 'Evening Citizen,' of which he (Sir James) spoke some commendatory words.

Supplied with this text, Mr Gladstone at once started on the subject of the halfpenny press, described it as a most interesting movement, and then put the aforesaid pointed question.

I was unable to reply in the affirmative. Although the matter had been simmering in my mind for upwards of a year, it was not until 1864 that I was able to carry my project into effect, and meanwhile two small sheets—one in South Shields and the other in Greenock—had preceded me by some days or weeks. The 'Citizen' was, however, the first halfpenny evening paper established in any large city; and from communications and consultations I had from London, Dublin, and other great centres of population, I believe it was the principal precursor of that cheap afternoon press which is now an established institution throughout the kingdom.

On the same occasion I had two minutes' conversation with Lord Rosebery, and was

charmed with his quiet and engaging manner ; but Mr Gladstone—a younger man than I am now—chiefly impressed me with his vivacity and alertness of brain, seeing that he had just come off a long railway journey, had sundry scores of other hands to shake that night, and had at least one day's hard oratorical work to face when the sun should next rise.

I may add that this interview took place at a time when we were all, in a sense, Gladstonian ; or, in other words, before political controversy had taken a shape which has caused an irreconcilable dislocation of parties. The extraordinary power of the man, however, appears to be still as fresh as when, on that occasion, I fancied he might easily have discoursed for an hour by Shrewsbury or any other clock on the humble topic which had been broached.

By a happy coincidence I chanced to have an opportunity of meeting, under almost identical circumstances, with his great political rival during several decades, Mr Benjamin Disraeli, afterwards Lord Beaconsfield. It was also in the civic reign of Sir James Watson, who, at a private banquet in the Corporation Galleries, introduced me to the Conservative chief.

Mr Disraeli shook hands, and surveyed me languidly from beneath heavy eyelids. He also had much to do on the following day, and I remarked, "I fear they are putting a great deal of work upon you, Mr Disraeli." His reply was in these words, "I daresay I shall get through it"—punctuated with a full stop.

He had that day been presented with the freedom of the city, and after the banquet his health was drunk as the "Youngest Burgess."

His reply was inimitable. "I rise," he said, "with great pleasure on this occasion, for two reasons. The first is, that there are no reporters present. (Laughter.) I look upon the absence of reporters as the carnival of public speakers. (Great laughter.) The second reason is, that my health has just been drunk as your youngest burgess. (Laughter.) I therefore appear before you with all the prestige of youth—(loud laughter)—and I hope you will all take an intelligent interest in my future career. (Immense merriment.)"

A good deal more followed with similar point and effect; but I cannot venture to enlarge. Had I been a reporter, I should not, of course, have been present. There was no mistake, however, as to the quality of that genius which

made Disraeli a novelist, a member of Parliament, a Chancellor of the Exchequer, a Prime Minister, and a Peer of the British realm.

## LIV.

## SERIO-COMIC INCIDENTS.

A young lady from Edinburgh was on a visit to my family. She had been ailing for some time; but on Sunday morning, feeling a trifle better, she resolved to attend divine service along with myself.

The clergyman was my friend, Dr Robert Pollok, whose church was not far off. He was a man of ready expression, and had never a difficulty, as I have heard him boast, in "shaking a sermon out of his sleeve."

My young friend, who was nicely and brightly attired, seemed to attract attention as we entered. Yet she looked pale, and after a little while she hinted to me that she feared she might have to leave. However, the sermon went on in Dr Pollok's usual off-hand and vigorous manner. I am unable to quote the text, but he happened to get on the subj

of female dress and its unstinted extravagance, while so little was given to the Church and so little to the poor.

At this moment my young friend whispered, "I must go out." "Can you not wait for a few minutes?" I said; "it would be awkward to leave just now."

"The money that's wasted on silks and ribbons," the preacher went on, "might extend the ministrations of the Gospel, relieve the crying distress, and diffuse incalculable blessings."

Up started the young lady, and I felt it necessary to accompany her. With a bustling noise we escaped from the pew, attracting more notice than I liked, and the last words I heard from the pulpit as we left were, "I don't mean to be personal!"

This I knew to be the simple truth. Dr Pollok was not a man to inflict a personal wound; nor did he at this time, as the untimely exit from the church was purely accidental. I may add that the subject was never afterwards alluded to by either of us, and that he and I continued to be on the best of terms.

The Doctor was often talked of as a relative of his namesake, the author of the 'Course of Time.' That, however, he informed me, was

a mistake. The two had only been fellow-students, and for a time fellow-lodgers; but even of that slight connection he was not a little proud. All his life, indeed, he enjoyed the society of the rhyming brotherhood; and on the death of Andrew Park, some of whose songs were popular, and whose poem of "Silent Love" had been illustrated by Sir Noel Paton, he undertook to proceed to Paisley Cemetery, where the interment was to take place, and to pronounce a funeral oration at the grave.

A number of Park's familiar friends went out from Glasgow, and a still larger number of those assembled belonged to Paisley itself. The funeral, at which some three hundred persons were present, might be called a public one; for, in both city and "suburb," the bard, from his ubiquitous and convivial habits, combined with an admirable gift of song, was widely known.

When the obsequies were over—when Dr Pollok had delivered his address, which was touching and appropriate—and when John Mossman, the favourite sculptor, had hung a memorial wreath on the tomb, a considerable number of the mourners, some from a distance, gathered together in one of the central hotels in the town.

The room in which we met was large, low in the ceiling, and about thirty or forty persons might be present. Some one, however, seemed to be wanting to take the lead, and an old crony of the poet's ventured to suggest that “the man really wanted was poor Park himself!”

This idea he proceeded to elaborate. “I feel assured,” he said, “that had Park only been here, he would have introduced everybody to everybody else, ordered whatever was needful, and called upon us all to drain a silent glass to the memory of the deceased!”

This odd observation had the effect of removing any feeling of restraint, and placing the company at their ease. But the idea of the deceased proposing his own memory reminded me of the gaberlunzie of Scottish song, who cheated the gravedigger,

“And helped to drink his ain dirgee.”

## LV.

“INHERITORS OF UNFULFILLED RENOWN.”

From Shelley's “Adonais” I take the above heading. The words are of beautiful signifi-



cance; and among those persons I have known to whom they are more or less applicable, I would name Alexander Smith, author of "A Life Drama"; David Gray, whose name is associated with "The Luggie"; and Patrick Proctor Alexander, who prosecuted literature in an eccentric and desultory fashion.

Some seven-and-thirty years ago George Gilfillan of Dundee rushed the first of these poetical aspirants into celebrity. I had previously made Smith's acquaintance, and had even given publicity to several of his pieces, among which was one entitled "Barbara," beginning—

"On the Sabbath-day,  
 Through the churchyard old and gray,  
 Over the crisp and yellow leaves I held my rustling way;  
 And amid the words of mercy falling on the soul like  
     balms,  
 'Mong the gorgeous strains of music and the mellow organ  
     calms;  
 'Mong the upward streaming prayers, and the rich and  
     solemn psalms,  
     I stood heedless, Barbara."

This fine poem attracted attention. But Gilfillan, who wielded an eloquent pen, was a power in the critical world, and it was his glowing praise of the young poet in a London

periodical, supported by lavish extracts from the “Life Drama,” then unpublished, that originally made the world at large cognisant of his wealth of imagery and resources.

Smith’s first published volume was a remarkable success. It secured him many friends, and it likewise brought him a flattering invitation from Inverary Castle, where he spent a couple of days with the Duke and Duchess of Argyll. His head was not turned by this sudden ovation. On the contrary, he was desirous apparently of following the advice of Sir Walter Scott, and making poetry a staff for help rather than a crutch for support. What he wanted was some steady employment of a congenial kind, and with his sanction I wrote in his behalf to Mr Robert Chambers, as one of the heads of a large literary and industrial organisation.

Through him the advice came shortly afterwards that he might apply for the secretaryship of the Edinburgh University, which had become vacant. The patronage lay with the Magistrates and Town Council of Edinburgh, and my old friend, Mr Duncan M’Laren, chanced to be Lord Provost at the time. His lordship was a man of stern rectitude, and

would not commit himself until he knew who was to be in the field. In the end, however, and after a rigid balancing of the claims of rival parties, he warmly espoused his candidature. There was strong opposition, but his prospects soon began to brighten,—Mr Chambers, Mr John Hill Burton, and other influential persons, working for him in earnest. Yet, at the eleventh hour, some doubt came to be felt as to the issue. The Duke of Argyll was popular in the Scottish capital, and it occurred to Mr Chambers that a testimonial from him might have a powerful effect. I replied that he himself, from his kindred scientific tastes, was the best man to write to his Grace on the subject. The result was a singularly weighty recommendation from the Duke. Lord Provost M'Laren proposed Mr Smith's appointment in an admirable speech; and after a keen contest he was elected secretary against many competitors, though only by a narrow majority of three.

One little incident, very characteristic of Mr M'Laren's shrewd and practical turn of mind, I may record. Prior to Smith's sending in his formal application for the berth, his lordship suggested the importance of its being written

in simple prose, and without poetical ornamentation of any kind. His duties would be prosaic, and he had heard the fact of his being a poet referred to, not as a point in his favour, but as a positive disqualification. From such little indications I augured Mr M'Laren's capacity for affairs, and was in no way surprised when he rose at length to be a leading and greatly appreciated member of Parliament.

Alexander Smith was a reserved and silent youth. He did not shine in conversation or in company. His style was unmarked by any flash of anecdote or repartee. Professor Blackie, indeed, confessed to me that he could not find him interesting, or succeed in melting him into geniality. But his keen observation and strong good sense were, however unobtrusive, unquestionable; and I believe he did the duties of his office well—while he continued to build up his poetical reputation, and to show himself, as in his ‘Summer in Skye,’ a master of lucid, imaginative, and beautiful English prose.

With my next “inheritor of unfulfilled renown,” David Gray, I had also active relations. To my friend William Freeland, who came from the same part of the country, and who was himself a “singer of high songs,” I was indebted

for my introduction to the poet of "The Luggie," and he soon won for himself many and much more influential admirers. Among those who recognised his genius were Mr Monckton Milnes, afterwards Lord Houghton, and Mr Sydney Dobell, not the least distinguished of Mr Gilfillan's *protégés*.

Gray was a young man of good height, broad-shouldered, but hollow-chested and slightly stooping. His dark hair curled over a forehead of Keats-like formation, and I remember being struck with his delicate complexion, softly luminous eyes, and sensitive mouth. To Mr Milnes he seems to have recalled the expression of Shelley. When I saw him I did not apprehend that his life was destined to be so short. But he was early stricken with consumption, and I could not easily name anything in literature more intensely pathetic than his thirty sonnets—"In the Shadows."

These were written in the near prospect of death, and they betray a strangely passionate yearning for fame. Ah me! how much to do, and how little time to do it! Here was one of the miseries of old age pressing on his boyhood. Hence the pitiful outpouring of that "utter poetry of woe." He alludes in one of the son-

nets to Pollok, White, Keats, and Bruce, as a “ tear-worthy four,” whom consumption had killed in their “ youthful prime ”; and he indicates his ambition that beside these future ages might grant him “ gracious room.”

I give entire one of the touching effusions I have named :—

“ Why are all fair things at their death the fairest ?  
Beauty the beautifullest in decay ?  
Why doth rich sunset clothe each closing day  
With ever-new apparelling the rarest ?  
Why are the sweetest melodies all born  
Of pain and sorrow ? Mourneth not the dove,  
In the green forest gloom, an absent love ?  
Leaning her breast against that cruel thorn,  
Doth not the nightingale, poor bird, complain  
And integrate her uncontrollable woe  
To such perfection, that to hear is pain ?  
Thus, Sorrow and Death—alone realities—  
Sweeten their ministration, and bestow  
O'er troublous life a relish of the skies ! ”

To David Gray's posthumous volume, only one printed page of which went to cheer him on his deathbed, I was invited to prefix a Memoir, and for this purpose his letters and correspondence were placed in my hands. They were profoundly interesting; and the tragic story I was enabled to tell—he died in his twenty-fourth year—was chiefly precious in so far as it

was conveyed in extracts from his own ardent appeals, and the noble replies they elicited.

Nothing could be more deeply sympathetic than the letters which came to him from Dobell and Lord Houghton. The volume was further enriched by a kindly introduction from the pen of the latter, who also wrote the simple and beautiful inscription carved on the poet's monument in the Auld Aisle burying-ground at Kirkintilloch.

How keen was the interest taken by Lord Houghton in Gray was shown in various letters to myself, and afterwards by his visiting me in Glasgow and making a touching pilgrimage to our young friend's grave.

On 29th July 1865 the memorial stone was inaugurated by Sheriff Bell in an excellent biographical speech, to which both Mr Freeland and I listened with feelings not easily described,—a speech which, in a subsequent edition of "The Luggie," has superseded the original memoir as well as Lord Houghton's prefatory note. I may add that, in another edition, the narrative of David's Gray's brief life-struggle is effectively told by Robert Buchanan, who, as one of his early companions, was in a position to furnish some fresh material.

And now, what can I say of the third name in my brief list? Patrick Alexander was not, like either of the others, a boy-poet burning for distinction. But he, nevertheless, had a vein of pure poetic gold in his nature. In his younger days, when I first knew him, he was one of the handsomest men I ever saw, and he retained to the last his lofty military bearing. His father had been Professor of Greek at St Andrews; his training and skill as a critic were unsurpassed, and his knowledge of the great poets of the world was at once large and minute. I introduced him to Alexander Smith, in whose “vision and faculty” he had a thorough belief, and both became close friends of the poet and “Rambler,” Hugh M'Donald.

But Patrick, as we lovingly called him, had a curious originality of his own, wrote much prose after the manner of Carlyle, and poems—alas, too few!—of which Wordsworth would hardly have had cause to be ashamed. One specimen of his Carlylese drew from Carlyle himself an indignant disclaimer of the authorship. To be thus publicly noticed by the “Seer of Chelsea” was a compliment which Patrick greatly enjoyed, in spite of its terms of anger and pretended contempt.



Among his young poetical associates, Mr Alexander was looked up to as a high literary authority. No man had a clearer vision of what I may describe as the happy audacities of genius. When Juliet, in contemplation of a certain eventuality, exclaims—

“Twixt my extremes and me this *bloody* knife  
Shall play the umpire”—

the said knife being at the moment dry and glittering—he pronounced, I remember, the expression “*infernally fine.*” A similarly bold image is given in Keats’s “*Isabella,*” where the two wicked brothers decoy the innocent Lorenzo towards his doom, the words used in the narrative being—

“So the two brothers and their *murdered* man  
Rode past fair Florence.”

But notwithstanding Patrick’s delight in the splendid hyperboles of poetic diction, he was a rigid stickler for the observance of the rhythmic laws. No doubt he himself, in a sonnet on “*Bannockburn,*” makes the verb *sees* rhyme with the noun *seas*. This, however, was not from carelessness, for in a footnote he remarks, “A false rhyme, of course, or rather no rhyme.” By way of excuse he quotes the precedent of Mil-

ton, who, in his sonnet “To a Virtuous Young Lady,” makes *Ruth*, the proper name, rhyme with *ruth*, the ordinary noun. Yet he adds that he should be surprised “if, in the whole legion of Wordsworth’s sonnets, a single instance of this vile flaw could be indicated.”

My friend did not often err in such matters, but he seems in this instance to have overlooked the sonnet in which Wordsworth dedicates “The Excursion” to the Earl of Lonsdale, and which opens thus—

“ Oft through thy fair domains, illustrious *peer*,  
In youth I roamed, on youthful pleasures bent ;  
And mused in rocky cell, or sylvan tent,  
Beside swift-flowing Lowther’s current clear.  
Now by thy care befriended I *appear*,” &c.

In point of fact, such slips are to be found in almost all the poets, even the greatest. Tennyson’s wonderfully perfect poem, “In Memoriam,” has this :—

“ He saddens, all the magic *light*  
Dies off at once from bower and hall,  
And all the place is dark, and all  
The chambers emptied of *delight*.”

Again—

“ Be near us when we climb or fall ;  
Ye watch, like God, the rolling *hours*  
With larger other eyes than *ours*,” &c.

I am no apologist for these cases of "no rhyme." Generally speaking, mere assonance is inadmissible. Still, a writer of verse may be too fastidious. Better a technical fault than the destruction of a fine line or couplet. No man, for example, of poetical feeling could wish a more unexceptionable ending to Coleridge's noble sonnet, "Fancy in Nubibus," than that wherein he pictures his dreamer mounting through cloudland—

"Or listening to the tide with closed sight,"

until he fancies himself to be

"that blind Bard, who, on the Chian strand,  
By those deep sounds possessed with inward light,  
Beheld the Iliad and the *Odysee*  
Rise to the swelling of the voiceful *sea!*"

Here is the "vile flaw" of my able and erudite friend, prominent and probably wilful, yet transfigured through its felicitous use into something of epic elevation and grandeur.

My pleasant memories of Mr Alexander relate chiefly to the period when he was at his brightest and best. In his later years he had become slightly careless and Bohemian in his habits; and perhaps his most notable efforts in literature were undertaken during the time he was

resident in Glasgow. His personal ambition was sluggish, indifferent alike to gain or glory, and he never, I think, did reasonable justice to his powers. Yet the poetic part of his nature was of the finest, and under a cynical manner he concealed a heart of genuine tenderness. Some of his most cherished companions had dropped one by one from his side, leaving him moody and aimless; and now that he too has passed to the silent land, a beautiful little poem, which he wrote on the death of Hugh M'Donald, may fittingly close this somewhat elegiac chapter:—

“ I wander where the river strays  
Through fields asleep in pearly haze,  
With quiet nooks where earliest peer  
The firstlings of the dawning year.  
I feel, but scarcely seem to share,  
The sense which haunts the happy air  
Of young life stirring everywhere—  
For ever at the heart of hearts  
A pulse of nameless trouble starts.  
I watch this tender April sky,  
I see its aimless clouds go by;  
I gaze, and gazing only think  
It would have pleased our poet's eye.

From his low nest the glad lark springs,  
And soars, and soaring ever flings  
Blythe music from his restless wings.

Though all the air be trembling, pleased,  
 The unquiet soul is nothing eased.  
 I hear with scarce the heart to hear  
 That carol ringing quick and clear ;  
 I hear, and hearing only think—  
 It would have pleased our poet's ear.

His ears are shut from happy sound ;  
 His eyes are softly sealed ;  
 The oft-trod old familiar ground—  
 The hill, the wood, the field—  
 This path, which most he loved, that runs  
 Far up the shining river,  
 Through all the course of summer suns  
 He treads no more for ever."

## LVI.

## CONVIVIALITIES IN THE OLDEN TIME.

The stirrup-cup in Luckie Macleary's change-house at Tully Veolan, on the breaking up of the Baron Bradwardine's banquet at the mansion, ended in oaths, angry altercations, and the furious clash of swords. At a time when the "tappit hen" was produced to crown the social festivities, such scenes were not unusual in Scotland.

An old lady of my acquaintance, Mrs Max-

well — mother of the once locally popular “Bob”—told me that in her early matron experience she used to look forward to a dinner-party at her own house with terror. One gentleman in particular was sure to get violent under drink, and the result was apt to be broken decanters and riot.

Mrs Maxwell died at the age of ninety-three, and in the times to which she referred a dinner was often followed by an eleven or twelve o'clock supper, with the addition, about three or four in the morning, of a second supper of “devilled bones.” With practices of this kind in vogue, and with doors occasionally locked to enforce a continuance of the orgies, what marvellous constitutions must our forefathers have had !

But I am indebted to another aged friend, my excellent neighbour, Mrs Fullarton, for a much more serious instance of the perils arising from the bacchanalian excesses then prevalent. The event of which she tells was a catastrophe, and it occurred in 1811, just eighty years ago. Mrs Fullarton, who is now in her hundredth year, and blessed with a remarkable memory, was in the bloom of her early married life. Two young friends had been supping together,

and afterwards drinking to all hours. One insisted on prolonging the revels still further, while the other was determined to escape; and in the struggle which ensued, the former received a stab—a slight, not a violent stab—which chanced to be in a vital part, and proved fatal. The perpetrator of the terrible deed Mrs Fullarton knew well. He was a handsome youth, and extremely popular among his friends. Nothing could he remember of what had occurred. His case was everywhere discussed: the law was inexorable, and he was tried in Edinburgh for murder. The public commiseration was intense, and it was a great relief when a verdict of culpable homicide was returned. But a division of opinion occurred on the Bench as to the amount of punishment to be awarded. Lord Hermand stood out for transportation; and among many stories told of that famous judge, and vindicator of the convivial amenities, there is one which is notorious in connection with this very case. “Good God, my Laards!” he is reported to have exclaimed, with his peculiar accent, “if he will do this when he’s drunk, what will he not do when he’s sober?” Fortunately, the moderation of his more temperate brethren

prevailed, and a sentence of only twelve months' imprisonment was pronounced.

To the unfortunate young man himself the effect of what he had gone through was, according to Mrs Fullarton, distressing. He was scarcely ever seen to smile. Proceeding, after his release, to India, he led a successful life. But a pathetic incident was told of him. Consequent on a petty quarrel at a mess-dinner, an officer threw a glass of wine in his face. While wiping away the affront with his handkerchief, he quietly remarked to his assailant, "You have not perhaps heard, sir, of the melancholy passage in my life which prevents me from ever resenting an insult."

It was in those days that country visitors, in accordance with the Laird of Logan's recipe, were left to find beds for themselves; and when, as Lord Cockburn chronicles, they needed no further attention than to have their cravats loosened as a security against apoplectic seizure.

But even within my own recollection the jovial habits of society had a tendency to exceed the bounds of prudence. After a feast toddy-rummers were supplied to every guest; one tumbler was apt to be followed, perhaps



hesitatingly, by a second, after which the courage of computation rose at times, under the influence of good company, to a height when headaches and all other probable consequences were disregarded. Absolute inebriety was no doubt ceasing to be altogether respectable; yet convivial sederunts were, as a rule, much too protracted — protracted until the entire company found themselves “right good fellows” indulging in much noise, and until clearness of articulation and steadiness of gait it became slightly difficult to preserve.

The rebellion of good sense and good manners against intoxication took very gradual effect even among the better classes. But in the end it was more or less successful. Toddy-tumblers were relegated to the centre of the dinner-table, afterwards to the sideboard, and ultimately failed to be made visible at all. Ceasing to be at hand, they ceased at length to be asked for. At all genteel festivities they grew as much out of fashion as the antiquated punch-bowl itself; and a good-society banquet is now as sober a piece of business as a ladies' afternoon tea.

I remember in my young days asking an inebriate “gentleman of the press” how his

new editor was getting on, whereupon he became mysteriously confidential, lowered his tone of voice, lifted his right hand pantomimically to his mouth, elevated his little finger with a significant jerk, and whispered with a dreamy look of superior wisdom in his eyes—"You know as well as I do that in a newspaper office that sort of thing WON'T DO."

Neither, I may be permitted to add, will that sort of thing now do anywhere.

## LVII.

### GENIUS : ITS FORTUNE AND ITS FATE.

Visitors to the Glasgow Hunterian Museum may have had their attention directed to a model of the Cathedral in its renovated shape. I saw that model when it was newly finished, nearly half a century ago. At that time it looked fresh, and of the finest workmanship. It was the production of George Kemp, who afterwards won proud laurels as the architect of the magnificent Scott monument in Princes Street, Edinburgh.

Mr Kemp was a joiner by trade, in humble

circumstances. All the fortune he possessed was in his brain and sinew. The Cathedral model was shown to me in his house, somewhere in the Newington district of "Auld Reekie." It stood on a table in a small, low-roofed apartment. The top of the spire nearly touched the ceiling. In the uncarpeted lobby I encountered several children. Such a thing of beauty as that piece of Gothic manufacture was in strange contrast to the homely surroundings. But the man himself was more interesting than the beautiful production of his hands. He was short and commonplace of figure, but with a head in which George Combe or Robert Cox might have discovered unusual power. His taste for architecture first showed itself in sketches, which he carefully executed, of Roslin Chapel and the ruined abbeys on the Tweed. Alone, unfriended, and without means, he contrived to travel not only in England but on the Continent, supporting himself wherever he went as a working joiner, and employing his leisure hours in making drawings of famous Gothic structures wherever they were to be found. It was through this process of self-education that George

Kemp achieved his astonishing Scott triumph against a host of professional competitors.

He was one of the most modest and retiring of men. His diffidence was almost painful. Yet though his poetry and eloquence chiefly took shape in stone, I have read several striking Spenserian verses from his pen; while on a certain social occasion I remember him replying to his health in a strain which, with little or no evidence of literary culture, displayed a simplicity, earnestness, and fervour which, under other circumstances, might have become a veritable force on the platform.

My poor friend came to a pitiful and painful end. Through some unexplained accident, he was found drowned in the Union Canal near Edinburgh, in March 1844. He had only reached a half-century in years, but he has left the memory of a remarkable career, and a name to be not unworthily linked with that of Sir Walter Scott himself in the noblest architectural adornment of perhaps the noblest thoroughfare in the world.

## LVIII.

## TWIN SISTERS.

Nearly twenty years have now elapsed since Robert Chambers "gently breathed his last" at St Andrews. To that ancient city he had no doubt been attracted, when his years came to require leisure, by its breezy amenities, its cultivated society, and its golf. His memoir, written by the elder of the two celebrated brothers, is an engrossing book, and is particularly interesting to me from my having, by happy fortune, been a participator in some of its scenes.

In alluding to the friendly gatherings of their employees in Edinburgh, Mr William Chambers with filial reverence remarks—"The presence of my mother was a pleasing feature at the earlier of these annual *soirées*."

The old lady thus referred to I always admired. She retained to a rare extent the personal beauty which must have distinguished her in youth; and the shrewdness, good sense, and tact which had been an unspeakable help to her children in all their trials were equally recognised by her friends. At one of

the *soirées* I remember Mr Simpson, who was never absent on these occasions, addressing her enthusiastically as the "mother of the Gracchi"; and seldom had any mother more cause to be proud of her treasures.

Talking of his brother's family, which consisted of eight daughters and three sons, the excellent biographer says: "Two of the girls, Janet and Eliza, were twins, and so closely resembled each other that you could scarcely have told the one from the other,—a circumstance which was often diverting in its consequences."

This interesting pair I knew in their beautiful childhood; and their father, at one of his homely supper-parties, by way of illustrating their extraordinary similarity, mentioned that if either was placed before a looking-glass she immediately named her sister.

So curious an instance of mistaken identity he suggested as a good subject for a poem, and both David Vedder and Thomas Smibert, I believe, took the hint, and moulded the idea into complimentary numbers. For myself, I also was taken with the theme; and some playful quatrains which I penned under the title of "The Twin Sisters" appeared in the 'Scotsman,' and were copied into 'Chambers's Journal.'

As these are also given in the miscellaneous section of my 'Lays of Middle Age,' they can have no claim to novelty. Yet, in connection with the story of their origin, now told for the first time, I am tempted to quote a few of the lines here as a sample of their fanciful purport.

"Stand both before me ; for when one is gone,  
I scarce can tell which is the absent one.  
To stray asunder you should aye be loath,  
So much alike you are—so lovely both.

Together ye are peerless, but apart  
Each may be matched by each ; to rule the heart,  
Keep gentle, cherubs—a conjoined sway ;  
Our love's divided when there's one away.

. . . . .

If you but hold a mirror up to each,  
'Twill name its sister in its lisp'ing speech ;  
And still, while equal loveliness is theirs,  
May one see only what the other shares !

Beauty that only looks upon itself  
Becomes unlovely ; yet, thou little elf !  
Not e'en thy sister should be praised by thee,  
Lest the harsh world pronounce it vanity.

. . . . .

Ah me ! I wonder if alike ye'll prove  
When maiden blushes paint the dawn of love ;  
Then will sad lovers, puzzled which to choose,  
Find solace in the thought, Can both refuse ?

Then will the promise which the one has named  
 Be haply often from the other claimed ;  
 And the fond wish of secret whisperer  
 Be met with—"Oh, it was my sister, sir!"

. . . . .

Long after the date of this youthful effusion I received a letter from Mr Chambers asking me for a copy in my own handwriting, for insertion in the household album of the family. I have no recollection of ever having complied with this request. Indisposition or absence may have come in the way. But however this may be, I retain a lively sense of my friend's kindly interest in the trifle I had written.

No man had a more tender regard for the feelings of the *genus irritabile vatum* than Robert Chambers. I recollect his telling me, in a paroxysm of amusement at his own good-nature, how he had found the volume of an amiable bard of our acquaintance lying "uncut" on the drawing-room table of a mutual friend, and how, fearing the poor author might see it, he had taken his penknife from his pocket, and patiently cut open the leaves from beginning to end!



## LIX.

BUSINESS AND *BELLES LETTRES*.

My townsman, Thomas Campbell, gives expression to a sentiment, in one of his smaller poems, over which I have sometimes lingered. He says simply and finely—

“To live in hearts we leave behind,  
Is not to die.”

Who knows but that the feeling thus set forth by the “Bard of Hope” may be responsible for much of the wonderful prevalence of authorship, especially in these later and more bookish days?

Men delight to put their heart in their writings, and they feel that to do so worthily is to assure themselves of communion with posterity. The stimulus to authorship may accordingly have its roots in that longing for immortality which prompted the reasoning of Plato, and to which revelation appeals. Hence even the *cacoëthes scribendi*, so sneered at from the days of Juvenal downward, may be the result of noble desires.

In pondering over this theory, I have been struck with the number of non-professional authors continually and modestly struggling for recognition. Without going widely afield, but confining myself to the circle of my own acquaintance, I could mention not a few who, while involved in the engrossments of business, yet burned for distinction in letters, and no doubt secretly dreamed of greater achievements than they lived to associate with their names.

To some of my local readers the figure of Mr George Mills may have been familiar. His father served at one time as Lord Provost of Glasgow, and I recollect seeing the old gentleman, on the public hustings overlooking the Green, propose Lord William Bentinck to represent the city in Parliament; while the son offered himself on the same hustings as an opposition candidate! That was the first occasion on which I saw George Mills, and in point of good looks, at least, I thought him worthy of his tall, silvery-headed, and handsome sire, whom many, perhaps, may also recall.

Young George's career was through nearly all his life absorbing and varied. He was in turn a steamboat-agent, a shipbuilder, a news-

paper proprietor, and a chemist. The first saloon steamer on the Clyde, the Alliance, was a product of his brain. When in the process of years he became a portly gentleman, bald and grey, he was an ornament at any dinner-table; while his knowledge of people, and his interesting flow of anecdote rendered his society in much request. But in the midst of his multifarious occupations he found his chief happiness in secluded literary work, in his modest cottage at Dunglass, with a beautiful fantailed pigeon perched on its dovecot pole or bobbing at his oriel window; while passing within a gunshot was the endless and ever-varying traffic of the continually active Clyde. There, or at his town house, I would sometimes meet the stately and good-natured member for the county of Dumbarton, Sir Archibald Orr Ewing. They were old and familiar friends; perhaps they had known each other from boyhood; and it was curious to me to listen to such colloquies as, "George, you're entirely wrong"; followed by, "Noo, Airchie! just observe this." But on these occasions no one could fail to enjoy the shrewd intelligence, kindly contention, and entertaining gossip which prevailed.

All the while, and even while much seen on

'Change, Mr Mills was sedulously engaged, at every odd hour, in spinning his lively yarns for the printer, as if with a wish to leave something behind him which might live. These ultimately took shape in two curious novels, 'The Beggar's Benison' and 'Craig Clutha,' the latter of which he dedicated with much kindness to myself. With queer old-fashioned designs from his own pencil, Mr Mills illustrated the first of these works, and both possess the merit of quaint originality and brightness.

I cannot think of this racy and active-minded citizen without associating with him our common friend, Mr David Hutcheson, of the West Highland steamers. In their later years of physical decline they were almost daily together, exchanging their reminiscences and gratifying their mutual tastes. Hutcheson's biography is in the work he accomplished, and an obelisk to his memory is conspicuous on the island of Kerrera, opposite Oban. But a glance at his social qualities may not be out of place here. He was a gifted singer, a lover of poetry, and could recite with excellent emphasis either "Tam o' Shanter" or "O'Connor's Child." Many other pieces were in his memory, while original songs proceeded

now and then from his pen, and were usually given to the world by his friend, Dr Carruthers, in the 'Inverness Courier.'

For an amateur, Mr Hutcheson sang with manliness and "burr." His *répertoire* was extensive, but latterly his favourite air was, "They may rail at this life." Enjoying ease, fortune, and congenial society, perhaps he agreed with Moore that "this earth was the planet" on which it was chiefly desirable to dwell. He accordingly gave this song until he feared its repetition might be wearisome, and he was always glad to find some good excuse for selecting it. The last time I heard it from his lips was on a rosy evening at the house of Colonel Dreghorn, the gallant and courtly old volunteer, who was constantly full of regret, when replying for the force, that no opportunity had occurred for practically showing their valour. Mr Hutcheson having been called upon as usual, got his eye upon Mr Grant, the worthy Professor of Astronomy, who was fortunately present, and at once discovered an opportunity of graceful escape from his obvious *embarras de richesses*.

"Well," he said, with an air of satisfaction, "in compliment to our friend Mr Grant I will give you an astronomical song." (Hear, hear.)

Thereupon he immediately struck up—"They may rail at this life"—laying such stress on the reference to the "orbs in the sky," and particularly the reference to "Mercury's orb," with knowing glances at the Professor, that the verses seemed to have as much point, freshness, and effect as if they had been written for the occasion.

Mr Hutcheson was full of suggestiveness and enterprise, and therefore largely prosperous in business. Of his ability, however, as a songwriter I cannot definitely speak. It is certain that Dr Carruthers, who wrote an appreciative Life of Pope, and who had the poetical department of Chambers's 'Cyclopædia of English Literature' under his charge, thought his lyrics not unworthy of appearing in print. So far as I know, they have never been put into book form, and I have no means at hand of judging of their quality. But—

"There is a pleasure in poetic pains  
Which only poets know ;"

and no man can have written lyric after lyric, and unflaggingly year after year, without some natural faculty of song, and the enthusiasm of at least an amiable and ennobling dream.

Another amateur author of much mark occurs to me. Mr James Stirling of Cordale belonged to an ancient Glasgow family, and was chief of one of the great calico-printing firms whose works have increased the wealth and detracted from the beauty of the classic Vale of Leven. When I knew him he was practically retired from business, but all along he had been a man of keen intellect, who kept himself abreast of the best thought of the age. He very narrowly missed being M.P. for Dumbartonshire, in opposition to Mr Patrick B. Smollett; but no man felt more strongly than himself that to have entered Parliament late in life—for he was somewhat advanced in years—would have been, after all, a mistake. His power, indeed, lay in his pen. To the press he contributed many sparkling leaders, and he produced at least one important work, a volume entitled 'Letters from the Slave States'—a work which exhibits rare mastery of style. Fortunately, however, for the American negro, though unfortunately for the author's book, the interest of the subject evaporated with the freedom of the slave.

Stimulated, perhaps, by Mr Stirling's example, Mr John Matheson, junior, who rose to the head

of the great house of the Stirlings, united zeal and activity in business with literary aspirations. Does heredity prevail in firms, as in families? He was the elder brother of Colonel Sir Donald Matheson, of the Volunteer Force, and a man of many enterprises and triumphs in the fields of peace. The details of his career would take a long day to tell, and would be beyond the compass prescribed for these cursory "Glances." One of his numerous hobbies, however, was the promotion of a taste for high-class music; and, as honorary chairman of the Orchestral Society and Choral Union, he arranged on one occasion to give a banquet on a large scale to the musicians, among whom was to be Sir Arthur Sullivan. As between ninety and a hundred gentlemen were to be accommodated at his table, a question arose as to how the big affair was to be conducted, and, *apropos* of the point thus raised, I beg to interpolate an anecdote.

I was once at a party of not more than half the contemplated size, the occasion being the annual dinner of the Glasgow Society of Antiquaries. Mr Sheriff Strathern presided, and on the cloth being removed, announced that it had been agreed to have no toasts or speeches, but



that the order of the evening was to be conversation, anecdote, and song. "This," he said, "will be acceptable, I hope, to all," and sat down, having nothing further to remark.

A comical silence ensued. Who was to begin conversing to so many people? or who, in cold blood, was to volunteer an anecdote or a song?

I sat next to the chairman, and whispered my fear as to the success of the new method of procedure.

Without a moment's hesitation, up started the Sheriff with extraordinary alacrity, declared that the matter had been reconsidered, and fired off the customary toasts amidst a general effervescence of approving laughter.

My friend Mr Matheson was too shrewd to make any palpable mistake. A regular programme was prepared, and although a feeling of regret took place at the receipt of a telegram intimating the abrupt summons of Sir Arthur Sullivan to attend the deathbed of a brother in London, much good speaking took place. Mr Matheson himself, the Rev. Dr Donald Macleod, Professor Leishman, and others interested in the adequate interpretation of the compositions of the great masters, did their best to make the oratory of the occasion a success. Nor was an

occasional flash of humour wanting to enliven the proceedings ; as, for example, when Sir James Bain, contrasting the opportunities now afforded of listening to the most glorious orchestral effects, jocularly recalled a time when the people's knowledge of instrumental music was derived from little better than the performances of " a blind fiddler up a close !"

It was a grand evening, and Mr Matheson beamed all over with hospitality. But while a society-man in the best and brightest sense, his nature was never without an ambition for something deeper and loftier. One interesting volume he had published—'From England to Delhi'—but the literary appetite thus whetted he was powerless to gratify much further. His keenness for business fought with his passion for *belles lettres*, and gained the mastery. He was chairman of no end of societies ; daily consulted by everybody on all sorts of subjects ; worried with incessant correspondence—living, as it were, usefully, nobly, but at high pressure. In proportion as he rose in position and influence, the horizon of his social responsibilities widened. Yet, often to me, for I had known him from his early years, he would lament his overcrowded life, express his determination

to shake himself free of all extra labours, and make no concealment of how anxiously he yearned for the lettered ease which—for his death was startlingly sudden—he was fated never to attain.

## LX.

### A SCOTCHMAN TO BE PROUD OF.

The Scotchman whom I mean was John Black. This name may suggest no individual in particular. To some people John Black may be an old school fellow, a new message-boy, the postman, a scrivener's clerk, or a grocer in the next street. But the John Black I refer to, though born nobody at all, mounted up to be somebody—somebody whom the world at large has nearly forgotten, but who has left credentials for posterity casually to observe, and perhaps pleasantly to remember.

A hundred years ago the John Black who towers head and shoulders above the ordinary John Blacks of the town directories was a shepherd's or farm-labourer's boy, rambling, with all the wide world open to him, among the

lonely Lammermoor Hills. At the parish school of Duns, in Berwickshire, he contrived to get hold of the keys to universal knowledge. Orphaned before the advent of his teens, he was put to various employments in his native locality, and afterwards in Edinburgh, where he found for himself new avenues to advancement. A big stout fellow he grew up, with capacity for any amount of work or any bravery of adventure; and he is next heard of pushing his way into England, and reaching London after a tramp of I know not how many days, with a capital of three-halfpence in his pocket.

For such a man failure was a catastrophe never for a moment to be feared. Though with so little money in his pocket, he had any amount of money's worth in his head. Already, chiefly through his own self-educating determination, he was lord of the classic tongues; and this gave him access to new worlds of wonder, to the "riches fineless" of bygone civilisations,—

"To the glory that was Greece,  
And the grandeur that was Rome."

French, German, and Italian added their stores to his intellectual wealth. He translated largely

from all these languages. High thoughts and high aspirations impelled him still onward ; and getting associated in some subordinate capacity with the 'Morning Chronicle'—the powerful metropolitan organ of Whig principles—he rose in its service till he could rise no higher, and for twenty-three years he reigned its editorial chief.

During his occupancy of this commanding position John Black was a man to be courted. Many important people were cap in hand to him, and he deserved the power he enjoyed because he knew how to wield it wisely. Blest with the heart that makes the hand helpful, he was fortunate enough to discover Charles Dickens at the time when he was beginning to build palaces out of the mud at his feet. He gave him the encouragement which was virtually hope, fame, and fortune. Praise from Black, like that from Sir Hubert Stanley, was "praise indeed" ; and Dickens valued it as "coming," as he said, "in the broadest of Scotch, from the broadest of hearts he ever knew."

As far back as 1842 I carried, from Mr Maclaren of Edinburgh, a note of introduction to this magnate of the British Press. Such an introduction I appreciated, but what precise

time it was best to choose for its presentation was a puzzle. Every day with him I knew to be publication day, and how could a man whose work was daily and continuous have a moment to spare for mere interviews of civility? So I hit upon a plan. Instead of intruding, perhaps inopportunately, into his sanctum, I determined to approach him through his sub-editor, Charles Mackay, whom I knew to be quietly seeking eminence in more leisurely fields. This device was successful. The latter took my note into Mr Black's room, and promptly returned with the intimation that he would see me next day about noon at the house of Sir John Easthope.

Sir John, I understood, was a proprietor of the 'Chronicle,' and Mr Black seemed to me to be occupying his mansion, in the absence of the owner, who might be abroad. At all events, he looked thoroughly at home in the library into which I was ushered, and met me with an agreeable welcome indicative of a bright and buoyant nature.

I immediately felt under the influence of a distinguished presence. Black was a tall muscular gentleman, with a huge bullet of a head. Attired as he was in a brown suit, a stranger might have set him down as a jolly Scotch

farmer—a man who had gathered a fine harvest of health on his broad acres, and among his tawny crops. His manner corresponded with his physique. It was loud, affable, and abounding in the richest *bonhomie*. That he must have been a hard student his magnitude of learning attested; yet I could not fancy him as having ever been indifferent to healthy exercise, or given to drawing illumination from midnight oils. On the contrary, he had rather the appearance of a hearty trencherman who might prolong his sederunts to untimely hours, but only in the midst of genial good-fellowship and jovial good cheer. Once or twice I rose to leave, thinking I might be interfering with his working obligations, but he as often put me back in my seat. He had always more to say—more questions to ask concerning some Edinburgh celebrity—more vigorous opinions on political or other subjects to pronounce. Force, physical and mental, struck me as his most conspicuous quality. Trained in another sphere, he might, I thought, have been a great admiral or a great soldier. As it was, he was only a great journalist; and if at any time, under pressure of P. D. importunity, he found himself behind

with copy for the compositor, I could picture him buckling like a giant to his task, and knocking off a fervid leader at a heat.

I marvel if a man of his large gifts, acquirements, and resources ever dwelt morosely on the ephemeral character of even his most brilliant literary achievements. He was, while he lived, an associate of statesmen, an authority on the momentous movements of the world—a writer exercising a palpable influence in shaping the destinies of the empire and of nations. But where is now any public monument to this dead conqueror? How often had he turned the light of publicity and popularity on perhaps less noteworthy persons, while he himself was dark behind his lantern? Alas that the fame of such a “chief of men” should, as the reward of his indomitable ability and perseverance, lie bound up and buried under the dust of ponderous newspaper files which only the prying eye of the antiquary is ever tempted to explore!

But Mr Black's accidental contact with Dickens was the making, to some extent, of two renowns. The latter chanced, at the outset of his active life, to be a humble aspirant in the establishment of this potentate of



the London Press. The able critic of politics, literature, men, manners, everything, at once descried the rising genius of the unknown youth, and gave him his first invaluable lift up the steep which leads to fame. Having himself passed "through the hard," perhaps he the more sympathised with the struggles, and rejoiced in the triumphs, of the future novelist. If so, his good feeling and kindly aid were twice blest. They conferred instant benefit, and won lasting regard. John Forster, the biographer of Dickens, tells us that "the good old mirth-loving man" was the first to start him "joyfully on his career of letters"; while Dickens himself, when that career was nearing its close, wrote to Forster these words—replete with affectionate remembrance—"Dear old Black! my first hearty out-and-out appreciator."

How interesting is it to reflect that the name of John Black, the all-potent *rédacteur*, might at this day have been as dead as a two-century-old epitaph but for that tender and beautiful association! Through nearly a quarter of a century he wrought daily for a twenty-four hours' reputation, which he continually gained. That was his unfailing diurnal victory. On

the accumulated life-work thus produced the shadow of an ungrateful oblivion has long since fallen. Yet, as I recall the features and the voice of the living, loving, large-hearted man, I seem to note some faint gleam of immortality shining on his obscure grave in connection with the illustrious author he befriended.

## LXI.

## THACKERAYANA.

Among a throng of gentlemen waiting to be ushered into a certain banqueting-hall, where a worthy but little known artist was to be entertained prior to his leaving Glasgow, was a big, important-looking, spectacled personage, whom I had never before seen. I asked a younger brother of the sculptor, Mr Mossman, with whom I was conversing, who he was. He was unable to inform me, but kindly undertook to ascertain. Shortly afterwards Mr Macnee entered, and going up to the important-looking personage with the spectacles, said, while warmly shaking his hand, "Ha, Mr Thackeray! I hope I see you well."

This salutation at once suggested the resemblance which the stranger—who turned out to be Mr Ballardie, a respected citizen—bore to the great novelist, whom I had once seen lecture. By-and-by Mr Mossman, junior, again found me out in the crowd, and whispered to me confidentially, “The tall gentleman is Mr Thackeray. I heard Macnee name him.”

This literal interpretation of Macnee’s little joke rendered it funnier than ever. If my young friend did not know Thackeray, neither did he appear to know Macnee, with whom such pleasantries were habitual.

Mr Thackeray was a man of commanding height, and otherwise of striking appearance. An injury which he had sustained in boyhood gave rather a flat appearance to his face; but faces of that type are not uncommon. I have mentioned Mr Ballardie; but another gentleman, my interesting friend Dr Carruthers of the ‘Inverness Courier,’ a man of similarly noble presence and of pleasing features and expression, had actually been more than once mistaken for the author of ‘Vanity Fair.’

The two wielders of the pen in different spheres were intimate friends, and usually dined together when the northern journalist

happened to be in London. On one of these occasions Carruthers told me that he found Thackeray somewhat indisposed. Yet he had to lecture that night, much to his annoyance. As the hour approached, he became more and more reluctant to leave his fireside; and at length, with a large amount of apparent gravity, he proposed that Carruthers should take his manuscript, boldly make his bow to the audience, and read the lecture in his stead, without explanation or apology! He "did not think the audience would discover the difference."

Dr Carruthers had often prelected on literary subjects, and had he entered into the humour of the thing, would doubtless have made a memorable appearance. As it was, I can imagine his outburst of musical laughter at the idea of his personating such a literary magnate!

But a more definite proof of the likeness existing between the two gentlemen may be stated. I give the anecdote on the authority of Mr J. R. Findlay, who knew them both well. Mr Thackeray, hearing that Dr Carruthers was in town, called and asked for him at his lodgings, whereupon the servant-maid burst into a fit of laughter. The Doctor had just gone out,

and here was he back, as she thought, gravely inquiring for himself!

Of the discourse which I had heard Thackeray deliver I retain an agreeable impression. It belonged to the series of essays on the "English Humourists," and his particular subject was that of "Congreve and Addison." I had listened to his eminent American contemporary, Ralph Waldo Emerson, on the platform; and I had also the advantage of spending an evening with the latter at a friend's house. By their habit of preparing their essays for oral delivery prior to aggregating them into books, they had both acquired the art of producing brilliant effects and skilfully avoiding dullness. Yet the two *illuminati* were widely different. While Emerson dealt with great abstract themes—"Nature," "Inspiration," "Immortality," and the like—and in a style which was always grave, aphoristic, and stately, it was customary for Thackeray to unbend, to become familiar, and to irradiate ordinary topics, social or historical, with scintillations of satirical humour as well as with the pathos of sympathy, and, in common with Emerson, the splendour of lofty aims. I do not disparage the sage of Concord, for whom I have a veneration. But his manner was to stir the

intellect, while Thackeray's manner was, in addition, to influence the heart.

All the essay lectures of Thackeray are fine, but I am content to take the one I heard from his own lips as a sample. With what quiet vivacity and deep sting did he descant upon the comic drama of the Restoration, as exemplified in Congreve! It was a comedy of dishonourable intrigue, of the glorification of youth, plastered beauty, and pleasure—of the wheedling, the deceiving, and the mocking of old age. "Money is for youth, love is for youth; away with the old people," cried the satirical interpreter of that bad time. I remember the telling sentence. But how refreshing and beautiful was the change when the lecturer glided from Congreve to Joseph Addison! Lingered in my ears still is the exquisite modulation with which he recited the sacred lines beginning—

"Soon as the evening shades prevail,  
The moon takes up the wondrous tale."

After finishing Addison's well-known hymn,—that pæan, as it were, of the celestial orbs,—"It seems to me," said the speaker, "that those verses shine like the stars. They shine out of a great deep calm. When he turns to heaven, a

Sabbath comes over that man's mind, and his face lights up from it with a glory of thanks and prayer."

But Thackeray was himself a poet as well as a master of idiomatic prose. His touch in verse was often singularly felicitous. Who does not remember his beautiful "Ballad of Bouillabaisse" ?—

"A street there is in Paris famous,  
 For which no rhyme our language yields ;  
 Rue Neuve des Petits Champs its name is,  
 The New Street of the Little Fields.  
 And here's an inn, not rich and splendid,  
 But still in comfortable ease,  
 The which in youth I oft attended,  
 To eat a bowl of *bouillabaisse*."

The whole metrical reminiscence is graphic, original, quaint—full of a racy feeling of old times—yet shaded with curiously pathetic reflections on the changes which the fleeting years have brought. There is no talk of gowan-gathering by the brooklets ; no talk of pastoral or woodland scenery and philandering : it is only an old French hostelry and its associations that inspire his muse. I regret that I never met in private the man who could write such a

ballad. Ah, Thackeray! cynic and satirist as thou wert, what a world of geniality and large-heartedness have I missed! As far as thou art concerned, I must eat my *bouillabaisse* alone.

Our famous humorist — with his humour playing at times near the fountain of tears—more than once, following his fame about the world, crossed the Atlantic. A bright and cheerful little acquaintance of mine, Mr John Callander, formerly of Glasgow, and afterwards of Liverpool, encountered him in one of his voyages, and was accustomed to tell how the distinguished novelist offered him a cigar. He took it, but protested he would not smoke it. “No,” he laughingly exclaimed, “I will preserve it, and have it handed down as an heirloom in my family, as having been presented to me by the great Mr Thackeray!”

The big delightful philosopher lifted up my greatly amused friend bodily in his hands, whirled him round and round, and then, planting him upright on the deck, declared, “Callander, you’re a trump!”

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## LXII.

## A DREAM OF ARDEN.

When in my younger days I presumed to be a critic, I disliked to become personally acquainted with individuals whom I might have occasion to criticise.

“Have you seen my new poem?” said an amiable friend to Douglas Jerrold, and added, “I hope you think it good.”

“My dear fellow,” exclaimed the wit, “good is not the word.”

Not having the ready resource of Jerrold, the friendship of authors, artists, and professional people generally I have sometimes found to be embarrassing. The more I valued them as individuals, the more was my embarrassment increased. But the awkwardness to which I allude was only felt with regard to mediocrity or incompetence. To be on terms of intimacy with any really great author, actor, or artist, I have always regarded as a peculiar privilege and honour.

Accordingly when, away back in the forties, I had an opportunity of seeing and knowing

Miss Helen Faucit off the stage—a considerable time before she became the wife of my scholarly and brilliant friend, Sir Theodore Martin—I was both happy and proud to avail myself of it.

Her first visit to Glasgow was, I think, at the close of 1843. The refinement and elegance she manifested in private life gave me, I confess, a deeper appreciation of her power as an incomparable *artiste*. I have seen most of the great actresses of my time, including Madame Rachel, with passion quivering to her fingertips, but not one has left in my mind so entirely satisfactory a picture of varied perfection.

Two creations of the Muse had a special fascination for the poet Wordsworth—

“The gentle lady married to the Moor,  
And heavenly Una with her milk-white lamb.”

I was about to name, in like manner, two of Miss Faucit's delineations in which I took chief delight. The moment, however, I attempted to make the selection, some third character arose to dispute the preference. Instead, therefore, of making choice of any couple of favourite parts, I shall rather mention two points of supreme excellence—one where

Imogen, in the play of "Cymbeline," repels the advances of Iachimo with a superb flash of scorn; and the other where Julia, in the "Hunchback," in a sustained burst of eloquence, appeals to Master Walter to free her from her contract of marriage with the Earl of Rochdale. The one was a startling inspiration of insulted womanhood; the other a collected, concentrated, and magnificent expostulation of feminine distraction and despair.

But I can imagine Miss Faucit like Garrick between the Tragic and the Comic Muse in Reynolds's famous picture. If in Tragedy she was great, in Comedy she was divine. I saw in the one case something to wonder at and admire. I saw in the other everything to enchant and love.

But in whichever direction her genius chiefly lay, it is certain that a gleam of joy and sunshine lightens up for me

"The dark backward and abysm of time,"

as I dwell upon Miss Faucit's Rosalind. Well might Sir Theodore, in one of his poetical moments, have "had a dream of Arden." A friend of mine, a venerable bailie of Glasgow, now deceased, went, with some reluctance, to

witness that exquisite impersonation. He had seen Miss O'Neil's Rosalind, and thought it could not be equalled or approached. Why should he decide to have the lovely memory of it disturbed? But the Rosalind of Miss Faucit infinitely surpassed, as he expressed it, his old ideal.

For myself, I may say that so perfect an embodiment of sweetness, delicacy, and grace—of wit, intelligence, and vivacity—I never witnessed before, and am not likely to behold again. How it illustrated the fascinating possibilities of that art—

“The youngest of the sister arts,  
Where all their beauty blends!”

Through her pervading personality the whole of “As You Like It” became the glorious forest idyll, which shaped itself to the imagination of the “star of poets.” But the art of the consummate histrion is as fragile and fleeting as a flower. With the fall of the curtain it ceases for the time to exist, and hence the Rosalind which I knew, having withdrawn into private life, remains for me only a memory and a record. The qualities which it unfolded—qualities so often applauded, and now so

vividly recalled—have gone, I assume, to adorn Lady Martin's beautiful home of Bryntysilio, with its outlook on the Cambrian hills.

## LXIII.

## LAST THOUGHTS.

Shall I go on or stop? A man's memory is like a carpet-bag—it takes any amount of filling. Or rather, it is like a conjuror's hat, out of which any quantity of feathers may be pulled.

But it is meet that garrulity should be restrained. In company with the venerable Mr Ritchie of the 'Scotsman,' I had on one occasion a walk with Lord Cockburn over the beautiful slopes of Bonaly. We had met the celebrated judge near his own gate. Mr Ritchie introduced me, and he invited us to take a turn through his grounds.

In such company the place, bathed in sunshine, was a paradise. As Ballantine sweetly sings—

“ Bonnie Bonaly's wee fairy-led stream  
Murmurs and sobs like a child in a dream ;

Falling where silver light gleams from its breast,  
Gliding through nooks where the dark shadows rest.  
Flooding with music its own tiny valley,  
Dances in gladness the stream of Bonaly."

On one side the Pentland Hills reared their heather-crowned summits, on the other "peerless Edina" displayed her countless charms; and it was in the midst of this enchanting scene that I listened to Lord Cockburn's luminous conversation, with its rich and delicious flavour of the old Scottish tongue. Those who have read his delightful 'Memorials' may imagine how racy and pregnant were his anecdotes. With what buoyancy of spirit did he lend wings to the moments! His talk had, indeed, a reputation, and there is one remark associated with his name which I hold to be of permanent value. As judge he had been detained absurdly long in court by the prosing of a young advocate; and on afterwards meeting Mr Alexander Russel in Princes Street, he gave vent to the impatience he had felt. Russel said that the speaker alluded to "was certainly inclined to be tedious." "Tedious!" cried Cockburn; "he not only exhausts time, but encroaches on eternity."

A great truth was hinted at in this col-

loquial expression, which Mr Russel speedily made famous. No man has a right to be a bore, and inordinate prolixity is an offence against good manners and against an age too busy to have its days wasted. On this theme Cockburn's successor on the bench, Lord Neaves, has also spoken with emphasis. I heard him deliver a public lecture on "Reading," in the course of which he recommended "skipping" as a cardinal necessity in the modern plethora of books. Lord Jeffrey had previously predicted that in two hundred years "there must be some new art of shorthand reading invented, or all reading must be given up in despair." Now, what if the skipping recommended by Lord Neaves was an attempt to realise this new art?

An author, however, should heroically expunge passages that are dull, rather than put his readers under an obligation to skip them. Few things are more intolerable than tediousness. When the darling old humorist, Charles Lamb, was button-held by an interminable monologist, he relates how he quietly took out his penknife, and by a little judicious sawing left the button in his hand! All button-holders should take warning. For my part, I have no

fear of exhausting my personal recollections; but I have an infinite fear of exhausting my readers' patience.

So far I have contrived, during several months of a wet summer (1890), to amuse at least my own "age of ease"; and yet I feel that even my gladdest rearward glances have not been without some shading of the dismal. Thackeray assures us of the gravity of the most noted jokers of the eighteenth century; our cleverest punster, Thomas Hood, dips his pen every now and again in burning tears; and we know that even the pantomime droll may, under his mask of chalk and vermilion, hide a very sorrowful visage.

How could it be altogether otherwise with me? Of the number of friends or acquaintances alluded to or thought of in the course of these desultory chapters, scarcely a dozen remain alive. I grope among old memories, and touch continually on tombs. Yet not even death can make the world lonely to the wise. With Johnsonian prudence I have tried to keep my friendships in repair—to have living friends for consolation, as well as departed friends for remembrance—and so to conquer in some degree the difficulty alluded



to by Madame de Staël and some other philosophic writers, that of making old age agreeable and sweet.

It is brave to be of good cheer ; it is human to be of exalted hope ; yet as day by day the road lengthens behind me, it is natural that I should look back with some feeling of sadness to the past, with all its fading phantasmagoria of familiar and loving and beautiful faces—

“Gone, glimmering through the dream of things that were !”

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