

## DAVID GRANT.

WHEN Joseph Grant was brooding over those home legends which in their metrical form gave backbone to his little volume of "Juvenile Lays", a cousin man-child was ushered into the world at the secluded homestead of Affrusk, who in after years was to carry to a higher level the poetical reputation of the family to which they belonged. This was DAVID

GRANT, the talented author of "Metrical Tales—1880", and "Lays and Legends of the North—1884". Born at Affrusk, parish of Banchory-Ternan, in 1823, his father, with a young family, which ultimately numbered eight, removed while David was a child to the neighbouring parish of Strachan, and at the school there the future poet received his first instruction. His love of learning and predilection for poetry were early exhibited; and as years went on, and his physical inaptitude for ordinary agricultural work became apparent, his mind turned more and more to a University education, as the likeliest means of bringing him into the kind of work to which his heart lay. Like many another humble genius before and since, he soon learned by a bitter experience

how hard it is to climb

The steep where Fame's proud temple shines afar,

and discovered in after life that only when he had entered the "dark valley" would he in any sense cease

to wage with Fortune an eternal war!

During the summer he wrought with his father as a wood-sawyer, and in the winter attended the arts classes at Marischal College; but the strain on his health was more than it could bear, and after two sessions' attendance he had, with great reluctance, to give it up. Throughout life he regretted his inability to finish his arts course, as he often found the want of the M.A. an insuperable barrier to advancement. Nevertheless he carried away with him a knowledge of Greek, Latin, and mathematics of no mean order, and to these he added in subsequent years a thorough knowledge of French and German, and considerable acquaintance with other modern European languages. After leaving the University, he taught for some time at the parish school of Lhanbryd. From thence he went to Canisby, where he collected the materials which he afterwards wrought into "Yarns of the Pentland Firth", and became an occasional contributor in prose and verse to the columns of the *Aberdeen Herald*. His connection with that paper brings to our mind an instance of literary theft which, had Grant not been the quiet, diffident man he was, might have been made public before now. About 1859 the herring fishing industry was beginning to attract public notice, and

a very able and carefully written article on that subject appeared from Grant's pen in the columns of the *Herald*. Imagine his astonishment when in 1861 he found an almost verbatim reprint of it, without any acknowledgment, in the *Cornhill Magazine* (vol. 4, p. 440), under the title "The Herring Harvest". He used to speak of this as a very dirty bit of business. Leaving Canisby, he came, in 1861, to Aberdeen (having been appointed to the French mastership in Oundle Grammar School, Northamptonshire) and was married to a daughter of Mr. John Webster, of the North of Scotland Railway Company, then a widow with one boy. During the interim he wrote a "Guide to the North of Scotland Railway", and threw off "The Hermit of Powis", an excellent imitation of our ancient ballads, which was printed by his friend, Mr. Middleton, then recently started as a bookseller in Skene Square. The Grammar School appointment did not turn out so financially satisfactory as was expected, and in the autumn of 1862 he laid out all the little means he had been able to save in opening a boarding and day school in Glasgow. His prospect of success in this undertaking was considerable, for, apart from his own ability as a teacher, his wife was exactly the kind of woman to take charge of the domestic department of such an institution with advantage to all concerned. But, alas! the adverse fate, which from first to last seemed to follow him hard through life, upset his cherished hopes here. An outbreak of fever, which carried off his wife, occurred ere he was many weeks started—the scholars dispersed beyond hope of recovery—and he was soon left on the streets of Glasgow, placeless and penniless, scarcely knowing, in the keen anguish of his sudden bereavement, where to turn. At length an opening occurred in Ecclesall College, a private middle-class educational establishment near Sheffield, and he entered there as sub-principal and chief classical master. Things went smoothly with him there for a considerable time, and with the savings he was able to make, he latterly purchased the goodwill of Springvale College, a day school of considerable standing in Sheffield. Again adversity was on his track—the Elementary Education Act of 1870 became law, and the new Board schools proved the ruin of all private adventure institutions like his.



He struggled on bravely, ekeing out his scanty earnings by writing for the press, edited for a short time the *Sheffield Post*, while stories of Scottish life and character appeared from his pen in *The Herald and Weekly Free Press* and other newspapers. He set about gathering his poetical works for publication in book form, but just as "Metrical Tales and other Poems" was in the press, a breakdown in health, produced by the struggle and worry of past years, occurred, and totally incapacitated him from placing it before the public. Through the kindly aid of Mrs. Leith Adams, the work was published in 1880.

The materials which compose this volume are classified into "Tales of the Storm-Bound"—a series of stories told by a company of voyagers to "while away" the time they were weather-bound at Calais; "Yarns of the Pentland Firth", mentioned above; "Miscellaneous Poems"; "Sonnets"; "Pour Amour"; "In Memorias"; "Varieties"; and "Odds and Ends". The tales and yarns are in some respects the most successful—at any rate they are the most enjoyable—parts of the book, for if Grant could do anything well, it was the telling of a story in pithy and effective rhyme. With an easy, pleasant swing, rarely found outside the old balladmongers, he carries you through such a love story as that of Reginald and Gunhild—tickles your risibility by the comical matrimonial mishaps of Joseph Brown—or enwraps you in the weird charm of such-like sorcery as the Witches' Wind. This last is an excellent example of the yarns. It opens with an account of how Will, the fisherman, who spins "the yarn that's as Gospel true", with the other members of his boat's crew, had lain wind-bound for the greater part of a week at Longhope, when

Came Magnus Manson down to the shore,  
 And jesting at our distress—  
 "Why don't you trade for a wind," asked he,  
 "With our neighbour Canny Jess?"

Said the Skipper, "I've sailed for sixty years  
 And whistled the breezes in;  
 I've ne'er been beholden to Witch's wind,  
 And I'm now too old to begin."

But Magnus Manson's cousin, from Gills,  
 My elder brother and I,  
 Slipt to the shop for a quarter of tea,  
 And visited Jess on the sly.

We asked a light for our pipes; the witch  
 Invited us to step ben,  
 And we saw before us a wrinkled wife  
 Of a good threescore and ten.

A wrinkled hag with a stragglin' beard,  
 And a threatening nose and chin,  
 And a cast in her eye, that plainly said—  
 "I'm in league with the Man of Sin."

The negotiations for a wind were speedily entered upon, and, after a considerable absence, during which the incantations of Jess were betokened to them by a variety of weird sounds, she returned with the boat's bucket, which they had brought, in her hand,

And in it three tiny wisps of straw,  
 Each girt with a worsted band.

"This bucket," she croaked, "you'll place in your boat,  
 As close to the prow as you may,  
 And all be ready to start from the Hope  
 At the earliest peep of day.

"A favouring wind will fill your sails  
 Till you've rounded Cantick Head;  
 Till the flood has run, and the slack begun,  
 But the breeze will then drop dead.

"And then you must throw a wisp of straw,  
 A single wisp, in the sea;  
 And another breeze will fill your sails  
 Till Gills lie under your lea.

"A second wisp must then be flung,  
 And you'll scud to Harrow Bay;  
 But keep, as you love your life, the third,  
 Till you've landed safe in Mey."

Following the witch's instructions, they fared as she had predicted, till they

. . . slackened sail at a cable's length  
 From the wished and welcome shore.

Then laughed the Skipper a scornful laugh—  
 "A snuff for the witch!" cried he,  
 And clutching the hindmost wisp of straw,  
 He pitched it into the sea.

Crack, crash! went the thunder overhead;  
 Thick darkness fell on the deep;  
 And round the boat, like famishing fiends,  
 The billows began to leap.

We rowed like men in the grip of death,  
 Still heading, we thought, for land;  
 But the angry demons of the deep  
 Had taken our yawl in hand.

And still the more that we urged ashore,  
 The further they forced us off;  
 Heaving us high on the mountain waves,  
 And deep in the dreadful trough.

\* \* \* \* \*

But just when the strength of all was spent,  
 And the hopes of all but o'er,  
 She suddenly steadied a cable's length  
 From the witch's cottage door.

\* \* \* \* \*

We left the Hope with the breeze of heaven,  
 For not for the Orkney's worth  
 Had we tried again, with a witch's wind,  
 To ferry the Pentland Firth.

As might be expected from one whose extensive reading and wide experience in life had stored his mind with ample matter for reflection, the miscellaneous and other contents of the volume show well the wide sweep of his genius. He loves nature and sings the beauties of the vernal year, but he loves her mostly where she is linked with something of human interest—home, love, or friendship. The fire of his patriotism is pure and intense as in "Wallace before his Judges", "The Young Briton's Reply to Old British Croakers", or subdued with a tinge of sadness as in "The Widow's Determination". Anon, he turns, with a quiet, subtle humour, broadening as it flows, to sing "The Summer Bonnet", the woeful "Decrease of the Male Sex", or that early love of his, "The Grocer's Daughter", who, in her unromantic thrift—

My tales in prose—my cherished tales  
 Of friendship, love, and war—  
 Made bags for tacks and paling nails,  
 Wrapt pots of glue and tar.

Some of his sweetest and most impressive lyrics, however, are cast in a sadder mould, and betoken a certain heaviness of heart, far down under the genial surface currents which play so freely in most of his writings. Thus, on a new-year's eve, while brooding over the enigma of life, he recalls a boyish pastime, often indulged in by him and his mates on his native Feugh-side, and finds in it an apt emblem of the greater game they have all been playing since then :—

We would launch upon the current  
 Of that river, dark and wavy ;  
 Bits of bark and broken branches,  
 And baptise the whole—"our navy."

Then along the margin running,  
 We would watch, with gaze extended,  
 O'er the fortunes of our "vessels,"  
 Till the course of each was ended.

Some would lag from the commencement,  
 Among weeds and waifs entangled ;  
 Some would vanish in the rapids ;  
 Some on rocks be dashed and mangled.

Few would keep the middle current,  
 And 'twas still a thing of wonder  
 If these reached the goal we set them  
 Otherwise than far asunder !

Where are we who played so gaily  
 By that river, dark and wavy ?  
 We are stranded, shattered, severed,  
 Like our childhood's mimic "navy!"

Cast together on Life's river,  
 In the days long since departed,  
 Far is each who keeps the current  
 From the friends with whom he started.

Some have gone, he knows not whither,  
 Leaving neither sign nor token ;  
 Some have passed him, some have lingered,  
 Some have perished—wrecked and broken !



Thus we drift, we few survivors,  
With diversity of motion,  
On our scattered waves of being  
To Eternity's vast Ocean.

That Grant had been a poet all his life, had been well known to the few who enjoyed the intimacy of his friendship. "I cannot help writing verses", he said to one who spoke to him of poetry being a drug in the market; "I feel sometimes that I must write—it is part of my life". But to the great outside public the "Metrical Tales" of 1880 first revealed how largely he was endowed with "the vision and the faculty divine". Unlike many of our modern bards, who in their haste for notoriety throw their cubs unlicked into the world, with, of course, the inevitable fate which deservedly awaits all such crude work, David Grant believed that good poetry, like good wine, lost nothing by being kept. Twenty years before his "Yarns of the Pentland Firth" ever saw type, he repeated most of them at the fireside of a friend in Aberdeen, much to the delight of those who heard them. And so it was with most of his work, except perhaps his translations; they lay in his mind, and were brooded over year after year, receiving whatever modifications and embellishments the ripening fancy and maturing judgment of advancing life brought to him. Hence the qualities which immediately placed his first volume of verse alongside the best specimens of the minor poetry of his time. Returning health brought him once more into the arena of active life, and, in 1883, with his wife (he had married a second time) and young family he settled down in Edinburgh in hopes of earning a livelihood as a private tutor or college "coach". The hand-to-mouth existence which this obtained for him was extremely discouraging. "During the past few years", he wrote to one of his friends, "I have had to zig-zag Edinburgh, town and county, from Dalkeith to Dean Bridge, for an average weekly income at which many a hand-worker would turn up his nose". A great deal of his spare time was occupied in seeing through the press his second, and by far his best, contribution to Scottish poesy, viz., "Lays and Legends of the North".

Though the merit of his earlier volume would have been



sufficient in itself to place his name prominently and permanently in the ranks of our best minor poets, a higher reach was yet in store for him in the publication of this volume. It not only showed a decided advance in literary faculty over his other work, but, along with its freshness of treatment, his subjects have a local interest and grip upon his fellow-countrymen which will hold as long as character and incident have home or occasion on his beloved Deeside. The command he had of the mother tongue was that of a master, equally at home in singing the pathetic, the comic, or the tragic—while the fineness of his ear, and his accurate sense of metrical movement, give his verse a musical charm seldom sustained for any length of time by writers in the vernacular. Indeed, those “Lays and Legends” for graphic detail and melodic flow have few equals in the poetry of our countryside since the days of Beattie’s well-known “Yule Feast”. “The Muckle Spate o’ Twenty-nine”, “Tammy Tod’s Trip to Elgin”, “The Cooper’s Weddin’”, and “Laird o’ Littlefirlot’s Woonin’” abound in incidents and character sketches which give full scope to his graphic descriptive powers; but no piece in the volume is better fitted to show his aptitude for this kind of work, his felicitous management of the mother tongue, his art in touching-off character in a few strokes, than “The Sounin’ o’ the Kirk”. The poem opens with a view of the comfortable conditions of the parishioners of Bobbintap:—

It fell aboot the tail o’ hairst—  
 The year we needna min’—  
 The craps were maistly i’ the yard,  
 But still the days were fine.  
 The clover an’ the aiftergirse,  
 The neeps an’ kail were green;  
 An’ nicht by nicht, wi’ siller licht,  
 Sailed roon the hairvest meen.  
 The fairmer and the fairmer’s man  
 Alike were blithe an’ gay,  
 Rejoicin’ in the walie craps  
 O’ barley, aits, and hay.  
 A mair contented peasantry  
 Than we o’ Bobbintap,  
 There wisna then, there isna yet,  
 On natur’s ample lap.

The material conditions of existence being so satisfactory, it

was but natural that the good folks' leanings to song, dance, and other modes of sociality should be proportionately pronounced. But the minister, a good, kindly, well-liked man, who in his youth could both fiddle and dance, had turned latterly much against exhibitions on the light fantastic toe, and in the eyes of his parishioners, he was guilty of only one heresy—the preaching against dancing. The sprig of our National Zion planted at Bobbintap was none of the comeliest:—

Our kirk hed but an earthen flier,  
 The seats were black an' rough,  
 Agen the wa' the poopit leant,  
 A big uncomely trough.  
 In fac', we a' began to feel  
 Oor kirk wis sic a place  
 As ane cud hardly sit intil  
 An' think o' heavenly grace.

No sooner did public attention turn in this direction than it was resolved, and workmen engaged, to give her a complete overhaul. Time passed—

Fleet flew the days, an' merry nichts ;  
 The tail o' hairst cam' roun ;  
 The riggin' steed upo' the kirk,  
 The timmer flier wis doon.  
 Losh, sic a splendid dancin' flier !  
 Sae smooth, sae lang, sae braid !  
 The thocht flashed through ilk gazer's min',  
 An' wadna rest unsaid.

\* \* \* \* \*

O were the minister fae hame,  
 Or faur he cudna hear,  
 A hunner pair o' nim'le feet  
 Sud trip that walie flier !  
 But wae's my hairt, the manse wis close,  
 Sae close to the kirkyard,  
 That fae the kirk in seelent nicht  
 A whisper micht be heard.

As good luck, however, would have it, the minister, who had been engaged in the pamphlet war of the Disruption, was feeling his health failing him, and, under injunctions from his man Robbie, took at this time a month's holiday. Robbie, a typical example of the minister's man of other days, is thus sketched—

For Robbie an' the minister  
 Hed neither o' them wives,  
 An' they hed been like left an' blade  
 The feck o' baith their lives.  
 Fan Robbie first cam' to the manse,  
 Then Geordie, but a bairn,  
 Wis aften danced on Robbie's knee,  
 An' nursed wi' kin' concern.  
 Fan George a stoovent cam' fae toon,  
 Forfochen wi' his buiks,  
 'Twis Robbie Reid fa got him wan's,  
 An' buskit's trootin' huiks.  
 Fan George becam' the minister,  
 An' Robbie Reid the man,  
 Then Robbie took the minister  
 An' pairis' baith in han'.  
 The pairis', minister, an' glebe,  
 He tentit day an' nicht,  
 An' in his nain opinion kept  
 'The hale hypothee richt.'  
 An' 'twis the minister himsel'  
 That sairest taxed his skeel,  
 'He'll sit,' quo' Robbie, 'at his buiks  
 Until he's rael unweel ;  
 An' fan he gangs faur buiks are sell't,  
 He aye brings hame a box,  
 An' then I scarce can get him oot  
 To catecheese his folks.  
 He's sae neglectfu' o' his health,  
 That, scholar though he be,  
 Ye wadna hae 'im lang the fore  
 Gin it were no for me'.

\* \* \* \* \*

fan Robbie Reid

Observed his maister's case,  
 He wisna slow to speak his min'  
 Afore his maister's face.  
 'Deed, sir', quo' he, 'ye're far fae weel,  
 That buik has worn ye oot ;  
 Yer legs hae grown like windle-straes,  
 Yer face as fyte's a clot.  
 'Deed, sir, ye maun gyang to the sea—  
 At onyrate fae hame—  
 We'll dee withoot ye for a month,  
 Or else it were a shame.



The pairis' sall be luikit till,  
 We'se try an' keep it richt,  
 An' nae ae non-intrusion gled  
 Sall ventur' to alicht.  
 As for oor folks about the manse  
 Ye needna fash yer head,  
 For ilka nicht I'se gether them,  
 An' hae a chapter read.  
 An' gi'e them o' the Sunday nights  
 A mou'fu' o' a prayer,  
 For till the craps are sattl't up,  
 I daurna promise mair.'  
 An' so the minister agreed  
 To gyang a month awa ;  
 An' like a glint o' mornin' licht  
 The welcome tidin's flaw.

The minister from home, Robbie, who liked "a dram gey weel", was caught by one of the workmen who had resolved on a dance in the new floored kirk, and over a flowing bicker, had the mystery of "The Sounin' o' the Kirk" duly explained to him. He was told that it was necessary before the seats were set down to take the "pitch throughout the kirk to rectify the soun'", so that singing, yea, fiddling, had to be indulged in, in order to bring matters right. Robbie saw, or thought he saw, the necessity of this operation, but was cautioned to say nothing at all about it, as it was a trade secret, divulged to him only of all in the parish. The eventful night came round. To make matters doubly "siccar" Robbie was well primed wi' Allan's best, and duly put to bed.

While slumbered Robbie o' the manse,  
 Forgetfu' an' forgot,  
 His fellow-servants donned their brows  
 An' joined oor merry lot.  
 Baith Effie Dean an' Janet Thow,  
 As soon's the coast was clear,  
 Anent their pairtners i' the kirk  
 Were timmerin' up the floor.

\* \* \* \* \*

While fae the forebriest o' the laft  
 Faur noo the seats were doon,  
 Three bows fae weel-accordit strings  
 Drew nae uncertain soun'.

As for the dancers—ye may guess  
 They werena sweir nor slow  
 To beat the tunefu' measures oot  
 Wi' nim'le heel an' toe ;  
 For ruddy health an' soople limbs  
 An' hairts an' speerits licht,  
 An' love an' bravity combined  
 To glorifée the nicht.

\* \* \* \* \*

'Twis twal' o'clock, 'twis ane o'clock,  
 'Twis near the chap o' twa,  
 Fan, on a sudden, at the door,  
 A weel-kent face we saw.  
 Then legs uplified, paraleezed  
 In middle air remained,  
 An' feet upo' the fleer were there  
 By leaden fetters chained,  
 The blithesome blink o' beauty's e'e  
 Becam' a stony stare,  
 An' sank in silence on the strings  
 'The merry lads o' Ayr'.  
 That face, it wis the minister's,  
 An' ne'er sin' I wis born  
 Hae I encountered sic a luik  
 O' sorra, wrath, an' scorn.

One of the leaders, with more presence of mind than the others, cried to put out the lights, and almost immediately "darkness ruled the scene", in the secrecy of which the kirk "scaled" as it never had "scaled" before. Fear and trembling were over all for the results of this discovery, but the minister

For wechty reasons o' his nain  
 He leet the maitter drap,  
 An' closely we oor counsel kept,  
 We fowk o' Bobbintap.

Besides those pieces of racy, vigorous verse, in which the sayings and doings of such worthies as those who won'd at Bobbintap, and the many stories familiar to the firesides of his native Feughside are recorded in appropriate ballad form, David Grant's contributions to the department of song proper are numerous and of no small worth. If not of the first quality, they are nevertheless sufficiently above the average to give character to his volume of "Lays and Legends". Not a

few of them have commanded the attention of composers and gained appropriate musical setting at their hands. We may parenthetically refer to the handsome volume of his songs, published in the spring of 1887, set to music, composed for the most part by Mr. J. C. Grieve, of the Watt-Heriot Institution, Edinburgh, and Mr. Charles Bradley. Of course, the tender passion in one or other of its many phases is a leading theme in his songs, while patriotic and descriptive songs, strong and tender, and lilt, humorous, pathetic, and serio-comic, give considerable variety to the products of his muse. As examples:—

THE CHILD AND THE BIRD.

*Child.*

Little bird, little bird, up on the spray,  
 Joining thy voice to the voices of May,  
 Art thou not a-weary all the day long  
 Straining thy wee throat and pouring thy song?  
 Little bird, little bird, evening is near,  
 Come into my chamber and rest without fear.

*Bird.*

Little child, little child, all the long day  
 Do not thy tiny feet patter and play,  
 Up and down, out and in, never at rest,  
 Till sleep fold thy fingers upon thy wee breast?  
 Little child, little child, song is to me  
 As needful, as joyful, as play is to thee.

*Duet.*

Child and bird, child and bird, over us fleet  
 Sunny hours, golden hours, hours ever sweet,  
 While earth is in blossom, and life is in spring,  
 And light-hearted laughter and merry songs ring.

*Child.*

Little bird, little bird, were it not well  
 Thou shouldst consent in my chamber to dwell?  
 Storm could not frighten here, hawk could not take,  
 And well would I feed thee with sugar and cake;  
 Little bird, little bird, shelter thee here,  
 And never know hunger, danger, nor fear.

*Bird.*

Little child, little child, dost thou not know  
 How the years come, and the glad spirits go?  
 Soon may the joyance thou woo'st me to share  
 Change for thyself into sorrow and care.



Sport in thy chamber, sweet child, whilst thou may,  
I'll warble my ditties up here on the spray.

*Duet.*

Child in the chamber, and bird on the tree,  
Each will have cares, will have sorrows to dree.  
Droop the wing, cease to sing, never more play.  
Ah! these are gloomy thoughts, chase them away—  
Gloomy thoughts, gloomy thoughts, chase them away.

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JOHNNY, MAN, I'M WANTIN' SILLER.

I'm nae a man to mak' complaint  
At ilka turn o' wind an' weather,  
Wi' worldly life I'm weel content  
Though it's nae faultless a'thegether ;  
My very wife—an' mair's the shame  
There are sae mony marrows till her—  
Has ae bit faut I'm wae to name—  
Her cry is aye, ' I'm wantin' siller'.

The constant sang where'er I gang  
Is ' Johnny, man, I'm wantin' siller' ;  
The constant sang where'er I gang  
Is ' Johnny, man, I'm wantin' siller'.

I hinna prospered weel in trade,  
An' aye the times are gettin' harder,  
Wi' profits sma' an' sma'er made  
While mou's grow mair to toom the larder ;  
But still my Katie's cry's the same,  
Or maybe sharper whiles an' shriller,  
Her constant cry when I come hame  
Is ' Johnny, man, I'm wantin' siller'.

*Chorus*—The constant sang, &c.

I hae a thrivin' brither Tam,  
At fifty years an' three he's single ;  
But yet for his, though poor I am  
I wadna change my canty ingle ;  
For Katie has a couthie wye  
That won my heart an' knits it till her,  
In spite o' that dementin' cry  
O ' Johnny man, I'm wantin' siller'.

*Chorus*—The constant sang, &c.

I lo'e my wife, I lo'e my bairns ;  
 Gin Fortune wad but use me better  
 I'd buy them bonny things in cairns  
 An' nane hae power to ca' me debtor ;  
 But plague on Fortune ! a' my life  
 I've found in her a sair ill-willer,  
 An' ithers noo as well's my wife  
 Cry ' Johnny, man, I'm wantin' siller '.

*Chorus*—The constant sang, &c.

But I've a frien' o' genius rare  
 Wha has a clever scheme to patent  
 For keepin' wives an' bairns on air  
 Or something in the air that's latent ;  
 Gin it succeed, nae mair I'll dread  
 To meet the souter or the miller,  
 Nor yet will Katie craze my head  
 Wi' ' Johnny, man, I'm wantin' siller '.

*Chorus*—The constant sang, &c.

As was very confidently expected, his "Lays" met with an admirable reception, and was recognised by all who knew the man to be far more representative of his many-sided genius than the earlier volume of "Metrical Tales". As time passed on, the financial difficulties in which he had been floundering so long knew no abatement; every fresh spurt brought its fresh disappointments, and he seemed to be merely dragging a lengthening chain. Regular work he never got, and his income was not only meagre at the best, but extremely precarious. After a temporary illness in the beginning of 1885, he writes to one of his old cronies:—"At present I am in good health, for me, and would only be too glad to get the chance of earning something with my pen, as teaching is so scarce and so poorly paid in Edinburgh when it is to be had. . . . I have had a dreadfully hard time of it ever since I came to Edinburgh, and for some years before, and fortune appears more threatful than ever. Several times I have proposed to start for the North, and try readings from my own writings as a sort of desperate venture, but some shabby piece of teaching, just one remove from starvation, has prevented me. At this moment my only teaching engagement costs me 15 hours' time per week, and brings me scarcely ten shillings ! Mr.— promises to take

some Scotch tales from me by-and-by, but 'the coo dees wytin' the green girse'".

About this time, so small was the income derived from his stories, which could not, like worse stuff, command simultaneous publication in a dozen different newspapers, that he broached a scheme of bringing out in penny weekly numbers the whole of his writings, but was very wisely dissuaded from such a project. A few months after his health failed, so that he was completely laid aside from all work. In the winter he was taken to the infirmary, where, in the beginning of the year he rallied so far as to enable him to be taken home; and he was buoyed up considerably by the hope of revisiting his beloved Deeside, and once more recruiting his strength under its invigorating climate. But it was not to be. A sudden relapse carried him away on 22nd April, 1886.

During this last illness a few of his friends made an effort to obtain a pension for him from the Civil List. Nothing was heard of their application till several weeks after his death, when a letter came addressed to him, and enclosing an order for £50 as a grant from that fund in acknowledgment of his literary ability. But "the coo had dee't wytin' the green girse". Nevertheless, on Mr. Gladstone being made acquainted with the circumstances in which those near and dear to the poet had been left, the payment was transferred to his widow.