

Burns' Border Tour.

THE month of May is the anniversary period when 118 years ago the poet, at the age of 29, made that delightful and memorable tour, compressed into a compass of some twenty-six days, but which enabled him to see and enjoy a vast extent of the Border country.

In the Spring of 1787 he had been contemplating, as he expressed it to Dr Moore, "a few pilgrimages over some of the classic ground of Caledonia—Cowdenknowes, Banks of Yarrow,



From Photo by

E. Waldie.

STATUETTE OF BURNS.

Tweed, etc." About the middle of December of the previous year he arrived in Edinburgh, and during the stay there made the acquaintance of a young man of amiable character and literary tendencies, just the sort of person who would be fascinated by the poet, and whose cheery and breezy disposition would naturally provoke the attention of Burns. Ainslie was a Border lad, serving his apprenticeship as a writer in the office of one Mr Samuel Mitchelson in Carrubbers' Close. A few years younger than the poet, he chummed with him at once, and the friendship thus formed lasted to the

end. A writer in the early fifties of last century says of him:—"I have often conversed with him about the bard, when age, business cares, and the gravity befitting his duty as an elder in the kirk, had given something of a different cast to his character; and never did he once admit, or seem capable of admitting, that the Ayrshire poet was anything but the finest fellow that ever breathed."

Cast so much in each other's company, it was but natural that young Ainslie should paint the glories of the Borderland to his friend in glowing colours, and we can well believe that the visions thus portrayed appealed to the finer fancies of the poet, and urged him to the journey.

Their mode of travel was on horseback, and on Saturday, 5th May, the two friends left Edinburgh. It was only to be expected that young Ainslie's thoughts would turn to his own home at Berrywell, near Duns, at which place Ainslie senior acted as land agent on the estates of Lord Douglas. Journeying by way of the Lammermuirs and Langton edge they reached the father's house on the Saturday night. Burns was touched by the family greeting of his companion, and evidently thoroughly enjoyed himself with the kindly household. They attended service at Duns, where the minister, Dr Bowmaker by name, preached a sermon which strongly condemned obstinate sinners. Ainslie's sister was one of the party, and Burns, taking a slip of paper, wrote:—

"Fair maid, you need not take the hint,
Nor idle texts pursue;
'Twas guilty sinners that he meant—
Not angels such as you!"

Pursuing their course on the Monday by way of Coldstream, where they dined with a Mr Foreman, Burns crossed the bridge (at the Scottish side of which was the blacksmith's house, the scene of many a romantic marriage) over the Tweed, which, at this place, is the boundary line between England and Scotland, in order to say that he had been in the sister country. When on the English side, "Mr Ainslie was surprised to see the poet throw away his hat, and, thus uncovered, kneel down with uplifted hands, and apparently rapt in a fit of enthusiasm. Mr Ainslie kept silence, uncertain what was next to be done, when Burns, with extreme emotion, and an expression of countenance which his companion could never forget, prayed for and blessed Scotland most solemnly, by pronouncing aloud, in tones of the deepest devotion, the two concluding stanzas of the "Cottar's Saturday Night."

The Monday night was passed at Coldstream,

and an early start being made the following morning enabled the travellers to breakfast in Kelso. On his way from there to Jedburgh they diverged a little from the direct road to call on a friend of Mr Ainslie at Caverton Mill. The entry in the diary runs thus:—"Mr McDowal (McDougall) at Caverton Mill, a friend of Mr Ainslie's, with whom I dined to-day, sold his sheep, ewe and lamb, at two guineas a-piece. Wash their sheep before shearing—7 or 8 lb. of washing wool in a fleece—low markets, consequently low rents—fine lands, not above sixteen shillings a Scotch acre—magnificence of farmers and farm-houses." This David McDougall here referred to came of a stock who had been for two or three centuries leading farmers in the district of Kalewater; the family were nearly two hundred years in Caverton Mill. A David McDougall was the tenant during the rebellion of '45, and when the rebel army was on its way south the Duke of Roxburghe, afraid of any mishap occurring to the family plate and valuables, sent for his tenant, and arranged that he and his two sons should go to Floors under cover of night and convey the chests containing the plate to Caverton Mill, where it was buried in the stackyard, where it lay till all trouble was over. This man's son, David, who was Ainslie's friend, and tenant of the farm at the time of the visit, was one of the party entrusted with the secreting of the plate. The family took a great interest in the parish, as is evidenced by different references. A letter from the minister of Morebattle, which gives some idea of the times, may be quoted:—

Morebattle, Nov. 26, 1742.

Dear Sir,—I take opportunity by the bearer who comes to demand payment for the duties laid over Grubbet Bridge last winter to inform you that in a letter I had last week from Mr Binning acquainting with the raising of a summons of valuation of teinds in yr. parish, he expresses his desire to hear that the roof of the kirk is covered and care taken to keep the water under the new bridge, neither of which is yet done, and as none of the Duke's tenants who were formerly given up deficient in devlots to David McDougall, have yet brought them in, I desire you'll repeat your orders to them to bring them in as soon as the weather will permit.

As to the bridge, we must have a meeting of heritors in a little time, both anent the poor and for the choice of a schoolmaster, and I don't see how anything can be done in it till then. This with my humble service to Mrs Lindsay, from, Dear Sir, yours,

ANDREW CHATTO.

P.S.—I believe I shall trouble you with a message for my stipend to-morrow eight days.

They arrived at the Border town and Royal Burgh of Jedburgh on Tuesday night. It can almost be said with certainty that the house

where Burns stayed during his three days' visit was in the Canongate adjoining the Dean's Close. At that time it would be one of the chief houses in the burgh. "The rooms are large, and the marble jambs and carved wood-work round the fire-place of the largest room are relics of last century grandeur.

On the following morning he breakfasted with a gentleman in the town, after which he set out for a roup of grass parks, where he met Captain Rutherford, grandfather of the present laird of Fairnington, who had had a most remarkable career in North America, having been captured and held prisoner by a band of In-

TO MR. JOHN KENNEDY.

MESSAGE 3 March 1742.

I have done myself the pleasure of complying with your request in sending you my letter. If you have a leisure minute I should be glad you would copy it, and return me either the original or the transcript as I have not a copy of it by me and I have a friend who wishes to see it.

New Kennedy of Jedburgh
Ever loving you to be Macchilium yours

John Kennedy to you
The above was heard I mean you must
Be glad to see you

ROBT BURNS



*Original considered by Lord Pringle's order in
his public service of in the justice Macchilium
for Rent 1744*

Took credit for the above 11/ 1/1744

From Photo by

JOHN KENNEDY.

R. JACK.

dians. It is worthy of note here that at the centenary proceedings at Morebattle in 1859, one of those who took part in the arrangements stated that he had a distinct recollection of seeing Burns and Captain Rutherford walking together.

After an early dinner with his host he returned to Jedburgh, and started for a walk up Jed, "with some ladies, to be shown Love-lane and Blackburn, two fairy scenes." On the way

thither he met, and was introduced to, Mr Potts, a writer in the town, according to the poet "a very clever fellow," and Dr Somerville, minister of the Parish Church. Burns summed him up as "a man and a gentleman, but sadly addicted to punning." When this character appeared in print, it is stated on good authority that he abandoned the practice.

Undoubtedly the outstanding figure of the party in Burns' eyes was that of Isabella Lindesay. She was a daughter of Robert Lindesay, say, who practised in the town. Originally the family came from Forfarshire, the cradle of the clan. Robert Lindesay had received his medical education in Edinburgh, where his grandfather was a merchant, and, as the following letter will show, his intentions had been to go abroad. The writer of the letter, John Coutts, was partner of the banking house of Coutts Brothers & Co., which, at that time, had its premises on the second floor of the President's stairs, Parliament Close, Edinburgh. The letter was to the Earl of Panmure, and is to the following effect:—

My Lord.—Mr Robert Lindsay, who delivers this to you, is the son of a very worthy man in the country, who has a good many friends in Angus, and connected with a good many of your Lordship's friends in that county. I have, therefore, presumed to recommend him to your Lordship, as your Lordship giving him a little countenance may be of great use to him. The young lad has been educated as a surgeon here, and goes abroad to endeavour. I presume, to get into some employment in the hospital. He has carried with him severall recommendations, particularly to his chief, the Earl of Crawford. I beg your Lordship will forgive the freedom I use, and I am, My Lord, Your Lor'ps most obed. huble servt.,

JOHN COUTTS.

Edinburgh, 6th April, 1748.

What the influencing reasons were is not known, but young Lindesay, if he went abroad, had not finally located there. From the fact that his father, Alexander Lindesay, was Commissioner for the Duke of Roxburghe at Swin-side, near Jedburgh, it is natural to suppose that the idea of starting as a surgeon in the county town would find favour with the family. At any rate he did so, and evidently was able to build up a good practice and occupy a good position, for he was elected to the office of Provost of the Burgh some ten years before the poet's visit. The position of Provost in these days was one of considerable importance. At the time of the Circuit Court the Provost and Magistrates, as representing the Crown, were obliged to give personal attendance on the judges during the sitting of the Court, and provide the requisite accommodation for carrying

on the business. "The Provost of Jedburgh, next to the judge, occupied the highest position. It was incumbent on the Provost and Magistrates to go out in state, generally so far as Ancrum Bridge, to meet the judge and escort him to the town, and on their arrival at the hotel door the burghesses were summoned, under the tenure by which they held their property—of watching and warding—to form a guard to his Lordship and the Magistrates. A letter from a judge on circuit, which has been preserved, may be quoted. It is addressed to the Provost (Dr Lindesay) and Magistrates.

Galashiels, Monday, 8th May, 1780.

Gentlemen,—I have got this far on my road to Jedburgh to hold the Circuit there. I shall be at Merton this night, and pass to-morrow at that place, and shall be at Jedburgh on Wednesday about half-an-hour after twelve, and I shall go to Court about an hour after. I thought it my duty to give you this information, and am with great regard, Gentlemen, Your most humble servant,

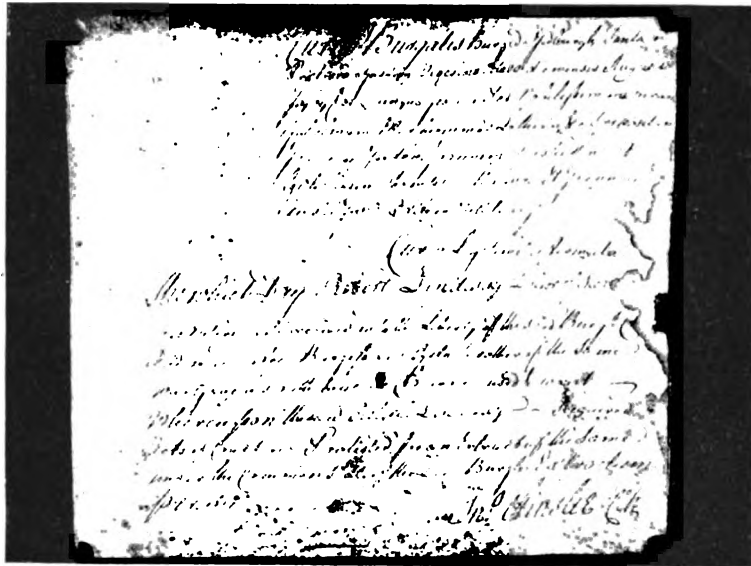
THO. MILLER.

Dr Lindesay occupied, at the time of the poet's visit, the house which had been associated with Queen Mary. When on her Border visit she lay sick with fever in this dwelling, and ever afterwards it was known as Queen Mary's house. Through the courtesy of Mr Simson, writer, the following interesting information has been obtained from the titles regarding it. From these it would appear that two infeftments were granted in favour of Sir Patrick Scott of Ancrum in the year 1704; while a charter of adjudication had been granted by the Magistrates of Jedburgh in favour of the deceased William Ainslie of Black Hill, dated 3rd February, 1694. On the 4th of July, 1740, Sir John Scott of Ancrum disposed the property to George Kemp, Town Treasurer of the Burgh of Jedburgh, for himself, and in the name of the Magistrates, Town Council, and community of the said Burgh, the price of the property being £200 stg., the right of the "dask" or seat in the Kirk of Jedburgh being included in the conveyance. On 13th June, 1743, the Most Honourable William Henry, Marquis of Lothian, Lord Provost of the Burgh of Jedburgh, the Bailies and Councillors thereof, in respect of a payment of £200, disposed the property to the said Sir William Scott, who some seven years later, by private sale, parted with the property to Mr Alexander Lindesay in Swin-side, "all and hail that land or lot, high and laigh back and fore with the yards, plots, grass, fruit and forest trees, including the "dask" or seat in the kirk, which was near the pulpit on the south, and the entry leading to the Session table on the north." Dr Robert

Lindesay succeeded in 1775, and from him the property passed into the hands of Robert Lindesay Armstrong, who was naturalised in Russia. Some fifteen years ago it was bought by Mr Alexander Scott, in whose hands it now is.

Isabella Lindesay was married to Adam Armstrong, son of the teacher at Hobkirk. He entered the Russian service and reached the rank of Major-General. It was through this marriage that Queen Mary's House came into the Armstrong family. Dr Lindesay had the misfortune to lose by drowning his son, Alexander, who was a much-liked young man.

cured him the esteem and favour of all to whom he was afterwards known in the intercourse of society and business. A candid interpreter in the actions of others, he never spoke of any person with bitterness or censure. He was exemplary for filial and brotherly affection, and his parents have been often heard to say that they could not recollect one instance of his having given them any cause of offence or displeasure. He received peculiar testimonies of respect and confidence from the officers and privates of the regiment to which he belonged. At the age of twenty-eight, possessed of a vigorous constitution in the full career of prosperity and honour a fatal calamity prematurely closed the scene of his existence here, admonishing his surviving acquaintances and



From Photo by

BURGESS TICKET OF JEDBURGH IN FAVOUR OF DR ROBERT LINDESAY.

E. Waldie.

The following account, by the courtesy of the proprietor of the "Kelso Mail," is taken from the issue of that paper of date 11th September, 1797:—

On Thursday, the 7th current, the body of Alexander Lindsay, Surgeon and Captain-Lieutenant of the Roxburghshire Light Dragoons, was interred in the Churchyard of Jedburgh. The excellent character of Captain Lindsay, and a combination of disastrous circumstances attending his death, render it singularly affecting to his relatives and numerous acquaintances. Endowed with a solid understanding, improved by a liberal education, he was well qualified for the duties of his profession. The mildness of his temper, his modest and unassuming manners joined to a kindly and obliging disposition, attracted the marked attachment of his early companions, and eminently pro-

friends of the vanity and deceitfulness of the fairest terrestrial hopes.

A tablet with this inscription is erected against the south wall of Jedburgh Abbey, close to the entrance to the Tower:—

"Near
This place is interred
the Body of
ALEXANDER LINDSAY,

Surgeon and Captain-Lieutenant of the Regiment of Roxburgh and Selkirkshire Light Dragoons, who was unfortunately drowned in the Jed on the 3rd Sept., 1797, in the 28th year of his age.

In testimony of the high respect and affectionate attachment to his memory this monument is erected in his name."

To get a portrait of Isabella Lindsay, one cannot do better than describe her in Burns' own words:—"A good-humoured, amiable girl, rather short 'et emboupoint,' but handsome, and extremely graceful—beautiful hazel eyes, full of spirit and sparkling with delicious moisture—an engaging face—"un tout ensemble" that speaks her of the first order of female minds—her sister, a bonnie, strappin', rosy, sonsie lass. Shake myself loose, after several unsuccessful efforts, of Mrs — and Miss —, and somehow or other get hold of Miss Lindsay's arm. My heart is thawed into melting pleasure after being so long frozen up in the Greenland bay of indifference amid the noise and nonsense of Edinburgh. Miss seems very pleased with my bardship's distinguishing her; and after some slight qualms, which I could easily mark, she sets the titter round at defiance, and kindly allows me to keep my hold; and when parted by the ceremony of my introduction to Dr Somerville, she met me half, to resume my situation. 'Nota Bene'—the poet within a point and a half of being—in love—I am afraid my bosom is still nearly as much tinder as ever."

Reference has been made to Dr Somerville. Before he came to Jedburgh he had been minister of Minto for some years, enjoying the friendship of Sir Gilbert Elliot. Dr Somerville and his family were much esteemed in the burgh, where he laboured long as minister of the parish. Burns alludes to Mrs Somerville as "an excellent, motherly, agreeable woman, and a fine family."

When in Jedburgh. Burns took occasion to visit his friend, Mrs Scott, at Wauchope, breakfasting by the way with Dr Elliot, "an agreeable, good-hearted, climate-beaten old veteran, in the medical line, now retired to a romantic but rather moorish place, on the banks of the Rule." His host accompanied him well on the way to Wauchope, where he was received in true Border style by Mrs Scott. Returning from there in the late afternoon he supped in the evening with Mr Potts.

On the morning of the last day of his stay in the town he breakfasted with Dr Somerville, where he again met Isabella Lindesay. After breakfast some of the party went to visit Esther Easton, "a very remarkable woman for reciting poetry of all kinds, and sometimes making Scotch dogerell herself." No doubt it would be on the instigation of his fair friend that the visit was paid, because Esther stayed in a house on the Lindesay property, which consisted of no less than ten different lots, which had at varying periods been bought up, after the orig-

inal Queen Mary's House had been purchased, so that now the ground was of a very compact nature.

Before leaving Jedburgh, we learn from Burns' diary that he "was waited on by the Magistrates and presented with the freedom of the burgh." There has often been doubt expressed as to the exactness of this, because there is no entry in the Council records. But other Burgess tickets have come to light which are not entered either, so that the benefit of the doubt has always been extended to the tradition. At the present time the matter is being looked into by the Provost, who, when looking through the file of the "Kelso Chronicle," came across an entry in 1843 referring to celebrations held on the anniversary of the poet's birthday. One of them referred to that held in the Spread Eagle Hotel, Hanging-ditch, Manchester, and was in the following terms:—

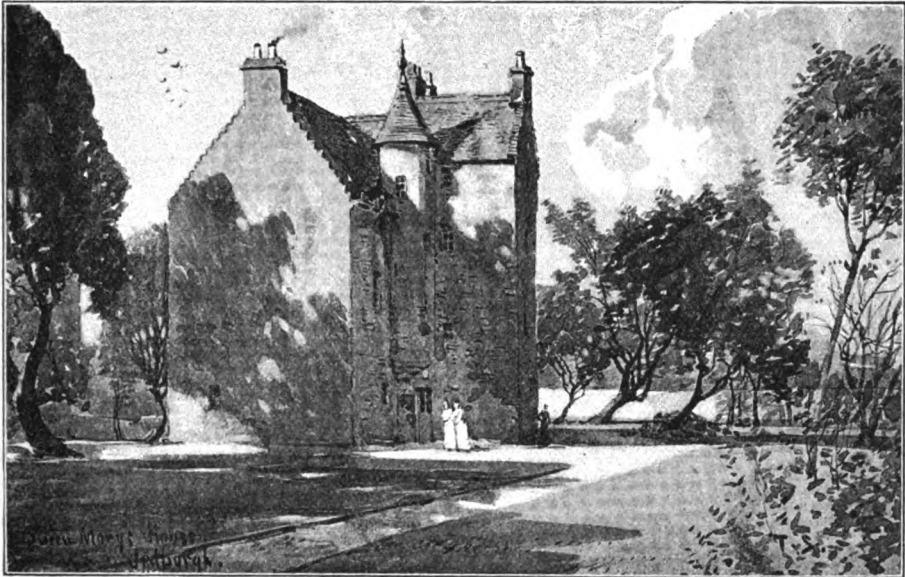
"In Manchester we observe by the 'Manchester Times' that the annual commemoration was carried out with great success and éclat. Many eloquent speeches were delivered, and toasts given. In the course of the evening Mr Falkner, of "Bradshaw's Journal," showed to the company the Burgess ticket presented to Burns by the Magistrates of Jedburgh on the occasion of the visit of the poet to this place. The relic seems to have been looked on with a good deal of interest."

Efforts have been made through varied sources to try and get on the track of the ticket, but up till the present, unfortunately, without avail. It is a matter of interest, however, to know that a few months ago there was presented to the Public Library the Burgess ticket of Dr Robert Lindesay, who received the honour in 1750. Some thirty years later he was made a free burgess of Lauder.

That same day Burns took his departure from Jedburgh and returned to Kelso, where in the evening he dined with the Farmers' Club, "all gentlemen, talking on high matters." While there he took an opportunity of visiting Newton Don in order to see Lady Harriet Don, sister to the Earl of Glencairn, "my noble patron, Quem Deus Conservet!" From Kelso he started on his visit to Dryburgh and Melrose, reaching the latter place by way of the Leader. After a short stay, to enable them to have dinner, and a view of the noble Abbey, amid very bad weather a start was made for Selkirk. In the original programme of the tour Yarrow and Ettrick were both included, but a continuance of the "rainy season" compelled alterations. Tweedside was substituted, and journey-

ing by Innerleithen, Elibank, and Earlston, he there visited the cottage of Thomas the Rhymer and Cowdenknowes. Before crossing the English Border numbers of places of interest in Berwickshire were brought under his notice, and it is quite evident that he could have made a longer stay. He arrived at Alnwick on the 27th of May. A day or two were spent in this district, and by way of Newcastle and Hexham he reached Carlisle, which place he left for Annan—and it is here that the journal abruptly closes. From other sources it is learned that he arrived at Mauchline on the 9th of June. According to Dr Currie "it will be eas-

for a celebration of Thomson's birthday at Ednam, and among others invited was Burns. "In my first enthusiasm," wrote Burns, in replying, "I overlooked every obstacle and determined to go; but I fear it will not be in my power. . . I once already made a pilgrimage up the whole course of the Tweed, and fondly would I take the same delightful journey down the windings of that charming stream." But it was not to be; a variety of circumstances prevented the wish to be present being carried out, and that tour, which would have been even more triumphal than the former, was nipped in the bud.



QUEEN MARY'S HOUSE, JEDBURGH.

ily conceived with what pleasure and pride he was received by his mother, his brothers, and sisters. He had left them poor, and comparatively friendless; he returned to them high in public estimation and easy in his circumstances. He returned to them unchanged in his ardent affections, and ready to share with them to the uttermost farthing the pittance that fortune had bestowed."

Some four years later it looked as if Burns might again visit the Borders. At that time he was resident at Ellisland, Dumfries. Lord Buchan, a great admirer of James Thomson, the author of "The Seasons," was arranging

It can easily be gathered that his visit had been a great source of delight to the poet, and it is not too much to say that the descendants of the burghers and villagers of those days recall the associations of that incursion with unalloyed pleasure. In the county town it seems reasonable to suggest that some permanent record should be erected of such an interesting time.

J. LINDSAY HILSON.

Law's like laudanum; it's much more easy to use it as a quack does, than to learn to apply it like a physician.—Guy Mannering.