

## H A R R Y   G A U L D.

AT once a poetaster of considerable local repute in his day, and a man whose habits and eccentricities of character marked him boldly out from the common herd of men, HARRY GAULD, the Rhynie poet, deserves more than passing notice at our hands. This little, active, energetic "bodie" was born at Castlehill, parish of Auchindoir, in 1791, and having equipped himself with more than the ordinary rudiments of education, and acquired considerable handiness in the craft of watch and clock making, he settled down in the latter capacity at Muir of Rhynie, sometime prior to 1828. His general intelligence and aptness in conversation soon brought him into contact with the best brains in the locality, and the common folks were wont to shake their heads rather doubtfully over the religious opinions which the watchmaker and doctor were reputed to hold in

common. Little makes a stir on such a subject in a country parish; for in after years Harry, whatever he might have been in his youth, had much the same complexion of opinion as generally passes for orthodoxy of the easy, plain-sailing order. Shortly after the publication of his "Poems and Songs, Aberdeen, 1828", he married, left Muir of Rhynie, settled down at Lumsden as watchmaker and schoolmaster, and ultimately gained the position of postmaster, with the munificent salary of £10 per annum! His married life, not being blessed with that felicity which Harry and his partner had no doubt counted on, ended in a separation, and although both lived in Lumsden all their lives, they never went together again. Both were highly respected people, and kept their private affairs to themselves. Harry for the greater part of his life lived alone, surrounded with a small menagerie of pets, which divided his affection with the few scholars on whom he exercised his tutorial powers. His habitation, at once workshop, kitchen, school-room, and post-office, though it suited well enough on ordinary occasions for all the demands made on its capacity, sometimes put him to his wit's end, when, after the Martinmas term, a host of grown-up pupils would crowd his little chamber beyond its sitting accommodation. Never altogether at a loss, Harry, on one of these occasions, hung a plank from the rafters at the sides of the wall, but the inequality in the length of the pupils' legs, when seated on this large swing, became such a source of merriment and indecorum, that the plank or the teaching had to be discarded—and the plank went. Harry's company was much sought after, especially by the young men of the place, who enjoyed his eccentricities and profited considerably by his conversation and instruction. He was kind and hospitable to such a degree, that all the casual tramps and itinerants who came within hail of Lumsden were sure to gravitate to Harry's domicile, certain that if there was little there, that little would be heartily shared with them. He had all his life practised the philosophy of squaring his wants to his income, and knew the satisfaction of wearing an old coat that was his own rather than dashing it in a new one obtained on credit. In his youth, he had been a man of indomitable pluck, and extraordinary physical endurance; yea, even in his old age, the feats he

occasionally performed, when the demand was put upon him, were truly astonishing, and many wonderful stories of what "little Harry Gauld had done" in his day are yet green in the memories of the generation who knew him. His early love of the muses never quite forsook him; for in the intervals he could snatch from his varied duties, he still clinked a few rhymes when anything struck him forcibly. He died quite suddenly while undressing for bed on the 11th December, 1873, and was interred in the churchyard of his native parish. Some years after his death, a few friends who knew and loved him well, erected a small obelisk over his ashes, to mark the resting place of the Rhyne Poet.

His volume of poems noted above, like the work of most young men of that period (and be it remembered Harry was always a young man), abounds in love verses after the manner of Tom Moore—sweet, slightly gushing, completely artificial.

Thus the lines "To Mary" are fairly typical of his love songs, whether to "Ann", "Isobel", "Clarinda", or any other real or imagined heroine who had for the time being touched him in the tenderest part—

I had a chord within my heart,  
 To love's emotion sweetly strung;  
 But, cold Indifference, by thy smart,  
 Asunder, quite, that chord was wrung.

And now its sweetest thrill is o'er,  
 And it has ceas'd to feel for ever!  
 No smile can e'er that chord restore,  
 Or warm my heart—no! never, never!

Lady! that heart, to love awake,  
 Once beat for thee, and thee alone!  
 Your coldness bade that heart to break,  
 Or turn, like thine,—as cold as stone.

His pages, however, present a considerable variety of moods, humorous, pathetic, sentimental, and serious—and in almost all of them he writes with a correctness and purity which the smaller poets of the day rarely attained to, when they essayed beyond their mother tongue. Of his humorous verses, "An Epistle to Miss ——" (on the choosing of a husband), and "Spirits, or the Devil Metamorphosed", are among the best

examples; but when we seek for those items which, relatively speaking, are of more abiding interest, we find them in “What is Man”? “The Guileless Heart”, “On the Soul”, and a few others of a like kind. From the last mentioned we quote:—

Thou secret power, immortal spark,  
Thou better part of man!  
Which wrapt in mystery, deep and dark,  
Defies all human power to mark  
Thy course, or nature scan.

Art thou a beam of heavenly light,  
From every passion free?  
A sun that shall not set in night,  
A quenchless flame for ever bright,  
Through all eternity?

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Are passions but the storms that cross,  
O'er thy unfading ray?  
The mortal part of man, the dross  
That dims thy gold's refulgent gloss  
While cumber'd with the clay?

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I know not; but in this I trust,  
That Heaven, in its own way,  
Will cleanse the gold, dispel the mist,  
And guide thee to where bright and blest,  
Thou'lt live, and live for aye!