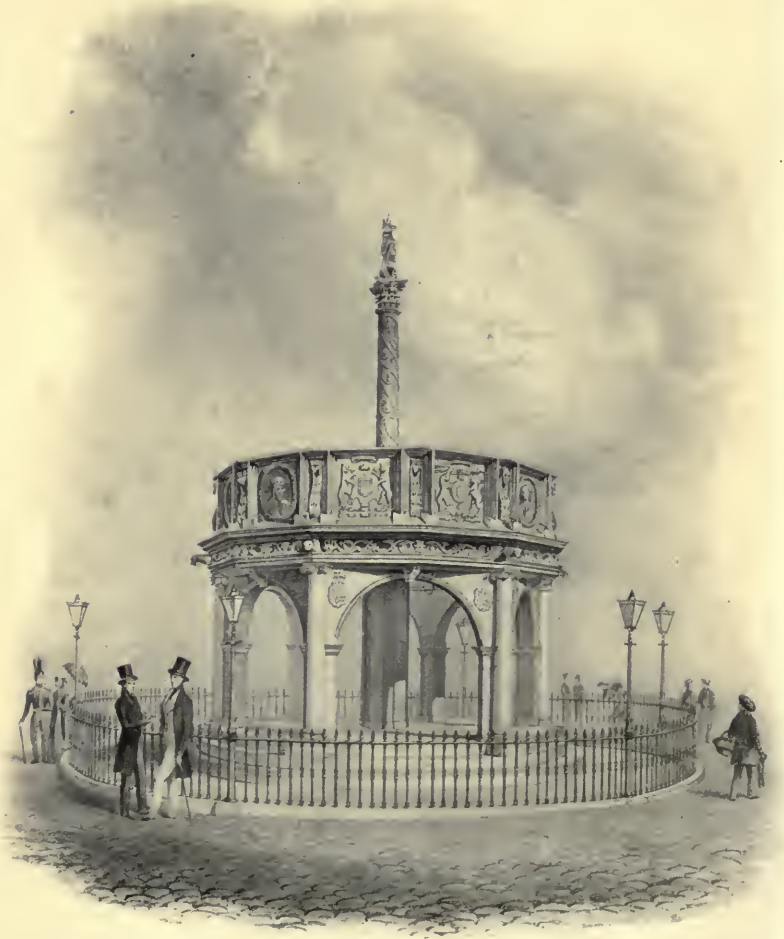
The Lone Shieling

Or The Authorship of "The Canadian Boat Song"

with other

Literary and Historical Sketches



ABERDEEN MARKET CROSS.

FROM A LITHOGRAPH BY JOHN HENDERSON (C. 1843) OF A DRAWING PREPARED IN THE OFFICE OF JOHN SMITH, CITY ARCHITECT, WHO SUPERINTENDED THE REMOVAL AND REBUILDING OF THE CROSS, 1842.

The Lone Shieling

OR

THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE
"CANADIAN BOAT SONG"

WITH OTHER

Literary and Historical Sketches

BY

G. George M. FRASER

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INTRODUCTORY.

THE authorship of "The Canadian Boat Song," one of the interesting literary problems that came over to the new century, has remained a problem because, possibly, sufficient attention was not paid to its literary history. One can only judge in such matters from a fairly full knowledge of the root facts. It will be seen, in the essay on Literary Deceptions, that successful deception was possible only so long as people confined attention to the general character and results of an enterprise; when some one person left these alone for a little, and penetrated backward to the origin of the matter, and operated there, the "mystery" usually became plain, often squalid enough. In the present attempt to solve this well known literary problem, that process has been followed, with what success readers must judge for themselves.

Then, too, a considerable part of the case, in this instance, rests on internal evidence, and it will be said

that, in literary criticism, internal evidence is unsafe. In general, that is true. As all who are familiar with literary history know, however, internal evidence may be founded upon, to discover authorship, with perfect accuracy. Students of Scott will know the considerable volume, published in 1821, and again in 1822, in which John Adolphus, working on internal evidence alone, laid bare the personality of Walter Scott as the author of the Waverley Novels, and every aspect of his literary character and method, as unerringly as if it had come from Scott himself, signed by his own hand. An interesting recent example is that recorded by Dr. Robertson Nicoll, in his "Life of Ian Maclaren," where an acute critic pierced the pseudonymity of the name, and had his success so wittily acknowledged.

It should be said that those interested in rather fuller details of the literary history of the subject may be referred to a communication by the present writer in *The "Times" Literary Supplement* of 23rd December, 1904. The detail bibliography of the subject has certain attractions, but would have been out of place in this volume, and must be reserved for a more technical work.

Most of the essays in this volume appeared in *The Aberdeen Free Press*, *The Glasgow Herald*, *The*

Scottish Review, *The Scottish Historical Review*, and *The Book-Lovers' Magazine*. I have to thank the editors of these periodicals for permission, cordially given, to republish the essays.

G. M. Fraser.

November, 1908.

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THE AUTHORSHIP OF "THE CANADIAN BOAT SONG."

I.

NOT very long ago, Lord Rosebery revived public interest in "The Canadian Boat Song," that remarkable poem which has been quoted up and down English literature for the last half-century, and he remarked on the circumstance that although its best known stanza is—he said—"One of the most exquisite that has ever been written about the Scottish exile," the question of its authorship has never been settled. That is not in any way owing to lack of attention to the subject. It has been more discussed in recent years, in Scotland and the Colonies at least, than any other literary problem; and in Scotland the discussion has ranged, at one time or other, over nearly every district of the country. Unfortunately, the discussion has almost always fallen into acutely controversial lines, whence it was hardly possible that any good could come. And it may have been due to this that one aspect of the subject has, so far, escaped notice, and some recent research along this line of inquiry seems to solve—as far as in the

nature of things a solution is possible—the problem of the authorship of the poem.

Everybody is more or less familiar with the second stanza of the poem, quoted by Lord Rosebery, expressive of the feelings of the Scottish exile in Canada—

> "From the lone shieling of the misty island
> Mountains divide us, and the waste of seas—
> Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland,
> And we in dreams behold the Hebrides:
> *Fair these broad meads—these hoary woods are grand;*
> *But we are exiles from our fathers' land.*"

In proceeding to deal with this rather interesting problem, it will be convenient to follow a two-fold course—firstly, to touch very briefly on some salient features in the literary history of the poem, considering certain claims that have been advanced relative to the authorship; and, secondly, to deal more in a positive sense with the authorship, as pertaining to a particular writer.

The poem first appeared, then, in "Blackwood's Magazine," in September, 1829, in one of the racy papers, "Noctes Ambrosianæ," paper No. 46; and was stated by the writer of the "Noctes" to be from a friend "now in Upper Canada," and as having been translated "from the Gaelic." Now, when the "Noctes Ambrosianæ" are mentioned, one immediately thinks of Professor John Wilson, otherwise "Christopher North," the genius of these remarkable papers, who played his biting scorn of men and things through them for so many years. But it has long been

well enough known that that particular paper was not written by Professor Wilson, but by John Gibson Lockhart, and so No. 46. was omitted—properly enough—from the authorised edition of Wilson's works edited by Professor Ferrier, his son-in-law, in 1855-58. Of itself, that omission has contributed to some extent to the mystification that has enveloped this whole subject—but that is one of the numerous minor issues that it is impossible to discuss at present. Meantime, it is important to note that Wilson and Lockhart actually had a literary friend in Upper Canada at that time, John Galt, author of "The Annals of the Parish," "The Provost," "The Entail," and many other works, and the interesting discovery has recently been made that in the same number of "Blackwood" in which "The Canadian Boat Song" appeared, a pseudonymous article, on the condition of Canada, was really the work of Galt. It was inevitable that this singular coincidence should give rise to a theory that Galt was the author of "The Canadian Boat Song," but a consideration of all the evidence seems to show that the coincidence was of the kind that does not arise fortuitously, but is made. That is to say, advantage was evidently taken of Galt's being in Canada at the time to suggest, in the "Noctes" of September 1829, that a friend in Upper Canada had supplied the poem.

But to proceed; the poem was reproduced in at least two publications in the dozen years subsequent to 1829—in "The Republic of Letters," of 1831, edited by Alexander Whitelaw, who had such an

admirable taste in work of that kind, and in "The Rod and Gun," of 1840, in a treatise on angling by James Wilson, the zoologist, youngest brother of Professor Wilson. It was again stated to be "from the Gaelic," but in both cases it was simply a copy from "Blackwood" of 1829. In the year 1849, however, a new element was introduced. In "Tait's Edinburgh Magazine" of that year the poem appears in an article on emigration, by one Donald Campbell, who about that time did a good deal of literary work relative to the Highlands. Campbell stated, in introducing the poem, that it was left amongst his papers by Hugh, twelfth Earl of Eglintoun, the "Sodger Hugh" of Burns's "Earnest Cry and Prayer." It was said to have been set to music by the Earl's own hand; and was again said to be "from the Gaelic," as was stated in "Blackwood" and the other publications named, the inference being that the Earl had either translated it from the Gaelic himself, or ultimately received it from someone who did. As the twelfth Earl of Eglintoun died in 1819, it is obviously an interesting question how all these various statements could be true. For if the Earl left the poem among his papers, in 1819, how did it come to be sent to the "Blackwood" group, from Canada, in 1829—sent, be it noted, by a person who, according to the "Blackwood" story, said he had heard it sung in Canada, in Gaelic, and now sent his translation of it? And, even if that impossibility were allowed to pass, how was it left to be told by Donald Campbell, on whose authority alone the Eglintoun story rests,

and who started the tale thirty years after the Earl's death? The fact is, that not one of the statements is true, either in "Blackwood," or "Tait," as will probably become fully clear in due time.

Up to the time of its appearance in "Tait's Magazine," in 1849, the poem had not attracted any particular notice. In the course of the fifties it caught the imagination of the late Dr. Boyd, of St. Andrews, better known as "A.K.H.B.," who, in treating of the Scottish Canadian Emigrants, reproduced the famous second stanza in "Fraser's Magazine," in the papers afterwards republished as the "Recreations of a Country Parson," composed in that lonely, beautiful little manse of Irongray, in Nithsdale. Dr. Boyd, like almost everybody who has attempted it, quoted the lines incorrectly, and, evidently going on the statement in "Tait's Magazine," he spoke of the stanza as "Lord Eglintoun's truthful lines."

The person, however, to whom is primarily due the extraordinary vogue of this poem in this country and the colonies, is, it cannot be doubted, Dr. Norman Macleod. In the first volume of "Good Words," 1860, Norman Macleod discussed "The Highlanders at Home and Abroad." He spoke of the undying love of the Highland Emigrant for his Scottish home as "one of the most interesting and remarkable features of the 'Highlander Abroad,'" and he proceeded to quote the familiar second stanza of "The Canadian Boat Song." Dr. Macleod had seen the poem in the "Noctes" of "Blackwood," for he

speaks of it as "Wilson's Song," and he obviously quoted it from memory, for his version of the stanza, and of another portion of the poem quoted in the course of his article, was very far from accurate.

From this time onward the "shieling" stanza of the poem, as it came to be called, appears frequently in literature, but only a few of the more interesting cases can be noticed. It was included by Dr. Charles Rogers in "The Modern Scottish Minstrel," from "Blackwood," and in at least one edition of the "Minstrel" attributed to Lockhart. It was quoted by Dr. Cameron Lees, of St. Giles, Edinburgh, in "Stronbuy," 1881, and quoted, as he has explained, from memory, with the usual result. Robert Louis Stevenson was very fond of the "shieling" stanza, and quoted Norman Macleod's incorrect version in "The Silverado Squatters," in 1883. Error seems to have dogged Stevenson above most in connection with this matter, for he not only quoted an incorrect version of the stanza, but he quoted even that inaccurately, and in his biography volume in the "Famous Scots" series, a third version is given correcting the others, which agrees neither with them, nor exactly with the original. In the same year that "The Silverado Squatters" appeared, Miss Gordon Cumming quoted the stanza in her volume "From the Hebrides to the Himalayas"; and William Black, who was able to quote in his "Green Pastures and Piccadilly," a portion of Thomas Moore's "Canadian Boat Song" with perfect accuracy, tried the "shieling" stanza of this poem in his novel, "Stand Fast Craig Royston,"

with the result that every one of the four lines he quoted is wrong. It was in 1885 that Mr. Chamberlain quoted his remarkable version in a speech at Inverness—not so remarkable, however, but that a Highland admirer afterwards defended it as being a decided improvement on the original. But the errors committed over the quotation of this poem are really almost incredible. In a popular literary periodical the first line of the familiar stanza with its "lone shieling of the misty island" was quoted as the "dim skirling of the misty island" which was not very surprising; but in a recent encyclopædic work on English Literature, deservedly of high standing, the editor rightly points out that this poem is almost always quoted inaccurately, then going on to quote the fatal stanza, he not only quotes it incorrectly, but by some unaccountable lapse of memory he speaks of this second stanza as "the original first verse." It would be quite tedious to pursue this part of the subject. Only this may be said, that the authorship has ever been the puzzle, and the persons to whom the authorship has been ascribed are almost as various as the versions of the poem.

And now, with regard to the authorship, the first thing to be done is to dispose of the ever-recurring and confusing statement that the poem is a translation "from the Gaelic." This statement is probably mainly responsible for the fact that the problem of the authorship has remained so long unsolved, for it has sent inquirers looking for the source of the poem in the wrong place. The poem is not a Gaelic, but an

English composition. In all the many inquiries that have been made with the view of getting at a Gaelic original no one has ever seen or heard of such, or seen or heard of anyone who did. In discussions of the question it has been stated that Professor Mackinnon, of the Chair of Celtic Literature in Edinburgh University, had seen a Gaelic original of the poem. That is not so. Professor Mackinnon, in a note received from him recently on the subject, says—

> "I saw, many years ago, a Gaelic version of this song. . . . . When reading these verses I came to the conclusion, rightly or wrongly, that they were not the original of the English version."

Then we have Dr. Donald Masson, a Gaelic authority, who has written a good deal on "The Canadian Boat Song," although he has been unable to come nearer a definite conclusion than that the poem was not the work of Lord Eglintoun. Dr. Masson says—

> "So far as the best efforts of keen, well-directed research have yet borne fruit, no man knows the Gaelic original of this song. . . . . Hitherto, so far as research has gone, here, or in Canada, the original Gaelic is unknown to Gaelic scholars. . . . . For eight months in 1872, I lived among Canadian Highlanders all the way from the Georgian Bay to Cape Breton, but I never heard a snatch of anything that looked in the least like the Gaelic original of the Canadian Boat Song. With Highlanders I often sleighed on the ice across the lower part of Lake Ontario with the Gael of Gaels, Evan M'Coll, the poet.

> I have sat at their festive board and slept in their prophet's chamber in many backwood settlements and growing villages, as well as in the luxurious homes of Montreal, Kingston, Toronto, Hamilton, and Ottawa. . . . . But never, in all these journeyings, or when, after our Gaelic preachings in the open forest we all but fell on each other's necks, and wept the exile's tears—never, when, if ever, 'our hearts were true, our hearts were Highland,' did I ever hear a whisper of that lost chord in the old Gaelic tongue."

After that, it will be necessary to quote, on this point, only one other authority, who goes even further than Dr. Masson. It is Mr. Neil Munro, author of "The Lost Pibroch," "John Splendid," "Doom Castle," and other bewitching Highland sketches, who has also been at the discussion of "The Canadian Boat Song." Neil Munro says—

> "The poem, though always said to be a translation of a Gaelic song by a Canadian exile, was never anything of the kind. It is beautiful, but it is, in its thought, in its fancy, utterly unlike any Gaelic poem I know, and the thought and the language of it are so manifestly simultaneous in their inspiration that it is inconceivable it can be a translation in the commonly accepted sense of the term."

As the poem is not a translation "from the Gaelic" then, its author must be sought among English writers. Now, among all those who have been named at one time or another as the likely author, attention need be directed to four only—the Earl of Eglintoun, John Galt, John Gibson Lockhart, and Professor Wilson. It is usually an unprofitable duty attempting to prove a negative, and so with

reference to three of these only the briefest statement of one or two circumstances must suffice.

First with regard to the Earl of Eglintoun. Almost everybody has now given up the once rather widely prevalent idea that he was the author of the poem. Nobody, indeed, would ever have suggested it but for Donald Campbell's statement in "Tait's Magazine," and the value of it may be judged from these facts—the Earl of Eglintoun, although remarkable for his military and public spirit, had no turn for literature, and "The Canadian Boat Song" is admittedly a brief literary masterpiece; the Earl of Eglintoun was, in politics, an austere Conservative, whereas the poem breathes a democratic spirit throughout, and in one stanza makes a direct attack on Highland landlords for the eviction of their tenants—

> "that a degenerate Lord might boast his sheep";

and, finally, if such a composition had been left among the Eglintoun papers, the Eglintoun family would have known of it, and the present Earl of Eglintoun has no knowledge of anything of the kind.

With reference to John Galt the case is equally clear. The only ground on which a claim on his behalf has been made is the coincidence already referred to, which, like coincidences in general, should be regarded as a caution, rather than as a guide. The writers of the "Noctes Ambrosianæ" were very fond of literary fictions—indeed, the papers were

founded on such—and the reference to the friend "now in Upper Canada" was one of them. It is not necessary to enter into a consideration of Galt's work in this connection, for it has not been seriously contended, even by those who have suggested Galt as the writer of this poem, that his known poetical work is at all comparable to it, but one specially interesting piece of testimony may be given. Mr. P. J. Anderson, of the University Library, Aberdeen, to whom I am indebted for some extremely interesting notes in the bibliography of this subject, informs me that he once discussed this question with the late Canon Ainger, who edited some of Galt's work, and Canon Ainger (I quote his words) "did not think Galt could have written the lines." That may be taken as the opinion of an expert, so far as the work of Galt is concerned.*

John Gibson Lockhart has recently been growing more in favour as the likely author of the poem, for it is admitted that he was the writer of the particular paper in which the poem first appeared. And, yet, * but for that single circumstance—which in the case of the "Noctes Ambrosianæ," so largely a joint pro-

* It is perhaps unnecessary to add that in his "Autobiography"—to which he added a bibliography—Galt made no claim for the authorship of this poem; and one interesting little bit of evidence I owe to Mr. Allan Park Paton, of Greenock, the octogenarian. Mr. Paton was a personal friend of Galt's, and he informed me shortly before his death that he got from Galt a copy of his poems, but never knew Galt claim the authorship of this poem.

duction, is of practically no significance—Lockhart would have been less likely to be suggested as the author of the poem than even John Galt. We all know this man—of strong individuality, indeed, whose character is stamped not merely on one of the very greatest biographies in the language, but, what is more remarkable, on even his periodical work, for it needs no great literary instinct to enable one to put his finger on Lockhart's work in the "Quarterly Review" in the long period during which he was editor. Lockhart's "Spanish Ballads" are very polished productions, as one would expect. And he could write not merely dainty, but sometimes touching verses, as, for example, the simple lyric that was such a favourite with Carlyle—beginning—

> "When youthful faith has fled,
> Of living take thy leave;
> Be constant to the dead,
> The dead can not deceive."

But all the strong character and literary skill of Lockhart would never enable him to write "The Canadian Boat Song"—to portray, as from the very inner heart, the feeling of supreme melancholy, of longing remembrance and desire for the native glens, and hills, and streams characteristic of the Scottish Highlander in exile. Only one man, of all that have been mentioned, could have done it, and we shall now proceed to consider the poem as the work of Professor Wilson, and his alone.

"THE CANADIAN BOAT SONG."

II.

IN proceeding to deal with "The Canadian Boat Song" as wholly the work of Professor Wilson, it will be necessary to make repeated reference to the original, and so it will be convenient to quote the complete poem exactly as first published in "Blackwood" in 1829—

Listen to me, as when ye heard our father
Sing long ago the song of other shores—
Listen to me, and then in chorus gather
All your deep voices as ye pull your oars:
Fair these broad meads—these hoary woods are grand;
But we are exiles from our fathers' land.

From the lone shieling of the misty island
Mountains divide us, and the waste of seas—
Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland,
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides:
Fair these broad meads, etc.

We ne'er shall tread the fancy-haunted valley,
Where 'tween the dark hills creeps the small clear stream,
In arms around the patriarch banner rally,
Nor see the moon on royal tombstones gleam:
Fair these broad meads, etc.

When the bold kindred, in the time long-vanish'd,
Conquer'd the soil and fortified the keep,—
No seer foretold the children would be banish'd,
That a degenerate Lord might boast his sheep:
Fair these broad meads, etc.

Come foreign rage—let Discord burst in slaughter!
O then for clansman true, and stern claymore—
The hearts that would have given their blood like water,
Beat heavily beyond the Atlantic roar:
Fair these broad meads—these hoary woods are grand;
But we are exiles from our fathers' land.

In considering Professor Wilson as the author of this work, it is necessary to recall an aspect of Wilson's character that has been almost lost sight of by the world. It is said that this remarkable poem, with its pensive longing for the fatherland as of a child for its parent, its dreamy imagery, its intensity of patriotism, could not be the work of the breezy, jovial "Christopher North," who seemed never so happy as in the enjoyment of congenial company at table, pouring out his strong, graphic humour, or scathing denunciations of political or literary opponents. But this could only be said by those who really do not know John Wilson. It has been this man's strange fate to be judged by a rough quality of work which was really not so characteristic as work of an entirely different kind; to pass for a kind of roysterer, when, as a matter of fact, his loudness and broad humour, and love of company, when not assumed for merely literary purposes, were but facets in a many-sided, brilliant character. Does anyone who has not paid the closest attention to literary

history think nowadays of "Christopher North" as a sentimentalist? Yet, what said De Quincey, who lived in Wilson's own house, and knew him most intimately? Writing to Lockhart, relative to Wilson's projected book on the English Lakes, De Quincey assumes that Wilson will treat the subject with great variety, judging from the extraordinary activity of his mind—"*Whenever he does not wilfully throw it asleep under the sentimental, which, to my thinking, is his evil genius.*" This, too, is the judgment of Jeffrey and his *entourage*, and there can be no doubt that this comes nearer to Wilson's true character than the personality by which he is best known. Wilson was always most himself when wandering alone by the Windermere he loved, or in the dark glens or mountains of his native Scotland, which he loved even more. "It was," says his daughter, in the "Memoir" (I quote his daughter's words) "a frequent practice of his, and continued to be indulged in for many years of his after life, namely, the habit of walking in solitude during the hours of night. In spite of his generally even flow of good spirits, and his lively enjoyment of social pleasures, it seemed as if, in the depth of his heart, he craved some influence more soothing and elevating than even the most congenial companionship could afford." This shows us a person very different from the roystering Christopher North, but we can hardly doubt, when we think of the tales and of the poetical work, that it is more like the real John Wilson, the lover of the solitudes, who, on rare occasions, had companionship even of the presence—

"Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns."

For, as an almost necessary complement, there was in Wilson, beyond the enjoyment of solitude, a very genuine love of nature. He understood nature as few did, for he had the rare gift of knowing exactly the quality of the pleasure he derived from his association with scenes of natural beauty. In approaching nature he combined in a curious way—but quite in keeping with other antithetical features of his massive character—the quality of analysis with the wider appreciation of general effects. And he was not merely fond of nature; he was passionately a lover of the typically Scottish scenery of the west—the towering mountain, the dark, impressive glen, the placid and secluded loch, the bold headlands, yielding doggedly and slowly, to the persistent, overwhelming mastery of the sea. One remembers how this feature of his character comes out in those "Lines on a Recovery from a Dangerous Illness," where as he roves along the margin of the English lake, he finds that—

> "The image of my earlier years,
> 'Mid Scotland's mountains, dim my eyes with tears,
> And the heart's day-dream oft will lingering dwell
> On that wild region which she loves so well."

These lines express, too, the last conspicuous features of Wilson's character it is necessary to deal with in this place. Along with his love of solitude, and a passion for nature, he had, what is really the chief characteristic of "The Canadian Boat Song," namely, a strong vein of intensest patriotism for his own grey land, which, as Stevenson says of the

patriotism of every Scot abroad, is the most inscrutable of all the mysteries of the human heart. These feelings, developed strangely amid the noisy whirr of life that moved about him most of his days, formed, it cannot be doubted, the roots of his character, although the issues are so largely hidden by features of a different quality. And this, too, has to be remembered, that in this very juxtaposition of the finer and grosser qualities we have, as it were, the typical expression of Wilson's character, as a whole. When we remember that in his manuscript note-books the most touching passages in his poems stand side by side with jottings of the price of sitting hens, and game cocks; that in the same part of the Magazine would appear some of his broadest humour, and a piece of his most delicate poetry, we shall not be surprised that the man who kept the reading public so long in terror of his satire, or amused at his fun, should also give to the world what Lord Rosebery characterised as one of the most exquisite lyrics of the Scottish exile that has ever been written.

Just one other preliminary point relative to Wilson may be noticed. It is sometimes asked—and the question is perfectly pertinent—why, if he was the author of "The Canadian Boat Song," he did not contradict the statement in "Tait's Magazine," in 1849, relative to the Earl of Eglintoun. Several answers might be given, but two will probably be held sufficient. In the first place, as already pointed out, the poem attracted no particular attention until after the death of both Wilson and Lockhart in 1854, and

by the time of the statement in "Tait" both men had a weighty enough load of personal troubles, apart from everything else, to preclude any idea of taking steps publicly to claim a comparatively unheard of poem of twenty years previously. Secondly, and more important, any public claim of the kind, at that particular time, was out of the question. It was a period of intense political feeling. Revolutions were breaking out all over Europe; in this country feeling had been inflamed to an acute pitch over the Chartist agitation, and other political troubles. For Professor Wilson, who had long forsaken the democratic idea that produced "The Canadian Boat Song," as well as many sharp things in the "Noctes" in which it appeared, for him to claim its authorship then would have been to bring a storm about his ears for which, at that time, he certainly had no heart. Not only so, but it would have involved Lockhart, who, as editor of the "Quarterly Review," and the chief publicist on the Conservative side, had less reason than Wilson even for any awkward disclosure of the kind. And so the occasion was quietly allowed to pass, and the subject left as a problem for the next half-century.

We come, at length, to consider briefly the positive evidence for Wilson's authorship of "The Canadian Boat Song," testing that composition by his other acknowledged work.

And, first, it might be interesting to glance at the mere mannerisms of the poem, comparing it, for this purpose, with Wilson's "Evening in Furness Abbey," which was composed at the same time, in the autumn

of 1829, and appeared in the same issue of "Blackwood" as "The Canadian Boat Song." To begin with, the lavish use of the dash in the punctuation in the twenty lines of the poem, and in the same number of lines in "Furness Abbey," is most curiously alike. So also is the use of capital letters throughout the two poems to accentuate the personification of Discord, or Night, or Gloaming, and so forth. Although these points are interesting, however, they are not, of course, of very special significance. We get a little closer to essential things when we consider the curious trick shown in "The Canadian Boat Song" of eliding the "e" of the past tense in such words as "banished," "vanished," and so on. Thus, the fourth stanza of the poem runs—

> "When the bold kindred in the time long-*vanish'd*
> *Conquer'd* the soil, and fortified the keep—
> No seer foretold the children would be *banish'd*.

Put alongside of this the following three lines from "Furness Abbey"—always keeping in view that the poems belong to exactly the same period of composition—

> "What though Imagination's wings be *chain'd* ?
> *Form'd* are the fetters of soft balmy flowers,
> *Gather'd* by angel-hands in Paradise."

It is a little difficult to believe that this is mere coincidence. It is just possible, however, that it is, and so we shall leave entirely out of account merely superficial mannerisms, and come to the very fibre of the poem. Now, anyone who knows Wilson well,

knows his characteristic use of odd, or quaint, words or phrases, certain of which are, in themselves, a touch-stone of his work. He was, himself, very conscious of this, and in one of the "Noctes Ambrosianæ" he makes the Shepherd very pointedly say—descriptive of Wilson's own articles in the magazine—

> "There's aye sic a fine dash o' nature in them—Sic nice touches o' description—and, every now and then, a bit curious and peculiar word—jist ae word and nae mair, that lets you into the spirit of the whole design."

This characteristic use of a peculiar word, or phrase, is found in its most inartistic form, in its mere bald repetition, as if it were one of the common words of the language. Sometimes—and to point this out is the merest justice to one who often shows the qualities of a true poet—this peculiar and characteristic phrase becomes the complete and very beautiful expression of an idea. Thus, Wilson often uses the simile of music sleeping in the strings—the silent resting strings—of the harp. He says in "The Past"—

> "Heaven's airs amid the harp-strings dwell."

This is slightly varied, and expanded, in the following—

> "Oh, there are thoughts
> That slumber in the soul, like sweetest sounds
> Amid the harp's loose strings."

And we have it in the "Hymn to Spring" in its most beautiful form—

> " Even as a harp, when some wild plaintive strain
> Goes with the hand that touched it, still retains
> The soul of music sleeping in its strings."

Now, let us turn to " The Canadian Boat Song." If we look up and down the poem for this " bit curious and peculiar word," as the Shepherd says, we find it in the first line of the refrain—in the word " hoary " as applied to the woods of Canada—

> " Fair these broad meads—these hoary woods are grand.'

It is a singularly unusual use of the word. Hoary heads, or hoary walls, or hoary castles we know intimately, for they are the common equipment of mostly all poets and descriptive writers. But where do we find the terms applied to woods, as in " The Canadian Boat Song "? It has been pointed out to me, indeed, that this remarkable phrase " hoary trees " occurs in Dryden's Virgil—and that is very significant, for when we remember how John Wilson delighted to quote from the classics in his magazine papers we can hardly doubt whence he got his idea of the " hoary woods." But in English poetry of Wilson's time it seems impossible to obtain another example of the use of such a phrase, except in one remarkable instance, and that is in Wilson's own poem of " Furness Abbey," which it is always necessary to keep in mind was composed at the same time as " The Canadian Boat Song," and appeared in the same issue of " Blackwood's Magazine." In the opening lines of " Furness Abbey " he tells of a spirit " that hung amid the hush of the lone valley," and this apparition, as the poet looked, gradually became transformed—

> "Slowly and waveringly it seemed to change
> Into a hoary edifice, o'erhung
> By *hoary trees.*"

We have here clearly got beyond a mere matter of coincidence. It is the same unusual expression, used in precisely the same sense as in "The Canadian Boat Song." And probably from this alone we should be entitled to conclude that as Wilson wrote the one poem, he, and he alone, could have written the other, for it is morally impossible that two different writers should have clothed the same idea in the same most unusual words for the same issue of a magazine.

But it may be just as well to carry the matter a little further. And having got into the region of Wilson's ideas, it is worth noticing that this conception of "hoary woods"—that is, ancient, unchanging, majestic forests—is expressed by him repeatedly throughout his poetical work. He has it in the "Hymn to Spring" thus—

> "Those who have wandered in their musing walks
> With the great poets, in their spirits feel
> No change on earth, but see the unaltered woods
> Laden with beauty."

And, on a close examination, it will be observed that the expression "these hoary woods are grand," in "The Canadian Boat Song" is a concentration of this stanza in the "Address to a Wild Deer"—

> "E'en now, in the pomp of their prime, I behold
> O'erhanging the desert, the forests of old!
> So gorgeous their verdure, so solemn their shade,
> Like the heavens above them, they never may fade."

It is only further to be remarked, at this point, that this use of the word "hoary," denoting old and majestic, is to be found practically anywhere in Wilson's poetry, particularly of the 1829 period. In "Edderline's Dream," with which Wilson gladdened the heart of Allan Cunningham by making it a contribution to Allan's annual, a few months prior to the publication of "The Canadian Boat Song," Wilson applies the epithet "hoary" to the sea, almost as unusual a phrase as the companion phrase of "hoary woods"; and in "Unimore," on which Wilson was engaged at the same period, he speaks of the towering mountains as "blind-faced cliffs and hoary crags"; and again, in the same poem—

> "He hails the Castle of his ancestors,
> And all its hoary towers."

But we pass on to one or two other interesting points. One of the most effective lines in "The Canadian Boat Song" is the first line of the oft-quoted second stanza—

> "From the lone shieling of the misty island."

It carries one back almost wistfully to the distant hut of the shepherd, on the lonely hillside. It is, in a sense, the keyline of the poem. In a patriotic retrospect it is admirable, and it is an idea that Wilson used with quite remarkable frequency, clothed usually in language strikingly like the language of "The Canadian Boat Song." He asks, in "Unimore," where are the two spirits sent to minister to the sorrowing mother—

"And where do they,
In hut or shieling, in the central gloom
Of woods, or in the mountain's secret top,
Now linger?"

Or, again, in the same poem, when he tells of the inability of the Lady of the Castle to walk with Unimore—

"No power hath she, to shieling and to hut,
With life besprinkling the wide wilderness,
With him to walk."

Or lastly, to come back to "Furness Abbey," the poet tells us that—

"Morn found me on the lonely mountain tops, and Night
Descended on me in the glens, where hut
Or shieling hid me from the stars."

It is the same throughout Wilson's poetry—loneliness, lack of human habitation, a solitary shieling—these are ever in view. Sometimes, even the absence of the shieling is remarked, as in "Solitude"—

"No shepherd's cot is here—no shieling,"

but, as a rule, the lonely shieling appears, most characteristically described in "Lines written at a Well"—

"There is but one lone cot
Beyond this well—it is inhabited
By an old shepherd."

In Wilson's prose work, of course, the same idea and phraseology may be found repeatedly. He had a

whole article on it—"A Highland Cottage"—in Whitelaw's "Casquet of Literary Gems," published in that very year, 1829. He has a good deal of it in his essay "Streams," first published in 1826—"A shieling!" he exclaims, "There is but this one beautiful break in the solitude, and there the shepherd has built his summer nest!" Again—"Sacred to every Highlander is the shieling where his daughter or his sister may be singing through the summer months her solitary song," and so forth. On this point alone it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the hand that wrote these passages was the same that traced the separation—

> "From the lone shieling of the misty island."

Having said so much on one of the finest lines of the poem, it will be as well to glance for a moment at one of the very few ineffective and puzzling lines. In the third stanza the Highlander laments that no more shall he

> "In arms around the patriarch banner rally,
> Nor see the moon on royal tombstones gleam."

What is the meaning of this last line? One can well understand, and enter into the spirit of, the other references in the stanza—the regret of the Highlander that never again shall he tread the fancy-haunted valley, where the small, clear stream creeps between the dark hills; and even sympathise with his longing to rally round the "patriarch banner," meaning, presumably, the old clan banner; but it is not so

easy to explain the exiled Highlander's longing to see the moonlight gleaming on royal tombstones. It seems a forced image on any reading. What royal tombstones had he in mind? or, what royal tombstones did he ever see the moonlight gleaming on in Arran, as the introductory remarks in "Blackwood's Magazine," in 1829, suggest? On one occasion, in the discussion of this subject, a Member of Parliament held that the tombstones were those of the Macdonalds of the Isles, formerly the rulers of Islay, but that was in connection with an attempt to show that the poem was written by the Earl of Eglintoun, who was distantly related to the Macdonalds, and along with that idea the other one falls to the ground. It has been suggested, with more reason, that the royal tombstones of "The Canadian Boat Song" are those of the ancient Scottish Kings in the island of Iona. It is possible, and as to that this has to be said, that if the tombs of Iona are meant, it is just the literary-historical kind of reference that Professor Wilson might readily enough have made. But it is also possible to explain the reference in another way. The moonlight on the royal tombstones is in all probability a creation of the poet's imagination, and the curious thing is that moonlight on tombstones was in Professor Wilson's imagination a great deal, and is one of the most familiar images in his poetical work. Indeed, although it is strange to find it employed in "The Canadian Boat Song," it would have been still stranger, perhaps, to find it omitted. He tells, in the "Voice of Departed Friendship," that the day before

his friend died, they both sat in the churchyard—

> "Pale in the moonlight that was coldly sleeping
> On heaving sod, and marble monument."

Sometimes, the moonlight had just passed, as in "Waking Dreams," where—

> "Haply, now, the churchyard is a glade,
> Where, by the feet of wandering wild-deer prest,
> The flowers in morning dew are glistening o'er his breast."

As a usual thing, however, the moonlight and the churchyard, or its tombs, come together inevitably. In the "City of the Plague"—

> "A ghost,
> In all the loveliness on earth it wore,
> Walks through the moonlight of the cemetery";

and in "The Hymn," in the same poem, he sings—

> "The loving ones we loved the best
> Like music all are gone!
> And the wan moonlight bathes in rest
> Their monumental stone."

On this aspect of the subject it is impossible not to refer to what may possibly have been the genesis of Wilson's idea of moonlight gleaming on a royal tombstone. We have already seen that when "The Canadian Boat Song" appeared, "Blackwood's Magazine" contained also his "Evening in Furness Abbey," written that Autumn. "Mr. W."—writes his wife, to a friend, at that time—"has been in rather a poetical vein of late, and I rather think there will be a pretty long poem of his in the next number of

"Blackwood," entitled, "An Evening in Furness Abbey." The pretty long poem duly appeared, and the more famous shorter one as well. In "Furness Abbey" the poet tells that in the Abbey grounds—

> "Close to our feet an antique tombstone lay."

At first the moon had not appeared :

> "Moonless as yet, without one single star,
> Lay the white amplitude of space serene."

But it was drawing very near to moonlight, for he adds :

> "It was that hour
> When Gloaming comes on hand-in-hand with Night
> Like dark twin-sisters, and the fairer Day
> Is loth to disappear."

In this semi-twilight the sculptured figures on the antique tombstone begin to impress themselves on the vision of the poet. He sees the mail-clad figure of a warrior stretched out, in height heroic : and across its feet lies the figure of a young female, in simple vestments. And now we approach the gleaming of the moon, for at this stage the poet describes how—

> "delicately, in its dove-like calm,
> Her bosom now did in the moonlight lie."

It is finally revealed that the young lady is the unhappy paramour of this warrior, who was a descendant of kings, and, even in death, she dare not be represented as by his side. And so—

> "In lowliest guise,
> As if unworthy by the side to be
> Of that great lord, whose lineage high was drawn
> From crowned kings."

It was while his mind was partly occupied with this episode that Wilson must have written "The Canadian Boat Song," and it can hardly be doubted that in this particular twelfth line of that composition we have a flying fragment, as it were, from the larger work, where the moonlight gleaming on the royal tombstone is at least in keeping with the other imagery of the poem.

It seems unnecessary to examine further. The other characteristic language and ideas of "The Canadian Boat Song" may be found, perhaps not so pointedly, scattered up and down the poetical work of John Wilson. They mostly belong to the same period of composition—necessarily so, for, apart from his early work, Wilson did not turn his mind seriously to poetical composition till that very year of 1829; and his poetical work was completed in 1837, the year of his wife's death. In that short period he produced a great variety of poems. Among the earliest and most sincere of his productions of the period, as it certainly stands out as his most brilliant composition, we may venture to place "The Canadian Boat Song," which has so touched the imagination of the Scot in every part of the world.

SOME NOTABLE LITERARY DECEPTIONS

SOME NOTABLE LITERARY DECEPTIONS.

LITERARY mystification, as every one knows, may be of two kinds—innocent or wicked, and it is certainly creditable to English literature that, with so much of the one, the centuries should have produced so comparatively little of the other. No one thinks any worse of a writer, even after he has attained to eminence, because his earlier books appeared under an assumed name. The mystery of the authorship of the Waverley Novels injured no one; George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë and Dickens and Thackeray—indeed all our best, have at one time or another ventured upon pseudonymity or anonymity, and it is not remembered against them by the reading public. Even in our own day, we are thankful that, having lost "Gavin Ogilvie," we have made a closer acquaintance with Mr. J. M. Barrie; although it must be allowed that the wonder one felt as to the personality of "Fiona Macleod" added somewhat to the charm of a style that might not have been quite so alluring under a known and familiar name. Only one literary mystery of this kind, perhaps, remains to be cleared up. The writer who, under the name of "David Lyall," continues to entertain a really vast

constituency with simple, kindly stories of domestic life, is completely unknown to his readers. Many guesses have been made as to his—or her—identity, all uniformly wrong, and it will be disappointing, probably, to the many ladies and gentlemen who wish to know "David Lyall's" real name to be informed that he is not the celebrated personage so many of them seem to imagine, but a very excellent private business gentleman, partner in a firm that has done a great deal to educate and refine the public taste.

Underlying the mere use of a pseudonym there is, of course, no sinister element of deception any more than in the case of the usual variety of the literary hoax. Of this latter kind of thing many curious instances are on record; but the peril of this amusement lies in the fact that it is seldom indulged in, even with the most innocent intention, without doing real damage to some one.

The ballad literature of the country, in spite of the marvellous labours of Professor Child and his numerous correspondents, contains many spurious compositions which it is now impossible, probably, to distinguish from the genuine article. It was so easy, not so very long ago, to pass a clever, spurious ballad, when ballad-hunting was a popular literary recreation. The ablest editor was not safe against imposition—sometimes, indeed, he was the easier duped that his professional acumen was so likely to disappear in the joy of a new "discovery." Peter Buchan of Peterhead, that strange, indefatigable personage, who

brought together *The Ancient Ballads and Songs of the North of Scotland*, with many another less meritorious work, was especially prone to deception in this way. Not, indeed, but that Peter was ready enough to make, or repair, a ballad when necessity arose, and perhaps this made him the less critical when an interesting composition came his way. Peter was suspected of tampering sometimes with genuine ballads which he had collected, and the late Professor Grub, author of *The Ecclesiastical History of Scotland*, used to tell how on one occasion this propensity in Peter was put to the test in an amusing way. It was either John Hill Burton, or Joseph Robertson, or both together, who composed a ballad after the ancient manner, and transmitted it to Peter Buchan as a "find," with gaps duly marked by asterisks representing "lost" stanzas. It was the ballad "Chil Ether," and the lines sent to Peter as a "fragment" began :—

> "Chil Ether and Lady Maisey
> Were baith born at ae birth ;
> They loved each other tenderlie
> 'Boon everything on earth."

The unwary Peter fell hopelessly into the trap. He not only published the ballad as genuine, but added a note that he had been able to recover the missing stanzas. These he had written himself, and one of them, the following, will show Peter's qualities as a ballad-maker :—

> "The ley likesna the summer shower,
> Nor girse the morning dew,
> Better, dear Lady Maisey,
> Than Chil Ether loves you."

Peter Buchan was, however, more or less a willing dupe. Other cases there are of deception practised on ballad editors of a different calibre. A person may see, about once in a lifetime, an extremely rare tract bearing on its title-page—"Two Ancient Ballads. Robin Hood's Courtship with Jack Cade's Daughter; and The Freiris Tragedie. Aberdeen: Published for and sold by William Robertson, High Street." The imprint carries no date; as a matter of fact, it should be 1822; but as there never was a "High Street" in Aberdeen—although there did happen to be a William Robertson, a bookseller, in Broad Street at that time—the error of omission on the title-page is venial. The chap-book was really printed in Edinburgh, under the direction of James Maidment and sundry other wits of Edinburgh as a catch for Pitcairn, of the *Criminal Trials*, who rather plumed himself on his knowledge and perspicacity in the matter of ballad literature, and allowed very little credit for the knowledge of anybody else. The ballad entitled "Robin Hood's Courtship"—the daring addition to its title was no stumbling-block to the eager collector—opened in this way:—

> "Brume, brume on ze hill,
> Brume on ze hill for me, oh;
> Ye blossomis of ze yellow brume,
> Are pleasan for to zee, oh.
>
> My native hill is dychte wi' fleuris,
> Sae blomand for to view, oh;
> With aureat glades of sacred brume,
> An' nows of heathery blue, oh.
> Brume, brume, etc."

And so on. The practical jokers thought, apparently, that if "Robin Hood and Jack Cade's Daughter" passed muster, anything might be attempted in the second ballad, and so, in "The Freiris Tragedie," they became riotously amusing:—

"Ance there was ane wickit Freir,
That livit in ane toune;
An he was fou o' lustiness,
The meikle, stalwart loune.

He travell't throu' the counterie,
Wi' pock upon his back;
Begging for meil in Goddis name,
His parache for to mak."

Twelve or fifteen copies of the tract were printed off, and by a friendly arrangement one of the copies was prominently displayed in the window of a second-hand book-dealer in Edinburgh, which Pitcairn, the worthy critic, passed daily in going to and from his professional duties. Maidment himself tells the amusing story. As Pitcairn sauntered along Bristo Street he was startled by observing the unfamiliar ballad. In a moment he was inside the shop, questioning the bookseller.

"Where did you get that thing in the window about Robin Hood?"

"Oh, it came from Aberdeen with that parcel of books," pointing to a heap.

"What's your charge?" hastily exclaimed the interrogator, fearing probably the intrusion of some rival collector.

"Saxpence."

The coin was handed to the bookseller, who received it with a grin, remarking that "he had sold the ballant owre cheap, as he had nae ither copies."

Onward the possessor of the gem hastened, says Maidment, and upon being admitted to his friend's house, where it so happened the conspirators were assembled, he held up the tract exultingly.

"Here's a prize! a Robin Hood ballad unknown to Ritson." "Indeed! that is singular. Allow me to see it." With an evident apprehension that the delectable morsel might be injured, it was slowly handed over for inspection. The first remark was an objection to its authenticity, founded on the anachronism of the title; namely, that Miss Cade lived in the reign of King Henry VI., and Master Robin in the reigns of Richard and John. The answer was inimitable. "This is a direct proof of its authenticity. The minstrels cared neither for time nor place; and Cade being a man of the people, they chose to marry his daughter to a popular hero. Had a forgery been intended, care would have been taken to prevent any mistake in point of date." "Well, well, it may be so; but let us see what sort of stuff the ballad is made of"; and one of the party commenced reading it in a drawling manner. Irritated at this profanation, its owner snatched it from the reader's hand, and after remarking that he had already read it over, began and went through it with great energy and effect. Ever and anon some objection was raised—some words were not intelligible. Every objection was overruled, and at the conclusion the happy possessor triumphantly

exclaimed, "There can be no doubt of the authenticity of this beautiful ballad—its marks of antiquity are unmistakable." It was impossible to preserve gravity any longer, and the peroration was received with shouts of laughter—the auditors taking from their pockets each a copy of the rare production, and exhibiting it to the eyes of their astonished friend. The defeat was complete; doubtless Pitcairn felt the damage to his reputation, and for the future Robin Hood's Courtship was a very sore subject.

The purpose of Maidment and his gay associates was, of course, pure fun, with some notion of a wholesome shock, perhaps, to the complacency of the collector. A more dubious case, concerned with greater personages, was the ballad hoax played on Sir Walter Scott himself. It was not creditable to any of the parties. In compiling the *Border Minstrelsy*, Scott received from Robert Surtees, historian of Durham, after whom the well-known Surtees Society is named, a remarkably spirited ballad, which Surtees declared to have been taken down from the lips of a woman eighty years old, and which he accompanied with explanatory notes on the characters and places named. As John Hill Burton says, this was by no means a servile imitation, this composition, but one of the most characteristic ballads in Scott's collection. It is named "The Death of Featherstonhaugh," and gallops along in this racy manner:—

"Hoot awa', lads, hoot awa';
Ha' ye heard how the Ridleys, and Thirlwalls, and a',
Ha' set upon Albany Featherstonhaugh,
And taken his life at the Dead Man's Haugh?

There was Williemoteswick
And Hardriding Dick,
And Hughie of Hawdon, and Will of the Wa',
I canna tell a', I canna tell a',
And many a mair that the deil may knaw.

The auld man went down, but Nicol his son
Ran awa' before the fight was begun:
And he run, and he run,
And afore they were done
There was many a Featherston gat sic a stun,
As never was seen since the world begun.
I canna tell a', I canna tell a',
Some got a skelp, and some got a claw,
But they gar't the Featherstons haud their jaw.
Some got hurt, and some got nane,
Some had harness, and some got staen."

Scott was delighted with the ballad, and in his grateful acknowledgement to Surtees he says—"Your notes upon the parties concerned give it all the interest of authority, and it must rank, I suppose, among those half-serious, half-ludicrous songs, in which the poets of the Border delighted to describe what they considered as the *sport of swords*." There is no evidence that Scott ever had the slightest suspicions that in "Featherstonhaugh" he was made the victim and allowed to remain the victim—of a wretched hoax. The ballad was Surtees' own work, proved by the fact that among his papers, after his death in 1834, were found various copies of the "ballad," corrected and interlined as he gradually evolved it, suited to the times and to the language and manners of the district to which it refers.

Sir Walter Scott himself was given, to some extent, to this kind of literary hoaxing, of which the most curious instance, perhaps, was in connection with the publication of his poem "The Bridal of Triermain." He not only brought it out anonymously, but so arranged matters that it should appear as if the poem were the work of his friend Erskine, and he promised himself particular satisfaction, says Lockhart, in laying a trap for Jeffrey and the *Edinburgh Review*. So circumstantially was the joke arranged that, on Erskine's own suggestion, a paragraph as to his authorship of the work was inserted in one of the Edinburgh newspapers. As we know, the whole scheme miscarried. Jeffrey avoided the trap, and it was Scott's own friends of the *Quarterly* who fell into it, being completely deceived. No one regrets that in the end Scott had this satisfaction out of it that "two large editions were sold."

In the matter of actual seriously intended literary forgery, the mind reverts at once to Chatterton,

> "The marvellous boy,
> The sleepless Soul that perished in his pride";

and to James Macpherson, both of whom had the rare gift of poetry, but by a strange obliquity of moral perception sought to gain a spurious reputation in what was actually—even if honestly accomplished—a lower plane of achievement. Sometimes the literary forgery is committed in the interests of a religious idea —at least it is charitable to suppose that some such purpose possessed the mind of the "discoverer" of

the lost "Book of Jasher" referred to in Joshua x. 13, and 2 Samuel i. 18, as containing the chronicle of how "the sun stood still and the moon stayed," with other events in the history of the chosen people. The *London Magazine* of 1751 announced the publication of this work, "The Book of Jasher; with Testimonies and Notes, Critical and Historical, Explanatory of the Text, to which is Prefixed Various Readings, and a Preliminary Dissertation, proving the Authenticity of the Work. Translated into English from the Hebrew, by Flaccus Albinus Alcuinas, of Britain, Abbot of Canterbury, who went a Pilgrimage into the Holy Land and Persia, where he discovered this volume in the City of Gazna." So ran the imposing title, and although few then probably had heard of Albinus Alcuinas, the notable theologian, his possible existence was accepted, and some, at least, of the monthly reviews were duped into commendation of what was really a careful and impudent forgery. Jacob Ilive, the actual perpetrator, was a type-founder and printer who carried on business in London between 1730 and 1756. He was not quite sound in mind, judging from his production of other strange works, including an "Oration," intended to prove that earth is really hell, that the souls of men are apostate angels, and other things of that kind. The matter of the "Book of Jasher" was fully cleared up by Thomas Hartwell Horne, one of the early bibliographers of the British Museum, whose monumental *Introduction to the Study of the Scriptures* so excited the admiration of Lowndes that it is spoken of

in the familiar *Manual* as "the most important theological publication of its kind that has appeared in this or any other country for years." Horne tells the story of the pretended Book of Jasher, and on the best authority, for he discovered the one person who assisted Ilive to perpetrate the fraud. It appears that the whole thing was carried out with the utmost secrecy by Ilive and his assistant in the printing-office during the night. Ilive kept a Hebrew Bible before him, in his closet, from which he produced the "copy" of the Book of Jasher, and the types were set and the "formes" worked off by him and his companion in a private pressroom, after the men in the printing-office had left their work. Surely a more freakish, and purposeless, attempt to deceive the world it would be impossible to discover.

No doubt some people remember the controversy that raged over the authenticity of the Codex Sinaiticus, now accepted as the most ancient manuscript of the Bible that has been brought to light. It would be a marvel if, with the intense interest aroused by numerous discoveries of ancient papyri dealing with matters affecting religion, attempts had not been made to palm off spurious documents of this kind, and, no doubt, agents of the various Exploration Funds could tell many a curious story of offers of pretended discoveries in papyrus or stone. Only quite recently such an idea was worked with great effect in the realm of Fiction. The book in question had extraordinary vogue, by reason of an exciting plot that turned upon the supposed discovery of an ancient

inscription that was held—in the story—to prove that there had been no Resurrection. Of course the inscription was proved a forgery, and the exposure of a famous and wicked archæologist averted all the dreadful things supposed to be impending while the world was under the shadow of the disastrous "discovery."

But the strange thing about the controversy over the Codex Sinaiticus is that it was an attempt not to pass off a spurious document as genuine, but to make out that a genuine document was a forgery. The Codex was discovered by Professor Tischendorf, in 1859, in the Monastery of St. Catherine, on Mount Sinai. It contains the whole of the New Testament, with certain additional documents, all of the fourth century, and naturally the importance of the discovery awakened the utmost interest among scholars. While Dr. Tischendorf was still receiving congratulations over the discovery, quite a sensation was made by a Greek, Dr. Simonides, who declared that so far from the "discovered" Codex being what it was represented, it was a mere modern copy, and that he himself was the copyist. In a letter to the *Guardian*, he gave a circumstantial account of how he came to write the manuscript, and how it happened to pass into the hands of the monks of Sinai. "Any person learned in palæography," he wrote, "ought to be able to tell at once that it is a manuscript of the present age." It could not be denied by Simonides that Dr. Tischendorf had, some time previously, convicted him of attempting to pass off forged manuscripts as genuine,

and so the Greek, in his letter to the *Guardian*, complained, "You must permit me to express my sincere regret that, whilst the many valuable remains of antiquity in my possession are frequently attributed to my own hands, the one poor work of my youth is set down by a gentleman who enjoys a great reputation for learning, as the earliest copy of the Sacred Scriptures."

In the controversy that ensued Simonides attempted to draw to his aid Mr. Henry Bradshaw, Librarian of Cambridge University, in whose *Life*, by Mr. Prothero, many curious incidents of the discussion are chronicled. In that, however, he was not specially successful. His statements did receive remarkable confirmation, however, from one Kallinikos, a Greek monk, who wrote to the *Guardian* a series of letters. "I have read," said he, in the first of his communications, "what the wise Greek, Simonides, has published respecting the pseudo-Sinaitic Codex, by means of your excellent weekly publication, and I too myself declare to all men by this letter that the Codex . . . which was abstracted by Dr. Tischendorf from the Greek Monastery of Mount Sinai, is a work of the hands of the unwearied Simonides himself, inasmuch as I myself saw him, in 1846, in the month of February, writing it in Athos."

When inquiry was made, it was found, contrary to the expectation of many people, that there actually was a monk named Kallinikos in the monastery on Mount Sinai, but when asked whether he had written the letters confirming Simonides' story, he declared

that he had not written the letters, and that Simonides had never been within the monastery. "Of course not," replied Simonides, when the result of this inquiry was made known. His friend, he asserted, was Kallinikos of Athos, who had nothing to do with Kallinikos of Sinai; and in support of this he soon afterwards produced another letter from this Kallinikos, reiterating his former statements. But Mr. Aldis Wright, who had taken an active part in the affair, had been investigating through the British Consul at Salonica. He was able to show to the world that Simonides, who had actually been to the monastery at Athos, and been practically ejected, had been telling a parcel of lies. The damaging disclosures were too much for Simonides, and he ultimately disappeared from view.

Scotland, unhappily, is conspicuously represented in the list of literary forgers, for not only has she James Macpherson, but also the more reprehensible case of William Lauder. His mania was induced, in the first place at least, by personal vindictiveness; his later state it is absolutely impossible to account for on any reasonable hypothesis whatsoever.

Lauder, who was a graduate of Edinburgh University, was a person of very unattractive personal appearance—"a sallow complexion," says Chalmers, in his *Life of Thomas Ruddiman*, "large rolling fiery eyes, a stentorian voice, and a sanguine temper." These imperfections were not improved by the unfortunate circumstance that he had a wooden leg. He was watching the golfers one day on Bruntsfield

Links, when he was struck on the knee with a flying ball, and unskilful treatment of the wound rendered amputation necessary. Then the "sanguine temper" was not softened by many professional disappointments. He was first disappointed of the Professorship of the Latin class in Edinburgh University; then of the Librarianship of the University; and very soon afterwards, although he came out first among the candidates for a Mastership in the Edinburgh High School, he had the mortification of seeing the appointment conferred on an opponent. It was in that same year, 1739, that Lauder brought out the well-known *Poetarum Scotorum Musæ Sacræ*, etc., in two volumes, published by his friend Ruddiman, "the most learned printer that North Britain ever enjoyed." Without doubt this, his most meritorious work, was, in a way, the cause of his undoing.

The circumstances that led to Lauder's extraordinary attempts may be very briefly recalled. The *Poetarum Scotorum* contains a good deal of the Latin poetry of Arthur Johnston, the Aberdeen scholar, with a life of Johnston by Lauder, extolling him as a Latin poet superior to Buchanan. He followed this, in 1740, by petitioning the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to sanction the introduction of Arthur Johnston's Scriptural Paraphrases, in place of Buchanan's, as a Latin exercise in the lower classes of the Grammar Schools of the country, and the General Assembly actually assented to this course, which naturally aroused the strongest opposition from the admirers of Buchanan. In the controversy that took

place Lauder endeavoured to enlist the support of Pope, but Pope's only reply to his letter and gift of Arthur Johnston's poetry was a withering couplet in the *Dunciad*, relative to William Benson, noted for his efforts in having the Milton monument erected in Westminster Abbey, and for his championship of this same Arthur Johnston :—

> "On two unequal crutches propp'd he came,
> Milton's on this, on that one Johnston's name."

Lauder always declared that the failure of his literary ventures was the effect of Pope's contemptuous sarcasm, and it is at least curious that he should have sought his revenge in traducing the greater poet that Pope had named. Having suffered another professional disappointment in regard to the Rectorship of the Grammar School of Dundee, Lauder shook the dust of Scotland from his feet, and devoted himself to literary hack-work in London, where he very soon attracted notice by his articles on Milton. The thing began by a communication to the *Gentleman's Magazine* in the beginning of 1747, in which he declared that Milton's *Paradise Lost* was very largely a plagiarism of a Latin poem, *Sarcotus*, by Jacobus Masenius (1654). Lauder was not aware that Sir Richard Maitland, also blind, had written a poem actually bearing the title, *On the Creation, and Paradise Lost*, before Milton was born, or he would doubtless have had much to say over the "plagiarising" of the title. But he had plenty of material otherwise. In a series of articles he pressed home the charge of Milton's indebtedness to many

writers, and pointed his articles with illustrative quotations from the *Adamus Exsul* of Grotius, Andrew Ramsay's *Poemata Sacra*, and other works little known even among those who knew something of bibliography. Then came the proposals for printing the *Adamus Exsul* by subscription, which was to contain an English version of the poem, with notes on the lines imitated by Milton. In an evil hour he somehow got Samuel Johnson—whose requtation was never really in any degree affected, however, by his connection with the scheme—to write the prospectus of the work. In the meantime came the *Essay on Milton's Use and Imitation of the Moderns in his Paradise Lost*, with a preface and postscript by Dr. Johnson, a tract now chiefly remarkable as containing Lauder's declaration, "in the most solemn manner," that he was actuated by "a strict regard to truth alone, and to do justice to those authors from whom Milton has so liberally gleaned, without making the least distant acknowledgment to whom he stood indebted."

But the whole fabric of deception soon came toppling to the ground. One wonders, indeed, that the work of Lauder received credence at all; in the present day such a scheme could scarcely be successful for a week. Accurate reference to the obscure works from which he had pretended to quote showed that not only had quotations been garbled, but that the works in question did not contain the most incriminating passages; furthermore, it was made clear that Lauder had taken those passages from the Latin translation of Milton's own *Paradise Lost*, published

by William Hogg twenty years after Milton's death. Boswell has told us how Johnson, grasping, doubtless, such an oaken cudgel as he provided for the special benefit of James Macpherson, dictated to Lauder the letter in which he confessed his guilt "in terms of suitable contrition." The sequel is squalid enough. Lauder attempted to pass the whole matter off as a practical joke, but failed miserably. He renewed his attack in 1754 in a pamphlet, *The Grand Imposter Detected; or, Milton convicted of Forgery against King Charles the First*, a last attempt that was at once overthrown, and following upon that came Lauder's utter ruin, personal and professional, in this country. He emigrated to Barbadoes, and there, after still another experience of failure as a schoolmaster, he died in 1771. The statement of the offence and its retribution reads "like a story." No one doubts, of course, that Lauder found many passages in Milton, just as one will find passages in the work of any great poet, that owe the inception of the ideas to previous writers—did not Charles Lamb declare that the only safe way for the man who desired to retain originality was to abstain from reading?—but Lauder's case stands out as the conspicuous example of a scholarly intellect developing incurable immoral taint in attempting to discover the infection in another.

National feeling ought, perhaps, to keep one from dwelling on the achievements of another Scotsman, John Pinkerton, born in Edinburgh while Lauder was still exciting the literary world with his pretended Milton discoveries. It was in the line of ballad-

making that Pinkerton went wrong, and this, at least, may be said in regard to his case, that he committed his errors while still comparatively young, that when Joseph Ritson very acutely pointed out the modern quality in the *Select Scottish Ballads*, in 1784, Pinkerton readily confessed that a great part of them was his own composition, and that he afterwards made some amends, in honest literary and historical work, for the escapades of his earlier years. Like others, Pinkerton pleaded that in manufacturing ballads he had no dishonest intention, but wished merely to provide entertainment for his friends. "All which," said Ritson dryly, "it is to be hoped he has found some charitable person to believe." However that may be, he had, at least, no great profit in his life or his work, and one thinks with sadness on his rather melancholy and laborious career. It is indicated in John Nichols's portrait of him, the personification of a confirmed, dried-up book-worm. "A very little, and very thin old man, with a very small, sharp, yellow face, thickly pitted by the small-pox, and decked with a pair of green spectacles." It was Pinkerton's hopeless play, about to be produced in Edinburgh, in 1813, that Walter Scott, in kindliness, declined to condemn beforehand when submitted to him in manuscript, because, said he, "I don't know why one should take the task of damning a man's play out of the hands of the proper tribunal."

It would be surprising if, among those who have attempted to pass off spurious literary productions, there were not some ready to provide manuscripts, or

other relics, of Shakespeare, which are always in demand. George Steevens was not specially a Shakespearean forger—indeed, in spite of his many literary fabrications the name of forger seems a harsh one to apply to a person who did so much excellent work in the elucidation of the text of Shakespeare, and was, withal, helpful to generosity to others when occasion really demanded it. The root of his evil tendency lay in his intractable temper, accompanied by a sardonic delight in deceiving others that led him into the most mischievous pranks. Steevens was born in Poplar, in 1736, the son of a former East Indian captain, who afterwards became one of the directors of the East India Company. From his father he must have heard many a story of the Far East, and to this source may be traced his extraordinary fiction of the deadly qualities of the upas-tree of Java. The fiction has not even yet been wholly laid. He started the superstition in an article in the *London Magazine* in 1783, which professed to be the personal relation of a Dutch physician resident in Java. It will be remembered that Erasmus Darwin was one of those who were taken in by the hoax. He described the effects of the marvellous tree in his long poem, "The Loves of the Plants," where it might have passed perhaps as a touch of poetic licence had the poet not sought to give it substantial foundation by quoting as his authority the wholly baseless statements of the *London Magazine*. Steevens was sent to Eton and King's College, Cambridge, which he left without taking his degree, but he must have been a diligent

student in some ways, for he acquired an enormous stock of information, especially in the bypaths of literature, which he utilised in many contributions to the periodical press, and in the various editions of Shakespeare of which he was sole or part editor.

His extraordinary delight in literary hoaxes amounted really to a mania. He fabricated a letter, and got it published, which purported to be a description in the hand of George Peele, the dramatist, of a gathering with Shakespeare and others at a tavern in the neighbourhood of the Globe Theatre. It was copied into serious works as a genuine Shakespearean discovery before its apocryphal character was found out. Still more grotesque was his fooling the Society of Antiquaries of London, of which he was himself a member. It was a very usual thing for him to supply the press with fictitious accounts of antiquarian discoveries, but conceiving a grudge against Richard Gough, Director of the Society of Antiquaries, he resolved on a means of turning the Society's proceedings into a burlesque. It was in 1789. He procured a block of marble—we quote from Mr. Sidney Lee's admirable summary account in the *Dictionary of National Biography*—and having incised upon it some Anglo-Saxon characters, placed it in a window in Southwark. He caused it to be represented to the Society of Antiquaries that it had been dug up in Kennington Lane, and was the tombstone of Hardy-canute. The matter proceeded quite on the lines that the "discoverer" would have desired, accounts of the find appearing in the press—a drawing of it was

actually given in the *Gentleman's Magazine*—and one of the members of the Society of Antiquaries duly read a paper before the Society on the inscription. Fortunately, the fraud was discovered before the paper was printed in the transactions.

Steevens was early recognised as a new authority on Shakespeare, and by none more readily than by Dr. Johnson, whose own edition of the poet appeared in 1765. Very soon afterwards, and with great willingness, he agreed to collaborate with Steevens in a new edition, which appeared as the ten-volume edition of 1773. But, indeed, the great and kindly soul, who well understood the faults as well as the accomplishments of his friend, lived in as much amity with him as any one was ever able to do. Perhaps it was because Steevens never ventured to make the Great Cham of Literature the victim of any of his grotesque practical jokes. "Sir," was the friendly communication of Johnson to him on the one occasion—"If I am asked when I have seen Mr. Steevens, you know what answer I must give; if I am asked when I shall see him, I wish you would tell me what to say." The person who could command the friendship of Dr. Johnson was not wholly bad, and that Steevens did so to a very special degree is shown by the fact that Johnson nominated him as a member of the select and famous body, The Club. He writes Steevens in 1774: "Sir—We are thinking to augment our Club, and I am desirous of nominating you, if you care to stand the ballot, and can attend on Friday nights at least twice in five weeks; less than this is too little and

rather more will be expected." The result Johnson communicated to Steevens shortly afterwards. "Sir—Last night you became a member of the Club; if you call on me on Friday I will introduce you. A gentleman proposed after you was rejected." Steevens's Shakespearean labours culminated in his edition of the poet, published in fifteen volumes in 1793; but even in that really great work he gave rein to his besetting tendencies. He freely tampered with the text, if by any means he might place his rival Shakespearean editor, Malone, in the wrong, and, what was almost as indefensible, he vented personal animosity in the notes. "With a malignity," says Mr. Sidney Lee, "that was not without humour, he supplied many obscene notes to coarse expressions in the text, and he pretended that he owed his indecencies to one or other of two highly respectable clergymen, Richard Amner and John Collins, whose surnames were in each instance appended." Perhaps it is as well, even for respectable clergymen, that in these days we live under the operation of a law of libel.

But the classic example of a Shakespearean forger was William Henry Ireland (or Samuel William Henry, as he is sometimes termed, bibliographically), with some notice of whom these notes may fitly close. He was the son of Samuel Ireland, draughtsman, antiquary, and dealer in old books and curiosities, Norfolk Street, Strand; but he was a child of mystery from the beginning, and it was never really known, even by himself, who was his mother. He was one of the most daring, and for a time the most successful,

of all the literary pretenders on our list. The fault began and continued with him in his own perverted ingenuity—almost brilliancy, one might say—and in his father's inordinate desire for relics of the great poet.

William Henry inherited his father's genuine love of antiquities. While still a mere lad, articled to a solicitor, and fond of amusing himself by writing verses in the style of early English authors, or picking up rare books and pamphlets, he came upon a small quarto tract dedicated to Queen Elizabeth. He determined—it was his first attempt—to make it appear as if it were the presentation copy to Queen Elizabeth from the author, and having diluted his ink to give it an ancient appearance, he wrote on a piece of old deed, of which he had command of an ample supply in the solicitor's office, a dedicatory epistle to the queen. This he thrust between the vellum covers and the papers of the tract, where he pretended to discover it, and presented the "find" to his delighted father, who never doubted its authenticity. His next "discovery" was that of a bust of Cromwell, very carefully made to assume the appearance of an old work, but really supplied to Ireland by a clever young workman of his acquaintance. When the bust was duly "discovered," it was a small matter that the elder Ireland was deceived. Some of the greater experts of the day pronounced it a genuine work of the Commonwealth; some went so far as to identify it as the work of Simon, a well-known contemporary sculptor. It was characteristic of Ireland's daring that he actually ventured

to affix an "antique" label to the back of the piece of sculpture, denoting that it was a gift from Cromwell to his friend Bradshaw, President of the Court that condemned the king.

With growing skill and boldness, young Ireland next proceeded to construct his first Shakespearean manuscript. This was in 1794. He had trained his hand at deftly copying Shakespeare's signature, and having cut a piece of parchment from an old rent-roll, and provided himself with his "faded" ink, he proceeded to execute a mortgage deed as between William Shakespeare and John Heminge on the one part, and Michael Fraser and his wife on the other, carefully copying Shakespeare's signature with his right hand, and that of Michael Fraser with his left. The seals he managed quite as adroitly. He cut an old wax seal from a parchment roll in the office, split it open with a heated knife, and attached a half on each side of the strip of parchment pendant from the deed. Again his father was delighted with his "discovery," which he pronounced a genuine deed of the time, and expressed his gratification by presenting the keys of his bookcase to his son, with the request that he might take anything from it that he pleased. The learned in such matters were invited to inspect the relic, and again it was declared a remarkably valuable Shakespeare document. Not only so, but Sir Frederick Eden found on the seal the impression of a "quintain," the apparatus which it was once customary for persons to tilt at with a lance or spear, and so it was perceived that Shakespeare affected a little play upon his name in his seal!

Relative to this, young Ireland afterwards confessed that he had never looked at the impression on the seal, and that if he had, he should not have known that the impression was that of a "quintain," a machine of which he had never heard until it was mentioned by those authorities.

The production of such a remarkable relic led, naturally, to inquiry as to where it came from—one wonders that sufficiently stringent inquiry was not made earlier, and so have nipped the whole series of frauds at the beginning. Ireland's story was that a gentleman of fortune, whom he casually met at a coffee-house, had invited him to rummage among a quantity of old deeds in his possession, and in consideration of Ireland's having found among them a missing document of great value to his patron, he had received the manuscripts as a gift. It was accompanied, however, by the stipulation that the identity of the donor was not to be disclosed. With this the inquirers appear to have been satisfied, and the same mine continued to yield vast stories of antiquarian riches.

Among the documents poured out were love-letters from Shakespeare to Anne Hathaway, one of which enclosed a lock of "Willy's hair," letters from Queen Elizabeth to the poet, and a remarkable confession of faith by Shakespeare, which young Ireland read over to Dr. Samuel Parr, the classical scholar, and Dr. Joseph Warton, whose brother, Thomas, took a prominent part in exposing the Chatterton forgeries. The fraud was almost too successful, for Ireland was

rather overwhelmed to hear, after a short silence, Dr. Warton declare: "There are fine passages in the Church Service, and the Litany abounds with beauties, but here, sir, is a man who has distanced us all." It was to be expected that among such a mass of priceless documents some manuscript tragedies would be found, and accordingly out they came, first a nearly perfect manuscript of *King Lear*, then a portion of *Hamlet*, and in due time the manuscript of an unpublished play, entitled *Vortigern*, which Sheridan was successful in obtaining for representation at Drury Lane. The terms agreed upon with the "discoverer" of the manuscript were £300 down, and half the profits of the first sixty nights of performance. Meantime, the relics in the Irelands' possession were placed on exhibition throughout the year 1795 in the shop in Norfolk Street, Strand. There they were inspected, and discussed, by most of the *literati* of the day—among others, by James Boswell, who, always in extremes, kissed certain of the relics on his knees. Great people were interested, and in November of that year Samuel Ireland and his son carried the documents to St. James's Palace, to be shown to the Duke of Clarence; and a little later they were taken to Carlton House and examined by the Prince of Wales. Coincident with this was published by the elder Ireland, by subscription, at the price of four guineas, a folio volume, containing the "Miscellaneous Papers and Legal Documents" belonging to William Shakespeare, as recently discovered, illustrated with facsimiles, etc., etc.

It must not be supposed that all this was allowed to happen without protest on the part of unbelievers. As a matter of fact, doubts had been expressed from the first, Malone, Steevens, Porson, the Greek scholar, and others of the acutest minds either keeping aloof, or definitely calling in question the authenticity of the supposed relics. By the time that *Vortigern* was produced, in April 1796, Malone was far advanced with his "Inquiry into the Authenticity" of the documents. The preliminary crash was the complete failure of the play at Drury Lane. Curiosity, and controversy, had brought together a crowded audience, who bore for a time the crudities of the work, but at the fifth act, incited evidently by the manner of Kemble, who had the leading part, and was understood to be wholly sceptical as to the antiquity of his lines, they broke into such hopeless ridicule that the play was at once withdrawn. Then came Malone's crushing "Inquiry," accompanied by minor squibs, with the result that the faith of the most deluded was completely upset. Something had to be done to bring the matter to a clear issue. A committee of investigation was appointed, with which young Ireland attempted for a time to prevaricate, but ultimately, with his back at the wall, he made a full confession, handing over certain unfinished forgeries on which he was engaged at the time, with the remainder of the "faded" ink that had played so large a part in compassing the frauds. The rest of the story must be more or less familiar—Samuel Ireland's consternation, his refusal, indeed, to credit his son's confession, even when put into print; his

banishment of young Ireland from the house; the mutual recriminations among those who had taken sides in the matter, and the controversy, especially, as to the father's own share in the forgeries, which, it is now fairly clear, was simply a culpable readiness to accept the Shakespearean marvels with little or no inquiry. However, he suffered, as well as his son, for the exposure and all that followed on it shortened his life, and there was more than mere rhetoric in the remarks of the *Gentleman's Magazine* on his death, in 1800, that "Mr. Ireland died a martyr to false hope, easy credulity, and despair; and, but for an imposition almost forced upon him, might now have flourished an healthy and happy man." Whether innocent or not, he had experience of the unfailing truth, like others in the foregoing review, that there is but one code of honour for all the spheres, and that in literary affairs, as in daily life, honesty and sincerity are indispensable.

A Scots Town Council as Patrons of Literature

A SCOTS TOWN COUNCIL AS PATRONS OF LITERATURE.

IT cannot be said that the Scottish national authorities, as represented by the Estates of Parliament, ever offered any very marked encouragement to men of letters. Rather the opposite, for with a single remarkable exception, we find the Scots Parliament in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries issuing one ordinance after another embodying a strict censorship of publications of every kind. Thus in 1551, "as thair is diuers Prentaris in this Realm that daylie and continuallie prentis buiks concerning the faith, ballattis, sangis, blasphematiounis rymes, alsweill of kirkmen as temporall, and vtheris tragedies alsweill in latine as in Inglis," printers generally are prohibited from issuing any publications until the same "be sene, vewit and examit be sum wyse and discreit persounis depute thairto." In 1567 the censorship is directed specially against "placardes and billis and ticquettes" posted in the street; but in 1574 the Privy Council sweep under a strict censorship "quhatsumever buik, ballett, or vther werk" is in view—and down through the seventeenth century

the same discouragement of printed work prevails. The exceptional case referred to is the curious one of Captain Slezer, of the "Theatrum Scotiæ," who after being subject to an order for committal to Edinburgh Castle for refusal to take the oath of fidelity at the Revolution, not only satisfied the authorities and received a command in the National Artillery, but got the Scots Parliament, shortly afterwards, to impose a tax on Scotch and foreign shipping that entered Scottish ports, to aid him in the publication of his book.

That being so, it is a little remarkable to find a provincial town council actually straining the resources of their burgh in the promotion of literary work. This was the case with the Aberdeen Town Council through the greater part of the seventeenth century, and as one notes in the Burgh Records payment after payment to writer, or printer, or bookbinder, or librarian, one cannot but suppose that the town council were endeavouring to sustain for the city at home that reputation for learning which sons of Aberdeen were spreading in the more celebrated schools of the Continent.

Even before the art of printing began to be practised in Aberdeen, at the comparatively late date of 1622, the civic authorities had been for many years the custodians of a library belonging to the town. It was located in the town's church, dedicated to St. Nicholas, the patron saint of this, as of many another sea-board town, and included, there is some reason to believe, part of the libraries of the four

monasteries that existed for centuries in Aberdeen prior to the Reformation. From time to time the town council caused examination of the contents of the library to be made, and we read that in 1611, by which date the collection was known—officially at least—as the "town's library," it was to be visited by the magistrates and council, and duly "vewit," "witht the catalogue theroff." At that time the council offered £200 to form a library in the recently instituted Marischal College to contain the books of the Earl Marischal, the founder of the college, but the earl did not fulfil his promise to give his books for this purpose, and so the town council, perhaps the more willingly on that account, gave £100 to form a library in the college for the books of Dr. Duncan Liddell, the well-known physician and scholar. It is rather curious, in this connection, that the very first act of the town council in the encouragement of printed work, had reference to the Earl Marischal. In 1592 they authorised the town's treasurer to pay £3 (Scots, always) "to Mr. Thomas Cargill, to cause print certane verse in Latin, in commendatione of my Lord Merschall for erecking the new college in Aberdeen."

It was in the early part of 1622 that Edward Raban, the town's first printer, was induced to leave St. Andrews and set up his printing-press in the Castlegate of Aberdeen. The actual share of the town council in this matter cannot now be determined, but Raban's migration was due to the joint influence of the town council and Bishop Patrick Forbes of

Corse, a saintly and liberal-minded churchman who, like Luther, is credited with a personal visitation of the devil. The town council had plainly a considerable share in the matter, for they settled on Raban a "pensioun" of £40 a year, and allowed him, in addition to many incidental payments, a small emolument from the fees of each pupil at the Grammar School.

It will be seen, as we proceed, that clergymen were, naturally enough, very often the recipients of the council's bounty. And they enjoyed that bounty sometimes in curious ways. Rev. W. Forbes, afterwards one of the rather famous "Aberdeen Doctors," became in 1616 one of the town's ministers, and in connection therewith the council paid "For the eftirnoone drink given be the Magistrattis to Mr. William Forbes, in Mr. Dauid Rutherfordis hous, at the said Mr. William Forbes his comeing to accept the office of the ministrie, 3 lib." Often after that was Dr. Forbes, as well as his colleague Dr. Barron, another of the "Aberdeen Doctors," similarly "gratifiet" by the authorities, and on one occasion, in 1633, when both were summoned to Edinburgh to preach before Charles I., at the coronation, they received from the town's treasurer, "ilk ane of thame the soume of ane hundreth merkis money, for making of thair chairges to Edinburgh to the effect forsaid." The council were doubtless in a loyal and pleasant mood, for the town was specially favoured of Charles, and on that same occasion their representative at the coronation, Provost Menzies, received the honour of

knighthood. In 1624 the town council had an unusual and happy experience. Dr. Thomas Reid, Latin Secretary to James I., bequeathed to them for the use of the town and Marischal College his collection of books and manuscripts. He thus became, as my library colleague in Aberdeen, Mr. P. J. Anderson, of the University Library, has pointed out in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, the founder of the first public reference library in Scotland. For Reid not only bequeathed his books to his native town, but 6000 merks as well to endow a librarian, who "sall holde the door of the librarie patent and oppin four dayes of the weeke the whole yeire." Naturally the municipal authorities had a good deal of business to transact relative to this bequest, and the treasurer chronicles in his official accounts the expenditure of "36 lib." in one of the taverns of the burgh "for ane denner to Mr. Patrik Gordoune, Mr. Robert and Mr. Adam Reidis, with the prouest and baillies at thair meeting about Mr. Thomas Reid his legacye."

But the council did not immediately lay their hands on the books. On being transported from London to Aberdeen they lay, on account of some legal technicality, in a store at the quay, until the council, becoming impatient, resolved "that the saids haill books and manuscripts sall be transported from the keyheide, out of the sellar wher they are lying, for the present, in hogeheids, to the college of this burgh, and ther set upe in the college librarie, be catalogue and inventar." But not for another year were the council free of legal troubles over this collection. It

turned out that His Majesty's printer in London had an unsettled bill against Dr. Reid, so he placed an arrestment on the books in the hands of the Aberdeen town council, who in 1626 had to pay this creditor 900 merks in order to have the arrestment removed. Even then, it was not till 1642, when they paid to one George Jaffray, "for hom bringing of Dr. Reidis buikis from London, 20 lib," that the council felt that they had seen an end of many payments in connection with the library. Unfortunately, payments of one kind or another continued down to very recent times, so that the 6000 merks bequeathed by Dr. Reid for endowment of the librarian yields now only the very modest income of about £12 10*s.* per annum.

As already said, Raban set up his printing-press in Aberdeen in 1622. Almost immediately afterwards, we find the council making literary payments of £66 13*s.* 4*d.* (Scots) to one writer, "for dedicating of his pamphlet to the toune"; of £13 6*s.* 8*d.* to another, "for ane poesie presentit to the prouest on the praise of Aberdein"; and of £10 to a third, "for some poesie dedicat be him to the counsall." Taken along with a remarkable liberality at this time on the part of the citizens, in the endowment of hospitals for the poor, the founding of bursaries, and endowment of masterships in the New College, and of liberality to outside objects, it can hardly be doubted that a kind of renaissance was operating in the far north which the rulers of the town hoped to promote in the direct encouragement of native genius.

Dr. Robert Barron, of whom we have already spoken, brought out, in 1627, through Raban's press,

his *Disputatio Theologica*, dedicated to the magistrates and council, who responded with a payment of £66, 13*s.* 4*d.*, "to gratifie him in some mesure for his dedicatioun." David Wedderburn, Master of the Grammar School, voluminous poet and writer, whose work may be judged from specimens in the *Delitiæ Poetarum Scotorum* (Amsterdam, 1637), was a special favourite of the authorities. Having selected Wedderburn, on one occasion, to conduct, temporarily, the High Class in Marischal College, on the death of the Principal, the town council acknowledged that "the said Mr. Dauid hes dischargit a verie honest dewtie in that employment in euerie way," and made him the quite handsome gratuity of £100. It was the first of a long series of such "gratifications." In 1617 he composed, at the magistrates' request, a Latin poem in celebration of King James's return visit to Scotland, and was rewarded with a sum of fifty merks. This was the year, it may be noted, in which appeared the first of the works of Alexander Ross, another voluminous Aberdeen writer, now remembered only by the couplet in *Hudibras*, reflecting on his many books—

> "There was an ancient sage philosopher,
> That had read Alexander Ross over."

Perhaps it was fortunate for Aberdeen that Ross published all his numerous books in London, and was himself living in Hampshire, otherwise his claims on a patronising town council might have brought on the burgh that strange experience of civic bankruptcy which befell Aberdeen exactly two centuries later.

But to return to Wedderburn. In 1619 he was appointed, in a sort, the poet laureate of Aberdeen, that is to say, "to compose in Latine, both in prose and verse, quhatsoumever purpose or thame concerning the commoun affairis of the toune ather at hame or a-field as he sal be requirit by any of the magistrattis or clerk in tyme comeing." On the death of King James in 1625, Wedderburn was duly called on by the magistrates to deal suitably with the event, and he produced his *Sub obitum*, a rare quarto, printed by Raban, for which he received an acknowledgment from the council of £33 6*s*. In 1629 Wedderburn received an augmentation of his modest salary as Master of the Grammar School; and in 1630 he had completed a new Latin Grammar, but could not have it introduced into his own, or any other school, since the national authorities had ordained, in 1613, that Alexander Hume's *Grammatico nova* be used exclusively in the schools of Scotland. Accordingly, application to the Privy Council became necessary, and on three different occasions the town council paid his expenses to Edinburgh for this purpose—first £40, then £100, and again 100 merks more. When the grammar was at length published, in 1632, the council gave him a further donation of 200 merks—"for printing of the new grammar laitlie set out be him be reasone of his dedicatioun of the same to the magistrattis and counsall."

Although a scholarly person, and a favourite with the authorities, Wedderburn appears to have been very unpopular as a teacher. On one occasion the

pupils of the Grammar School rose in armed rebellion. They provided themselves with "hagbuts, pistols, and other offensive weapons," as a local chronicle puts it, and threatened serious acts of outrage, when the magistrates intervened. Several of the ringleaders were put in prison, and twenty-one others were expelled, and prohibited from attending any other school in the town.

Meantime public payments to writers, as well as to Raban, the town's printer, continued to be frequently made. Even book-binders were not forgotten. In 1632 a bookbinder of the name of Francis Vanhagat —doubtless an importation from Amsterdam—was in the town, employed by the magistrates in binding various works, folios, quartos, and others, in the College Library. So well pleased were they with the manner in which he did his work, that they paid him a gratuity of £6 13*s.* 4*d.* "attour his ordinar allowance." They paid also, at this time, £111 (Scots) to Raban for printing, with other "poesies," a work by Dr. Barron on the arrival of King Charles in Scotland, and to another local poet 200 merks "for defraying of the chairges" of bringing out his poems.

The great disasters of the "Trubles" soon after this time fell on Aberdeen, when the town was harried and fined by Royalists and Covenanters alternately—its citizens even massacred, as in that dreadful butchery that followed the Crabstone rout in 1644, by Montrose and his Irish allies. Yet through most of that trying time the council, although paying over £6000 at one time to Montrose, "to saiff the toune from plundering,"

and £4000 at another for a similar purpose, had something to spare for the encouragement of letters. In 1640 they defrayed the cost of printing a book by Professor John Menzies; in 1641 they paid Raban £12 for printing the theses submitted at the lauration of the "skolleris" of Fraserburgh College; and, as it was customary in those days to make payments *pour-boire*, we find in the accounts such entries as these—"To Edvard Raban, his servand, in drinksilver, 1 lib. 6*s.* 8*d.*"; or "To Edvard Raban, for prenting half a rime of the scool actis and lawes, 5 lib., and at the setting of the pres, givin him and his men to drink, 6*s.* 8*d.*"

Through all those years it is the same—400 merks to Rev. John Row for teaching the Hebrew Class, "and for setting furth ane Hebrew Dictionar, and dedicating the same to the counsall"; £10 to Raban for printing the theses of Marischal College; sixteen shillings to one Patrick Leslie, skinner, "for wool and ane skin to give to Edvart Raban to print the papers that is prined [pinned] on the bristis [breasts] of thes that stand on the scaffold." In due time Raban was superseded as town's printer—for what reason it is impossible to say. From repeated payments to him of "drinksilver," the suggestion has been made of a dissolute life, but the evidence is not satisfactory. It is, however, a curious indication of the serious-mindedness of the time, that the town council in appointing a successor to Raban, appointed the son of a minister, and that one of the council enactments in that year was that the provost should open all meetings of the council with prayer.

Prior to the formal appointment of James Brown, the new town's printer, one James Cromie discharged the public printing, and both he and Brown enjoyed the usual council patronage, Brown's first payment being the substantial sum of £279 13*s.* 4*d.* (Scots) to cover the cost of printing Dr. Patrick Dun's edition of Dr. Liddell's *Ars Sanitatis* and "for the papper thereoff." A few years after his appointment he printed Professor Douglas's *Vindiciæ*, and in reference to that work the Burgh Records bear the following entry:—

> "1 April 1657.—The said day the Counsell ordanis and appoynts the magistrattis to aggrie with the printer for printing and binding of ane little book callit *Psalmodia Ecclesiastico Divina Vindicata*, put to the pres be Mr. Williame Dowglass, professor of divinitie in Old Aberdeine, and dedicat to the prowest, baillies, and counsell of Aberdeine."

This was the same Professor Douglas who was selected by his fellow-citizens, seven years before, for the embarrassing duty of reproving King Charles for unbecoming behaviour. Charles landed at Speymouth on 4th July, 1650, and arrived in Aberdeen accompanied by a lady on the 7th. He was lodged in a merchant's house opposite the Tolbooth, and spent the evening of the day of his arrival in such merriment that the townspeople were scandalised. It is said that Douglas, in concluding a serious admonition to the king, exhorted him on such occasions in future—to close the windows. The conclusion so tickled the Merry Monarch that he is said to have bestowed a reward on his friendly mentor.

In this year (1657) the town council of Aberdeen took a remarkable step in resolving to print a weekly periodical for the use of the citizens. Robert Chambers tells, in his *Domestic Annals*, that the *Mercurius Caledonius* of 1661, edited by Sydserf, son of that Bishop of Galloway that got Samuel Rutherford banished to Aberdeen in 1636, was the first original newspaper published in Scotland. As a matter of fact, the *Mercurius* was begun in 1660, and, as Fox Bourne points out, it was a very short-lived periodical. But the resolution of the Aberdeen magistrates is really four years prior to the publication of the *Mercurius*, and two months before the magistrates of Glasgow, who appear to have followed the example of their brethren in the north, appointed one John Fleming "to write to his man wha lies at London" to send a diurnal weekly to Glasgow "for the town's use." The movement in Aberdeen is chronicled in the town council register in this way :—

> "29 July 1657.—The said day the counsell appointis ane weeklie diurnall to be sellit for the wse of the inhabitants, and John Forbes, stationer, to furnish the samen weekly, and appoints the deane of gild to pey the said John for the samen, whereanent thir presents to be his warrand."

It is very greatly to be regretted that no copy of this "weeklie diurnall" of 1657 exists, or has ever been described. It would be extremely interesting if a copy were discovered, for many reasons. But it cannot be doubted that, for fifteen weeks at least, it duly appeared, for the magistrates of Aberdeen were ever a shrewd

people, and were not very likely to have allowed payment to be made to the printer for their periodical if the periodical had not been issued. And that payment was made is perfectly clear from the following entry in the treasurer's accounts for the year 1656-7 :—

> "Item, peyit be the compter to John Forbes, stationer, for fyften diornalls at the magistrats ordor, four pund ten sh."

One might make an interesting computation, from the above payment, of the circulation of the "*Diurnall.*" Necessarily, the circulation must have been very limited, but although the attempt to spread the light among the inhabitants by this means appears to have failed, it did not wholly discourage this enlightened town council from making further efforts in the same direction. We find, not many years afterwards, that in appointing a new keeper of the letter-office in the burgh, the council held the new official bound to undertake the duty of bringing from Edinburgh the *Weiklie Gazet* and news-letters, for the use of the town "frielie and without any payment."

On one other occasion, in 1661, it fell to the town council to reward merit in connection with a notable work. James Gordon, minister of Rothiemay, son of Gordon of Straloch, made, in that year, the first map, or plan, of New and Old Aberdeen. His work was thus acknowledged by the council :—

> "16 Oct., 1661.—The said day, the counsell tacking to consideratioun that Master James Gordon, minister of Rothiemay, heid beine at great paines in draughting wpone ane meikle cairt of paper, this burghe and

> fredom [lands] and other pairts ajacent neir therto, which he haid this day delyverit to the counsell weill done; tharfor in tokin of ther thankfulness, ordanis the deane of gild to buy, or cause mak ane silver peece or cup, wechtand tuentie unces, and to buy ane silk hatt, and delyver to the said Master James, with ane silk goun to his bedfellow."

This "meikle cairt" was engraved in Holland, at the expense of the town council, and upon the completion of it the council, in 1663, acknowledged Gordon's admirable work by making a further donation to him of "tuentie pundis sterlin of gold."

With this recognition of Parson Gordon's work we may fitly close our notice of the town council's liberality in the cause of letters. It was not the last act of the council, by any means, in rewarding literary effort, for at various times after that they paid for printing of poems, or music, or sermons, or theological "disputations." Once, indeed, they attempted to maintain local industry by prohibiting the importation of any pamphlets, or small books, that could be provided by the town's printer, although in this case they took care to enact that the town's printer should always sell such publications "on ordinar value."

But this very prohibition indicates the changed attitude of the council in the later years of the century. Instead of the advancement and liberality of the earlier days, we find the council, in the last quarter of the century, stagnant, or receding. They had embarked in a wretched and prolonged campaign against the Quakers in the town, which was completely

unsuccessful, and issued mainly in cramping and debasing the public mind. We find the council actually, in 1683, instituting a censorship of books, and these not the work of the hated sect but the productions of their own town's printer. And so, as the seventeenth century drew to a close, the association of the council with the promotion of literary work underwent a complete change. No doubt the conditions, generally, were changing. Literature itself was becoming more independent, seeking wider and freer scope, and the public intelligence less tolerant of a system of direct patronage which, under the best conditions, does not always make for the production of the best work, or the true enlightenment of the world.

Sir Walter Scott and the Aberdonians

SIR WALTER SCOTT AND THE ABERDONIANS.

I.

"TAK' awa' Aberdeen an' twal' mile roun' an' faur are ye?" So spake an Aberdeen artist at an Academy dinner more than half a century ago, and so happily did he thus express the local idea of the super-eminent merits of the district that his remark has passed into a settled proverb, and outgrown, it is to be feared, its author's own reputation in the Granite City.

But Sir Walter Scott's opinion of Aberdeen and the Aberdonians was not quite that of James Cassie and his fellow-citizens. He was far too good-hearted to seek seriously to asperse either the city or its inhabitants, but he reminds us every now and again that if the Aberdonian be "hard-headed," he is not, on that account, to be reckoned as quite the salt of the earth. Often had Walter Scott a sly dig at the lawyers of Aberdeen, the only members of the profession outside Edinburgh who term themselves "advocates," but that was merely playful professional prejudice, and Scott would have been the first to acknowledge the

interest of the circumstance that the Aberdeen lawyers were styled "advocates" officially by the Privy Council of Scotland more than three hundred years ago. And then he tells the excellent story of Lord Elibank, who in reply to the remark of an English lawyer that at the Union the English law should have been extended all over Scotland, observed grimly, "I cannot say how that might have answered our purpose, but it would scarce have suited yours, since by this time the Aberdeen advocates would have possessed themselves of all the business in Westminster Hall!"

Of course, the unkindest cut Scott ever dealt the Aberdonians was in representing Dugald Dalgetty, the free-fighter, with his lust of siller, and his tags of Latin, as a product—not intended, let us hope, as a typical product—of the Marischal College of Aberdeen. But the Aberdonians have steadily declined to acknowledge the portrait, except to laugh over it as an amusing caricature. They remember that Scott's early intimacy with the "old military veteran, Dalgetty by name," who had been in all the German wars, and now subsisted on an ensign's half-pay, "though called by courtesy a Captain," took place, not in the north, but at Prestonpans, at which place, they assure themselves, the qualities as well as the figure of the hero were really to be found.

But we know from many indications that Scott really bore no grudge against the men of the north. What was very remarkable, taking everything into account, was his quite amazing ignorance of all that really pertained to that district of Scotland. He made

the blunder of supposing that Aberdeen was at one time a walled city—strange in anyone supposed to have a knowledge of the antiquities of Scotland; and the historical and antiquarian interest of the Aberdeen district remained a sealed book to Scott to the end of his days.

Unfortunately, Scott never visited Aberdeen, except on one occasion, as a young lawyer, in attendance at the "Circuit" Court, and he was too much engrossed during that passing visit with a matter of the affections to pay the slightest attention to archaeological or historical subjects. And only once again was he within sight of the city. In the year 1813 a disaster happened near the entrance of Aberdeen Harbour in the wreck of the Oscar, whaler, and the loss, in the most heartrending circumstances, of practically all her crew of about forty men. The Aberdeen magistrates petitioned the Lighthouse Commissioners to erect a lighthouse near the point, and in response to the petition the Commissioners sailed round in their yacht in the summer of the following year, and inspected the site at Girdleness, on which, twenty years after, the present lighthouse was built. The Commissioners were accompanied on that occasion by a specially honoured guest in Walter Scott—as yet only plain "Mr"—and it is ever to be regretted that he contented himself with looking on the city from afar. "The view of Old and New Aberdeen from the sea is quite beautiful," he wrote in his diary—and there was end of it. "He is gone to the Orkneys in a gale of wind," wrote James Hogg to Byron, and although out of that

trip came much of the "Lord of the Isles" and the "Pirate," how much more might there not have been? Had he landed on that occasion Scott would have found himself in the scene of some of the most stirring incidents of Scottish national history that might have outweighed the lack of legendary episode which does not flourish in Aberdeenshire soil. In the matter of antiquities only one example need be mentioned that would, in itself, have rejoiced the heart of Walter Scott. We remember how in "Marmion," he sang of—

> Dun-Edin's cross, a pillared stone,

and how he treasured a fragment of that old Market Cross of Edinburgh, a "venerable relic, connected as it is with a thousand associations," and how he never ceased, as Lockhart says, to lament over the barbarity of the Edinburgh baillies who had removed the beautiful Gothic cross for the sake of widening the street. In the Castlegate of Aberdeen Scott would have found a Market Cross occupying the site on which a cross had stood since the days of Robert Bruce's residence in the town, and a structure that remains to this day the most beautiful, as well as the most interesting, Market Cross in Scotland. Not only so, but when the present Market Cross of Aberdeen was erected in 1686, the architect and maker was held bound to produce an exact replica of the Market Cross of Edinburgh, whose disappearance Scott so greatly lamented.

The fact is that Scott, in order to get the proper interest out of any district beyond his own, needed

to have what might be termed a "local agent" to supply him with the necessary facts. Joseph Train, the antiquarian exciseman, was an ideal assistant of this description for the south-west of Scotland, and friendly help was not awanting in other districts as well. Much, indeed, was obtained from the Aberdeen district by Scott, but it seemed to be by the merest chance. It was casually, while on a visit to Dunnottar Castle, the fortress of the Earls Marischal of Aberdeen, founders of that "Mareschal College" so derided in the "Legend of Montrose" —that Scott saw, for the first and last time, Peter Paterson, the living "Old Mortality." "He and Mr. Walker, the minister of the parish, found the poor man refreshing the epitaphs on the tombs of certain Cameronians who had fallen under the oppressions of James the Second's brief insanity." The old fellow was induced to join the party in the manse in a glass of whisky punch, but he was "in bad humour," says Scott, "and to use his own phrase, had no freedom for conversation. His spirit had been sorely vexed by hearing, in a certain Aberdonian kirk, the psalmody directed by a pitch pipe, or some similar instrument, which was to Old Mortality the abomination of abominations."

But if Scott was not fortunate enough to obtain the services of a Joseph Train of the Aberdeen district, it must not be supposed that he lacked acquaintanceship with Aberdonians of knowledge and ability. As will presently be seen, he had relations with Aberdonians to quite a remarkable extent. As Johnson delighted to poke fun at the Scots, yet employed them in

his literary work and placed his reputation for all time in the hands of a Scotchman, Scott played his joke on the Aberdonians in the printed sheet, yet found their friendship and assistance invaluable throughout his career.

One of those, who, being on friendly terms with Scott, might have been expected to render some antiquarian aid, was George Chalmers, of the "Caledonia." Chalmers, who had been a student at Aberdeen under Dr. Reid, founder of the Scottish philosophy "on the principles of common sense," was one of the earliest to detect the real authorship of the Waverley novels. On the publication of the "Antiquary" in 1816, Chalmers declared Scott to have written it, having recognised in Monkbarns, George Constable, a mutual friend, who, like the original of Dugald Dalgetty, hailed from the region of Prestonpans. This was eleven years before Scott explicitly admitted the authorship of the novels in the famous speech at the Theatrical Fund dinner in February, 1827. So far from Chalmers helping Scott with information, however, the only record we have of such matters shows that it was Scott who helped Chalmers. Says Lockhart, speaking of 1796—"Among other literary persons at a distance I may mention George Chalmers, the celebrated antiquary, with whom he [Scott] had been in correspondence from the beginning of this year, supplying him with Border ballads for the illustration of his researches into Scottish history." When the "Minstrelsy" is duly published, in 1802, "Chalmers overflows with heartier praise" than many, as would

be expected of a person who had already written "in great transports" about Scott's versions of the ballads. It is a curious circumstance that through the agency of Sir Walter Scott, Joseph Train was employed by Chalmers in the preparation of the last volume of the "Caledonia."

Another Aberdonian, also of the name of Chalmers, was in a way Scott's successful rival in one of the great literary undertakings of the period. This was Alexander Chalmers, compiler of the "General Biographical Dictionary," son of the first Chalmers, printer of the "Aberdeen Journal," the oldest newspaper in Scotland. Alexander Chalmers was the friend and literary assistant in London of his fellow-Aberdonian, James Perry, (properly Pirie), proprietor and editor—after "Memory" Woodfall—of the "Morning Chronicle," who has the unique distinction of having offered a pension of £50 a year to Burns if he would contribute a poem regularly to the columns of the "Chronicle." In 1805 Scott was full of literary schemes, one of which was a gigantic edition of the British poets, in which the editorial work was to be shared by himself and the poet Campbell. The scheme fell through in consequence of the refusal of the booksellers to admit certain works which Scott and Campbell insisted on, and while Campbell went his independent way in preparing his "Specimens of English Poetry," the booksellers continued in a "general edition" of the English poets which was produced under the superintendence of "Dictionary" Chalmers. It was a kind of task for which this

"Grub Street vassal" of the booksellers, as Lockhart contemptuously, and not altogether unjustly, styles him, was probably about as well fitted as Scott, and it at least left Scott free for better work.

It was, indeed, a defect in Scott, as the merest tyro in literary criticism may now discern, that he exercised so little restraint on the variety of his literary output. Often he embarked in literary schemes which might have been at least as well carried out by smaller men, but the world was so eager to read anything that came from the pen of the Wizard that one must have been more than human to resist the proposals Scott received in such abundance, or to refrain from proposals which he himself was so ready to make. Not very many people nowadays, probably, read "Paul's Letters"—indeed, not everyone will recollect what these letters are about, and yet as a journal of Scott's visit to the Continent, in 1815, thrown into the form of communications to an imaginary group of personages in Scotland, they were devoured by the reading public as fast as the sheets could be printed off. Waterloo had just been fought and won; the thoughts of the whole country were still on that great event, and with the 20,000 wounded soldiers still lying in Brussels, when Scott felt the temptation irresistible to see "probably the last shadows of real warfare that his own eye would afford." So he set out, leaving Ballantyne to make the usual arrangements with the booksellers for the publication of the "Letters" as they should arrive.

SIR WALTER SCOTT AND THE ABERDONIANS.

II.

WHEN Scott arrived in Brussels in the middle of August, 1815, he obtained the services, as cicerone, of one of the very remarkable figures which the city at that time contained. Pryse Lockhart Gordon, a half-pay major from Aberdeen, had already circled round a large part of the world, and contrived to know everything and everybody worth knowing wherever he happened to find himself. He was a man with some taste in the arts, and it is ever to be remembered to his credit that he first detected the true genius of John Phillip, house-painter and R.A. At the critical moment he took Phillip home to his own house, found a tutor for him, and almost against Phillip's own will compelled him for the space of two years to undergo that drudgery in essential detail in his native town which at least prepared the way for the brilliant results afterwards achieved in London and Spain. In Brussels, Pryse Gordon was intimate with many of the celebrities. When Byron visited the field of Waterloo, it was in the company of Pryse

Gordon, whose son had been Byron's schoolfellow, and it was in Gordon's house in Brussels that he afterwards spent the evening, and wrote in Mrs Gordon's album the lines which afterwards appeared in "Childe Harold," beginning—

> Stop ! for thy tread is on an Empire's dust.

It was under the guidance of this Aberdonian abroad, then, that Scott visited the field of battle. The day was beautiful, Gordon tells us, and Scott made the most of his opportunity, collecting much information and many trophies, although most of these he had to buy from the greedy peasants. The most precious memorial he obtained was presented to him by Pryse Gordon's wife. It was a French soldier's pocket-book, stained with blood, which contained versions of songs popular in the French army, some of which Scott forthwith turned into English for his "Paul's Letters." Scott, like Byron, passed the evening with the Gordons in Brussels, and charmed the party by his geniality and brilliant conversation.

This Pryse Gordon was descended on his grandmother's side from the Burnetts of Leys. It so happened that Andrew Cant, the notable Covenanting preacher, having offended Montrose's troops in Aberdeen, had to withdraw from the town, and occasionally preached at Crathes Castle, the stronghold of the Burnetts, and there left a bundle of his sermons. More than a hundred and fifty years afterwards the manuscript came into the hands of a brother of Pryse Gordon, Rev. Abercromby Lockhart Gordon, minister

of the Greyfriars Church in Aberdeen, who presented the sermons to Sir Walter Scott. We have ample testimony to the effect that Scott looked on the manuscript as an extremely interesting literary curiosity. But Scott had earned some right to this particular form of compliment from the Gordon family. A Scottish newspaper of January, 1828, has this announcement among its important items :—

> Sermons by the Author of Waverley ! ! ! "Religious Discourses by a Layman" are announced, and it will excite the public curiosity to learn that they consist of three sermons by Sir Walter Scott. We do not feel at liberty to state the circumstances which led to their being composed, nor to say more of the author's consent to their being published, than that it does honour to the goodness of his heart, and proves that he is as sincere a Christian in practice as we have no doubt these discourses will show him to be in precept. We certainly look both for practical sense and noble eloquence in this remarkable publication.

The writer of this announcment evidently knew the story of the Scott sermons, although wrong as to the number, but although these sermons contain both "practical sense and noble eloquence," they are certainly less interesting than the story of how they came to be written. Scott had become interested in Pryse Gordon's eldest son, a young man who intended to enter the ministry, but whose professional prospects had been blighted by chronic deafness. He helped the lad in many ways, and ultimately through Scott's aid, young Gordon became, like the son of the beadsman at Jeanie Deans' cottage, a divinity student at

Aberdeen, and was, in due time, licensed by the Aberdeen Presbytery to preach the Gospel. Unhappily the deafness operated against his selection for a charge. The Synod declared his deafness an insuperable barrier, and although the General Assembly, moved by the advocacy of Jeffrey, whose aid had been invoked by Scott, reversed the Synod's decision, the young man himself felt that the Synod was right. So, instead of wagging his head in a pulpit, he became for a considerable time Walter Scott's amanuensis, cataloguing his library, and copying the Waverley manuscripts for the press. Once again, however, there was a prospect of a charge within the bounds of the Aberdeen Presbytery. Scott wondered that his young friend was not thereby exhilarated, and discovered that the young man had been so utterly unnerved by all the circumstances of his situation that he could not compose his mind sufficiently to produce the two sermons that must be put before the Presbytery by a certain day. Scott's kind heart was moved. "My good young friend," he observed, "leave this matter to me. Do you work away at the catalogue and I shall write for you a couple of sermons that will pass muster well enough at Aberdeen." Next morning, accordingly, he placed the discourses in the hands of the young man, and although the sermons were never preached—for the youth was too conscientious to take advantage of the kindly meant arrangement—the manuscript remained with him a very tangible proof of Scott's most friendly help. It turned out a very substantial proof, indeed, for a few years later when, having fallen on

evil days in London, young Gordon received Scott's permission to dispose of the manuscript, he had no difficulty in getting from Colburn, the bookseller, for the two sermons the sum of £250.

It is specially interesting to know that the most tender friendship that Scott enjoyed outside the limits of his own family—and it was his good fortune to enjoy many—was the friendship of an Aberdonian. James Skene was a gifted member of the family of Skene of Rubislaw, the descendant of that Provost George Skene of Fintray and Rubislaw who repeatedly represented his native city in Parliament, and who, along with Baillie Adie, was sent by Aberdeen to wait on the Duke of York—afterwards James VII.—when he visited Edinburgh in 1681, and on that occasion received the honour of knighthood. At Scott's own request he was introduced to James Skene in the early part of 1797. From that time began, as Skene said after Scott's death, "a friendship so pure and cordial as to have been able to withstand all the vicissitudes of nearly forty years, without ever having sustained even a casual chill from unkind thought or word." Everyone who knows his Scott knows how devoted was Skene's friendship for him, and, on the other hand, the inspiration that Scott drew from his constant intercourse with this singularly high-minded man. He was an accomplished artist, something of a scholar, an acute observer of men and affairs in many parts of the world, and all that he had was placed unreservedly at Scott's disposal. To him Scott was indebted for the materials for "Quentin Durward," for the Jewish

episodes in "Ivanhoe," and for many friendly and willing services besides not to be set down, and never intended to be set down, as services at all, but merely the issue of that fair companionship between the two which Scott acknowledged in the dedication to Skene of the fourth canto of "Marmion." Skene was fittingly one of the very last to receive a letter from the hands of Scott—from Malta, in the last days of 1831, when the shadow of the end had already made its appearance.

This friendship with James Skene was, from first to last, a source of happiness and pleasure to Scott. There remains to be mentioned Scott's relations with another Aberdonian—an equally honourable man—that may truly enough be said to have yielded him the sorest trial of his life. It is well enough known now that Scott, popular and successful in his own day beyond almost any person in these dominions, and apparently supremely happy, never completely recovered from the unfortunate issue of his first love affair. After seven years' wooing he was rejected, and it was only his remarkable strength of character, which means his moral reserve power, that carried him clear of those consequences which friends who knew the ardency of his passion so dreaded. His successful rival was William Forbes, son and heir to Sir William Forbes of Pitsligo, Aberdeenshire, whose marriage with Miss Stuart took place in 1797. Scott sought relief in literary and professional pursuits, and soon afterwards married Miss Carpenter, but although he doubtless imagined then that he had closed the episode, the memory of it continued painful to the touch to

the last. More than a dozen years afterwards, and after the lady's death, he drew her portrait in Matilda, in "Rokeby," and the curious in such matters may amuse themselves in tracing autobiographical references in the most touching passages of the poem. In 1827, when he had removed to the shabby lodgings in Shandwick Place, Scott found that the aged mother of his first love was living very near. He induced Skene's wife—herself a sister of his successful rival, Forbes—to take him on a visit to the old lady, and an extremely painful scene was the result. Other incidents of the same kind followed, for Scott was now unable to maintain the brave front of the old days, and there is not a little foundation for Mr. Lang's view that Scott's heart was "broken for two years, and retained its crack till his dying day."

But it is somewhat singular, and ordinary people will remember it with pleasure, that Scott and his successful rival, Sir William Forbes, remained on friendly terms throughout life. It so happened, very strangely, that, when the great financial crash came, Sir William Forbes was appointed chairman of Scott's creditors, and in that capacity he spared no pains to make as light as possible the terrible burden on Scott's shoulders. On one occasion a firm of Jews, thinking to obtain their money by a speedier method than was being adopted by the creditors, wished to imprison Scott. Forbes heard of it, and paid the money out of his own pocket, concealing the fact, so that Scott came to know of it only after Forbes's death. And so that relationship also

closed, as it had been carried on—apart from the supreme episode—in great kindness of heart, for Scott bore frequent testimony to the generosity of his friend's conduct. But, of course, the true reason was to be found in Scott himself. His nobility of character seemed to induce in everyone who came within the charmed circle unwavering devotion to his interests. His overflowing kindliness for others had a return in a universal kindliness for himself. And of Sir Walter Scott, as well as of Cowper, it might well be said:—

> "His highest honours to the heart belong,
> His virtues form'd the magic of his song."

The Ideal Edition of Lockhart's "Life of Scott'

THE IDEAL EDITION OF LOCKHART'S "LIFE OF SCOTT."

ONE wonders how it is that no enterprising publisher sets about a fully and properly annotated edition of Lockhart's *Life of Scott.* Three quarters of a century almost have come and gone since the publication of that classic biography. Its interest is as fresh to-day, although the Scott and Lockhart generation has long since gone to its rest, as when it first saw the light, and the need for accurate and fresh information on the many topical and personal and literary references in the work increases the farther we pass from its own time.

Let us glance for a moment at only a few of the features on which a properly annotated edition of Lockhart would carry pleasure and knowledge to all interested in the history and literature of their country; for it is a chief feature of this remarkable book that it is very much more than a life of Scott.

Everybody knows the Scott Monument in the Princes Street Gardens of Edinburgh. It has become familiar to us in pictorial representation as almost an emblem of Scotland. Yet it is an extraordinary thing

that more than half a century after the erection of this really national monument we should be unable to find in any existing edition of the *Life of Scott* information on the history of the movement that resulted in that beautiful and appropriate structure. Not very many people remember, perhaps. how nearly that movement ended in a great blunder. In those days, by some strange obliquity of artistic vision—due, no doubt, to interest in the efforts to secure the Cleopatra Needle, then still lying at Alexandria—public taste in matters of the kind ran in the direction of enormous obelisks, constructed of a vast number of blocks of stone. There are two of them in Aberdeen, which, after standing as an offence to public taste for years in the middle of the city, were, at great expense, taken down and re-erected in the outskirts—the McGrigor obelisk, now in the Duthie Park, and the Forbes obelisk, now in the grounds of the Lunatic Asylum—and there are others of the same kind, of that period, to be found in various parts of the country. The Scott Monument was very nearly an ugly obelisk of this kind. William Playfair, the archictect of the Royal Institution, was actually instructed to prepare designs for such a memorial, and designs were submitted in 1835 of an obelisk two hundred feet high, to cost £5,000, which the committee were guided, most providentially, into rejecting.

Then one will look equally in vain in any existing edition of Lockhart's *Scott* for information regarding George Meikle Kemp, the designer of the monument. No doubt information can easily be got in

biographical dictionaries—a volume containing a brief account of his career was published in 1892—but the virtue of an annotated edition of a great work (and no other is worth annotating) is that the reader is able to carry along with him that reasonable amount of necessary side-information on the topics dealt with in the text which gives him proper command of the main subject, and connects his subject, at the same time, with the greater affairs of the world beyond it.

The personal relationships, other than literary, alluded to in the course of the biography, which now require elucidation for even well-informed readers, are very numerous and interesting. Take the case of another architect. It will be remembered that William Burn was the architect for the new academy opened in Edinburgh under Scott's influence in 1824, and that he was the designer of the flat memorial stone—which Lockhart mistakenly calls a "little pillar"—still to be seen on the grave of Helen Walker, the original of Jeanie Deans, in Irongray Churchyard. But nothing will be gleamed about Burn in Lockhart's *Scott* beyond one or two passing references. Yet this man, who, by the way, was one of the first to employ George Kemp, the architect of the Scott monument, has left his honourable mark on every other Scottish town. In Aberdeen, he was the architect of the old Bridewell, the consulting architect for the extensions of Gordon's College in the early thirties; and his bank at the corner of Castle Street and Marischal Street, built in 1803, still stands as one of the finest public buildings in the city. His methods and designs did not com-

mand universal approval—his reconstruction of St. Giles Cathedral, 1829-33, was seriously challenged—but it would be the duty of an annotator to direct readers to such sources of information, even on technical and artistic points, as should enable them to gain at least a view of his accomplishments and personality as one of the close personal friends of Walter Scott.

The literary relationships of Scott were, naturally, more fully dealt with by Lockhart than any others, and yet here, too, some part of the light cast by the knowledge and experience of three-quarters of a century might very well be shed on the pages of this great work. There is the case, for example, of John Leyden, whose recent centenary has been a means of drawing renewed and widespread attention to his qualities as a poet and scholar. Public interest in Leyden has grown since that unopened letter was returned to Scott from India in 1811, or since Dr. Chalmers, himself then rising into celebrity and pursuing his Teviot tour, wrote in his journal in July, 1826: "Before we turned our gig down the Teviot again, we called on an old couple formerly belonging to the parish of Cavers [Leyden's native parish where Chalmers began as an assistant] and now living here. They are the parents of the celebrated John Leyden, now deceased."

Besides the many literary relationships of Scott which need elucidation in our ideal edition of Lockhart, we might very well have a little more information than Lockhart was willing to give relative to the effect of Scott's work on the contemporary public. It would

be both an encouragement and a warning to less successful writers. We are so accustomed to accept everything of Scott's as a work of genius that we forget that he wrote far too much, often very indifferently; and, as a matter of fact, the literary public of the time was very much divided in opinion as to the merits of a great deal that left his hands. Francis Horner, the rising hope of a considerable group of Whigs of the day, only got through *Don Roderick* with fatigue, and found it passing strange that the work should be commended by any person of cultivated taste. Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, the gossip and mouthpiece of Edinburgh society, and a literary person of some standing, as well as a personal friend of Scott wrote, even in 1839, of Sir Walter's "harmless romances" and their "ten thousand blunders as to chronology, costume, etc., which must mislead the million." Thomas Love Peacock spoke of the romances as "the pantomime of literature." In the literature of pantomime, he said, "there is the same variety of character; the same diversity of story; the same copiousness of incident; the same research into costume; the same display of heraldry, falconry, minstrelsy, scenery, monkery, witchery, devilry, robbery, poachery, piracy, fishery, gipsy-astrology, demonology, architecture, fortification, castrametation, navigation; the same running base of love and battle. The main difference is that the one set of amusing fictions is told in music and action, the other in all the worst dialects of the English language." Even George Borrow, conservative to the backbone, thought, as a youth, that *Old Mortality* was

a "tiresome trashy publication"; and looking over it again when he had grown old, thought so still, but detected in it also what had escaped his immature eye, "base, fulsome adulation of the worthless great, and most unprincipled libellings of the truly noble ones of the earth, because they, the sons of peasants and handicraftsmen, stood up for the rights of outraged humanity, and proclaimed that it is worth that makes the man, and not embroidered clothing."

Every one remembers how Dr. M'Crie, the biographer of Knox, defended the Covenanters so effectively against the representation of them in *Old Mortality* that Scott found the impression on the public mind so strong that he had to take up the cudgels in his own behalf in an anonymous review. No one can pretend that Lockhart has given a definitive account of this particular episode. One does not wonder that the Scottish public of that day was with M'Crie, and not with Scott, when it is remembered that the only publication of that time which, in multiplicity of editions, ran neck and neck for a whole year with *Old Mortality* was the Glasgow sermons of Dr. Chalmers.

Naturally, the favourable impressions produced by Scott's work on his own generation are sufficiently indicated by Lockhart. But even on this side, in a work of such national importance, something useful might be told of how the work of Scott has held its honourable place throughout the century in the minds and hearts of the reading public; and the wholesome effects of his life, more even than his works, perhaps, on the whole English-speaking race.

Probably, however, the most important service that our ideal edition of Lockhart could render would be to direct attention to the sources of information relative to the characters in Scott's novels. It may be doubted if there is any one literary subject on which requests to public librarians—at least in Scotland—are more frequent or more interesting than the request for information as to the originals of these characters. There is a real need for a first-class book on this subject, and perhaps, when our enterprising publisher undertakes the ideal edition of Lockhart, he will also make available, in a separate and completer form than would be possible in mere annotations, the enormous mass of floating information on this branch of the Scott literature.

With regard to this matter, it is true that the work, as it stands, contains a good deal of most valuable information. For example, we have the original of Meg Dods dealt with in chapter v. of the *Life*, of Edie Ochiltree in chapter vi., of Dandie Dinmont and others of the *Guy Mannering* group in chapter vii., of Old Mortality in the same, of the Black Dwarf in chapter viii., of Tod Gabbie in chapter xiv., of the Dominie in chapter xxv., and so on to Dugald Dalgetty in chapter lxxviii. Then the enthusiastic student of Scott will not stick for other excellent sources of information. The Chamberses have done much—perhaps the best—in giving help in this direction. William Chambers's little work on David Ritchie, the original of the Black Dwarf, issued in 1820, is an excellent monograph of its

kind; but as only one hundred and fifty copies were printed, it has long been classed as "rare." Even the reprint of 1885 is selling at present at four to five shillings. Relative to this same character one must read, along with Chambers's work, Dr. John Brown's curious paper on "The Black Dwarf's Bones," which embodies most interesting accounts of this strange creature by a medical friend who made special investigations, and has a woodcut of his "thrawn" limb-bones.

Much more useful, however, than any of the foregoing is Robert Chambers's *Illustrations of the Author of "Waverley,"* first issued in 1822, five years before the great speech in which Scott confessed himself the author of the novels. The little book has been repeatedly reprinted—last, I think, in 1884—and it well deserves to be, for it is quite a mine of information on the originals of the characters in *Waverley*, *Guy Mannering*, *The Antiquary*, *Rob Roy*, *The Black Dwarf*, *Old Mortality*, *The Heart of Midlothian*, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, *A Legend of Montrose*, and *The Monastery*. Robert Chambers's other volume, embodying a memoir of Scott, written immediately after Scott's death, is less useful for information about the characters than about the great novelist himself. Its interest is still fresh. What was thought of it when it was first published may be judged from the fact that one hundred and eighty thousand copies of it were sold at the time.

Other books there are on the Scott characters, but they will be, for most people, difficult to come at.

There are Cornish's *Waverley Manual* of 1871, Charles Rogers's *Waverley Dictionary* of 1879, Cadell's excellent *Introductions*, etc., published in three volumes away back in 1833, with other works, now practically unobtainable, that appeared while the Scott works were in their earliest vogue, or within the period prior to Scott's death in 1832. It is remarkable, too, and indicates the extraordinary interest that Scott literature evokes, that a large part of the best information on the Scott characters has appeared intermittently in newspapers and periodicals. Many will still remember the excellent contribution to our knowledge of the real Dominie Sampson that appeared in the pages of the *Scotsman* as recently as June 20th of 1906.

Along with all the foregoing must be kept in view the introductions and notes in the best editions of the Waverley Novels themselves. The person who possesses a good edition of these, or is within reach of a good public library, has at his command—with the expenditure of some labour, no doubt—a stock of information on the chief characters in each particular novel that largely covers the ground. It will at least enable the intelligent reader to have an extended and deepened interest in the characters and incidents of the work.

From all the foregoing it will be seen that although there is an enormous amount of information available, in a way, on Scott and his work, it needs to be brought together, carefully sifted, and embodied in what we have ventured to call the ideal—it might very easily

be the definitive—edition of Lockhart's *Life of Scott*. "It would make the book too long," says someone—and it is true that this would add to its length, but there probably never was a person who read the *Life of Scott* for pure love of the subject who did not feel that this is one of the long books in our language which is too short. And one can always skip notes—at least that the world may have its adequate edition. Perhaps the idea may be realized by the hundredth anniversary of the publication of *Waverley*, the first of the novels. It would be a fit celebration of the centenary of that occasion when the British public discovered that they had lost a poet but found a writer whose genius as a novelist was surpassed only by his qualities as a man.

An Aberdeen Literary Centenary

AN ABERDEEN LITERARY CENTENARY.

TO all interested in English Literature, especially as affected by writers of the north-east of Scotland, a certain significance attached to the 18th of August, 1903. On that day, one hundred years ago, died James Beattie, poet and miscellaneous writer, whose work added so largely to the fair fame of Scotland that his memory may well be recalled with a sympathetic interest by the present generation of Scotsmen.

It must be said that James Beattie is very much a forgotten celebrity, and for that two reasons are enough. In the first place, in the last hundred years English literary taste has undergone a complete revolution, and Beattie's work can only be read mainly as illustrating literary history. Then, although his biography was written in three volumes by the friend who knew him best, it is, with perhaps a single exception, the most forbidding biography ever written of any notable person in this part of the country. In Sir William Forbes's "Life," one seldom gets hold of the living man. We are brought into the presence of a cold, formal personage, who has none of the homelier human virtues, to say nothing of human frailties, who never

gets on really cordial and familiar terms with anyone, even in his letters—and this kind of biography the public, with a true instinct, unfailingly neglects. And so it happens that Beattie, whose chief work, unfinished by himself, more than one writer of some standing attempted to complete, whose ideas, and phrases even, were in at least one noted instance followed by Sir Walter Scott, and whose abilities were the envy of Robert Burns, has become little more than a name to the majority of even well-educated people.

Beattie was born on 25th January, 1735, at Laurencekirk, where his father was a country "merchant" on a small scale, and worked a croft in the neighbourhood, as his fathers had done before him. "If," says Sir William Forbes in a sententious phrase with the point of which, at least, no one will quarrel, "if from this humble line of ancestry Dr Beattie derived no lustre, it may be fairly said that he incurred no disgrace." Young Beattie, left an orphan at an early age by the death of his father, attended the parish school of Laurencekirk, and afterwards took the course of Greek, Philosophy, and Divinity—for at one time he had the ministry in view—at Marischal College, Aberdeen. He was in his nineteenth year when, in 1753, he got his first appointment, that of parish schoolmaster of Fordoun. There he had ample opportunity of cultivating the muses in a solitude more profound than even he found wholly agreeable. At anyrate, he readily offered himself as a canditate for a subordinate post on the teaching staff of the Aberdeen Grammar School in 1757, and although not then successful, he

acquitted himself so well in the examination that then preceded such appointments that on another vacancy happening in the following year he was appointed by the magistrates without any further trial. In that position he remained for only two years. In 1760 the Chair of Natural Philosophy in Marischal College became vacant. Beattie, who, we are told, first regarded the suggestion with amazement, was induced to become a candidate, and mainly through the interest of Lord Erroll he received the appointment. About the same time a new Professor of Moral Philosophy and Logic was appointed, and by an arrangement quite amusing, Beattie and he exchanged "portfolios," and the two men were installed together on 8th October, 1760.

From this point Beattie's life seemed singularly placid and successful. He carried on acceptably the duties of his chair, and his literary work brought him fame, and friendships, and many honours. It is of the true pathos of life that in this apparent serenity he was stricken above most, and really died of a broken heart.

Very early in life Beattie showed an inclination to poetry. While a teacher at Fordoun he contributed poetical pieces to the "Scots Magazine," easily distinguished by the initials "J.B."; but a more serious essay was the publication, almost immediately after his appointment to the professorship, of a small volume of miscellaneous poems and translations from the Classics. It was neither very brilliant nor successful. For the last, Beattie laid blame on the publisher, but

he tacitly admitted a personal responsibility in afterwards suppressing almost the entire contents of the volume. Yet these "Poems" were accepted by the public as the work of a person of high ideals and refined taste, and they opened the way for the recognition of Beattie by literary circles—then regarded as the necessary "crowning" of genius. By this means, for example, he had the inexpressible pleasure, in the autumn of 1765, of passing two days with Gray, of the "Elegy," then on a visit to the Earl of Strathmore at Glamis Castle, and Gray afterwards spoke and corresponded with him in terms of friendly esteem.

On his appointment to the Chair of Moral Philosophy, Beattie naturally found it necessary to read something of what had been written on morals and human nature. Accordingly, he applied himself to the works of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. He was surprised to find there what appeared to him a pernicious and fallacious scepticism—particularly in the works of David Hume, in which, he explicitly states, he found the sceptical philosophy in its most extravagant form. And so, as a member of the "Wise Club," one of the long line of local institutions from which was evolved the present Philosophical Society of Aberdeen, and more privately in his own study, he set himself to controvert the reasoning of the sceptics. One is amused at the little subterfuge by which the publication of the celebrated essay was brought about. The two friends to whose care Beattie entrusted it offered it to a bookseller, and met with a positive refusal. They knew that Beattie would not go forward to publication unless on the

outright purchase of the manuscript, so they laid their heads together, and informing Beattie that the essay had been sold for fifty guineas, themselves advanced the amount, and the volume duly appeared in May, 1770, under the title "An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth in opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism." The results were sufficiently remarkable. It has never been looked upon as at all an adequate discussion of the subject, although there is scant enough justice in the judgment of a present-day critic that in the treatment of such themes Beattie was "hopelessly out of his depth." On Hume himself it produced no effect whatever, unless to induce an ironical pleasantry. But with the reading public it was amazingly popular, and in four years went through five large editions, and was translated into French, Dutch, German, and minor European languages. It brought Beattie into still greater prominence as a writer, and although now quite unread, as the occasion for both its arguments and method has changed, it must be held to have done its own work in the directing of wholesome intellectual inquiry.

Meantime, Beattie had other work in progress. In the middle of the sixties he began to try his hand on a poem in the style and stanza of Spenser—which seemed to him, as to many another poet, the most harmonious form of verse ever contrived, which Burns adopted in the "Cottar's Saturday Night," and Byron and Scott whenever they had in hand a passage of special stateliness. He did not intend this poem for publication; indeed, he had the idea—fulfilled absol-

utely as it turned out—that it would never be finished. Yet, the "Minstrel" grew in his hands. The subject was suggested to him by a dissertation on the old bards, or minstrels, prefixed to a collection of ballads published a short time before by Dodsley, the London printer. He proceeded to give an account of the birth, education, and adventures of one of those bards, born in a lowly position in the north of Scotland, endowed with a taste for music and the beauties of nature, and intended to support himself by singing his ballads to his harp. In the poem as it stands, however, Edwin, the hero—really Beattie himself—who has in him all the makings of the wistful, detached, high-souled figures of whom he was to be a type, scarcely reaches manhood, and perhaps better so—

> "For now he haunts his native land
> As an immortal youth."

The young man may almost be said to languish through boyhood, caring nothing for boyish or youthful sports or toys—

> "Save one short pipe of rudest minstrelsy."

The forest, or moors, or "lonely mountain head" are the scenes of his dearest delights—the foaming waterfall, the concert of waters, woods, and winds, the glory of the rising sun and the living splendour of its setting, for he was a true poet in whose sight continually the promise was fulfilled that the mountains and hills shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. The construction of the poem is artificial exceedingly, for Beattie's ideals in this

respect were all in the old formalism in literature of which the "Minstrel" is one of the last notable examples. Yet Beattie had a true feeling for nature, and often with Edwin

> "The craggy cliff he loved to climb
> When all in mist the world below was lost."

Indeed, his truly poetic imagination frequently took wing in spite of its fetters, and then

> "Along this narrow valley you might see
> The wild deer sporting on the meadow ground,
> And here and there a solitary tree,
> Or mossy stone, or rock with woodbine crowned.
> Oft did the cliffs reverberate the sound
> Of parting fragments tumbling from on high;
> And from the summit of that craggy mound
> The perching eagle oft was heard to cry,
> Or on resounding wings to shoot athwart the sky."

To a generation which as yet knew neither Wordsworth nor Burns, and was scarcely prepared for them, the modest witchery of the "Ministrel" was perfectly captivating, and when the first canto appeared anonymously in 1771, it seemed to the indulgent critics as if the poet of the "Seasons" had returned purified to earth. The first and second cantos—all that was ever completed—were published together in 1774, and Beattie thenceforth took his place as a poet of high rank and one of the literary celebrities of the day. In response to an application to the King, a pension of £200 a year was granted to him, and in the course of a visit to London in connection with this business he was summoned to a personal interview, and

passed fully an hour with the King and Queen, conversing, he tells, "on a great variety of topics." At this time the University of Oxford conferred on him the degree of LL.D. At Sir Joshua Reynold's request he sat to the great painter for his portrait, the famous allegorical picture, which was presented to him, and now hangs, one is thankful to say, in Beattie's own college, one of the most valued artistic possessions of the University of Aberdeen.

Beattie's fame, keeping in view the amount and quality of his work, was now quite remarkable. He was urged to exchange his chair in Aberdeen for one of greater honour and double the stipend in Edinburgh University, and declined. He similarly resisted the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury to enter the Church of England, in view of high preferment, as also a definite offer from another Prelate, on his taking orders in that Church, of a living then vacant of £500 a year. He remained in Aberdeen, quietly carrying on the work of his chair, and issuing from time to time numerous works, chiefly in the form of ethical and critical dissertations. In one of these, it is worthy of remark, he urged the abolition of the slave trade—as he had already done in his class lectures—nearly half a century before the passing of the Emancipation Act. His foresight was shown also in local affairs in his advocacy of the union of the Aberdeen Colleges three-quarters of a century before it actually came about.

Beattie was ardently fond of music, and as a member of the Aberdeen Musical Society of that day

took part in the weekly concerts in the city. He himself performed on the violoncello. On his death his 'cello passed into the hands of his niece, the wife of his successor, Professor Glennie; ultimately it became the property of the late Mr. James Walker, also a devoted lover of the fine arts, and was by him bequeathed to Marischal College, where it now lies, a suitable companion of the Reynolds portrait. He wrote a little on music, but, all things considered, one can hardly regret that he never carried out a promise made to Burns to write for him an essay on the national music of Scotland.

By the end of the century, however, Beattie was losing his interest alike in literature and life. In 1767 he married a daughter of Dr. James Dun, rector of the Grammar School, a lively young lady of such beauty that Dr. Johnson, who saw her in London in 1773, confessed himself positively dazzled. Unhappily, a hereditary taint of madness soon made its appearance, and her cherished companionship was lost. Beattie's affection for long centred in his eldest son, James Hay Beattie, so named after the Earl of Erroll, a brilliant young man who, in 1787, when only nineteen, was appointed Assistant Professor and successor to his father. He was only spared for two years more, and although his father found some relief from his unspeakable sorrow in preparing a volume of the young man's writings, which was privately printed for distribution to friends, he never really recovered from the blow. In 1796 he suffered another bereavement in the death of the last of his children, his youngest son, Montague,

in his nineteenth year, and from that time, as he said when standing by the grave of his boy, he was done with the world. He never again applied himself to study. Music and society had no more interest. He rarely even answered a letter. In April, 1799, he was struck with palsy, and in his house in Upperkirkgate he died on 18th August, 1803. By his own desire he was laid beside his two sons in St. Nicholas Churchyard, where, by those interested, the two slabs that mark the graves will be found not far from the south-west corner of the church, within a few feet of the grave of that redoubtable churchman, Andrew Cant. Beattie was not a great man—his poem was in no sense the masterpiece that some, even in recent days, have endeavoured to make out; but he was an example of a purely idealist writer emerging from unpromising soil in a very unfruitful time, and so it is worthy of continual remembrance that he did something for literature and for Scotland.

Samuel Rutherford in Aberdeen

SAMUEL RUTHERFORD IN ABERDEEN.

IF Samuel Rutherford's banishment for eighteen months to the town of Aberdeen had had no other result, it at least enriched the spiritual life of Scotland through that wonderful series of letters, unique of their kind in English literature. The best edition of the *Letters*—the edition of 1891, edited by Dr. Andrew Bonar—contains 365 of Rutherford's epistles, and of these no fewer than 220 were written from Aberdeen. But although so many of the letters have been recovered, these can be but a fraction of the whole number that he wrote during his stay in the Granite City. He was constantly at his desk, pouring out to his many correspondents in the south-west country the fervent story of his spiritual experience. Even of the recovered letters we have eighteen of them, in one case, written on the same day, and eleven are dated the day following. If we remember that it is practically impossible that even these could be all that he wrote on those particular days, we shall see what an almost incredible number of letters must have issued from his pen.

Nor were these letters short, or copies one of another. Even Burns, as we know, was not above

repeating a letter that pleased him to several correspondents; but while many of Rutherford's letters, on the busiest days, would fill the four pages of a quarto sheet, each seems to be suited to the person that Rutherford spoke to at the moment. Indeed, the secret of their power is that they are not so much literary documents at all as the vehicle of that very breath of life which vivified whomsoever it touched.

It was on July 27, 1636, that, at the instance of Thomas Sydserf, Bishop of Galloway, Samuel Rutherford was discharged, by the Court of High Commission, from exercising any part of his ministry within the kingdom of Scotland, under pain of rebellion, and was banished to Aberdeen, to remain there during the king's pleasure. One can imagine a certain irony in the selection of the place of banishment. Aberdeen, then as now, had an individuality in religious as well as in secular things. Some might call it intellectual independence, others a less creditable quality, according as one might wish to be friendly or the opposite. At the time of Samuel Rutherford's deposition the town stood by Episcopacy, and it was served by a group of learned doctors who would be expected to correct, by mere weight of intellect, the vagaries of this Puritan divine who had been such a disturbing element among the plains and hills of Galloway.

Rutherford himself says that he was charged in the king's name to be in Aberdeen by August 20. Had that been so, his tardy movements towards his prison-house might easily have been made a reason for his undoing had his enemies been quite as eager for his utter down-

fall as we are sometimes inclined to suppose. In the early days of August he is no farther than Irvine, spending a day with his beloved friend David Dickson, who had himself by this time suffered banishment to an arid Aberdeenshire parish. A month later, September 5, he is still in Edinburgh, no man making him afraid. So he writes:—

> "The Lord is with me; I care not what man can do. I burden no man, and I want nothing. No king is better provided than I am. Sweet, sweet and easy is the cross of my Lord. All men I look in the face (of whatsoever denomination, nobles and poor, acquaintance and strangers) are friendly to me."

At length, on September 20, he has reached Aberdeen, and is settled "in an honest man's house." It is remarkable how widespread is the idea that during his banishment to Aberdeen Samuel Rutherford was in prison and was harshly used. That, of course, is not so. He speaks, no doubt, of the town as his "place of confinement," but in the large sense of its being the place where he could not exercise the full freedom of his ministry. He entered the small town that Aberdeen then was probably unnoticed, save by the friends who met him. And his friends were not so few, for in the very first days he tells that "I find a lodging in the heart of many strangers."

The house that Samuel Rutherford lodged in was in the Upperkirkgate, close to the Upperkirkgate Port, one of the six gates of the town. It was on the very verge of the burgh. Indeed, from his window his uninterrupted view northward would be over the Loch of

Aberdeen, now completely covered with streets, and towards the west the only buildings that would meet his eye would be two mean structures on the Schoolhill —the Grammar School and the Sang School, apart from the massive pile of St. Nicholas Church, the Mother Church of Aberdeen for seven hundred years.

Beyond the circumstance that he himself tells of many friendly greetings he received, and of many visits from friendly strangers, we would know from the conditions in Aberdeen at the time that Rutherford had little actual ill-usuage to fear. No official intimation was made to either the civic or ecclesiastical authorities of his banishment thither, and so no formal notice of any kind was taken of his arrival. Then, it happened that the Provost, Alexander Jaffray of Kingswells, was not only leaning towards the Covenanters—he openly joined them in 1638—but was suffering himself some bitter social persecution in respect that, being the grandson of a baxter, he had attained to the provostship in despite of others who—as John Spalding, the contemporary chronicler, says—belonged "to the old blood of the town." Then, the Provost's son, Alexander Jaffray, himself Provost a few years later, had just returned to the town after his travels on the Continent. He was on the way to becoming not only a Covenanter, but the first of the notable Quakers of Aberdeen and the personal friend of Oliver Cromwell. He had intense religious experiences of his own; and, indeed, his famous *Diary*, recovered in a remarkable way a century ago near Dunnottar, where the Covenanters suffered so much, often approaches the *Letters*

of Samuel Rutherford in its earnestness of evangelical testimony. These were the stamp of men in authority in the town, and they were not men to countenance the harsh treatment of this stranger minister.

And how did Samuel Rutherford occupy himself in Aberdeen during his banishment? We know that he was lonely and home-sick to the breaking-point. His dream had been to pass a quiet ministry in Anwoth, and lie there at the last. "I, like a fool, carved a providence for my own ease, to die in my nest, and to sleep still till my grey hairs, and to lie on the sunny side of the mountain, in my ministry at Anwoth" (Letter clvii.). Instead of that, here he is set upon a pinnacle in a strange and hostile city, eating his heart out for that quiet parish and for his own folk. "Be pleased," he writes imploringly (Letter lxxxi.) to Lord Craighall—"be pleased to try if the Bishop of St. Andrews and Glasgow (Galloway's ordinary) will be pleased to abate from their wrath and let me go to my charge." And again (Letter clxvii.): "I think the sparrows and swallows that build their nests in the kirk of Anwoth blessed birds." He was not, however, without occupation. The very manual labour of his correspondence must always have necessitated a continuance of his early practice of rising at three in the morning; and certainly the volume of it implies many friends in having it conveyed to his correspondents.

Then he was frequently in the streets of the town, where he was spoken of as "the banished minister"; but he had no special delight in most of the people whom he came across. He found the indwellers of

the town "dry, cold, and general. They consist of Papists and men of Gallio's metal, firm in no religion." (Letter ccv.). He had also disputations with the leading divines. Spalding, who, as being on the Episcopal side, would not be a very friendly or even impartial narrator, says of this:—

> "There was also ane minister called Rutherford, who happened to be wairded in Aberdeen, at King James' command. He, hearing Doctor Sibbald at that time preach, stood up and accused him of Arminianism. But he defended [withstood] him also."

Samuel Rutherford himself gives a rather different impression of such encounters. "Dr. Barron," he says (Letter cxvii.), "hath often disputed with me, especially about Arminian controversies and for the ceremonies. Three yokings laid him by, and I have not been troubled with him since." And again (Letter cxliv.): "I am here troubled with the disputes of the great doctors (especially with Dr. B.) in ceremonial and Arminian controversies, for all are corrupt here; but, I thank God, with no detriment to the truth, or discredit to my profession."

One thing this greatly agitated soul never seems to have done—to have gone for repose to the great nature about him. His letters are full of images drawn from family life, from ecclesiastical forms, from business, from social customs, but never from nature. A century after his day, Professor James Beattie, a far inferior man in many ways, who dwelt in the same narrow street, within thirty yards of Rutherford's house, drew inspiration for his *Minstrel*, the early nature poem,

from the woods of Maidencraig and the natural beauties of Rubislaw Den; but one will search the writings of Samuel Rurherford in vain for any sign that he ever found in nature the magic touch that kindles imagination or strengthens faith.

Of course his great trial, next to separation from his parish and his flock, was his enforced silence from preaching. From first to last this is the burden of his lament. "By reason of my silence sorrow hath filled me." "I am burdened in heart for my silent Sabbaths.' "My dumb Sabbaths are undercoating wounds"—and so on. Being eager in service, he could not be silent wholly, and so the ministers of Aberdeen, besides preaching against him in their pulpits, appear to have been endeavouring, all through his stay, to obtain his banishment to a more remote part—Caithness or Orkney. But this does not greatly daunt him. His spiritual trust was radiantly unwavering, and, apart from passing clouds and the continual hunger for his home, his buoyant spirit rode hopefully throughout his exile. As time went on his friends appear to have increased. By the autumn of 1637 he had so many letters to attend to and so many visitors that he felt straitened for time. Even the widowed Lady Marischal and her son, the Earl Marischal, were of the number of his friends, and he began to discern signs of grace in the commonalty of Aberdeen. "I find a little brairding of God's seed in this town, for the which the doctors have told me their mind, that they cannot bear with it, and have examined and threatened the people that haunt my company."

At last came the opportunity, joyfully accepted. His last letter from Aberdeen that has been recovered is dated June 11, 1638—a long letter to his friend and parishioner, Robert Gordon of Knockbrex, afterwards Member of Parliament. National affairs were taking a friendlier turn for Samuel Rutherford and his friends. John Campbell, Earl of Loudon, that Brutus of Scotland, had made his memorable speech in defence of Scottish liberty of conscience to the King's Commissioner. The Marquis of Hamilton, sent down by Charles to try the effects of crafty conciliation, had made his remarkable journey from Dalkeith to Edinburgh through 20,000 of the populace, whose attitude made it clear enough to a manœuvering courtier that they would stand to the last in defence of what they believed to be the highest principles of freedom. Otherwise, too, the whole fabric of Prelacy in Scotland was tumbling to pieces. Accordingly, between June 11 and the beginning of August, Samuel Rutherford judged that with safety he might leave his place of banishment for home. As he rode out once more through the narrow streets of Aberdeen, out towards the Bridge of Dee, he was accompanied by many who had come to love him and to know his worth. They believed he was an instrument for righteousness—Scotland, even, felt that—but they could scarcely have imagined that it was the work he did during his exile in their cold northern town that would keep his memory fresh for centuries as one of the saints of the Church.

POLMUIR

THE STORY OF A SUBURBAN RESIDENCE

POLMUIR:

THE STORY OF A SUBURBAN RESIDENCE.

AMONG the many thousands of visitors to the Duthie Park, the chief public garden of Aberdeen, in the course of a summer, not very many, perhaps, have any interest in the adjoining property of Polmuir. Yet, Polmuir is worthy of some attention. It is nowadays of no account, but its personal and literary associations distinguish it as one of the most interesting little properties in the north east of Scotland.

Under an arrangement by which the lands of Ferryhill were feued out in perpetuity, by the town, between 1750 and 1760, a considerable portion adjoining the river was purchased by Thomas Blackwell, the learned professor of Greek in Marischal College. This was in 1751, almost immediately after Blackwell had been appointed Principal of the University. "Polmoor" was then the designation of the property, and as Polmoor it continued to be known—with the variation of Pulmoor and Pulmore—for nearly a century afterwards. One is never safe to merely speculate on the meaning of a place-name, and the moor of the pool (that so long filled the hollow behind where the Ferryhill United Free Church stands) is almost too

obvious to be correct. Where so many ancient place-names survive, *poll-mohr*, the great pool, would suggest itself if it could be borne out by the early topographical conditions, which does not appear to be the case. In any case, the neighbourhood of the pool was, in 1751, barren land, and Blackwell bought it for the low price of £1 2s. per acre for the haugh ground, and an absolutely nominal price for the muir ground that formed part of his purchase.

Dr. Blackwell, though a scholarly person—he was familiarly known as "the learned Blackwell"—had probably no more appreciation of natural beauty than most people in his day. That taste had scarcely begun to be developed. So one is not surprised to read in Francis Douglas's "Description," of 1782, that on Polmuir Blackwell "built a small house, but except planting a few pines, made no improvement." This "small house," built by Blackwell, is still Polmuir House, a building quite singularly devoid of any single attractive feature. The entrance to it is by the old gateway in the Riverside Road, immediately east of the railway bridge. On entering the gateway one comes on two old-looking "harled" cottages, one on each side of the path, facing towards the river. The cottage on the left, South Polmuir Cottage, has some architectural character, not much, but is interesting as having been for some years the residence of Captain Penny, the Arctic navigator, whither he brought his friend the Esquimau, who became the fashionable lion of 1840. Behind these two cottages stands Polmuir House, also facing the Dee, as it appears in many

views of Aberdeen taken from the Kincorth heights on the other side of the river.

The Blackwells are now but a mere name, and that only to a comparatively small number of people, but in their day they were of some consequence in the public and scholastic life of Aberdeen. Rev. Thomas Blackwell, minister of Paisley, was translated to be one of the ministers of St. Nicholas Church, in Aberdeen, in 1700. In 1711 he was elected Professor of Divinity in Marischal College, and Principal in 1717, both of which offices he held till his death in 1728. His books on theological subjects are known only to bibliographers, and his work in the church courts, remarked on repeatedly by Wodrow in those quaint letters to his wife from the Assembly, was not specially distinguished. He was sent by the Assembly Commission as one of a deputation of three to London to oppose the passing of the Episcopal Toleration Bill, and the restoration of patronages, a duty in which he and his fellow-deputies were wholly unsuccessful.

Principal Thomas Blackwell, son of the foregoing, the purchaser of Polmuir, attained to rather greater distinction as a writer than his father—he had, at least, the honour of having one of his books roundly condemned by Dr. Johnson—but his works are now as completely forgotten. He appears to have been a person of rather churlish disposition. His property of Polmuir lay near the river bank, which had long been a favourite resort of the townpeople, but soon after he became proprietor he took steps to exclude the public. Accordingly, in July 1756, the Town

Council agreed to a representation by Blackwell that only "Burghers of Guild and other discreet orderly persons" should be allowed to walk betwixt the haugh and the Dee.

One cannot forget the extraordinary series of events connected with Dr. Alexander Blackwell, brother of Blackwell of Polmuir. As a youth he clandestinely married the daughter of a stocking-maker in Aberdeen, which so displeased the Blackwell family that the young couple had to seek their fortune in London. There Blackwell experienced failure after failure as a physician, a journalist, and a printer, and he ultimately found himself in the Fleet prison for debt. In this extremity the genius of his wife came out brilliantly. She had a taste for drawing flowers, and assisted partly by her husband, partly by the keeper of the botanic garden at Chelsea, and partly by eminent physicians of the day, she produced her remarkable "Curious Herbal, containing five hundred cuts of the most useful plants which are now used in the practice of physick. Engraved in folio copper plate after drawings taken from the life by Elizabeth Blackwell." The "Herbal"—which, as a rather scarce and curious work, has a present commercial value of £3 to £4—was extraordinarily successful, and by its means Elizabeth Blackwell was able to release her husband from prison, and put him in the way of professional advancement. In this latter, indeed, he was too successful. A small work which he published on certain agricultural operations that he superintended for the Duke of Chandos brought him an offer of

employment from the Swedish Government. He accepted the offer, and at Stockholm he was appointed one of the King's physicians, and received other marks of Royal favour. But suddenly, he was arrested on a charge of being concerned in a conspiracy to alter the line of succession to the Swedish throne. He was unable to clear himself of the charge, and after trial by a Royal Commission, he was sentenced to be tortured and afterwards broken on the wheel. Representations made in his behalf had the result only of mitigating the sentence to decapitation.

"He was executed on Wednesday, the 9th of August, N.S., 1748," says a curious tract of the time, "and was attended to the place of Execution by the Minister, Tolstadius. He seemed no ways dejected, but behaved with great Calmness and Decency expressing neither any symptoms of Despondency or Despair at his approaching Fate, or any want of a just Sense of the great Debt he was about to pay, but behaved in every Respect as became a Man of natural Courage and a Christian. He bowed to several of his Acquaintance as he pass'd along the Streets, and when he came upon the Scaffold, after viewing the Dreadful Apparatus, he ask'd the Executioner if he was not the same Man who some Years ago had beheaded the Chief of the Dalecarian Peasants and Generals, condemn'd by the Dyet, which Question being answered in the Affirmative, he desired him to do his Office alertly, and made him a Present. He then addressed himself to those about him and said, 'That he was a stranger who came to seek his Bread in Sweden, where he had been re-

ceived with Tenderness and Respect by all Ranks to whom he was known, that he lov'd and heartily wish'd well to the Nation in general, and died in Charity with all Mankind." Having delivered a Paper to a Friend who stood nigh him, he kneel'd down to the Block, but upon the wrong Side of it, which the Executioner telling him of, he answered without the least Emotion, that as it was the first experiment he ever made in that Way, it was not to be wondered at that he should need a little Instruction. Having placed himself as directed, he prayed for some Minutes with great Calmness and Devotion, and having given the Signal to the Executioner, his Head was sever'd from his Body at one Blow."

Principal Blackwell of Polmuir died of consumption in 1757 at the comparatively early age of 56. His widow survived him for many years and continued to reside at Polmuir till her death in 1793. Thus, in 1782, Douglas states that "the lands are now the property of his (Principal Blackwell's) widow, who has re-feued part of them to two gentlemen who are improving them with spirit and judgment. One of them, Mr. Fordyce, has already made out a summer villa; the other, Mr. Ewen, has begun one, which, when the plan is finished, will be very pleasent."

It is doubtful if this Mr. Ewen ever finished his "summer villa" at Polmuir, but he certainly did a great deal in the way of laying out the property, and traces of his work were discernible for many years afterwards in trees planted, paths formed, and curious memorial stones or inscriptions set up. John Ewen

was altogether a very remarkable personage. Originally a pedlar from Montrose, he became in Aberdeen a silversmith and curio and art dealer, and his shop in Castle Street was for many years a recognised centre of local art, as well as in all matters pertaining to local politics. John has long enjoyed the reputation of having been the author of the well-known song, "The Boatie Rows," but although Burns was satisfied on the point, it is a little doubtful if there is any foundation for the story. But he has the credit of many meritorious works otherwise. He was the founder of infant schools in Aberdeen. He was a patron of many local artists. He took in hand Andrew Robertson, of Marischal Street, as a boy of sixteen, and having observed his artistic bent, placed him, at the joint expense of himself and Leslie of Berryden, under the tuition of Nasmyth, the painter, in Edinburgh. Many years afterwards, Robertson, become famous in London as the greatest miniature painter of his time, used to look back on those early years, and spoke of Ewen with gratitude as "that good man." John was musical, and as treasurer, was a leading spirit in the Musical Society, which included in its ranks most of the leading men of Aberdeen for many years. His versatility in public works—apart from his being once a member of the Town Council, and a Police Commissioner for a number of years—may be judged from two intimations in the public press of Aberdeen in 1807 and 1808. The first tells that

> "John Ewen is receiving subscriptions in the endeavour to raise a little fund for the relief of the poor and numerous family of J. M'Donald, in Loirstown, whose wife was lately delivered of three children, as mentioned in our last."

The other marks the beginning of an enterprise that now fills a large place in local municipal effort—

> "At the desire of a few individuals a very convenient and comfortable bathing machine is now fitted up and will be in waiting upon the beach, nearly opposite the battery, where the bottom is smooth and level, and less subject to change, from 7 to 9 o'clock in the morning, and from 10 to 12 o'clock in the afternoon, every favourable day during the remainder of the season, for the accommodation of those wishing to take the benefit of sea-bathing, so conducive to health. It is proposed to indemnify the expense of the machine and a proper shed for its protection by subscription, and it is requested that such as wish to encourage the institution will signify their intention by calling at the shop of Mr. Ewen, where a subscription paper is lodged."

John Ewen's connection with Polmuir is commented on by Alexander Dingwall Fordyce in his compilation, the "Family Record of the Name of Dingwall Fordyce" (1885). He says—"His (Ewen's) plan for the improvement of his part of the lands of Ferryhill was probably never completed, but long after he was gone traces of his design were to be seen; summer-houses remained in 'Ewen's wood,' as it was called, built of run brick and tastefully furnished; paths threaded the wood, with here and there an obelisk or a pillar bearing an inscription on a marble slab, commemorate of some event or individual counted worthy of honour by Mr. Ewen, whose sympathies are believed to have lain with the promoters of the French Revolution in its earlier stages. Periodical gatherings of the descendants of the subject of this notice (Arthur Dingwall Fordyce) were held at Arthurseat, and on such occasions Ewen's

dark fir woods and the adjoining cowslip-covered banks were favourite resorts and resting places."

The reference in Fordyce's narrative to Ewen's partiality for "run brick" summer-houses supplies the key to what has doubtless puzzled several generations of Aberdonians, namely, the meaning of the curious "run brick" constructions on the high ground at Berryden, near the railway. They consist of a rather picturesque copy of the crown of King's College, a rough obelisk—erroneously spoken of as the Dauney Slaughter Monument—and a grotto, firmly believed by residents near by to have been once a chapel. These were all the work of Leslie, a druggist, who owned Berryden in the later years of the eighteenth century, and who delighted in eccentric forms of ornamenting his property. He had the assistance of John Ewen, who was his bosom friend, and for a time lived in the same house with him, and it was doubtless Ewen's resourceful genius that suggested the "run brick" ornaments of both Berryden and Polmuir.

John Ewen, who died 21st October, 1821, had an ambition to found for his native town of Montrose an institution of the same kind as Gordon's Hospital in Aberdeen. He left about £14,000 for this purpose, but his will was reduced by the Court of Session in favour of his daughter, who, by a prior deed granted by Ewen, was found entitled to his property.

Not much space is left to speak of the Dingwall Fordyce connection with Polmuir, but a few words are necessary to complete the tale. The Mr. Fordyce

spoken of by Francis Douglas, in 1782, as having bought part of the property, was Arthur Dingwall Fordyce, of Culsh, born at Brucklay Castle, 1745. He studied law in Aberdeen, later in Edinburgh, where he had as a fellow-student Walter Scott, father of Sir Walter. When he set up as an advocate, and was subsequently appointed Commissary in Aberdeen, he resided first in Castle Street, where he built a house in 1787, but removed in 1807 to the property he bought from Mrs. Blackwell, which he named Arthurseat, having built the house which is now the museum in connection with the Duthie Park. Arthur Dingwall Fordyce married in 1770 Janet Morison, daughter of James Morison of Elsick, a former Provost of Aberdeen—the "Provost Positive" who refused to drink the health of Prince Charles Edward at the Market Cross, and had the wine poured down his shirt front. Her brother was Rev. Dr. Morison, of Banchory-Devenick, who built the serviceable "Shakkin' Brig" over the Dee, at Cults, in 1837, and another brother was Dr. Thomas Morison, who first made known the virtues of the waters at Strathpeffer. Mr. and Mrs. Dingwall Fordyce resided at Arthurseat, in happy union, as the "Record" tells, till the death of Mrs. Fordyce in 1831, which was followed by Dingwall Fordyce's death in 1834. It was while resident with them that Elizabeth Spence, a niece of Dingwall Fordyce, wrote a good deal of her vivacious "Caledonian Excursion," in which she gives pardonably glowing accounts of both her relatives, the Fordyces, and the place of their

habitation. One remembers, too, that Alexander Bannerman, the first Reform M.P. for Aberdeen—whose wife was the Margaret Gordon of Carlyle's early Kirkcaldy experience, and the Blumine of "Sartor Resartus"—occupied Arthurseat as a summer residence in the early period of his Parliamentary career. Here Lord Brougham breakfasted with Bannerman and his wife, on 11th September, 1834, having stayed the previous night with them in their house in Marischal Street, after being presented with the freedom of Aberdeen.

After the death of Mrs. Blackwell in 1793, most part of her property of Polmuir passed by her bequest to Marischal College to found the Blackwell prize, and to aid in establishing the professorship of Chemistry. With regard to Arthurseat, after the death of Arthur Dingwall Fordyce in 1834, it passed into the possession of his grand-daughter, wife of Arthur Dingwall Fordyce of Culsh and Brucklay, a staunch friend of the Free Church at the Disruption, who died, however, in December of the Disruption year, 1843.

Mrs. Fordyce and her sister continued to reside at Arthurseat for some years, but by the time the south railway came, in the middle of the century, and considerably affected the property, it had passed by purchase into the hands of a stranger. This coming of the railway was turned to account by the then proprietor of Arthurseat in a very curious way. The trains ran to Ferryhill from the south for the first time on 16th March, 1850, and the newspapers of the day contain an intimation by the owner of Arthurseat that

he has formed his grounds into a "Royal Garden," or recreation ground, and states as one of the special attractions of the park "the view it affords of incoming trains." This "Royal Garden" at Arthurseat was, however, a fore-glimpse of the ultimate destination of the property. The whole of Arthurseat, part of Polmuir, and part of other land adjoining, were acquired by Miss Elizabeth Crombie Duthie, from whom it passed, a most generous gift, equal, it was said, to a money donation of £50,000, to the city, and was made available for the public, in 1883, as the remarkably fine Duthie Park.

"Aberdeen" as a Historical Place-Name

"ABERDEEN" AS A HISTORICAL PLACE-NAME.

I.

WHEN one thinks of the development of special scholarship now going on, and of the many literary clubs in this country engaged in elucidating, among other things, obscure points in local history and philology, it seems strange that doubt should still exist about the origin of the names of any of the Scottish towns. Yet the fact is there is scarcely an ancient Scottish burgh whose name has been satisfactorily explained. "Edinburgh" is probably the burgh of Edwin, king of Northumbria, although the point has not been quite conclusively proved; but not even a probable approach has yet been made to the real meaning of "Glasgow," and we are not much nearer certainty with "Dundee," or "Perth," or "Dumfries," or "Ayr," or "Elgin," or any of the numerous smaller towns whose history goes back into the mists of antiquity.

The case of Aberdeen, although with "Inverness" and "Berwick" it looks easier than most of our burgh names, is really in little better condition than the rest. It has been discussed, indeed, by many writers and

historians, but the issue has been much confused by special local circumstances. In the first place, it has sometimes been called "Aberdon," and as the city stands between the mouths of the Dee and Don (although not equi-distant, be it noted), some people have been led to the view that the original name was really "Aberdon," whence the familiar Latin form, "Aberdonia." That is to say, according to this view it was the Don, and not the Dee, that was the determining stream in the fixing of the name. One regrets to see that in a recent and most suggestive work on Scottish place-names, this view has been unquestioningly adopted, and the meaning "at the mouth of the Don" seriously given, involving, as we hope to show, both a philological and topographical error.

Then the matter has been further complicated by the circumstance that we have two burghs beside each other (now forming one) bearing the name—Aberdeen, the city, at the mouth of the Dee, and Old Aberdeen, nearer the mouth of the Don. To judge from philology alone, apart from history, this looks like an important point for the view that "Aberdon" was the original name, for with "Old" Aberdeen on the Don, the matter seems ridiculously plain. And yet it is not quite so simple. The detail history of the subject tells us that "Old" Aberdeen is really a corruption. For centuries before any burgh of "Old" Aberdeen existed, Aberdeen, by the Dee, was a royal burgh, with fully organised burghal life and rights, and was, further clearly in existence as a separate community for several

centuries at least before it received its first charter, about 1180, at the hands of William the Lion.

It will thus be seen that in what at first seems a comparatively easy case, the difficulties in the way of a complete solution of the problem of the place-name are considerable. In attempting it, one must, first of all, clear the path of a good deal of misconception which has tended to obscure the view of the subject hitherto; we shall then, perhaps, be able to project ourselves into the early centuries, whence the name arose, with some prospect of getting at a clear and satisfactory result.

To begin with, it must be made clear that the name "Aberdeen" was not originally "Aberdon." The "Aberdon" idea seems to be due, to some extent at least, to a misplaced faith in the older maps of Scotland. In them the name "Aberdon," and its variants, are common enough. John Speed, in his "Kingdom of Scotland," 1610, set it down "Aberdone" as plainly as could be, but John Speed, although a map-maker of real eminence for his time, paid too little attention to the philology of his subject, and, as all who have had occasion to study his Scotch maps know very well, his application of local names is often grotesquely inaccurate. Then Hondius also gave "Aberdone," and Moll's map of "Scotia Regnum," first engraved for William Camden's "Britannia," gives "Aberdone" too, so that there would seem to be quite a concurrence of authority for this form of the name. But, of course, all those early map-makers simply copied from one another—there was no public sentiment on "plagiar-

ism" in this matter then—and one may trace the most serious topographical error through half a dozen of them due to this cause. Du Val, in his French map of 1685, actually gave two Aberdones—"Aberdone" for the old town, and "New Aberdone" for the city. And this was fully thirty years after Gordon of Straloch had given us the first accurate map of this north-eastern corner of Scotland, and laid the "Aberdone" form of the name at rest. Yet this curious thing is to be noted, before we leave the old maps, that although nothing is to be put on their evidence, one way or another, the earliest map which gave Scotch names in the vernacular, the "Theatrum Orbis Terrarum" of Ortelius, 1570, gave the name, not "Aberdone," but "Aberdeyne," and gave it in this way for both towns.

But then, those who have held to the "Aberdon" view have had more than inaccurate maps to point to as their authority. There exists in the oldest extant register of Aberdeen a document of a very puzzling character on many points besides its place-names. It purports to be a bull of Pope Adrian IV., of 10th August, 1157, confirming certain grants to the church of Aberdeen, and it mentions clearly enough "the whole town of Old Aberdon." There are certain things in that document which, with present knowledge, are inexplicable, but the true solution seems to be easier than was once thought. It so happens that Cosmo Innes, in the exercise of that "wholesome scepticism" which he felt to be essential in treating of legendary miracles, turned his attention to the authen-

ticity of this and certain other early Aberdeen charters, and he pronounced it, at the best, a memorandum of early grants "to which the scribe had stupidly affixed the conclusion and mode of testing and dating that were in fashion in the charters of his own time" ("Reg. Epis. Aberd.," p. xii.) This view of Cosmo Innes has been adopted by Sir Archibald Lawrie in his recent book ("Early Scottish Charters Prior to 1153"), and there seems to be no reasonable doubt that this view is the right one. This is the most important documentary piece of evidence for the name "Aberdon," and it must now be given up. Obviously, the presence of "Aberdonia" in Latin charters of those days is due to the same cause that turned Exeter into "Exonia," Winchester into "Vindonia," and so forth.

Among other theories that have been put forward as to the meaning of "Aberdeen," two only need engage attention. It has been noted, firstly, that in the "Book of Deer," dating probably from the twelfth century, the form of the name is "Abberdeon," and this has given rise to the suggestion that the earliest form of the name was a combination of "Aberdee" and "Aberdon" to agree with the position of the town, which was situated, in a sense, between the two rivers. This view is wholly untenable, and for two reasons. In the first place, the early town of Aberdeen was not situated between the two rivers, but on the Dee, closely and absolutely, two miles distant from the Don, and it was a very small community, having no relation whatever to the last-named stream. In the second place, and mainly, the idea that the name was a com-

bination of "Dee" and "Don" implies an artificial, not to say fanciful, construction of the name which the early settlers never indulged in. They did not, indeed, confer place-names at all in our modern sense. They distinguished their places by describing some outstanding natural quality, or form, or position which they possessed; and in speaking of this town, as of others that derived their names in the same way, they spoke of it, not by any name that it had, as a mere name, but solely in a descriptive sense as the town, or hamlet, at the mouth of the river.

The other theory that remains to be dealt with is the idea, more or less hazily held, that the name is Scandinavian, and was orginally "Apardion." Now, there is no doubt that this was the name by which Aberdeen was known to the Norsemen in the twelfth century, and probably earlier. In the "Heimskringla," of Sturlasson, it is told that Eystein, king of Norway (1142-1157), made a descent on the eastern shores of Scotland, and bringing his ships to the town of "Apardion," he killed many people and wasted the town. Pinkerton brought this curious point out in his notes to "The Bruce," 1790, and Dr. Joseph Robertson made it familiar to Aberdeen readers by the reference in his admirable "Book of Bon-Accord," 1839. But although Dr. Robertson was right that this "Apardion," as he says, "is the earliest form in which we recognise Aberdeen," he probably did not mean that this was actually the earliest form of the name. In any case, this was simply the Scandinavian form of a name that had already existed for ages, and it was no

more the original name of Aberdeen than were the Scandinavian forms in the same narrative the original names of those English towns to which Eystein carried his destroying arms after he had harried the north of Scotland.

"ABERDEEN" AS A HISTORICAL PLACE-NAME.

II.

IN coming now to consider "Aberdeen" as a Celtic name, whose associations give a glimpse into historical conditions in very early times, it will be most convenient to break the name up into its three constituent parts—the "Aber," the "Dee," and the final "n." We begin, then, with "Aber," admittedly a Celtic term, signifying the "confluence" of a stream with a river, or of a river with the sea. "Aber" was not a proper name, as we should now say, but merely a descriptive term, a use it has now wholly lost, although one remembers a curious example—probably the only example in recent English literature—of its use in the strictly accurate descriptive sense. George Borrow, in describing the Rheidol, in "Wild Wales." observes that there is scarcely twenty miles between the source of the river "and the aber, or place where it disembogues itself into the sea."

But it is not enough to say that the term is Celtic. From its distribution and use by the Celtic tribes who overran these shores in the very early centuries, we get an instructive idea of the movements of those tribes

in relation to Aberdeen. It has been pointed out repeatedly since the days of Isaac Taylor, half a century ago, that, generally speaking, all those places with "Aber" in their names are to be found within one particular area in Great Britain, and those with the corresponding Celtic term "Inver," meaning the same thing as "Aber," in another. This distinction agrees with the distribution of the Brythonic Celts, or Britons, on the one hand, and the Goidelic tribes, or Gaels, on the other. Thus, the Britonic branch of the great Celtic family, coming from the nearer continental shores, settled, in the main, in the territories south of the Forth; thence, in due time, they were pushed by later immigrants westward into the mountainous regions of Wales, where alone, in the British Isles, their descendants and their speech are to be found to-day. These are the "Aber" Celts, if we may so say. It was only they who used the term "Aber" to describe the confluence of their streams, a term which, in a perfectly natural way, came to be applied as a proper name to the hamlets situated at such spots. And so we find that out of eighty-eight places in Great Britain whose names contain the Brythonic Celtic term "Aber" (and the number could probably be increased), between sixty and seventy of them are in Wales alone. Of the remainder, the larger proportion are well south of Aberdeen. Almost needless to say, they are all situated at what is, or has been, the mouth of a stream or river—"Arbroath" (Aberbrothock), at the mouth of the Brothock Burn; "Aberdour," at the mouth of the Dour; "Abergavenny," at the confluence of the

Gavenny with the Usk; "Aberystwith," at the point where the Ystwith falls into the sea, exactly in the position of Aberdeen.

With regard to the other great branch of the Celtic family, the Goidels, or Gaels, who arrived before the Brythonic tribes, and probably by them were pushed to the far north and west, the permanent marks of their occupation of the land, and their descendants and language, are now found in the Highlands of Scotland, in Ireland, and the Isle of Man. They were the "Inver" tribes, so to speak, who used this term to describe exactly the same thing as the Brythons spoke of as the "Aber" of a stream, and their distribution, too, can be traced to a large extent, in their place-names. But although so many places in Wales bear the stamp of the Brythons in the place-name "Aber," not a single instance will be found in the Principality, where the corresponding Gaelic term "Inver" is used. On the other hand, although we find "Inver," as a place-name, subsisting in Ireland, and practically anywhere in the Scottish Highlands, not a single case of the use of "Aber" appears to exist in Ireland, and only sparsely in even the Highlands of Scotland.

The bearing of all this—which, of course, is familar ground to all who have paid special attention to the subject—on the name "Aberdeen" will be obvious. Aberdeen probably marks the ultimate line of separation in Great Britain between the two great branches of the Celtic race. Thus far northward swept the victorious Britons, but like the Roman legions (if we may accept popular history on this point), they found it difficult or

impossible to penetrate beyond what is now known as the Grampians, or beyond the river that flows along the base of their northern flank. So, observing the natural advantages of the rising ground on the north bank of the Dee, where the river emptied itself into the ocean, those daring immigrants planted a small colony there, much later in date clearly than the period of their arrival further south, and the cluster of huts that arose in the neighbourhood of what afterwards became the Castle Hill was the beginning of the city of Aberdeen. Again, let it be noted that the founders of the town did not name it Aberdeen, or name it anything. But they could only distinguish it by its position at the mouth of the Dee, and so the position naturally fixed the name as Aberdeen.

But, so far, we have only justified the "Aber." The next point, the "dee," in the name need only occupy a moment, but one or two things should be mentioned, if only to strengthen the conclusion that it was the Dee and not the Don whose name enters into the name of the city. Which of the two great branches of Celts gave the name "Dee" to the river it is impossible to say. Likely enough it was the Gaels, the first comers. Both branches were polytheists, and both were in the habit of identifying rivers and streams with particular divinities. Thus, we have in County Louth an example of the same name, the Dee, applied undoubtedly by the Gaels, and there is also the case of the now unknown Loch-diae, mentioned by Adamnan, beyond the Grampians somewhere, whence Columba ordered the removal of the coracle. And, of course,

the outstanding example of the name occurring in the Brythonic area is the Dee, in North Wales, which like our own river, is named after the Celtic goddess, supposed to have been the divinity of death or war.

From whatever source the Dee got its name, however, it is notable that, judging from the place-names, it seems to have been the Dee alone with which those Brythonic tribes were associated who founded the town, and named it. After they settled at the mouth of the river they did what every colony of immigrants in such circumstances have done since immigration began—they penetrated along the banks of the stream; and so it is very significant that of the comparatively few "Abers" to be found in Scotland no less than four of them are to be found along the valley of the Dee, viz.—"Aberdeen," "Abergairn," "Aberarder," and "Abergeldie." On the other hand, with one exception —and it would be strange if some fringe of the Brythons had not touched the neighbouring valley—with the exception of "Abercattie," the original name of Whitehouse, there seems to be no examples of the use of "Aber" as a place-name in the valley of the Don. There, however, traces of the "Inver" tribes are to be found in abundance—"Inverurie," "Invernochty," "Invernettie," "Invermossat," "Inverernan," and others, and all are situated in spots, at the confluence of streams, corresponding precisely to the "Abers" of the valley of the Dee. Too much is not to be made of this single point, for although the two valleys are separated by a very distinct watershed, and would, in those very early days, have been separated also by dense

forest over much of the district, they are so comparatively near each other throughout their whole length that, as already said, fringes of the respective tribes would touch each other's territory. The broad fact to be noted is that, on the whole, the available evidence goes to show that the Dee, and not the Don, was the stream with which the "Aber" Celts were associated, and from which alone the town derived its name.

We come now to the last step of the inquiry—the final "n" in the name of "Aber-dee-n." How came it there? and what does it mean? This is confessedly a most difficult point, and what follows is set down merely as supplying a more reasonable and natural explanation than we have yet come across, and not as excluding a better explanation which may yet be found. Clearly, if "Aber-dee-n" is to stand—as there is no doubt it does stand—for the town "at the mouth of the Dee," this final "n" is a genitive. But so far as the labours of philologists have gone a genitive in "n" for such a word as "Dee" is unknown in any branch of the Celtic language. So one must look elsewhere, and what has to be suggested is that this is an example of the language-forms of a conquered race, the Picts, being adopted into the language of the conquerors, the Celts. The Pictish tribes had a genitive in "n," and we are not without examples of its use in Celtic inscriptions in various parts of the British Isles. On this point we get very clear light from Professor Rhys, who so recently received the acknowledgment of a knighthood for his services to Celtic history and

literature. In his history of the Welsh people, Sir John Rhys says :—

> "The distribution of inscriptions with this non-Aryan syntax suggests that the British Isles were once inhabited by a people speaking a non-Aryan language, and that, while that people learned the vocabulary of an Aryan language it continued the syntax of its previous speech. This was so decidedly the case that we trace it not only in the Goidelic which that people definitely adopted, but also in the Latin which its learned men now and then wrote. There is nothing incredible in this, as habits of pronunciation and the syntax peculiar to a language are most persistent and difficult to eradicate, even when careful teaching is directed to that end, as anybody will admit who knows anything of the difficulty of teaching Welsh boys idiomatic English."

The principle of this persistence of language-forms being clear, it only remains to cite one or two examples of the Pictish genitive in "n" persisting into Celtic inscriptions, just as it seems to have done in the name of Aberdeen. One is the well-known St. Vigeans Slab, near Arbroath, which dates probably from about the ninth century A.D. Dr. Joseph Anderson, in his Rhind Lecture, says of the initial word Drosten—"If what was written concerning Drosten was not on an upper panel [now awanting] . . . the rest of the sentence must have been understood, and hence it has been suggested that we ought to regard Drosten as the genitive case of Drost, and the formula to mean that this is 'the stone of Drost.'" The other example to be noted of the persistence of the Pictish "n" in a Celtic inscription is the Newton Stone, still nearer

Aberdeen. Professor Rhys interprets the Ogam characters of that monument as "Vorenn ipui, Osir," and, keeping the Pictish genitive "n" and "en" in view, reads thus—"Of Vor, the offspring, Osir." It will at once be said that this reading of the Newton Stone has not been finally accepted, and that is true, just as it is true of the above reading of the St. Vigeans Slab. But that really does not affect the point, which is, that scholars of the highest eminence in their respective departments have recognised this genitive in "n" persisting in Celtic inscriptions on each side of Aberdeen. The same genitive in "n" persisting in the Celtic name of the town itself appears to be an additional and most interesting example of the same thing, and it supplies a perfectly natural and complete explanation of that name "Aber-dee-n" as the town "at the mouth of the Dee."

An Aberdeenshire Rural Press

AN ABERDEENSHIRE RURAL PRESS.

"O mother dear, make me my bed,
And lay my face to Fyvie;
Thus will I lie, and thus will die,
For my dear Andrew Lammie."

SO runs the "motto" on the title-page of the first chap book issued from the "Fintray Press," which, in the last forty years, has issued many thousand copies of "Mill of Tifty's Annie," and other popular ballads, to be scattered up and down the haughs and vales of Aberdeenshire. Few people outside these same valleys have ever heard of the "Fintray Press." In the city of Aberdeen itself, within a dozen miles of where the press operates, not every hundredth person can tell you where it is carried on, and not one in a thousand could tell what kind of literature the "Fintray Press" supplies.

John Cumming, the founder, was born about eighty years ago at Hatton of Fintray, a very secluded hamlet then, and just about as secluded still, although it lies within a mile of the main line of the Great North of Scotland Railway. You take a slow train from Aberdeen—for fast trains fly contemptuously past the stations in that neighbourhood—and in half an hour you alight at Kinaldie (pronounced Kin-a'die), whence a brisk ten minutes' walk carries you by an iron girder bridge over the Don, and so to the compact

little village of Hatton of Fintray. As you stand on the bridge, looking up and down the valley, where every foot of soil is cultivated scientifically and successfully, you appreciate the quality of the Aberdeenshire farming, more even than the poet of two hundred and fifty years ago who invited all to

> "Behold how Fintray's plains delight the eye,
> For fertile soil there's none with them can vie;
> See the enamel'd mead, extended wide,
> Augment the river's charms on every side."

Presently we pass into the village. The Parish Church, standing high up on a knoll at the end of the village, seems to dominate the whole neighbourhood, but it is not nearly as interesting as the modest ruin, away to the eastward, near the river bank, now all that remains of the ancient Church of St. Medan, the patron saint of the parish. So closely was the saint associated with the district that the lands on the opposite side of the river still bear the name of Pitmedden, and in the earlier days John Cumming's imprint was that of the "Pitmedden Press," which was more distinctive, if less geographically correct, than the name he afterwards used.

When a very young man, John, whose mother kept a small "merchant's" shop at Fintray, went to Aberdeen to learn the business after the manner of the larger world. He travelled by the flyboat on the long-ago disused Aberdeenshire Canal, which flowed along what is now the line of railway between Aberdeen and Inverurie, a few miles beyond Fintray. Older people still with us remember how it was at

Fintray that the crisis in the life of the old canal occurred. It was in 1854. The new railway company bought up the canal company and all connected with it, but much delay took place in settling the legal transfers and other details, so that the patience of the contractor for the new railway gave out. He was a man of strong character—he soon afterwards became an Aberdeenshire laird himself—so setting his men to work one morning at Kinaldie, he opened one of the banks of the canal, and before the lawyers and other great personages in the city knew what had happened, the life-blood of the Aberdeenshire Canal had mingled with the drumly waters of the Don.

About the year of the Disruption, John Cumming returned to Fintray to help his mother in the business. In Aberdeen, however, he had learned more than how to handle the small wares of the country merchant. He had, somehow, got a slight knowledge of printing. Being an acquaintance of William Thom, "The Inverury Poet," who was then living near by, and soon afterwards came into his fame, he would be interested in this way in both the composition and printing of ballad literature. Then in Aberdeen he came to know John Longmuir, afterwards LL.D., editor of the abridged edition of Jamieson's "Scottish Dictionary," and author of the best "guide" to Dunnottar that has ever been written, not to speak of his scarce "Speyside," his "Ocean Lays," "The College," and a score of other works more or less meritorious, but now remembered only by collectors. I have an impression that it was at Dr. Longmuir's

suggestion that Cumming turned his attention to printing at all. At anyrate, the doctor continued through many years to give him the benefit of his advice. He was Cumming's art critic, too; for John not merely decorated his chap books with woodcuts, but he cut the blocks himself, and John Longmuir's ideas were often followed in the rig of a vessel (he was minister of the Sailors' Church in Aberdeen), or in the "make" of a Highlandman's bagpipes, or the architecture of "The Auld Kirk o' Pert," which ornamented the cover of "The Herd's Ghaist; or, The Perjur'd Laird's Doom."

In course of time, then, John Cumming introduced a printing-press into the but end of the shop at Fintray, and tried his hand at printing a chap book. It was "The Old Scottish Ballad of Andrew Lammie; or Mill of Tifty's Annie," the best known ballad in all the Howe of Buchan, of which more copies have been sold, from the Fintray Press and otherwise, probably, than of any other secular work, not excepting even John Pratt's "Life and Death of Jamie Fleeman, the Laird of Udny's Fool," and the sale of it has long been over 100,000 copies. "Andrew Lammie" consisted of a sheet of eight pages, and the "chapmen billies" sold it at a halfpenny at the farm kitchen door. Everybody then knew something of the incidents of the ballad, for Mill of Tifty is not so far from Fintray, and Fyvie Churchyard—where the heroine is buried and the path to her monument is worn by pilgrim feet—is easily within reach on the same line of railway. And so, although the printer's profits on the

ballad were small—for the Fintray chap books were sold to the "dealers" at three-halfpence per dozen copies—the demand was great. Accordingly, it was stereotyped, as most of the other chap productions of the Fintray Press have been, and edition after edition was thrown off for many years.

Following on "Andrew Lammie," Cumming printed another eight-page chap book, "The Bon-Accord Sangster," which bore a wood-cut of the Aberdeen burgh arms above the familiar civic motto, "Bon-Accord." It was quite a budget of ballads, containing six of them, and in most, if not all, one can discern the hand of John Longmuir easily enough. That means that the moral tone of the "ballads" was unexceptionable, for John Longmuir was a man of the purest ideals, who firmly believed that, by taking thought, the multitude can be taught to love the very best. For many years John Longmuir was in the way of composing a New-Year Ode, and reciting it at the New-Year Festival of the Aberdeen Temperance Society. The writer remembers being taken, as a boy, by one of Longmuir's admirers to hear "the Doctor" recite his ode on one of these occasions in the Music Hall of Aberdeen, and the impression remains clear of a tall, massive personality, with shaggy locks and long white beard, inspiredly declaiming his composition, the picture of an ancient bard, supremely happy in the enthusiasm of the three thousand or thereby of an audience. John Cumming had the courage to include one of these odes, "Welcome to the Festival," in his second chap book,

and as the language had the bite in it that country folk could appreciate, and it could be sung to the tune of "Scots Wha Hae," even the "Welcome to the Festival" had its admirers in the bothies and farm kitchens of the district.

A list of the chap books of the Fintray Press has never been printed, and so it will be of interest to place them on record here. They comprise twenty-one eight-page chap books, each one of which has been reprinted over and over again, although the demand for them fell away when the daily newspaper began to absorb the spare time of the peasantry, as of greater people. The complete list is as follows:—

1. "The Old Scottish Ballad of Andrew Lammie; or Mill of Tifty's Annie."
2. "The Bon-Accord Sangster; containing Bon-Accord; Saturday Eve; Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity; The Pipes; The Pipe and Bowl; Welcome to the Festival."
3. "The Bennachie Budget; containing The Strayed Ox; Stap the Flood's Wall-e'e; Tenant Right; Huntly's Blessin'; and 'The Occasional' of the Excise."
4. "The Excellent Old Scottish Song of the Blaeberry Courtship; to which is added The Crook and Plaid."
5. "The Buchan Sangster; containing Bloody Dundee; Your Ain Fireside; The Blue Peat Reek; The Love of Barley Bree; and The Hare Amo' the Corn."
6. "The Cameronian's Vision" (James Hyslop's poem on the shooting of John Brown).
7. "The Hunting of Chevy Chase."

8. "The Duke of Gordon's Three Daughters; to which are added Jem of Aberdeen, and the Bonny House of Airly."
9. "The Tragical History of Gill Morice."
10. "Grigor's Ghost; an old Scotch Song."
11. "The Herd's Ghaist; or, The Perjur'd Laird's Doom; to which is added Nancy Bean."
12. "Jemmy and Nancy of Yarmouth."
13. "The Murder of King Kenneth."
14. "The Railway Rhymer; containing The Pleasure Trip; The Channel Fleet; The Brake; Lament for Mary Bourke; and The Bird on the Wire."
15. "Sir James the Rose."
16. "Tullochgorum; to which are added Roy's Wife; and Braw Lads on Yarrow Braes."
17. "The Water Warbler, containing The Cogie; The Pleasure Trip; The Rinderpest; The Clear, Cooling Wave; and The Sang of the Unemployed."
18. "The Water Lily; containing The Licensed Grocer; Fa Pushioned the Doggie?; Nearing the Dawn; The New-Year's Advice; and Wattie's Pipes."
19. "The Bonnie Lass o' Bennachie, to which is added O, Gin I were faur Gadie Rins."
20. "The Covenanter's Carousal; containing The Banner Blue; The Wigton Martyrs; Dunnottar Castle; and Our Covenanters."
21. (Issued since the death of John Cumming, the founder of the Press, six years ago)—"The Battle of Harlaw; to which are added Willie's Drowned in Gamrie; and Bogie Side."

It may, perhaps, be permissible to say that there is only one complete set of the ballad productions of the Fintray Press in existence. A few years ago, by

the help of Mr. William Cumming, son and successor of John Cumming, the present writer was able to form a set of these productions, which, bound in a neat volume, form an interesting item in the "Local Collection" in the Aberdeen Public Library. As time goes on, and the Fintray Press becomes merely a part of bibliographical history, this set of its productions will become more and more valuable.

It cannot be said that John Cumming was very deeply versed in ballad literature, or showed any keen perception in selecting the text of the real ballads which he published. This, of course, is not the place to discuss the sources of his productions, although it is just the topic that bibliographers would delight to handle. And, in itself, this aspect of the subject is full of interest. For example, John Cumming's "Andrew Lammie" is simply the version of Peter Buchan, printed in 1825, in the "Gleanings of . . . Scarce Old Ballads"—the now rare volume dedicated by Peter "with every veneration and respect" to Sir Walter Scott. His "O Gin I were faur Gadie Rins" is a poor version of one of the finest old Scots songs that we have—which was a favourite camp song of the Highlanders in the Peninsular and Crimean campaigns, and has been a cradle-song in the region of Bennachie throughout memory. John Imlah, an Aberdeen poet, in a volume, "May Blossoms," published in London in 1827, started a fashion of writing modern verses to the first line of the refrain of this fine old folk-song, but neither he nor John Cumming, nor any of the

half-dozen poetasters who have tried their hand at it, ever caught the spirit of the real ditty:—

> "O! gin I were where the Gadie rins,
> Where the Gadie rins, where the Gadie rins;
> O! gin I were where the Gadie rins,
> At the back o' Bennachie."

Fortunately, John Cumming printed in his chap book the music of this ballad—as he did with certain others—and so did something to preserve that. Quite a number of the pieces issued from the Fintray Press were the work of John Longmuir, not otherwise obtainable, and preserved here for the future bibliographer of that industrious writer's work, if such should ever arise.

But one wonders at the omissions, as well as the contents of John Cumming's wallet. Why did he never treat his patrons to such stirring compositions of the district as "Whirry Whigs," or "Logie o' Buchan," or "The Burning of Frendraught," or "The Baron o' Braikley"? Most of all, why did he not give them "Bonny John Seton," that admirable ballad of Fintray itself? We have in the official registers of the city of Aberdeen the historical foundation of the piece. On July 3, 1622, before the Provost, Bailies, and Town Council—

> "Compeirit James Settoun of Pitmedden, burges of this burght, and tauld doun and delyuerit befoir thame in redie gold the soume of twa hundreth merkis, usuall Scottis monie, left in legacie be umquhill Margrat Rolland, his spous, to the commoun puir of this burght."

This worthy couple, James Settoun and Margrat Rolland, his spouse, were the parents of Bonny John

Setoun of the ballad, who fell at the age of twenty-nine at the battle of the Bridge of Dee, June 19, 1639, while advancing with the Royal Standard in his hand :—

"Some rode upon the black and gray,
And some rode on the broun ;
But the Bonny John Seton
Lay gaspin' on the ground.

They took from him his armour dear,
His sword, likewise his shield ;
Yea, they left him naked there,
Upon the open field."

It must not be supposed that the Fintray Press has produced nothing but ballad chap books. Cumming printed and published, in 1865, an actual history of 170 octavo pages—"The Early History of Kintore ; With an Account of the Rights and Privileges Belonging to the Heritors and Community of the Burgh." It was the work of Alexander Watt, a friend and neighbour of Cumming, who died while preparing the work for the press. Only a small edition could have been printed, for, although so comparatively recent, the volume is now practically unobtainable.

Another of the productions of the Press—as rare as the "Kintore"—was a nineteen-page pamphlet, telling the story of the Aberdeenshire parish that has been buried by the sands.

"Notes on the Parish of Slains and Forvie in the Olden Days. By James Dalgardno, Corr. Mem. S.A. Scot., Slains, by Ellon, Aberdeenshire. Printed by John Cumming, Fintray, Aberdeen. MDCCCLXXVI. Printed for private circulation."

Apart from the ballad chap books, the most interesting production of John Cumming was his edition of "Don: a Poem," printed in 1849. The literary history of this composition is quite remarkable. In 1797 it was published in Aberdeen "by Charles Dawson, schoolmaster at Kemnay," and the scenes and episodes described in the work were just such as an intelligent, observant person, dwelling at Kemnay, on the banks of the Don, would be expected to be interested in. The work was very successful, and so Charles Dawson, the schoolmaster of Kemnay, brought out a second edition, 1805, but not even then was it discovered that Dawson had quietly appropriated a prior publication. At length it was found that the poem had gone through several editions before Dawson took it up, and that it had been in print for 150 years actually before his day, the first edition having been printed in London in 1655. Peter Buchan had an edition of it in 1819, and this no doubt suggested to John Cumming the propriety of an edition from the Fintray Press, the only printing press that ever stood amid the actual, immediate scenery of the poem.

The Story of an Aberdeen Memorial

THE STORY OF AN ABERDEEN MEMORIAL:

AN ARCHITECTURAL EPISODE.

IN the last sixty or seventy years many persons must have wondered at seeing the top of a tall granite obelisk appearing above the trees in the higher grounds of the Aberdeen Lunatic Asylum. It is still there, easily to be seen as one descends any of the streets leading down from Rosemount to Westburn Road, but few could guess how closely the story of the monument touches that of the making of Aberdeen. That story was never fully known, or only to a very few. It is interesting in our day as taking us into the heart of the great progressive movements of the first half of last century in Aberdeen, and as giving us a glimpse of the rivalry that went on for so many years between Archibald Simpson, the noted Aberdeen architect, and John Smith, city architect for half a century, who, each in his own way, conferred lasting distinction on the town.

The inscription on the sunk marble panel on one of the faces of the monument—protected from the action of the weather by a sheet of glass—reads—

JOHN FORBES OF NEW.
Born 10th September, 1743.
Died 20th June, 1821.

John Forbes of Newe ("New," it was spelt in his day), is completely forgotten now, but in the opening years of last century his name was in a very real sense a household word in Aberdeen. His kindnesses were most liberal—especially to the Infirmary and the Lunatic Asylum, his last gift to the Asylum being a legacy of £10,000, by which the managers of that day were enabled to complete Archibald Simpson's fine buildings at Clerkseat.

So highly was John Forbes esteemed in the community that his funeral from London to Strathdon was made the occasion of a great public ceremonial on its passing through Aberdeen. The magistrates issued a black-edged card to this effect—

> "The Lord Provost and Magistrates give notice that the remains of the late Mr. John Forbes of New, in passing to the Family Burial-place at Strathdon, are to be moved from the Town-Hall on Wednesday first, at 12 o'clock, that those who wish to testify their respect for the memory of this worthy Man, and their sense of gratitude for his munificent Benefactions to the Charitable Institutions of the town of Aberdeen, are respectfully invited to accompany his Remains from the Town-Hall to Union Place."

And the public acknowledgments of John Forbes's virtues did not end there. A fund was started by the Asylum Directors to provide a public memorial of him, and £700 was in due time collected, a very large number of people contributing, from far and near. A party of trustees was appointed from the subscribers, of whom the Provost of the town was chairman, to take the necessary steps in providing a memorial of the deceased.

The great question then came to be—What form should the memorial take? At a meeting of the subscribers in 1828, "it was unanimously resolved that the same should consist of a statue or monument, to be placed on some conspicuous part of the city." Perhaps a statue may seem rather an ambitious object for the occasion, but the memorial very nearly took that shape—and in that case a very familiar and imposing structure in Aberdeen, the St. Nicholas Façade in Union Street, would probably never have been erected. When Flaxman, the celebrated sculptor, was consulted on the matter, at the start of the movement, his advice was to erect a statue of Huddersfield stone. Then it so happened that Provost Alexander Brown, being in London shortly before he demitted office in 1828, practically concluded a contract with William Behnes, the brilliant but unfortunate sculptor, for a marble statue of Forbes for the town. In the long interval that took place before a final decision was come to by the Monument Trustees, Behnes' reputation as a sculptor advanced so greatly that his charge for the marble statue went up from a few hundreds to a thousand guineas, and that sealed the fate of the Forbes statue.

Meantime many local artists were at work devising some suitable form of memorial. One of these was Hugh Irvine, of the Drum family, whose view of Castle Street, in 1812, is one of the familiar Aberdeen views of the period. Hugh Irvine had been struck with the new façade at the entrance to Hyde Park, still familiar at Hyde Park Corner, the work of

Decimus Burton, the eminent architect, and having discussed the subject with Burton, with Hamilton, the Edinburgh architect, Henry Howard, R.A., and others of artistic note, Hugh Irvine became possessed of the idea that a façade in a similar manner, of granite, to be erected in front of St. Nicholas Churchyard, would be the appropriate memorial to John Forbes in Aberdeen. Accordingly, being in London, he commissioned Burton to make drawings of a façade for St. Nicholas Churchyard, with a space for a statue, and he commissioned another artist to make a model from Burton's plans.

All this took place in July of 1829. Unfortunately, before Burton's plans or the model were completed, Hugh Irvine died. Then Charles Irvine of Drum, as representing his brother's executors, received this letter from Decimus Burton:

"6 Spring Garden, London,
10*th November*, 1829.

"GENTLEMEN—I beg to acknowledge with sincere regret the note announcing the melancholy death of Mr. Hugh Irvine, whose acquaintenance I had the pleasure of enjoying. Some months previously to his departure from London in July last, I had been engaged in preparing a Design and Working Drawings for an Archway to form a Façade for Aberdeen. I beg to transmit herewith my charge for the same, which I have purposely reduced under the unfortunate circumstances under which it is presented. I trust therefore to receive the amount at your early convenience. Mr. Irvine ordered a Model of the proposed Building to be made by Mr. Dighton, according to an estimate amounting to Ten Guineas, which he had previously approved, which Model accom-

panied the Drawings sent from here on the 26th September, addressed to Mr. Irvine, as directed by him, Drum, Aberdeenshire. Mr. Dighton requests me to forward berewith his account for the above, and earnestly to beg the favour that it may be settled herewith.

I am, etc.,

DECIMUS BURTON.

"THE EXECUTORS OF
HUGH IRVINE, ESQ.,
Drum, Aberdeenshire.

Accounts referred to.

"THE EXECUTORS OF THE LATE
HUGH IRVINE, ESQ.

To Decimus Burton.

"For the Design and for making a Plan, Sections, Elevations, Working Drawings, and Specification of an Archway to form a Façade in front of St. Nicholas Church, Aberdeen, according to Mr. Irvine's Instructions referred to in his letters dated 25th July and 25th August, 1829, ... £26 5s.

"*To* JOHN DIGHTON—October, 1829. Model of Archway to St. Nicholas Church, ... £10 10s."

All this matter relative to the Forbes Memorial Charles Irvine of Drum gathered together, and in due time they were submitted to the Forbes Monument Trustees. This remarkable result then took place that at a small meeting of the Trustees, on 14th December, 1829, Provost Hadden being in the chair, the Trustees resolved to proceed with the construction of a façade to St. Nicholas Churchyard according to the plans and model of Decimus Burton, with the addition of a

tablet in the centre of the archway commemorating the character and munificence of John Forbes of Newe. Burton's and Dighton's accounts were duly paid, and the Trustees requested the co-operation of the Magistrates in carrying the design into effect. The consent of the Magistrates and Town Council was given without hesitation or reserve.

It is at this stage that John Smith, the city architect, enters on the scene. He was a busy man, whose larger architectural works were already making a notable appearance in the town. He had built the new Court House and Prison in Lodge Walk, laid out the plan of Huntly Street, and certain other more or less ornamental streets in that neighbourhood, of which Union Row was the only one actually carried out; he had taken down and rebuilt the Market Cross; he had built the new west front to King's College—often erroneously ascribed to Archibald Simpson—and he had in hand at this particular time the North Parish Church, the South Parish Church, the Water House in Union Place, and the New Bridge of Don. Moreover, he was engaged in improvements at the Loch—finally cleared away a few years afterwards—on improvements at Justice Mills, and was dealing in a preliminary way with the Bridge of Dee, which he widened and much improved a dozen years later.

How John Smith was induced to take up the idea of a façade to St. Nicholas Churchyard it is impossible to tell. Provost Hadden was probably the only person, besides himself, who knew, and Provost

Hadden carried his secret along with him. What is undoubted is this, that at a meeting of the Monument Trustees, on 23rd January, 1830, a few weeks after Decimus Burton's plans of a façade had been adopted, Provost Hadden produced plans by John Smith of a granite façade for St. Nicholas Churchyard, the pillars of which were to be of cast-iron, and he also read to the meeting this letter, which he had received from the architect :—

"Aberdeen, *25th December*, 1829.

"My Lord Provost,—I beg leave herewith to transmit to your lordship a Design for an Entrance Front to the Town's Churchyard, towards Union Street. Within the Entrance Gate, and near to the junction of the old and new Burial-ground, I would humbly propose to erect an Obelisk, or Cenotaph, to the memory of Mr. Forbes of New, enclosed by a circular Iron Railing, and round which the Approaches to the Churches would be formed. The view of this, as seen through the Gateway and Screen of Columns, and the general effect of the whole, I am inclined to think, would be pleasing. The whole of the Façade I intend to be of finely-dressed granite stone, with the exception of the Columns forming the Screen, on each side of the Entrance, which are meant to be of cast-iron—as they can be exactly made to imitate granite, and at an expense very considerably less, and, indeed, in their situation in this design cast-iron is, in some respects, preferable to granite. The probable expense of erecting the Façade, agreeable to the accompanying sketch, will be about £1180 sterling. Should your lordship, with the gentlemen of the committee generally, approve of this Design, I shall be most happy to give the necessary drawings for it, and superintendence of the works, gratis.

I am, etc.,
John Smith."

The obelisk, which John Smith proposed to construct of red Peterhead granite, was designed on the lines of the Cleopatra Needle, now on the Thames Embankment (which is, of course, a monolith), and was a form of memorial affected at that time by greater architects than John Smith. It was just at that period that Playfair very nearly succeeded in inducing the Scott Memorial Trustees to accept his design of a huge obelisk of this kind, to cost £5000, as a suitable memorial of Sir Walter Scott in Edinburgh. However, the Forbes Trustees had no hesitation in accepting John Smith's designs both of the façade and the obelisk, on the ground that they were more appropriate for their purpose than the designs of Decimus Burton, which they had previously adopted, and the Town Council was unanimously with them. The Town Council was very intimately concerned in the scheme, for they agreed to pay the cost beyond what could be borne by the Forbes Memorial Fund, and it was by the will of the Council that for the twelve cast-iron pillars of the façade, proposed by the architect, there were substituted twelve columns of Dancing Cairns granite.

All Aberdonians now are rather proud of the St. Nicholas Façade as a distinguished piece of archirecture in granite in the principal street of the city. But it was not so in 1830. A very keen controversy broke out over both the façade and the Forbes obelisk, strong objections being taken to both, and in the course of the controversy even a pamphlet was published, and the architect of the designs received plenty of the customary hard knocks. One temperate critic

took objection specially to the site of the Forbes monument, and it is worth while observing here that he suggested as an alternative site Golden Square, or, failing that, the lands of Berryden, in the vicinity of the Lunatic Asylum. Meantime, John Smith went on his quiet way, and did his work, earning the unusual compliment of a special vote of thanks from the Town Council for giving his plans and his superintendence of the works for nothing.

We now turn to Archibald Simpson, the other Aberdonian architect of genius, who had been following the course of affairs in regard to the façade and the obelisk with the closest interest. He, too, by the opening of the thirties, was a very busy man, and had already produced many architectural works of quite a new quality in the north of Scotland. He had erected, in order, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, the Medical Chirurgical Hall (King Street), Union Buildings, and the Athenæum Hall, the Music Hall Buildings (excepting, of course, the large hall), the Lunatic Asylum, Woodside Parish Church, laid out Bon-Accord Square, Bon-Accord Terrace, and the lands of Ferryhill, and built, beyond Aberdeen, Stracathro House, Castle Newe, Kintore Parish Church, the Church of Elgin, and many an edifice besides. He was at this time engaged on plans for the new Marischal College and the new Infirmary, and it was specially in connection with the latter that he was called upon to deal with the Forbes obelisk.

For the public objections to the obelisk in St. Nicholas Churchyard continued to grow, and the

authorities felt it necessary to yield to the popular sentiment. John Smith was instructed to find some other suitable site for it. Golden Square was again suggested. But when John Smith interviewed the feuars of Golden Square, several of them declined their consent. It was in September of 1832 that this intimation was made in the newspapers:—

> "We rejoice to hear that a proposal has been made to remove the monumental column recently erected in St. Nicholas Churchyard to the memory of the late John Forbes, Esq., of Newe, to a far more appropriate site, viz., in front of the Infirmary, the managers of which have recently acquired right to the whole of the angular piece of ground to the eastward of their property for the purpose of forming a suitable approach to their splendid new buildings. The name of Mr. Forbes will in all future time be associated with the Infirmary of Aberdeen, and with its kindred institution the Lunatic Asylum, from the munificent bequests he made to these invaluable institutions. No spot could, therefore, be so appropriate for a monument to his memory as that which affords ocular proof of the blessings imparted by his benefactions and those of other good men who were like-minded."

This mention of the angular piece of ground near the Infirmary brings into notice another point affecting by-gone Aberdeen, which can be touched upon only incidentally. Those who have studied John Smith's "Plan" of 1810, and certain other plans of Aberdeen of that period, will have noted what seemed to be a group of buildings standing in the middle of what is now the open triangular space of Woolmanhill, between Black's Buildings and the Infirmary. As a matter of fact, a group of houses did stand there for

many years. They were three small dwelling-houses, and a fourth low building which served as a Custom House for Aberdeen. And in 1832, when they accepted Archibald Simpson's plans for the splendid new Infirmary, the Infirmary managers bought up these old properties in Woolmanhill in order to improve the healthfulness and amenity of the Hospital.

It was on this ground, then, that it was proposed to re-erect the Forbes monument. Archibald Simpson and John Smith met in consultation on the subject. Simpson never was very keen on the scheme—one gathers the impression, indeed, that he thoroughly detested the obelisk—but the Infirmary managers considered this a very appropriate site. Moreover, they got from the Monument Trustees £200 to cover the expense of taking down and re-erecting the memorial; and so, whether he liked it or not, Simpson had to set about making plans for enclosing the ground in the middle of the Woolmanhill, and erecting the obelisk in the enclosure.

All this, however, took time. Archibald Simpson was now become the most notable architect in the north of Scotland, engrossed with large undertakings in various parts of the country, so that although the Woolmanhill ground was acquired by the Infirmary managers in 1832, it was nearly the end of 1836 before they succeeded in getting from Simpson his sketch-plans for laying out the ground, and not till the middle of 1837 that they got his final plans on which they could definitely act. In June, 1837, then, they agreed with James Mitchell, mason, to remove the obelisk

from St. Nicholas Churchyard, and re-erect it in the Woolmanhill ground, for £157, with £28 more for a few additional courses at the base, which the curious may still see, of a different granite from the rest of the monument, giving five or six feet extra height to the monument at Clerkseat.

But the obelisk never was erected in the Woolmanhill. Archibald Simpson was not at all satisfied with the arrangement come to, and before the contractor began operations, Simpson suggested to the Infirmary managers that instead of placing the monument in the Woolmanhill area, they should place it within the Infirmary grounds. And this, after a little consideration, the managers agreed to do. They resolved, at the same time, to hand over the site of the old buildings in the Woolmanhill to the town, to be added to the street, and in 1838, accordingly, this part of the arrangement was carried out, and Woolmanhill was cleared of the old buildings and paved, as we know it to-day.

Even yet the last had not been heard of the unfortunate Forbes obelisk. Archibald Simpson received instructions from the managers of the Infirmary to re-erect the monument within the grounds on a site immediately in front of the main entrance of the new Infirmary building. This was more than Archibald Simpson had bargained for. He regarded the Royal Infirmary as one of his best works, and the appearance of its main front as seen, for example, from Union Street, as an architectural effect unexampled in Aberdeen, and he had no desire that the effect should be marred by

the huge unlovely obelisk. So, for nearly nine months he did nothing. It was only in June of 1838 that he laid before the managers a statement recommending that they should alter their resolution to place it in the Infirmary grounds, and should erect it on an elevated spot at Clerkseat, near the Asylum, where it would be near the object of Forbes's chief benefactions, and would be seen from all the country round. It says much for the great weight that by this time had come to be attached to Archibald Simpson's views in matters of the kind that, after all that had come and gone, the managers at once and unanimously adopted his recommendation. And there was this further notable feature about the transaction that although the Asylum managers had practically dismissed Archibald Simpson, as the Asylum architect, fifteen or sixteen years before, and employed John Smith to complete his work, they now not only carried out his suggestion about the site of the Forbes obelisk willingly, but inscribed Simpson's own name on one of the sides of it, telling of his work in connection with the Asylum. Thus it came about that after a short and stormy history in the middle of the town's life, John Smith's obelisk was removed by Archibald Simpson to the heights of Clerkseat, where it has stood in quiet forgetfulness for over seventy years.

A Market Cross and its Story

A MARKET CROSS AND ITS STORY.

THE Market Cross of Aberdeen, the finest and best preserved of all the seventeenth century market crosses of Scotland, occupies a site in the Castlegate of the city where a market cross has stood since, at least, the days of Robert the Bruce. Like other towns—Elgin, for example, at the present day—Aberdeen once had two crosses. One was the "fish cross," in the east end of the Castlegate, round which the fisher folk displayed their wares until the removal of the fish cross in 1742. The other, situated at the western end of the spacious market-place, was known as the "flesh cross," from the circumstance that the booths of fleshers stood in and near it for many years, from the time when flesh-meat was allowed to be sold on only certain days of the week.

Our knowledge of those earlier crosses amounts to very little, although they, as well as the existing Cross, played an important part in the life of the burgh. Readers of John Spalding's History of the Troubles will remember that it was between the two crosses that, in 1641, Major General Monro constructed his wooden guard-house—"court de guard," Spalding calls it—for the protection of his soldiers of the Covenant. He and Earl Marischal entered the town on 28th of May, with 800 footman and 40 horse,

being met at the Bridge of Dee by the musketeers and pikemen of the town, and were conducted, with sour looks, doubtless, for the Aberdonians were never ardently devoted to the Covenant, to their quarters in the Castlegate. Before the town was actually entered, Monro delivered to the Provost and Baillies those "Articles of Bon-Accord" which were set down as "ridiculous, tyrannous, and scornful," and which certainly made savage exactions on the community. But under the stern logic of a thousand veteran soldiers held ready to enforce them, to say nothing of a Covenanter Provost, the Articles were duly signed and sealed, and the Covenanter force marched by the Bow Brig into the heart of the town. Monro and the Earl Marischal stayed in the Earl's own house, where Marischal Street now is, and the guard-house was erected for the soldiers of timber taken from the Royalist burgher, William Scott, who had fled. But Spalding, the Royalist chronicler, had some satisfaction in the matter, after all, for he says—"This court de guard was bigged betwixt the crosses, as said is, but on Sunday, the 23rd of January, 1642, there rose a mighty wind that blew down the same."

Parson Gordon of Rothiemay tells us of the fish cross and flesh cross in the Castlegate, and to him they were familiar objects, for many a time he must have passed both of them as boy, youth, and man in Aberdeen. Most unfortunately, he thought it unnecessary to describe them, and so we shall probably never know for certain what exactly they were like. The Fish Cross was probably a mere pillar, set on a

foundation. The "High Cross" must have been different. The two most definite references on this point indicate that it was of the larger Gothic type, such as others of the principal Scottish towns possessed at that time. Spalding, writing while it still stood, says:—

> "It was ornamented also with a crucifix, which, in 1640, incurred the wrath of a Covenanting Committee. . . . Our crucifix was treated with unwonted mercy, the Committee were contented with ordering it *to be closed up* being loath to break the stone."

The other pointed reference treats of the notable reconciliation, in 1597, of Lords Huntly and Forbes, the two most powerful magnates of the district, who had been in deadly feud, which meant unsettled times for the town of Aberdeen. Great public rejoicings took place in Aberdeen on the occasion. As part of the ceremonial,

> "The Cross was hung with tapestry as was also a small house beside it, in which musicians were placed. The Earls sat on two chairs *on the Cross*, along with the King's Commissioner, the Ministers, and the Magistrates, while in attendance below were four score youths of the town, clad in their bravest array, and armed with hag-butts, together with six individuals in the guise of maskers. The Earls' 'pacificatioun and peace' were then proclaimed with sound of trumpet; the Commissioner delivered to them the 'wand of peace' and they were again received by him, by the Ministers and the Magistrates amid deafening discharge of firearms."

While little is known of those earlier crosses themselves, we know them as the centre of many noteworthy events in local and national history.

The celebrations most familiarly associated with our earlier market crosses were the rejoicings on the occasions of a royal visit, royal birthdays, coronations, and such like. We are often told how, on such occasions, as William Dunbar tells of a visit of Queen Margaret to Aberdeen in 1511, that

> "At hir cumming great was the mirth and joy,
> For at thar Croce aboundantlie ran wyne."

This was a form of celebration that subsisted for a very long period of time, and it is curious that when the present Cross of Aberdeen was moved from its former to its present site in 1842, a pipe was found running up the centre column, from which it was supposed that wine flowed on some occasions of the kind. It was a foolish notion, for wine was never supplied in such quantities at the Market Cross.

The supply of wine at the Cross on occasions of even great rejoicing was, indeed, far from being so plentiful as is popularly supposed. No doubt, at the coronation of Charles II., when the whole country made extravagantly merry, no less than "twa punsheoners of wyne, with spycerie in great aboundance," was dealt out at the Market Cross of Aberdeen. But that seems to have been quite exceptional. In 1593—and that was about the period when the practice was most usually observed—we find, from the Dean of Guild Accounts, that "ffor wyne drunkin and spent at the croce," in celebrating the birth of a prince, the amount spent was twenty pounds (Scots), and this, as we know from other entries of the same date, was just the price of five gallons. Thus, in 1594:—

"Item, the VIII. of Februar, for ane gallon of wyne spent at the croce, at command of the [Town] Counsall, quhen my Lord Duke was maid burges, 4 lib."

One gallon of wine spent at the Cross would not go very far, and one gallon was, oftener than not, the whole quantity that flowed on such occasions. So, in 1608-9—"the 6th of Marche, at command of the Counsall, for ane gallon of wine, and 6 buistis [boxes] quhairof thair was 2 of confectionis, to my Lord of Enzie, velcum, 7 lib., 6*s.* 8*d.*," and again, in 1613-14, "for ane gallon wine, six buistis confectionis, glassis, and deckking of the Croce, the daye of the solemnizing of the birthe of the sone of the Counte Palatin, 10 lib., 6*s.*" The mention of "glassis" in this, and similar entries, reveals in what manner the wine supplied at the Cross was disposed of. It was clearly often the case that only a limited number of persons partook of it, the heads of the community, doubtless, and they followed the practice, not wholly disregarded in the present day, of breaking their glasses when they had finished. So, at the making of the Earl of Enzie a burgess, on 23rd March, 1608, one gallon of wine was given out, and eighteen glasses were smashed, which cost the worthy Dean fully more than the liquor did. Every year, for some time, King James's deliverance from the Gowrie conspiracy was celebrated at the Market Cross, and with the exception of the first celebration, on 5th August, 1600, the quantity of wine supplied was just one gallon, costing four pounds (Scots), with a little more for glasses broken, and occasionally a few "buistis" of confections. Even

on that first celebration the quantity of wine that flowed was but three gallons, as will be seen from the official entry in the Accounts :—

> "Item, the aucht of August, 1600, debursit upon wyne, spyceres, and glassis spent and brockin at the mercat croce, at the solemnitie maid be the towne for the gude newis of the mervellous preservation of the Kingis Majestie from the treasounable conspiracie attemptit agains him be the Erll of Gowrie and his brother at St. Johnstoun, 12 lib."

The Market Cross, as the centre of burghal life, was naturally often the scene of punishments when it was desired to make a public example of any specially gross offender, or any specially heinous offence. In 1563 two Flemings were ordered by the Magistrates of Aberdeen to be taken to the Market Cross and have their right hands struck off, for cutting the cable of a ship in the harbour and stealing the "cutt"; but the punishment was remitted by the Town Council on the culprits appearing at the Cross and bringing the cut cable with them, and by holding up their right hand and giving praise to God and thanks to the Council for the favour that had been shown them.

Twenty years later, two persons convicted of adultery were sentenced to be bound and exposed at the Market Cross for three hours, thereafter to be burned with a hot iron on the cheeks and banished from the town. In 1617 a person was pilloried at the Cross and banished from the town for insulting one of the baillies; and in 1640 a female, for unbecoming

behaviour, was sentenced to be scourged at the Cross, to be drawn in a cart through the streets, bearing a paper crown on her head, the bellman going before proclaiming her offence, and her banishment from the town.

In the course of the eighteenth century such proceedings at the Cross gradually ceased, but as late as 1787 a public exhibition of this kind was made. In May of that year the Magistrates caused a deficient potato measure, owned by one John Collie, gardener, "to be broke down at the Cross by the hands of the Common Hangman, the Town Drummer attending and proclaiming the name of the owner and user, and cause of the condemnation, which was that the measure was deficient nearly one-third of the standard, and the sentence was immediately executed amidst a great concourse of the inhabitants."

On one notable occasion the Magistrates got more than they bargained for in resorting to a public exhibition of this kind. This was in 1758, when they caused Peter Williamson's book—telling of his being kidnapped by conspicuous citizens of Aberdeen and sent to the plantations—to be burned at the Cross, the town's officers standing by and proclaiming his offence of defaming the fair name of the merchants of the burgh. But Peter, who had already been imprisoned by them, and was now banished the town, took his judges to the Court of Session, and got decree against them for £100 as damages, with expenses. And that, no doubt, made the Magistrates much more careful in work of the kind for the future.

Proclamation at the Market Cross was at one time held to be an essential element in the promulgation of a new law. Indeed, we find the Scots Parliament in 1581 solemnly discussing the question of how far the public were bound to observe Acts of Parliament unless they had been proclaimed at the market crosses of the chief burghs throughout the country. And in order to remove all doubt, an Act was passed that in future all statutes should be proclaimed at the Cross of Edinburgh only, which publication was held to be "als valiabill and sufficient" as if the publication had been made at the market crosses of all the shires within the realm.

Notwithstanding this Act of 1581, practically all national proclamations continued to be made at the Market Cross of Aberdeen—and in the other larger towns as well. One of the most singular was made only two years afterwards, 1583, when the national authorities were taking alarm at the use being made of the new printing press for the issue of anonymous political squibs in the form of ballads and other publications. Proclamation was made of an Act of the Privy Council that "Na prenter sall presume or tak upoun hand to prent any buikis, ballettis, sangis, rymes, or tragedeis, ather in Latine or Inglis tounge, unto the tyme the same be sene, vewit, and examinat be wise and discreit personis depute thairto."

One of the earliest proclamations of which there is a record in Aberdeen has some resemblance to the Act anent undesirable aliens of a few years ago. It was in 1348, and embodied an Act of Parliament then

passed prohibiting Flemings—mariners excepted—from resorting to Scotch towns for business purposes, and so depriving Scotch merchants of legitimate trade in Flanders. The original proclamation is one of numerous ancient documents still preserved in the charter room of the Aberdeen Town House, with its seal in white wax still entire.

The present Market Cross dates from near the end of the seventeenth century, but before the old cross was removed, a very interesting and solemn ceremony took place there, which recalled the exploits of the great Montrose. The execution of Montrose took place at the market cross of Edinburgh on 21st May, 1650. He was captured in the end of April, and was ordered by the Estates to be hanged at the cross. Says a contemporary record: "This sentence wes punctuallie execute upon him at the Mercat Croce of Edinburgh upon Tysday, the 21st day of May, 1650, and he hangit upon ane high gallows, maid for the view of the pepill more than ordinar, with his buikis and declarationnis bund upon his bak. He hang full thrie houris; thaireftir cut doun, falling upon his face, nane to continance him bot the executioner and his men. His heid, twa leggis, and twa airmes tane frae his body with ane aix, and sent away and affixit at the places appoyntit thairfoir, his body cassin in to a lytill schoirt kist, and taken to the burrow muir of Edinburgh, and bureyed thair amang malefactouris. His heid was spiket on the Tolbooth."

About a dozen years after Montrose's death, his son and successor petitioned the Town Council of

Aberdeen—as of other places where the Marquis's limbs had been exhibited—to restore for decent interment one of the dismembered limbs of the Marquis, which had been exposed on the Justice Port of the town and afterwards buried in St. Nicholas Churchyard. The Council agreed not only to restore the dismembered limb, but to make some measure of public atonement in the doing of it. Accordingly, guns belonging to the town were brought up to the Market Cross, and were discharged while a procession of the Town Council and inhabitants of Aberdeen, carrying the recovered limb in a coffin, marched from St. Nicholas Church to the Town House, where the remains lay in semi-state till arrangements were made for their transport to Edinburgh for interment in Holyrood. The town suffered much from Montrose, both when he was a Covenanter and when he became a Royalist, but by 1661 popular opinion had given him that martyr's crown which has remained with him ever since.

It was shortly after this, in 1664, that the Town Council of Aberdeen felt the necessity of providing a more imposing Market Cross. "Taking to consideratioun," says the register of their proceedings, "that notwithstanding this burgh is ane of the most antient royall burghs of this kingdome, the mercat croce thairof, which should be ane ornament thirin is farr inferior to many meaner burghs; therfor ordanes the dean of gild to caus mak up the mercat croce of the said burgh in the west end of the Castellgait with hewin and cut stanes, according to the stane and forme of the mercat croce of the burgh of Edinburgh, and to caus bring home stanes, and to do everie thing thair anent."

The purpose set forth in this Minute was not carried out, and two years later, 30th May, 1666, the Council returned to the subject, and "ordanes the deane of gild to caus bring hame hewin stones, and to make up the Mercat Croce of this burgh in decent maner, conforme to ane former act laitlie maid theranent, and what charges sall be debursit thereon the samen to be allowit in his accompts."

Still nothing was done, and the old Cross continued to fulfil its ancient purpose. On 22nd May of the following year, on the public day of thanksgiving "for the King's Majesties birth and happie restoratioune," sermons were preached in both churches in Aberdeen, all ordinary work was prohibited while the King's loft in St. Nicholas Church and the Market Cross were "to be hung with tapestrie in good ordour as formerlie, and wyne and confectionis to be at the said croce, and ane covered table for that effect."

In 1686, however, decided action was taken, which resulted in the construction of the still existing Cross. Difficulty had evidently been experienced in finding a suitable person to design and build a new Market Cross on the somewhat ambitious lines laid down by the Town Council, but that suitable person was ultimately found in John Montgomery, mason, of the rural Aberdeenshire parish of Rayne. This parish of Rayne seems to have had a succession of able craftsmen, for it was Thomas Watson, mason, in Auld Rayne, who from about 1616 to 1622 was employed by the town of Aberdeen in building the prison at Lodge Walk, with a portion of the old tower

still to be seen. John Montgomery himself had been well known as a leading craftsman in the town, for he had held office as a Master and a Warden of the Mason craft prior to his most distinguished work in the construction of the Market Cross. The actual Minute of the Town Council relative to the new Cross is in the following terms :—

"20 January, 1686. The said day the saids Provost and Baillies and Counsell, finding it was convenient and decent for the credit and decorment of the towne that ane cross suld be erectit and built upon the public market street, in the Castel Gait, at the westmost cross thereon, neir or about the same as should be fund convenient, and that John Montgomerie, measone, had offered and undertaken to mak upe the said Cross in good forme and order, off hewan and eastler work, with the present and eight Kings and Queen Maria's armes, formerlie imediatalie preseiding, in effigie, engraven upon eastler hewan stone, with chops underneath, the first storie with ane great high pillar in the middle part of the said cross, and had formed and given in ane moddel thereof of timber and pasebord, and was content to perfyte and accomplice the said work conforme to the said moddel and frame and otherways as the Magistrates and Counsall sould devyse, and that for the sum of ane hundreth punds sterling money, to be payed be them to him. Unto all which the saids Magistrates and Counsall condescended and recommends to the Magistrats and Deane of Gild to meet with John Montgomerie, and to contract anent the same affair, and the foresaid soume to be payed out of the Gild Wyne monies at such tymes as they sall appointe, and the benefite of the chops under the said cross to belong to the said Gild Wyne moneys charge, in respect the said charge is advanced and payed off the said soume."

The new Cross, as it left the hands of John Montgomery—and for which he received a total payment of £231 9*s.* 11*d.* sterling—was in some respects a very different structure from any of the Market Crosses then in existence. No doubt, as the contract provided, it was modelled on the design of the old Gothic Cross of Edinburgh, whose disappearance Sir Walter Scott so greatly lamented, and no doubt in its general structure it resembled the then existing crosses of Perth, Dundee, and others of the older burghs of Scotland whose ancient crosses have all been sacrificed. In many of its details, however, and particularly in its series of portraits of Scottish sovereigns represented in the external panels of its deep balustrade, the Aberdeen Cross was, and still is, unique. We can well understand how the building of the new Cross would arouse the interest of the burghers of two hundred years ago, and we can well suppose, too, that not even the most imaginative of them, who may have attempted to project themselves into the future, could have come at anything like the actual events which the new Cross was to see in its time.

The New Cross continued, as of old, to be the scene of many curious episodes in the life-history of the burgh. Very soon after it was completed, the students of Marischal College gathered at the Cross—11th January, 1689—and formally tried, condemned, and burned the Pope in effigy, which scandalised not a few of the old religion who were still to be found in Aberdeen. It was at this time that is said to have

happened—for religious feeling was keen enough at the Revolution—the incident of Peter Gibb and his terriers. Peter was the father of James Gibb (or Gibbs, as he came to be called), the noted Aberdeen architect, and it is told that, being a Roman Catholic, and something of a wag, he wished to cast some ridicule on his Protestant fellow-townsmen, and so named one of his two terriers Calvin and the other Luther. The Magistrates are said to have publicly rebuked him, and sagaciously ordered the two dogs to be hanged at the Market Cross.

The public records of Aberdeen contain no reference to this, but they do make mention of an incident which happened at the Market Cross in 1745. When the Jacobites possessed themselves of Aberdeen in that year, they obtained the keys of the Market Cross, from which they proclaimed Charles Edward king. Meantime, a party of them had seized Provost Morison, whom they dragged to the Cross, but they completely failed to make him drink the health of the new sovereign, and had to be satisfied with pouring the wine down his breast. From the resistence he made, Provost Morison—who was the father of Rev. Dr. George Morison, who built Morison's Bridge (the Shakkin' Brig) at Cults, and of Dr. Morison, originator of the Strathpeffer Spa—was afterwards known as Provost "Positive."

Soon after this date, and the abolition of heritable jurisdictions in Scotland, the Magistrates of Aberdeen caught something of the spirit of improvement of the time. In 1752, in the course of levelling and paving

the Castlegate, they laid down the Plainstones, which, in Aberdeen as in other towns, became popular as a resort and promenade for many years. On 22nd January, 1752, the Town Council agreed to the proposal of David Deuchar, contractor, for paving the Castlegate "twixt the Cross and Exchange Coffee Rooms, at the rate of fourpence per foot, he furnishing sand and all workmanship, and the paving being at least six inches of thickness." Before the work was carried out, however, a larger improvement had been discussed, and so, on 29th June, 1752 :

> "The said day, The Council agreed that the Pavementing on the Castlegate should be sixty foot in breadth; and eighty foot of length from the Cross, with Swipe on the side of the Cross, conform to a Plan, and that this shall be a foot higher than the Causeway."

Up till the laying out of Union Street, and the great public improvements that issued therefrom, this raised platform was the daily resort, or exchange, of the better class of citizens; subsequently, it became the scene of huxters' stalls, fishwomen and their "creels," and loungers of every kind, until it became something of a public nuisance. On the Plainstones was fought, in 1763, a fatal duel between Abernethy of Mayen, and Leith of Leith-hall. It originated in a squabble in the adjoining New Inn, and the two antagonists, having withdrawn to the Plainstones, they there exchanged shots, and Leith was shot through the head. Its trading associations are of a homlier cast, but it is worth noting that it was at the corner of the Plain-

stones that McCombie, originator of a once famous brand of Aberdeen snuff, had his booth. In the newspapers of June, 1807, one may still read that "McCombie, late Dealer in Snuff and Tobacco, North Corner of the Plainstones, begs leave to Intimate that he has Removed to that Shop, Justice Port, head of Justice Lane, formerly possessed by Mr. John Walker, where he intends to deal in the Grocery, Tea, Spirit, and Porter lines." One is glad to add that such a soul was not wholly given up to grocery lines, for McCombie intimated also that he still intends "to keep an assortment of the very best qualities of Snuff and Tobacco on the most reasonable terms." The business was afterwards transferred to Netherkirkgate, near the passage now so well known as McCombie's Court.

As the eighteenth century drew to a close, and the spirit of public improvement spread, the Market Cross stood in some danger of being swept away as a public obstruction. The old city Ports had been demolished; the old stone port or barrier at the Bridge of Dee had shared the same fate, and now, by the advent of a new public body, the Police Commissioners, created by the Police Act of 1795, to manage the streets, everything was to be large and new. John Ewen, a meddlesome busy-body, whose curio shop was opposite the Plainstones, and who was one of the early Police Commissioners, had long had his eye on the Cross. The levelling of Castle Street was one of the earliest of the schemes which the new Police Board occupied itself with, and very soon John got his colleagues to

come to a formal resolution about the Cross. So say the Board's official Minutes:

> "28 July, 1806. The Board having had under consideration various proposals suggested out of doors, in respect of removing the Cross, Plainstones, and the outer stair leading to the Court House, or Prison, it appeared proper that these obstructions upon the street should be brought under the view of the Magistrates and New Street Trustees, with whom the Board wish to cultivate a good understanding for the public benefit—and a scroll of letter having been read on these subjects by Mr. Ewen, the Commissioners approved of it, and directed that it should be extended, and that Mr. Ewen may, with the Treasurer, subscribe and forward it to Provost Brebner.

The Town Council declined to interfere with the Cross, but the movement for its removal was not discontinued. It was just at this time that Walter Thom, a friend of John Ewen, came to Aberdeen from John's native district of Montrose. He had been in business in Bervie, but failed, and turning his attention to the writing of books, he began with a series of "Sketches in Political Economy." On coming to Aberdeen, he wrote his history of the town, published in two volumes in 1811, much of the material of which he owed obviously to his friend. To that source must be attributed his condemnation of the Market Cross, in Volume I. of his history, as an "erection, neither useful nor ornamental"; but Walter Thom's history is curious in this respect that what he said of the Cross in Volume I., he retracted in Volume II. He had received a hint that he was on the wrong lines, and so,

in his later volume he proceeds to say that "The Cross in Castle Street, although no part of it bears any resemblance to that emblem of our religion, is a very beautiful and singular production in stone-masonry," and he hurries on to explain that what he said about it in his previous volume "related chiefly to its present situation rendered inappropriate from the late improvements and opening of new streets."

As time wore on, the Cross itself furnished evidence that some renovation was required. Signs of decay were only too apparent. Accordingly, its condition was being considered in 1820 and 1821 by both the Town Council and the Police Board—who still had a scheme in hand for the improvement of Castle Street. On 20th March, 1820, the Provost submitted to the Town Council plans and proposals he had received from the Police Board relative to the improvement of Castle Street and the removal of the Cross, "which having been examined by the Council, they were unanimously of opinion that the Cross should remain as at present, and empowered the Dean of Guild to cause lay out a reasonable sum in repairing and brushing it up previous to the King's Coronation."

This committee of the Town Council which had charge of the repair of the Cross, found that structure in a much more dilapidated state than had been expected. Their official in charge was John Smith, the city architect, a careful and capable man, who had not gone far in his examination of the old Cross before he saw that the whole thing would have to come down.

And so, at a meeting of the Town Council on 11th May, 1821, the Provost made another statement on the subject:

> "11 May, 1821. The same day, the Provost stated to the Council that their Committee proposed, if sanctioned by the Council, to take down the Cross in Castle Street for the purpose of rebuilding and altering it so far as to convert the interior into a shop, which would not only prove a source of revenue to the town, but also contribute to the embellishment of the street; that the Committee had procured from Mr. John Smith an estimate of the whole expense of the extended operation, including the alterations already contracted for, by Mr. James Small, mason, which might amount to about £305, and that Mr. Small had agreed to contract for the mason work, including the Base, already executed by him under his former agreement, and to take down and rebuild the Cross for the sum of £168; which being considered by the Council, they approved of the Cross being taken down and rebuilt, and fitted up as a shop, as proposed by the Committee, and empowered Mr. Duthie, Dean of Guild, to enter into and execute a Contract with the said James Small in terms of his Estimate."

The operations thus outlined went on at once, under the personal superintendence of John Smith. While the taking down of the Cross was going on another effort was made to induce the Town Council to rebuild it on a site further eastward in Castle Street, but the Town Council held to their resolution, and rebuilt it was, accordingly, on the former site. The work of taking it down was gone about as carefully as possible, but in spite of that the beautifully floriated Corinthian column which rises from the centre of it unfortunately fell, and was broken in three parts. It

still stands, however, and the careful mending of 1821 is easily discernible. At the same time a singular discovery was made in regard to the unicorn which surmounts the central column. When the cleaning operations began the whole structure was black with the grime of years, and seemed to be made entirely of sandstone, as had been agreed upon in 1686, but as the cleaning went on the unicorn began to assume a whitish tint, and it was then found that it was made of pure white statuary marble.

Apart from placing the whole structure on a granite base, and renewing the decayed portions of the fabric with Morayshire freestone, the operations of 1821 included the clearing out of the four compartments, or booths, in the interior of the Cross, and forming them into one. The modest Post-Office of Aberdeen was at that time carried on in a small shop in Netherkirkgate. As the rebuilding of the Cross went on, Alexander Dingwall, Post Master, petitioned the Town Council to grant the use of the new apartment in the Cross, as the Post-Office, offering to pay £25 yearly rent for the same. And the Town Council, while agreeing that they might have made better terms for their property, resolved to accede to the Post Master's proposals. On 10th April, 1822, therefore, the rebuilt Market Cross was opened as the Aberdeen Post-Office, and a new era seemed to be opened in its long and interesting history.

From the rebuilding of the Cross to the present day only one outstanding event occurred in regard to it that needs to be specially noted. It did not long

remain the home of the Aberdeen Post-Office, for in 1824 the Post-Office was removed to more suitable premises in Union Street. The compartment in the Cross then became a coaching office, and there are not a few still with us who remember how Captain Barclay Allardice used to dash off with his Defiance coach from the neighbourhood of the Market Cross. The incidents of the proclamation at the Cross of William IV. in 1830, and of Queen Victoria in 1837, lacked the picturesqueness of ancient ceremonials of the kind; and other formal proclamations that have taken place in the period have as yet no historical interest.

About the time of Queen Victoria's accession, however, the Police Commissioners were again discussing the old subject of the improvement of Castle Street, and the removal of the Market Cross. New and imposing public buildings were rising up in the immediate neighbourhood; the site of the New Inn, at the corner of King Street, had just been acquired by the North of Scotland Banking Company for the erection of their new head office, and this was felt to be an appropriate occasion to press for the removal of the Cross. At a meeting of the Police Commissioners, then, on 19th February, 1838, notice of motion was given—"That the period being now arrived for the Board taking under consideration the proper level to be given to the Castle Street, especially as the corner stance at the New Inn is about to be rebuilt, the Cross be removed and the Plainstones cleared away." Much discussion took place throughout the next few

years over this subject—a public meeting being called, at one stage, by Provost Blaikie to obtain directly the views of the community, and by 1840 a feeling was general in the town that the Plainstones should be cleared away, and that the Cross should be removed further eastward in Castle Street, behind the line of the busier street traffic.

While this was so, a very curious legal question arose. Would the Market Cross on a different site have the legal authority attaching to the Cross as it stood in all matters of official proclamation and ceremonial? Authorities in Aberdeen were doubtful on the point, and it was deemed wise to make application to the Court of Session for a clear opinion. There the question was entirely novel, and the case stands alone probably in Scottish legal annals. However, after some delay, an interlocutor was obtained from the Court authorising the removal of the Cross to a new site while leaving its historic and legal traditions unimpaired.

Thenceforward, all parties proceeded unitedly in the movement. The Board of Police, in seeking the Town Council's co-operation in clearing away the Plainstones, and moving the Cross, voted £400 for the work connected therewith; and the Town Council, in giving its sanction to the proposals, voted £200 additional to help in meeting the cost. So, on 18th August, 1841, as the Town Council Minutes bear:

> "The Same Day, the Provost, with reference to the Minute of the Council, of date 14th December last, on the levelling and improving of Castle Street, stated that

this very desirable work had been contracted for by the Board of Police, to be executed, and as it would soon be commenced it was necessary to give directions for the removal and replacing of the Market Cross nearer to the top or eastward end of Castle Street; which having been considered by the Council, they remitted to the Provost to give the necessary directions to the Town's Superintendent, and to take all other steps that may be considered requisite for the removal and replacing of the Market Cross accordingly."

John Smith—the Town's Superintendent, according to his official title—was again in charge of the taking down and removal of the Cross. The work, which was begun in February, 1842, was carried out by the end of June, and very carefully it was executed, so that not a stone of it came by any mishap. On this occasion, the Plainstones disappeared for ever. An attempt was made, just before the removal of the Cross began, to get the Town Council to agree to lay down the Plainstones again at the new site of the Cross, but no one seconded a motion made to that effect at the Council meeting, and so the Plainstones passed away. But the Cross itself arose on the new site in a more beautiful form than ever. The solid masonry that filled the arches of the Cross was not restored, and the airy gracefulness of the open arcade gave a new charm to the ancient structure, and made it more than ever unique among the Market Crosses of Scotland. It was encircled, too, on the new site, with a simple unobtrusive railing, which still stands, a protection, as well as an ornament, although there must be few who would wish to lay desecrating hands upon the Cross. For it is an example of the

worthy growth of public sentiment that nowadays all classes in Aberdeen look upon the Market Cross as a precious civic possession, to be guarded with extreme care. From an architectural point of view the Cross is not pure, for it reflects the mingling of the styles that went on all over the country in the Jacobean period. But its traditional and historical associations embody centuries of civic life and struggle, and so it represents to each succeeding generation the long and honourable history of the burgh. The rulers of the city, in whose special keeping it is, cherish it perhaps the most interesting of the older structures in the whole neighbourhood. Within the last few months, by order of the Magistrates and Town Council, it has again undergone a process of repair and cleaning; and the milk-white unicorn, from its lofty perch on the top of the central column, once more keeps guard over the grim portraits of the Scottish kings.

Aberdonians Viewed from the Outside

ABERDONIANS VIEWED FROM THE OUTSIDE.

I.

"Oh wad some power the giftie gi'e us
To see oursels as others see us!"

ABERDEEN has always been a self-contained city, and Aberdonians a remarkably self-centred people, possessed of an independent, dauntless confidence that is not less a gift than an inheritance. It is begotten of centuries of isolation and struggle. As one runs down the eight hundred years of the recorded history of the burgh one feels this more and more that its citizens, thrown largely upon themselves, have carried on in this corner of Scotland a kind of miniature republic, and developed a self-reliant quality of character which finds outlet in struggle with hard natural conditions about its own doors, and plodding pioneer work in many a distant corner of the Empire.

Naturally, such a type of character seldom gets itself liked by those accustomed to milder conditions of life and climate. Nobody, said Walter Bagehot, speaking of Francis Horner in Parliament, likes a young Scotchman. He might have added—least of all do people like a pushing Aberdonian. Dr. Joseph Robertson once remarked that "it has been the

practice of the whole world, in pure envy of the superior intelligence in every respect of Aberdeen, to pass it by on all occasions unnoticed"; but this is an example of an Aberdeen doctor's playfulness, which may be given to the outside world as something they don't meet with every day in their life. When the pushing element in the Aberdonian gets to be associated with the insular quality which is undeniably a general feature in the race, people who know little of what the Aberdonian has to be proud of may generally be expected to look slightly askance, as objecting to the standing reproach of a "superior intelligence" conjoined with less agreeable qualities.

It can never, indeed, be denied that to the pioneer work of the Aberdonian the world owes many of the conveniences of daily life. It was David Gregory, the Aberdonian, who first taught the Newtonian doctrines in Edinburgh University before they were taught in Cambridge or elsewhere. It is difficult to imagine the world without the friendly postman. But more than half a century before the penny post was in general use in this country, a penny post had been established in Edinburgh by that queer Aberdonian, Indian Peter Williamson, who also kept a little tavern in the Parliament House, celebrated by Robert Fergusson in "The Rising of the Session":—

> "This vacance is a heavy doom
> On Indian Peter's coffie-room,
> For a' his china pigs are toom;
> Nor do we see
> In wine the soukar biskets soom,
> As light's a flee."

Peter managed his penny post so successfully that the General Post Office found it necessary to buy him up, and he lived on the resultant pension for the rest of his life. It was an Aberdeenshire minister, Rev. Alexander Forsyth, of Belhelvie, who invented the percussion lock; and it was the above-named Peter Williamson who started the first street directory in Edinburgh in the eighteenth century, just as it was a fellow Aberdonian, Alexander Thom, printer, who started a directory in the Irish capital. It would be tedious—and unkind to other communities—to follow these achievements very much further, but one or two less familiar cases may be noted. Thus, the now prevalent system of "starring" theatrical companies was begun by one Sutherland, who at one time carried on a small theatre in Chronicle Lane, Aberdeen. It was Sir Thomas Urquhart who first tried the world with a universal language, at least there does not seem to have been a serious earlier attempt than his "Jewel" of 1653. English journalism, admittedly the purest and ablest in existence, was put on its present footing by James Perry, of the "Morning Chronicle," son of a builder in the Denburn; and American journalism followed in the footsteps mainly of James Gordon Bennet, who, before he started the "New York Herald," had been an inmate of the still existing Roman Catholic seminary in Constitution Street of Aberdeen.

Every now and again controversy arises as to the origin and meaning of the "honours three" of Scotland, and this illustrates how contentedly Aberdeen allows the achievements of its sons to be forgotten or claimed

by others. For it was an Aberdonian who saved the "honours" of Scotland, and when exuberant patriots propose, with Henry Scott Riddell, to

> "Drink a cup to Scotland yet,
> Wi' a' the honours three!"

they commemorate the preservation by the Earl Marischal of the Crown, the Sceptre, and the Sword of State. Thus, says an Act of the Scots Parliament, of 1661:—

> "Forasmuch as the Royall honors, the King's Majesties Crown, the Scepter, and the Sword, entrusted be his Majestie in the yeer Jm vjc fiftie one to the keeping of the Earle of Marishall, have beene notwithstanding of these ten yeers troubles carefullie keept and preserved. And this day [1st January, 1661] presented safe and enteir befor his Majesties Comissioner and Estates of Parliament. The Kings Majestie Doth acknowledge the preservation of the honors to be a singular good service and a signal evidence of the Earle Marishalls loyaltie to his Majestie and regaird to the honour of this Kingdome whairof he has given many testimonies at all occasions formerly. And therefor his Majestie with advice of his Estates of Parliament Doe exoner the Earle Marishall and all others concerned therin of the keeping of the saids honors. And doe approve his care and service therin. And doe heirby returne him this publict acknowledgment thairof which for his Honor they ordane to be recordit in the books of Parliament."

Of course, all the "superior intelligence" and loyalty of the Aberdonian will not make an admirable character, nor keep him from the scorn of his fellowmen. There used to be a proverb—"He's an Aberdeen's man, and will tak' his word again," and much

ingenuity has been shown in the attempt to make out that the proverb was creditable to the Aberdonians, and implied that having once passed their word, they might be trusted to redeem it. One is sorry to confess that this reading will not stand examination.

A scarce little "guide" to the Formartine and Buchan Railway, enlivened by the sketches of Mrs. Pratt, whose husband should have the biggest monument of Peterhead granite that could be erected in the Howe o' Buchan,* tells that "in old times the Aberdeen merchants and manufacturers, in their dealings with the merchants of the Low Countries, were so honourably known as to have only to pledge their word that they would, at a specified time, return and release their obligations in order to be trusted to any extent they thought it prudent to name." How does this compare with the fact that the proverb appears in Ferguson's collection under the title "Of Unconstant Persons"? And there is the further condemning circumstance that during the vogue of the proverb, Sir James Balfour spoke of those Aberdeenshire gentlemen who prudently declared for the Covenant, after testifying against it, as having been "taught by the Committee of Estaites to speake thair aven countrey language." Much evidence exists, unhappily, showing that the proverb was applied in anything but a complimentary sense. And every day makes

*Rev. J. B. Pratt not only wrote the history of Buchan, but among other things wrote, seventy years ago, the "Life and Death of Jamie Fleeman," which has been so remarkably popular in Aberdeenshire.

it clearer that the Scotch merchants in the Low Countries were thoroughly well disliked, and any proverb applied to them in that quarter had better be forgotten as quickly as possible.

Passing from that, however, one is reminded of another proverbial trait over which the outsider is accustomed to make amusingly merry. The Aberdonian is said, in the matter of giving, to be an extremely careful person, typified by the scurvy Scot who was appalled to find that he had not been three hours in London when "bang gaed a saxpence." One must not attempt to struggle with a proverb, lest Sydney Smith be justified, but one wonders how the records of any other Scottish town would compare with those of Aberdeen in regard to the open-handedness of the citizens. Take a few examples from the seventeenth century. In 1604 a burgess of Dundee applied to Aberdeen for help in having his son relieved from captivity among the Turks, and he received ten pounds. In 1624 the town of Dunfermline was nearly destroyed by fire. The burghers of Aberdeen assembled in Head Court, and promptly raised £1600 (Scots) in aid of the distressed. The following year the town gave £100 to Kinghorn to help repair its "bulwark"; and in 1633, when famine was ravaging Caithness and the Orkney Isles, Aberdeen collected supplies and sent them to the famished districts. In 1637, the town of Ayr had certain of its people captured by Algerine pirates—no uncommon experience then—and Aberdeen, in response to an application from the magistrates of Ayr, gave a thousand

merks towards the ransom of the captives. In 1646, the little town of Stonehaven suffered by fire, and Aberdeen, although then in the very midst of the "Troubles," harassed and fined by both sides in the civil war, contributed a thousand merks to its suffering neighbours. Constantly, about this time, contributions were given for the relief of prisoners, belonging to other towns, captured by the Turks; no single instance occurs of Aberdeen itself having solicited help. In 1658, Peterhead got a contribution towards the cost of making a harbour; Geneva got a contribution towards the maintenance of refugees; and over £600 was collected for the relief of distressed Protestants in Poland. And so the story runs down the years—a contribution to Kilmarnock in 1670, which had also suffered by fire, a collection in 1673 for an observatory at St Andrews, a collection in 1675 for captives of Inverkeithing, the same in 1677 for a "skipper" and his men, of Montrose, and again in 1680 for a party of Pittenweem. Clearly in this matter Aberdonians have been misunderstood. As they cannot hope to change the world's opinion, they may take such comfort as Dean Stanley found in the circumstance that he never was in but one controversy where he was in the right and at the same time on the side of the majority.

One would imagine that the dialect of Aberdeen would prove objectionable to those not familiar with it, but that is by no means the case. To quote Dr. Joseph Robertson again—he upheld "the Aberdeen dialect to be the only remnant of the pure Scotch now remaining." Although that was a strong assertion

to be seriously made, it was justified if he meant that there is more kinship between, say, the language of "Johnny Gibb," and Barbour's "Bruce," than between the dialect of any other district and the Scotch of the middle centuries—which, we must always remember with some humility, was only a dialect of northern England after all. Of course, the reason was partly geographical, for the isolated Aberdeenshire district was not easily accessible to the newer elements or forms of speech, and it was partly temperamental, for the Aberdonian was slower than most to give up the old and tried for the new in either language or habits.

But others than natives have commended the dialect of Aberdeen. John Leyden, that remarkable youth who, had he lived, might have taken rank as a Scottish writer only second to his friend Walter Scott, visited the town in 1800. "The town dialect of Aberdeen," said he, "seems not, to my ear, inferior to that of Inverness," and as Inverness was supposed to have the purest speech in the British Isles, commendation could hardly go higher. Nay, even the Highlanders looked to Aberdeen as leading the fashion in speech as well as doctrine, and the proverbial attitude found itself sometimes embodied in rhyme, as in "The Stabliad," of 1825, which tells of

> "Aberdeen,
> That ancient place, which every mountaineer,
> Admires for language pure and truth sincere."

It is very remarkable that with all its dogged conservatism, Aberdeen shows to this day more of the old French influence in its dialect than any other

town or district in Scotland. We do not speak of the University and its effects, for, of course, it was founded directly and ostensibly on the model of the University of Paris, and so was, in a sense, an external, non-popular thing. And the founding of the University of St. Andrews was the same. But in all that relates to the ordinary life and customs of the people, the dialect of Aberdeen is strangely rich in traces of the French. Aberdeen is the only town, besides Edinburgh, that retains for its advocates this ancient title, which probably came to us, with the Court of Session, from France. It is the only town in the country that distinguishes its baillies by spelling the title with a double "'l," and the practice, which has sometimes excited wonder, even in Parliament, is but the retention of the original French form. Common speech in Aberdeenshire is still full of equally interesting examples, and it will be an excellent thing for the zealous Franco-Scottish Society, started not long ago in Aberdeen, to trace and publish to the world the period and manner in which the unimpressionable peasantry of the north-east of Scotland became so largely imbued with the language of their politer friends.

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ABERDONIANS VIEWED FROM THE OUTSIDE.

II.

IT may be legitimate cause for wonder that critics of Aberdeen have not been more severe in strictures on its graveyard monuments. Mr. Israel Zangwill once visited the town, and found it "a weariness and an abomination." It was too straight and upright for him. "You discover that it is one endless series of geometrical diagrams. The pavements run in parellel lines, the houses are rectilineal, the gardens are squares or oblongs; if by chance the land sprawls in hillocks and hollows, nevertheless is it partitioned in rigid lines." The poor man found no refuge from Euclid, even in the graveyards. He found that when the Aberdonians die "they are laid out neatly in a rectangular cemetery with parallel rows of graves."

Mr. Zangwill omitted to notice the rectilineal tombstones that fill these cemeteries in such multitudes. One wonders that some Aberdeen architect of refined taste—and happily there are many such—does not make a special study of the monumental offerings, and endeavour to infuse some lightness and grace and interest where there is so much scope for the artist touch. For at present, it must be owned,

the monuments in our graveyards are remarkable chiefly for their immense number and their imperishable quality. One can well imagine that, three thousand years after this, when some scholarly and devoted professor of the humanities from the icy regions of New Zealand comes to spend his vacations digging in the broiling deserts of the north-east of Scotland, his discoveries will inevitably lead him to the conclusion that the Aberdonians were a very simple and strange folk, devoted to caring for, if not actually living among the tombs.

Still, if we cannot find in Aberdeen cemeteries many cases of mottoes crawling endwise up the shafts of pillars, as Stevenson found them in the Old Greyfriars of Edinburgh, we find, at least, a reflex of the character of the community in the plain, good sense of the majority of the inscriptions. There is a remarkable absence of the absurd epitaph from the cemeteries of Aberdeen. Francis Douglas, an erratic spirit himself, and keen to observe aught noteworthy in people or place, noticed, more than a century ago, a great many tombs in St. Nicholas Churchyard—"but few of them in good taste. I must, however [he added] do the people of Aberdeen the justice to observe that in their burying-ground we meet with less nonsense and bad grammar than in most of those I have occasion to see."

We are hardly prepared, after this, to find that one of the most frequently quoted grotesque epitaphs is to be found in one of the city graveyards. In the middle of the seventeenth century a worthy pedlar of

the name of George Davidson who amassed a fortune and acquired the property of Pettens in Belhelvie, gave a great deal of money to various good objects in the city of Aberdeen. He built also the bridge that carried the turnpike over the Bucks-burn, and in the same neighbourhood he erected what is now the ruined church of Newhills, where not very long afterwards the minister hanged himself with the bell-rope from the window in the east gable. Davidson, among his other works, defrayed the cost of the wall enclosing the Footdee burying-ground, and it was commemorated in the inscription that for a century and a half has made its appearance in one form or another in every other work on Scottish epitaphs. It is always in the form of rhyme, sometimes a quatrain, as in "The Caledoniad" of 1775:—

> "Here lies John Davidson,
> Burgess Aberdonensis,
> Who builded this church-dyke,
> Upon his own expenses."

Usually it is given as a couplet, as it is found in William Kennedy's "Annals of Aberdeen":—

> "George Davidson, elder, burgess, Aberdonensis
> Bigit this dyke on his own expenses."

Pryse Lockhart Gordon, the "discoverer" and benefactor of John Phillip, the artist, who had so many remarkable adventures but did not always hold by the truth in telling them, declared that he had seen this blundering epitaph in the churchyard of his native parish of Deskford, and he had evidently come to

believe it, for he printed the story in his queer "Personal Memoirs" of 1830. Even scholarship is no safeguard in dealing with such a fateful quotation as this. The last time it appeared in print in a work of any pretensions was in two learned volumes, "privately printed," the work of an "F.R.H.S." and "F.S.A.," who strange to say, gave the most illiterate rendering on record:—

> "Here lys John Davidson,
> Burges in Aberdonensis,
> Who builded this church-dyke
> Upon his own expenses.'

The actual inscription must appear quite commonplace after all this. It may be examined by anyone in the wall of Footdee Churchyard, near the entrance gate, the only interesting stone in an otherwise dreary retreat. It tells plainly that—

> "George Davidson, elder,
> Burgess, Aberdeen,
> Bigit this dyke on his own
> Expenses, 1650.

It seems almost a pity that, in this case, the epigraph is not as grotesque as its reputation, if only to show that imagination does find a little play sometimes in the far north.

If the language of Aberdeen has earned commendation, it would not be expected that the city itself would escape praise. For many years topographical writers had varied ideas as to the exact location of the city, and it was set down in every manner of situation, in one instance, indeed, on the

banks of the Forth. To this day very estimable writers appear to entertain doubts as to whether it is a Highland town or not, and not so many years ago, on the occasion of a disastrous accident in Aberdeen, the illustrated journals of London showed those concerned in the affair as clothed in kilts and tartan plaids. Twice, however, has the British Association penetrated to Aberdeen, and it is believed that the proceedings on both occasions were easily understood by the Aberdonians.

The first Southron who took any real trouble to find out accurately about the city was Oliver Cromwell. He did many wise things for Scotland in his time, but none better than when he sent down Thomas Tucker, in 1656, to report on the customs and other matters relating to the Scottish burghs. It was the first scientific attempt, as we should now say, to gather information as to the actual condition of things in these towns, and to put the knowledge into an understandable and usable form. Tucker got sadly confused over the two towns of Aberdeen, but only in his notes. His personal impression of the burgh was sufficiently clear and admirable.

> "The port of Aberdeen lies next northward [to Montrose], being a very handsome burgh, situated at the mouth of the river Downe, and is commonly called the New Towne, for distinguishing it from another towne hard by, of the same name, but more antiquity, lying at the mouth of the river Dee, some a mile distant from the New Towne, and is the chief academie of Scotland."

In celebrating recently the four hundredth anniversary of its University, Aberdeen heard no more

fitting commendation than to be acknowledged as "a very handsome burgh," and "the chief academie of Scotland." When one comes to think of it, it will be remembered that the many interesting things that were said during those University celebrations were, for the most part, pleasant, oratorical amplifications of the compliments of Thomas Tucker. And, naturally, everybody was charmed. Another Cromwellian was in Aberdeen when Tucker made his visit—there were more of them, indeed, than were welcome, for the town was held by a squadron of Cromwellian soldiers; and Richard Franck, the literary trooper, was as well pleased with the town as his fellow-countryman.

> "Is this that Aberdeen" [one of his characters asks] "so generally discoursed by the Scots for civility?"
>
> "Yes, and humanity, too; for it's the paragon of Scotland."

The visitor, unfortunately, lost his temper with the streets, but he did not succeed in getting the townspeople to improve them.

> "You have concisely characterised Aberdeen, with her inhabitants; but what have we here—cawses uncartable, and pavements impracticable, pointed with rocky-pointed stones, and dawbed all over with dingy dirt that makes it impassible; and the fields, as I conceive, are ten times worse because o'erspread with miry clay, and incumbered with bogs that will bury a horse."

In those days other things than compliments were occasionally going. About the time of the Reformation the town was so seriously slandered that the Town Council formally resolved "that thair prowest pas to

Edinburgh for the defense of the gryt sklander and fals narratioun maid on divers nychtbouris, and on the haill towne, be Maister Valtir Stewart, and to inform the kingis grace and lordis, and in speciall the bishope of Abirdene, of the verite tweching the away passing of frier Kelour." Whether the sklander was satisfactorily cleared away or not we cannot tell, but the fair fame of the city remained unaffected, for Christopher Irvin, in his "Historiae Scoticae," of 1597, is found speaking of it as "not only the best, but likewise the gentliest town beyond Forth." One would not expect Sam Johnson to be greatly taken with the town, for it will be recollected that he could not obtain lodgings in the New Inn until it became known that he was a friend of the advocate Boswell; and John Wesley—to the discredit of Aberdeen be is said—had the misfortune to be struck by a potato on the arm when he visited the town in 1761, the only occasion on which he was assaulted in Scotland. Yet the good man bore no grudge, and gave his testimony to the excellent qualities of the Aberdonians, as well as to the marvellously good singing which he heard in the Parish Church of Monymusk.

As courtlier times come on, the polite things said of Aberdeen become too numerous to quote, but to modify the native pride they are sometimes mingled with less agreeable epithets. One of the more recent cases is also one of the most remarkable. The late John Hill Burton, it is well known, was one of the distinguished sons of Aberdeen of the last century. Mrs. Hill Burton, in the memoir of her husband pre-

fixed to one of the editions of the "Book Hunter," commended Old Aberdeen as "a sweet little place," but of Aberdeen itself she ventured to observe that it is "a highly prosperous commercial city, as utterly devoid of beauty or interest as any city under the sun." As much had never been said by the keenest enemy, and it was not likely to be passed over in silence. Fortunately, it fell to be corrected by the kindliest friend of both the critic and the town. Professor David Masson, who never spoke of his native city but as one who loved it, freely admitted Mrs. Hill Burton's eulogium of the Old Town :—

> "But who that really knows the Granite City will agree with her about the New? Is it nothing to be able to walk along the whole length of her noble Union Street, whether on fair summer mornings when the sun is shining, or again in the frosty winter nights when the eye is held by the undulating perspective of the lamps and the very houses glitter keenly in the starlight; and the aurora borealis is seen dancing at its best in the northward sky over the chasm from Union Bridge? Is it nothing to saunter down by the bustling quays and shipyards, and thence to the extreme of the harbour, where the great outjutting pier of stonework ends the miles of breakers and of sandy beach to the left, and spikes the wrath of the German Ocean?"

No, no. Envious people may safely assert that Aberdeen is not friendly or warm or even beautiful, or that its inhabitants are hard, and slow, and close-fisted, and unbrilliant, for all these things may, conceivably, be matters of opinion. But when a person ventures to say that the rugged and remarkable history

of the town is not interesting, everybody else knows that this is one of the rare cases of a critic speaking who does not know. Did not Gilbert White teach that that district produces the greatest variety which is the most examined? And the person who wishes to find interest in the story of such an old Scotch town as Aberdeen has only to set to work.

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