



## Family Reminiscences of David Kennedy, the Scottish Singer.

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### CHAPTER I.—*Early Life.*

DAVID KENNEDY was born in the city of Perth, on the fifteenth of April in the year 1825. His father and grandfather were also natives of Perth, but his great-great-grandfather, John Kennedy, belonged to a family or small clan of Kennedys in Foss, in the north of Perthshire, and was, in fact, gillie to the Laird of Foss, whom he accompanied to the fatal field of Culloden. The Laird was killed but his gillie escaped. The story goes that when he got home the lady called him "coward" for having come back without his master, and he felt her reproach so keenly that he never forgot it. Others of the family were driven from their homes after the failure of the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745-46, and some found their way to Canada, and later to Australia, where their descendants, thriving colonists, claimed kinship with "The Kennedys" when singing round the world. One family in particular, settled near Ottawa (the seat of the Canadian Government), had so increased and multiplied on the face of the earth that when, as on every occasion of our professional visits to the city, we assembled in the farm house of the patriarch of the family, no fewer than forty Kennedys were present in the one room. The day was spent in social enjoyment, one never-

failing feature of these gatherings being the singing of Handel's Hallelujah chorus by the united families.

It was not from the Kennedys, however, that he inherited his vocal and dramatic power and his intense enthusiasm for Scottish Songs. His grandfather, David Kennedy, was a man of phlegmatic temperament, but his grandmother, Mary More, was a remarkable woman. Gifted with a beautiful voice, a rare intelligence, and a retentive memory, she was one of those who, from generation to generation, have preserved and handed down the rich traditional ballad lore of Scotland.

The next generation of Kennedys were all more or less musically gifted—our father's own father David, his uncle Thomas, and one of his aunts being exceptionally so. His aunt inherited the beautiful voice and ballad repertoire of Mary More, and his father and uncle became leading lights in their own musical world. They were appointed precentors in two of the largest Presbyterian kirks in Perth; his father in the "North Kirk" and his uncle in the "South Kirk," and by the single unaided voice they led congregations of over a thousand people. It was no easy matter, for everybody sang in the kirk in those days, and with characteristic Scottish conscientiousness, the auld folk thought themselves in duty bound to sing every word of the Psalms, whether they could keep pace with the precentor or not.

One well-known old character, an inveterate snuffer, our grandfather used to tell us, habitually left off in the middle of a verse, deliberately blew his nose with his red pocket "neepkin," and having carefully marked his place would recommence where he left off, oblivious to the fact that the precentor and the rest of the congregation were two lines in advance of him.

The elder Kennedys, in addition to the church work,



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organized glee clubs and gave concerts in Perth and the neighbourhood. They being away from home one night assisting at a concert, little Davie, then barely three years old, was left alone in the house with his mother, and we have heard him say that his earliest recollection was of that night, for a big black dog pushed open the latched door and took possession of the room, to his infinite terror, until the arrival of his father and uncle.

His father was an upright, stern disciplinarian, a purist in musical matters, a diligent student of harmony and Handel's compositions, and was called by his cronies "Auld Super-tonic," because of his habitual use of technical terms in discussing or teaching music. He was a man of independent mind and observed a rigid economy, so that he "owed no man anything." This habit of economy, to secure "the glorious privilege of being independent," he carefully instilled into his son, and one day, giving him three "bawbees" to spend at the fair, he said, "You are at liberty to spend it all, Davie, but the less you spend the more I will think of you."

He also instructed him in the Calvinistic doctrines of the Presbyterian Church and the Voluntary principles of the "seceders," and took great pains to train him up in an accurate knowledge of the Shorter Catechism. But Davie's first interview with "the minister," when in the course of the periodical "visiting" he called at his father's house, was a sore trial to both father and son. The worthy man asked him the usual questions from the Shorter Catechism, in all of which his father knew him to be letter perfect, but Davie was so paralyzed with awe that he could not recall a single answer, and at parting he sank, if possible, into still deeper disgrace by giving the minister his left hand.

Though an only child for eleven years, he gave his mother

more trouble than half-a-dozen; and many a night when the young wanderer came home in a sorely tattered condition, she mended his "breeks" before the morning, to save him from a father's lecture and lickin'. She was a patient, industrious, undemonstrative woman, fond enough and proud enough of her boy, but like most Scottish women of her time, little used to giving expression to her feelings in every-day life. "My dear this," and "My dear that," were seldom heard at Scottish firesides, and there was a current saying, that "where there's mickle love in the mouth there's little love in the heart." On the long winter nights, when the day's work was done, she sat at her wheel and span by the dim light of an oil cruise, and her laddie, weary of the dull monotony of the house and the want of congenial society, would say, "Mither, can I get oot?" No answer. "Mither, can I get oot?" Still no reply. "Mither, can I get oot?" "I'm easy, laddie" (I am content, you have my permission). That was enough. The blue bonnet with the red cherry in the crown was snatched up, and a rush made to the door-cheek. His appearance there was the signal to all the laddies of the neighbourhood. "Here's Davie Kennedy," they cried; "noo for fun." He was the leader in all their sports; and when innocent sport failed, they turned to mischief.

Many an auld wife that kept a "shoppie" found in the morning that her gingerbread elephants and "sweetie" rabbits and clay pipes which she had placed on the window-frame the day before had fallen from their high estate, and as she picked up the fragments of the broken sweets and replaced the uninjured would mutter to herself, "Thae deils o' laddies."

But one night they hit upon a plan that was far grander fun than "chappin'" on auld wives' window-panes, their chosen victim on this occasion being an auld weaver.



Hand-loom weaving was at that time the principal means of livelihood in the neighbourhood of Perth, and was generally carried on at home, the smaller houses consisting of only two rooms, a "but" and a "ben," with rafters for the roof, and a clay floor. The "but" was the kitchen, bedroom, and parlour; the "ben" was the workshop where the loom stood. On their nightly raids the laddies flattened their noses against many a weaver's window-panes, and peered in at the solitary occupant of the room. To the young mind there was a sense of eeriness in listening to the quiet but unceasing click-clack, click-clack of the shuttle, and in watching the lonely figure, seated on the bench, guiding it to and fro with the patient constancy of a machine.

The weaver in question was an auld doited body long past work, who yet went through the form of working from mere habit. He had been a beau in his youth, and still wore the high silk hat and black silk stock, without which he was never seen, even at his loom. What his history was who can tell? but he was an unfailing source of interest to the boys, and the auld "lum" hat was an irresistible bait to the band on mischief bent.

One summer night, their dark plan having been laid, they stole, in the friendly dusk of the long twilight, into the ill-lighted room. Fixing the end of a long black thread to the crown of the old silk hat, they passed it over a crossbeam of the loom above the bench where the old man sat and holding the other end of the thread outside the door, they waited. He sat croonin awa' to himsel' as was his custom, taking no notice of what was going on around him. Gently, cautiously, they pulled the thread and slightly raised the hat. He just settled it on his head again and went on with his croonin'. Again and again the hat was raised and replaced, and he never awakened to the

fact that anything unusual was happening till it gradually ascended above his head and disappeared. There was a simultaneous disappearance of the boys, who made a bee-line down the street after their leader, for the old man was irascible enough when provoked.

For two years Davie assisted his father (who was himself a weaver) in filling the bobbins, but it was a monotonous, mechanical occupation, which he could not endure. To relieve the tedium many a song was sung to the metronome-like click of the shuttle, and to this practice he attributed in great measure, his father's accurate sense of time.

The weavers as a class were known to be eccentric and original; independent thinkers and much given to discussion on political, theological, and other questions. Newspapers being an expensive luxury in those days, a single copy had to serve at least a dozen families, and this gave rise to gatherings at the stairhead during diet hours, known as "committees," at which the news of the day was read aloud and commented upon by the assembled auditors. There was a representative committee for every score of houses or so, one meeting at the "Clay Holes" (where our father was brought up), another at the "Loan" (where he first lived after his marriage), and another at the not distant suburb of "Dovecotland." Here was opportunity for the exercise of much natural oratory, passionate enough at times, fired as it was by the Chartist excitement then smouldering. A number of Chartists in Perth held their meetings in an underground cellar lit only by a few tallow candles, and at night young Davie was wont to creep in there unperceived, and hiding behind some empty casks, to "assist" at their proceedings.

His father's house was lonely for a lad of his ardent temperament, so his favourite "howfs" were his grannie's and his aun-



*"Hoo oor John socht me for his wife."*

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tie's, where he heard many an auld ballad and many an "auld world" tale. His grannie spoiled him, as most grannies do, and her house was always a place of refuge in time of trouble.



HIS FATHER'S HOUSE.

At his auntie's he heard many a gossip between her and her cronies. "Toots, never heed the laddie," they said; "he is ower young to understand oor clavers." And so he was, but the words of their talk fell upon his ears like seed upon good ground, and bringing forth fruit in after life formed the basis of many a humorous love story that touched the hearts of his audiences in all parts of the world. "Hoo oor John socht me for his wife" was most directly derived from this source—and here we give it as nearly as possible in his own words, though the truth is these stories were seldom told twice alike, and many a time, if his audience entered into it heartily, the story grew with added inspiration. This is merely the skeleton, to be filled in not only with other details, but above all with our father's own personality.

"Behold twa auld wives seated at the fireside drinking the

blackest of tea, the old brown teapot at the fire, blackened with use and broken at the stroup. 'Eh, woman, but that's grand tea—it sticks to the roof o' yer moo! Nane o' yer new fangled German silver teapats for me; ye dinna get the guid o' the tea unless it stands half an hour at the fire.'

"There they sit, cracking ower their young days, the one nervous, thin, black-eyed—poetic; the other squat and stout, practical, matter-of-fact—prosaic. But they both enjoy a gossip, and keckle ower the stories o' their courtin, the recollection of which seems even sweeter than the reality. 'Eh, but thae were grand days, thae young days; weel dae I mind—dear me, this is the very nicht forty years sin that oor John socht me for his wife. I'll tell ye the whole story—if ye'll promise to tell me what your man said to you when he socht you; but ye mauna repeat it, mind ye, to ony other body.

"John and me had gane thegither for five year. It's a lang time, and I began to weary on John—a woman does na like to hing on ower lang, ye ken—I was beginnin' to be feared that if he didna speak soon he wadna speak ava.

"Tuesday nichts and Friday nichts were John's nichts, so John an' me were rale sib. Weel, ye ken, my faither's hoose stood in the middle o' a garden, and when John cam to see me he gae three raps on the window. Some chiels gae twa raps and some four raps and a whistle, but our John, ye ken, just gae three raps. Weel, this nicht we were a' sittin at the fireside, three raps cam to the window, and my heart gae a dunt, for I kenned it was *him*. But I never let on, ye ken. By and by I laid doon the stockin' I was darning, and slippit oot quietly, and says I, "Is that you, John?" and oot o' the dark a deep voice says, "Ay, it's me, Janet." Then I heard a motion among the busses, and it cam' nearer and nearer till John was at my side, and eh! sic a wark he made wi' me.'





"'Eh, woman, look at that deil o' a laddie glowerin' at ye and takin' in a' ye say.'

"'Hoots, awa, woman! the laddie's ower young to understand oor clavers. Here's a piece an' treacle tae ye, Davie. That'll shut his mouth and his lugs baith.'

"'Weel, awa doon the brae we gaed thegither. "It's a fine nicht," says I. "Grand weather for the craps," says John, but no anither word did he speak. John was never a great hand at sayin' muckle, and this nicht he was waur than ever. So doon the brae we gaed, and I fand John's arm slippin' roond my waist. By and by I made believe to miss my foot, ye ken, and that gar'd John haud me tighter! I'm tellin' ye the whole truth, altho' I think black burnin' shame. Folks thinks that it's the lads that coorts the lasses, it's naething o' the kind, it's the lasses that coorts the lads, for I'm sure,' said the auld wife, 'if I hadna gi'en John a hand, he wad never hae gotten on ava.'

"'Eat awa at yer piece and treacle, laddie, and dinna glower at me like that.'

"'Weel, at the foot o' the brae we sat doon aneath a bus', whaur there was just room for John and me, and it's bonnie branches hid us frae every mortal e'e. Even the impertinent man in the moon, that sees sae mony things he shouldna see, couldna see in on us that nicht. There we sat a lang time, and John as usual said naething, but a' this time his arm was round my waist, and at last it began to shake, and he said, "Janet," and thinks I to mysel' I've caught John at last; but something stuck in his throat, for he said nae mair. And there we sat and sat, an' better sat, an' eh! we were sae happy. "Surely," thinks I, "this is heaven upon earth." But all of a sudden John astonished me, for a better behaved young man never lived, he took a haud o' my head and he pressed it till his bosom, and I fand his heart knock, k-nock, k-nockin' against

my lug, and says he to me, says he, "Janet, Janet, w-w-will ye, will ye marry me?" Eh, woman! was na I richt glad to hear that!! But a lassie canna expect to hear that very often in her life, so she maunna be in a hurry to answer. The tears were rinnin' doon my cheeks. John's arm was round my waist, and my head was on John's bosom, and his heart was k-nockin' waur than ever. But I didna wait ower lang, for fear I should lose him a'thegither; so says I to him, says I, "Jo-o-hn, yes," and wi' that oor John gaed clean daft a'thegither, and he fairly worried me up wi' kisses.'

"'Hoot, awa' woman,' said the prosaic wife, 'sic ongaeins! My man and me were na sic fools. When my man cam' to see me, he cam' into the hoose like ony decent man—to be sure there was nane but him and me in the hoose at the time—and he sits doun in my father's chair, puts his tae leg ower the tither, and toasts his taes at the fire. "Ony news?" says I. "Ou ay," says he; "I've ta'en a hoose." "Ta'en a hoose?" says I. "Ay! ta'en a hoose and *furnishin'* a hoose." "Losh be here," quo I, "ta'en a hoose and furnishin' a hoose! Wha are ye furnishin' the hoose for?" "I'm furnishin' the hoose for you." "Oh, if that be the way o't, it wad be a great pity to lose the guid furniture."'" Such the talk he heard at his auntie's.

His mother, like most frugal and industrious wives of that time, went as a rule in the autumn to work at the "hairst" (harvest gathering), and she took Davie with her. That was before the days of reaping machines, when the harvest was gathered in by rows of sturdy, merry bandsters of both sexes, and they, when the evening shadows fell, gathered into the barn and beguiled the time telling stories and singing songs, many of which are only now, for the first time, seeing the light in a published form. Here the young lad heard the traditional versions of the old songs and mingled in such scenes as sur-



rounded Robert Burns, and was thus fitted for his life work by seeing the last of that form of peasant life which gave birth to much that is noblest and purest in Scottish minstrelsy.

At five years of age he was sent to school. He was a good scholar, but it was on reading days that he came to the front and made his teacher feel proud of him. Elocution was a favourite study with Crichton, the master, and our father always said that he owed much to him for this early initiation into the art of reading.

He was fond of introducing a scene from his schoolboy days when prefacing Sir W. Scott's ballad of "Young Lochinvar." This had been a favourite piece for reciting in Crichton's School, and was often chosen for declamation on certain Saturday mornings, when friends and former pupils (tall lads from the college, of whom the school laddies stood greatly in awe), gathered in to "assist" at the recitals. There is the master, pacing to and fro, more excited than any of the boys, and shouting "Silence!" merely to relieve the tension of his own nervous state. And the chosen boys, ranged along the wall on the unsteady elevation afforded by a narrow form, are not likely to have much freedom in suiting the action to the word. There is the dux, a boy with a large head, globular eyes and retentive memory, and next to him the hero of the school, the laddie whose pouches were aye stuffed wi' "calk" and "skeelie," and string and "bools," and who could run fastest, climb highest, and eat more raw turnips without injury to his digestion, than any other boy in the school. But whatever their other qualifications, they cannot satisfy their teacher with the reading of the ballad, and it ends by his showing to them (and to the admiring audience), how it ought to be done.

At sixteen years of age he was apprenticed to Douglas the house-painter, and now began a life of hard work and hard

reading. He commenced work at six in the morning, and finished at eight in the evening. But the diet hours were precious, and he never supped his "halesome parritch" or mid-day "kail" without a book in one hand, while the spoon was doing service in the other. He was so wearied sometimes when he came home at night, that fatigue overcame hunger, and he fell asleep with the bread in his mouth.

The love of reading was with him a passion that lasted till death. Enthusiasm characterized everything that he said or did; exaggeration, men of colder nature called it. The Kirk Library was ransacked for books to satisfy his craving for information and mental stimulus, and he never forgot the benefit he had derived from it, when in later life he sang for the benefit of such institutions in his own and other lands. On returning to Perth once after a lengthened absence, he crept up the library stairs on his hands and knees in loving memory of the enthusiastic reading days of his youth.

On Sunday mornings he woke at four, got his book and read till breakfast time. One Sunday morning his mother found him reading "Rollin's Ancient History," and being a strict Sabbatarian was anxious to know what he was poring over. "Eh, laddie, what's that ye're readin'?" she asked. "It's the history o' Egypt, mither," he replied. "That's a' richt then, Davie," she said, quite reassured, and left him undisturbed till the special duties of the day began. These were not light, and left little time for reading. Three times to the kirk they went, and once to the Sabbath School, and as he grew older the morning Bible Class was added to the list.

With all the economy of his father's household there was no sense of poverty. The cheap musical publications of the present day, putting classical works within the reach of all, were then undreamt of, yet our grandfather had a good though



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small musical library, and his own copy of the "Messiah," a large folio edition, is the finest we yet have. It is inscribed in his own hand—

DAVID KENNEDY,

PRECENTOR TO THE NORTH UNITED SECESSION CHURCH,  
PERTH, 1843.

They attended every concert that was given in Perth, eagerly scanning the programmes for novelties, and were familiar with the repertoires of the elder Braham, John Wilson, John Templeton, Russell, etc. While still considered too young to be admitted into the enjoyment of such privileges, Davie was even a more enthusiastic worshipper than his elders at the shrines of the great singers, as the following incident will show.

One night John Templeton was singing in the Theatre in Perth. The young 'prentice laddie was working in a house some ten or twelve miles distant, in the Carse o' Gowrie. On the night of the concert the rain fell in torrents, and the road to Perth was lost in darkness. He had no money to pay for admission, and no means of reaching Perth save on his own feet ; but he was not to be deterred by such impediments—his youthful enthusiasm knew no obstacles. He ran all the way, "skelpin' on thro' dub and mire," and covered the distance in two hours. When he arrived at the theatre door the concert had begun, so he listened at the keyhole during the remainder of the performance, and the rain which had gathered on the ledge of the roof dripped steadily down on the back of his neck, sufficient surely to have cooled the ardour of any feeling short of unquenchable enthusiasm !

Next morning he had to be back to his work in the Carse by six o'clock. But now the rain had ceased, the sky was clear, and he had heard the great singer, so he walked lightly

back by the road that had seemed so dark the night before, singing lustily to himself one of Templeton's favourite songs—

“ There was a jolly beggar, and a beggin' he was boun',  
 An' he took up his quarters into a landwart toon ;  
 An' we'll gang nae mair a rovin' sae late into the nicht—  
 We'll gang nae mair a rovin' tho' the moon shine e'er sae bricht.  
 An' we'll gang nae mair a rovin' ”

The chorus of this song gave Templeton an opportunity for considerable display in floriture, which, according to the prevailing musical taste of the period, was considered essential to effective public singing. This now antiquated taste, as far as ballad singing is concerned, was instanced years afterwards in the criticism of an old man on our father's singing after one of his concerts, given in a town in Fife. He was walking home, and having overtaken some of the audience, he overheard this old man remark that “ That man couldna sing ava', he had nae floorishes ! ” But Templeton was a perfect master of the florid school of singing, and like most tenor singers of his time, indulged freely in the use of the falsetto voice. This may account, to some extent, for his early loss of vocal power and consequent disappearance from public life when under fifty years of age.

Our father became intimately acquainted with him in after life, and made many a pilgrimage to Tempè Villa, the cosy little house in the village of New Hampton on the Thames, some twelve miles out of London, where the old singer lived in retirement for over thirty years.

Apropos of these visits to Tempè Villa, the following reminiscence from the letter of one who was equally the friend of Templeton and Kennedy may be of interest :—

“ Your father, Robert, and I had arranged to spend an afternoon in June, some years ago, with Templeton. The old



gentleman was then in excellent health ; and upon our arrival at Fullwell Station, we found him sitting in an open 'fly' waiting for us. We had arranged that we should have a two hours' drive, and then a 'toosie tea' at Tempè Villa. The night was beautiful, and ere the sun went down we were seated beneath a fine old tree on the lawn. Tempè garden looked its best. The roses were in full bloom. The fragrant honeysuckle hung in clusters over our heads. The birds were warbling forth their matchless songs. The human songsters were unco croose and very happy, indulging in a wee, wee drappie. All at once your father sprang to his feet with the exclamation, 'Templeton, do you know what day this is?' 'No.' 'It is the twenty-fourth of June—the anniversary of Bannockburn. Uncover every son of Scotland, and drink to the immortal memory of Bruce and Wallace!' With that New Hampton echoed and resounded with the mighty war-song 'Scots wha hae,' sung in a manner rarely heard in the concert-room even when the trumpet tones of the master-minstrel were at their best."

When John Templeton revisited Scotland, as he usually did every summer, he was always a welcome guest at our father's house in Edinburgh. We were all familiar with the appearance of the venerable old man with the flowing white hair and beard, but could find little trace in him of the elegant young singer of his earlier portraits. Many a story he told us of his early professional life and connection with Malibran, and of his travels in Scotland and America before the days of railways. He died only two months before our father in his 85th year, and the world, hearing of his death, was astonished—he had been dead to the world for so many years.

Davie's 'prentice life, though a hard one, was a bright one. One summer he was employed in the country at the house of a Mrs. Campbell, whose elder son Sandy was very musical.

He had been away from home at the time of the house painting, and when he returned his mother greeted him with—"Eh, Sandy, it's a great pity ye werena at hame last week, for we had a grand singin' painter laddie workin' here." Her two sons emigrated to Canada—the younger settling in Stratford, Ontario (where our father died), the elder on a farm some forty miles distant. The latter never missed an opportunity of driving to the nearest town to hear again "the grand singin' painter laddie," and these two brothers, Perth laddies like himself, were the last friends admitted to see him on his death-bed.

When old enough to be initiated into the mysteries of part-singing, Davie was made a member of his father's glee club, and then it was that he acquired that love of the old English unaccompanied part music that prompted him, when his family grew up around him, to train them in the singing of the glees and madrigals which found such acceptance at their concerts when singing round the world.

Our grandfather's voice was a pure, light tenor, in quality resembling that of John Wilson, who was his beau ideal of a singer, and for years he refused to believe in his son's qualification for the profession he finally adopted, he being, in many respects, so distinct from his famous predecessor.

Davie had been singing alto for some time at his father's concerts, when one night he was put down on the programme for a solo, the piece chosen for his debut being the exquisitely beautiful Jacobite song "Wae's me for Prince Charlie." He was quite overcome with nervousness, and unconsciously as he proceeded, he gradually turned his face away from the audience, his head being completely averted at the close of the song. In after life this was one of his favourite songs, and his introduction to it (original, as indeed were all his prefatory





remarks to the songs) was very beautiful. If we transcribe it, it may give those who never heard him an idea of his manner of prefacing the songs, vivifying the main points and surrounding them with beautiful, interesting, or touching details which revealed new beauties in songs already almost hackneyed favourites, and in certain instances rescued misunderstood songs from semi-oblivion.

The story of “Wae’s me for Prince Charlie” is supposed to take place immediately after the failure of the last attempt of the exiled Stuart race to regain their forefathers’ throne. Prince Charlie has had to fly for his life, thirty thousand pounds being offered for his head, and has spent many weeks of privation in the Western Highlands and Islands before effecting his escape to France. The words of the song are as follows :—

A wee bird cam’ to oor ha’ door,  
He warbled sweet and clearly,  
An’ aye the owercome o’ his sang  
Was “Wae’s me for Prince Charlie !”  
Oh, when I heard the bonnie bonnie bird  
The tears cam’ drappin’ sarely,  
I took my bannet aff my head,  
For weel I lo’ed Prince Charlie !

Quoth I, “My bird, my bonnie bonnie  
bird,  
Is that a tale ye borrow,  
Or is’t some words ye’ve learnt by rote,  
Or a lilt o’ dool an’ sorrow ?”  
“Oh ! no, no, no,” the wee bird sang,  
“I’ve flown sin’ mornin’ early,  
But sic a day o’ wind and rain—  
O ! wae’s me for Prince Charlie !”

“On hills that are by richt his ain  
He roams a lonely stranger,  
On ilka side he’s pressed by want,  
On ilka side by danger.

Yestreen I met him in a glen,  
My heart maist burstit fairly,  
For sairly changed indeed was he,  
O ! wae’s me for Prince Charlie !”

Dark nicht came on, the tempest roared  
Cold o’er the hills and valleys,  
An’ whaur was’t that your prince lay  
down  
Whase hame should been a palace ?  
He rowed him in a Highland plaid  
Which covered him but sparely,  
An’ slept beneath a bush o’ broom,  
O ! wae’s me for Prince Charlie !

But now the bird saw some red coats,  
An’ he shook his wings wi’ anger,  
“Oh ! this is no a land for me,  
I’ll tarry here nae langer.”  
Awhile he hovered on the wing  
Ere he departed fairly,  
But weel I mind the fareweel strain  
Was “Wae’s me for Prince Charlie !”

There is no hint in the song as to the character of the Jacobite singer. we only know him to be a man by the act of baring the head in reverence. But Kennedy was never happy in rendering a song unless he could, first to himself and then to his audience, impersonate the singer. And these impersonations were all taken from life, the old man in the following instance being his own Jacobite ancestor who returned from Culloden, and who, when he was an old man, sat and grat by the fire and moaned to himself over the failure of the Jacobite Rebellion. The following was my father's introduction to the song, sketched in brief sentences, the result of long experience in public speaking :—

“Ae day a wee bird was flying from tree to tree seeking food for its young, when it spied the hunted prince scougin' aneath a bus'. It flew straight to yonder house, where an auld man lived that loved Charlie, and there it sang the password of their party, 'Waes me for Prince Charlie.' When the auld man heard it he kent the birdie was a Jacobite, for all lovely things, the lasses on the earth and the laverocks in heaven, were on Charlie's side. Oot he cam', the tears streaming down his furrowed cheeks, and reverently took aff his bannet at Charlie's name. There the two held sweet converse together, feeling that sorrow when shared tasted like joy, till red coats were seen comin', thirty thousand pound men, seekin' for Charlie. When the birdie saw them, anger dried its tears, and 'dichtin' it's e'e wi' its wing, it said, 'This is no a land for ane o' my opinions, I'm aff.' But it couldna flee far, for it was tethered by love to the auld man's heart. Circling like a musical halo round the auld man's head, every note a tear drop in it, rang the refrain, 'Wae's me for Prince Charlie,' and the auld man, looking up till his eyes were blinded with tears, drew his blue bonnet doon ower his broos, and turning back



to the hoose, drew a creepie near to the fire, put anither peat on, and murmured to himsel', 'Wae's me for Prince Charlie,' while far in the blue lift among the white clouds the birdie soared and sang, 'Wae's me for Prince Charlie,' heaven and earth at this moment lamenting the fate of 'the born King of Scotland.'"

As Davie grew up to man's estate he appeared a thin, black-haired, bright-eyed youth, full of life and determination, yet somewhat reserved and very sensitive. He was studious, a teetotaller (a rare thing in those days), he did not smoke, was a member of the kirk, and a much respected son of a much respected father.

So recent was the temperance movement that, when he was a laddie, he ran with other laddies to get a sicht o' a man of whom it was actually said that *he didna drink whuskey*.

When only eighteen he was already assisting his father in the precentorship of the North Kirk ; but his first attempt at psalm-singing, made in a small country kirk, had been almost as disheartening as his *debut* as a solo-singer. The tune chosen was "French," familiar to him from boyhood ; but the same nervousness that paralysed him as a child saying his catechism to the minister seized him now. He could remember no more than two lines of the tune, and to these he sang the whole of the psalm.

At the age of twenty he succeeded his uncle in the precentorship of the South Kirk, and there he led the psalms with such vocal power and musical and religious feeling, that he soon made for himself a local fame. The improvement of the musical service of the church was a matter he had always at heart. On his long and arduous tours through Canada, singing every night, sometimes in six different towns in one week, he would lead the psalmody in the two Presbyterian kirks on Sunday,

and the congregations were frequently so increased that chairs and forms had to be placed in the aisles to accommodate the people. One Sunday he was singing in Dr. Thomson's church in Sarnia, Ont., where many of the congregation came from the outlying country district. One old farmer, a type of the old Scottish covenanter transplanted to Canadian soil, had driven in some miles to the service. After it was over he came round to the vestry, and speaking in the loud tone of one accustomed to give orders in the open air, he said to the minister, "It is no often ye see me in Sarnia, but I've been in twice, nae less, this week. I cam in on Thursday to hear that man singin' the sangs o' Robbie Burns, an' noo' I'm in again the day, hearin' him sing the Psalms o' David, and on the whole," speaking slowly and with great deliberation, as though not quite assured in his own mind, "on the whole, I think that king David has rather the heels o' (is a little in advance of) Robbie Burns."

About a stone's throw from his father's house in Perth, lived the family of Robert Henderson. The old man was a great reader, and there David went in the evening to "hae a crack wi' the auld man" and get the loan of books to read. There was a large family of them, and the young folks were much together, and it ended by his falling in love with the eldest daughter Helen. He had had an early love experience, like most laddies, for when only four years of age he fell in love with a lassie much older than himself. He never spoke to her nor dreamt even of approaching her, but like the lover of "Auld Joe Nicholson's Bonnie Nannie," he cowered behind a bush as she passed along the road, and—

" His heart lay beatin' the flowery grass,  
 In quakin', quiverin', agitation ;  
 An' the tears cam' tricklin' doon frae his e'en,  
 Wi' perfect love and admiration."



The year '48 (he being then 23 years of age), was an eventful year with him. In the month of February, he gave a lecture in the South Kirk on the History of Music. The programme, a very ambitious one, raises a smile at its comprehensiveness, embracing as it does—The Origin of Music—the Music of Savage Nations—the Music of the Antediluvians—of Egypt, India, China, Persia, Turkey, Arabia,—of the Hebrews—of Greece, Rome, Germany, France, Spain, Russia, Lapland, Sweden, England, Scotland—the Universality of Music—the Influence of Music, and the state of Music in the Schools and Churches at the present time. It was a success. Shortly after this he wrote an essay on the Sabbath (the Sabbath question was at that time agitating the whole country) as competitor for a prize offered for the best essay on the subject written by a working man. He gained £5, a considerable sum in Perth in those days, when the annual salary of a precentor was £8, and the rent of a respectable house was only £2 a year.

Being now a journeyman painter, he felt a desire to improve himself in his trade, so, in the spring, having got a substitute to fill his place in the precentor's desk, he left Perth for Edinburgh to seek for temporary employment there.

His first visit to Edinburgh had been made in company with his father some years previously, they having walked all the way from Perth, for the purpose of hearing a grand performance of the "Messiah" in the Music Hall, George Street. But this was the first time he had been away from home alone, and his sense of loneliness and homesickness was intense.

He was sent first across the Forth to work at Burntisland, but later he went south to Kelso, and worked for two months at a beautifully situated house called Newton Don. From there, having now gained some experience, and being

anxious to see the best work done and to provide for his approaching marriage, he went in the autumn to London. He was a skilled and energetic workman, and got employment on many important buildings.

One day as he was engaged in painting a ceiling in one of the rooms of Buckingham Palace, Prince Albert came through on a tour of inspection. There was naturally a stir amongst the men, but the work on which they were engaged was of a most delicate and exacting nature, and demanded their constant and undisturbed attention. In hurriedly moving back a scaffolding, he narrowly missed tilting over the Prince's hat; but, unaffected by this slight incident, he continued his work, and fortunately finished his half of the ceiling without a blemish. The other half, unfortunately, showed signs of the disturbance, and the poor fellow who had been at work on it was never seen at his post again.

But the time during his stay in London was not all devoted to work, he took advantage of the abundant opportunities afforded there of hearing the best of everything in the musical world. In a letter to a friend he writes:—"I have been out late two or three nights since I came, and always found some poor wanderer asleep on some corner or doorstep, while the place I had left (Her Majesty's Theatre) blazed with the jewels of coroneted heads." And in another—"I got the greatest treat on Tuesday night that ever I had in my life—the oratorio of the Messiah, containing his annunciation, humiliation—his mission. I felt as if I were among the glorified saints before the throne of God. I don't think I ever felt so completely in the atmosphere of heaven—every fibre in my body—every feeling of my heart—was in the most excited state, and I felt the tears begin to trickle o'er my cheek."

On returning to Perth at the close of the year, he married



Helen Henderson, and shortly afterwards set up in business for himself in the High Street as a house painter. He settled down to hard work for some years, but felt that this was not destined to be his life work. From a boy he had cherished the hope of being able to follow in the footsteps of Wilson and Templeton, and years only strengthened his belief that he was born to be their successor.

After five years of happy married life, his wife died, leaving him with three bairns—two sons, David and Robert, and one daughter, Helen. In his loneliness more than ever, the call to sing his country's songs forced itself upon him. Going down a lane one day he prayed to God to help him, to tell him if it were His will that he should be a singer of the songs of Scotland. The answer came "Thou shalt sing," and from that day he decided to take the daring step of changing his whole career ; but there was much to do to prepare himself for his new work, and to sever his connection with the old.

Two years later he married again, and his second wife, Elizabeth Fraser, proved a faithful companion and fearless traveller, accompanying her husband in all his after wanderings.

Still carrying on his business in Perth, he went periodically to Edinburgh, and spent every sovereign he could spare on lessons in singing and elocution. The latter he studied under Bell, whom he afterwards met in America, enjoying, in his old age, the fame of his son, the telephone inventor. He studied singing with Edmund Edmunds, an Englishman trained in the Italian school, and an excellent teacher, from whom he received invaluable aid in the art of phrasing and dramatic expression. To him he confided his hopes, his ambition, his position as a married man with a family dependent on him, and a business in Perth fairly started, and asked

him his deliberate opinion—should he dare to throw up everything and risk his fortune as a public singer—a difficult question to answer. When asked for similar advice by young aspirants to fame, our father used to tell them that if they loved music well enough to starve on it for a time, they might risk it, but hardly otherwise.

Mr. Edmunds, always a true friend of his pupil, and much beloved and esteemed by him, took a turn or two round the room, then reseating himself on the music stool, he said "Yes." Mr. Edmunds watched his career ever after with the greatest interest—never let the opportunity slip of hearing him from time to time, and often cheered him with the praise a public performer values from a competent critic, while kindly advice was never wanting both to the singer and his family. Mr. Edmunds still teaches in Edinburgh, and was one of those who helped to lay our father in his last resting place.

At this time the precentorship of Nicholson Street U.P. Church, Edinburgh, was vacant. It was a large and prosperous congregation, and in order to secure the services of a really good man, they offered a salary of £40 a year—a very large salary for a precentorship in those days—and no fewer than forty names were enrolled on the list of candidates. David Kennedy added his to the list. It was a name unknown to Edinburgh at that time, but the forty precentors who were gathered on the day of trial in the upper room of the kirk buildings came from far and near, and some of them had heard of Kennedy, the precentor of Perth. When the future Scottish singer and traveller was ushered into the room by Mr. David Hay (chairman of the musical committee), a whisper went round the room, "There's Kennedy frae Perth; if he's going to try for it, we ithers hae little chance."

One by one they were conducted from the room to undergo





*Success as Precentor.*

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the ordeal of a strict musical examination before competent judges, and when at last David Kennedy was called out, he turned to his brother precentors, to whom he had been chatting cheerily the while, and said, "Weel, gentlemen, success to ye a'!" Besides being possessor of a fine voice of the *tenore robusto* quality, he had had twelve years experience in church singing, and was, thanks to his father's training and his own persevering study, a good musician. He made his mark at the examination, and when he occupied the precentor's desk on Sunday the congregation heard the tune of "Montrose" sung as they had never heard it sung before. He was unanimously elected to the post by committee and congregation, and held it for five years.