WILLIAM CADENHEAD.

THE outburst of poetical activity, which, after the signal success of William Thom, found vent in the columns of the Aberdeen Herald, and continued with little or no abatement for over twelve years, is one of the brightest and most remarkable in our newspaper annals. The noteworthy feature in it was, that scarcely any of the contributions could be said to be the outcome of leisured ease, but almost all of themcertainly all of any permanent worth—were the productions of men busy with head or hand in the every-day work of the world. For many a year the best verses of Thom while at the loom, Still, while in the penury of peat-casting and ditching, Murray, a working dominie at Inverkeithing, and Denham while at the shoemaker's bench, had given a reputation to the poetical corner of that newspaper which fired younger bard-lings with a new-born zeal, and raised the standard for admission to something considerably above mediocrity. This, with the well-known critical judgment and taste of James Adam, the editor, himself an occasional lyrist, made the Queen Street oracle of those days a centre to which poetical talent gravitated with a certainty almost equal to that which our philosophers measure by the mass and the distance. From 1840 to 1854 we can count some twenty different poets connected with the literary coterie of the Herald, and though some of these certainly never achieved great things, many of them never even rescuing their verses from the fugitive state, others, like William Anderson, William Forsyth, and the writer whose name stands at the head of this paragraph, have by the force of true genius fixed their names permanently among the genuine poets of their generation.

WILLIAM CADENHEAD, whose father was a veneer-sawyer, was born in the vicinity of the Poynernook in the year 1819. He began the work of life at an early age in a small thread factory at the foot of Carmelite Street belonging to a well-known citizen "Johnny" Garrow. The industry and intelligent application to business, which have been marked characteristics in our poet's career, exhibited themselves even then in his boyish work, and his employer was not slow to recognise that "the laddie" was made of the right metal. Indeed, when Mr. Garrow gave up business in Aberdeen, and went to Liverpool to join a firm there, his interest in his young thread-lapper was such that he promised to look out for a suitable situation for him once he got settled in his new quarters. And he was as good as his word. Meanwhile young Cadenhead wrought at his trade (now a mere name) at Spring Garden factory, and in his by-hours composed the poem which first brought his name into public notice. It has been said

that the first stirrings of his young heart towards poesy were occasioned by his reading "The Minstrel". This is very probably the case, for, though we find little trace in his published work of the influence of any of our greater poets upon him (except Scott, and this mostly in his juvenile productions), yet the same qualities—moral tone, literary finish, ripe fancy which immortalise "The Minstrel", are exactly those qualities which Cadenhead has striven after during his entire career. Be the origin of his bent to poesy, however, what it may, he certainly met, in the companionship of George Kidd (a weaver, and a true genius of nature's own making), with the living influence which committed him entirely to her service. While in his twentieth year he put through the press his first work "The Prophecy: a prospective poem in three cantos." This piece was written while he was employed at Spring Garden, and takes its title from the well-known lines attributed to Thomas the Rhymer—

Brig o' Balgownie! wight's thy wa'!
Wi' ane wife's ae son
And ane mare's ae foal
Down shalt thou fa'—

which he weaves through a simple story of love, jealousy, revenge, and retribution, to a poetic consummation. The scene is laid on that part of the south bank of the Don long noted for the beauty of its scenery—the vale of Seaton.

The summer eve is beaming bright Upon the banks of Don; And bland beneath its cheering light Gleam blooming grove and streamlet's flight, And flower and mossy stone. It glints on Machar's sister-towers, On Seaton's halls and leafy bowers, And shade and sunshine flings in showers On tufted Tillydrone. Balgownie's arch beneath its beam Lights up its Gothic brow, And flings its shadow on the stream That slowly steals below. And like some grey old Baron's cheek, Lit up into a smile, The tints of eve reflected streak From Blaelick's ancient pile;

M M

And seems as if a lordly pride
Was in its glist'ning ray,
So bright the charms of tree and tide
Beneath its eye that lay.

* * * * *

A beauteous scene it looks upon, That eve of light and glee, Where latest flows the lovely Don By rock and glen and tree; Where, as if loath to leave its groves, It lingers in its ivied coves, And seems sad when retiring; Where rocks that stand and watch the scene, Enchanted with its charms, I ween Have grown grey admiring. Where that old arch of Gothic mould, Whose stern foundations, firm and bold Were by a monarch laid; Hems in a scene so sweetly lone, 'Twould seem the place (in days agone, When silence, on her poppy throne, Her dreamy sceptre swayed:) Where music's first enchanting tone With infant echo play'd, And taught her many a fairy dreamlet Of mossy stone and lilied streamlet.

Here Albert Clive, a young nobleman, "ane wife's ae son", woos and wins Marion Bede, the daughter of a humble cottager at Bridge of Don. One evening after parting with his lady love, he met a former rival, Duncan Blake.

A wight of form and feelings rude,

To whom some neighbouring glebe pertain'd,
Who erst to Marion Bede had sued,
And foster'd ire because disdain'd.

They quarrel; came to blows; Duncan is killed and his body thrown into the river. Albert, after hinting to Marion what had happened, seeks safety in flight. The maiden droops and turns distracted, while her lover away by Hill of Drummond, Clinterty, and the "wraith-man's cave", is hounded into madness by remorse and the visions of his fevered phantasy. In his despair he turns his horse, "ane mare's ae foal" homewards by the north road, and in the midst of a midnight storm

nears Balgownie's Brig. Marion, wandering distraught, hears the sound of the horse's hoofs, and runs to the bridge to meet him:—

> But vain was the care Of the maiden fair, And vain the spur of haste, And Albert's sigh, That swell'd on high, As if 'twould burst his breast; For the wind came on With a dismal groan, The lightning glar'd like day, And from root to ridge The old grey bridge Shook, shook like the aspen spray— Burst bar and band Like a willow wand, As the grey pile smote the wave, And the maniac maiden And murder-laden Found one sad common grave. While a hoary sprite Through the dark midnight Shriek'd forth these accents drear-* *

"Brig o' Balgownie! wight's thy wa'!
Wi' ane wife's ae son
And ane mare's ae foal
Doun shalt thou fa'!"

Viewed in comparison with his later work "The Prophecy", as a bit of literature is certainly jejune; still, many passages in it indicated the possession of powers, which experience pruned, and time duly ripened to the production of work which will long keep Mr. Cadenhead's name in living remembrance. Meantime, his youthful essay had just passed through the press, when he was offered a situation in Liverpool, by Mr. Garrow, as overseer in the rope-yarn spinning department of the firm, of which he was a partner, and which was at once accepted. After some years' service there, the company failed, and Cadenhead returned to Aberdeen, entering the employment of Maberley & Co., at Broadford Works, as an overseer in the yarn sorting department. Much of his spare time was now devoted to the study of our older poets, and subjects of general

antiquarian interest, and during the year 1847-8 he contributed many excellent pieces to the pages of the Scottish Journal, an Edinburgh periodical devoted to antiquarian matters. About this time, August, 1847, he began his connection with the Herald, and, strange to say, his first verses there were written in defence of the "Right of way to the braes of Don"—the scene of his youthful poem, and the spot where, on many a summer evening, he had charmed his admiring shopmates with a recital of its various parts then in manuscript. William Anderson had crept into the Poet's Corner of the Herald some months before with "The Auld Bow Brig", but little dreamed that the author of "The Devil's Stane", quoted by the editor from the pages of the Scottish Journal, was a fellow-worker in the same factory, and one soon destined to rival him in the delineation of local life and character. The controversy of the Wells, noted in our sketch of Anderson, revealed these congenial spirits to one another, and a friendship sprang up between them which grew more and more intimate until death intervened, and Anderson went hence. From 1847 to 1853, scarcely a week passed but some ballad or song, in homely garb or more correct English, some character sketch, some garland of sweet flowers wreathed for the Hortus Club, or legend woven into "Our Annual Trip" chronicle-mentioned further onfound a welcome place in the Herald columns. Poetical friendships multiplied in those years, and sympathetic responses from brother bards were neither few nor far between. At length he collected his effusions, and early in 1853, under the apt title of "Flights of Fancy and Lays of Bon-Accord", they appeared in a handsome 12mo, of 332 pages. The volume met with an excellent reception.

The "Flights" for the most part are written in pure English, while the majority of the "Lays" are in our every-day Scotch. But whether Mr. Cadenhead writes in Scotch or English, he uniformly produces verse, as pleasantly graceful and melodic as has flowed from the pen of any of his local contemporaries; while in not a few instances he has dowered them with such routh of true poetic glamour as leaves in the mind that sense of transport, that feeling of having been lifted up from the rut of mere commonplace, which is only

produced by works of genuine inspiration. Turn where you will in the volume, the man—full of ennobling and earnest aspirations, in delightful playfulness of mood, or in rollicking reminiscences of "days that ance hae been"—without whine or whimper—stands out clear and unmistakable, cultured, healthy, and happy in his gift of song. The key-note of his loftier strains, the point of view from which he seeks, in his higher moments, to look out on life and its belongings, may be gleaned from the following fine lyric:—

THE BEAUTIFUL AND PURE.

Oh! why when manhood steals on youth,
Do all the roseate hues
That once were wont through every scene
Their beauty to infuse—
The sunny gleams of early joy,
Love's fair impurpled blooms,
And all the fitful sanguine tints
That youthful Hope assumes—
Why do they all grow dim and dark
And powerless to allure,
And leave a wreck of dreams, for all
So beautiful and pure.

O! can it be that all the hopes
And aspirations high
That well up in youth's inmost soul
And sparkle from his eye—
That all the generous thoughts which burn,
Within his throbbing breast,
Are but the fragile rainbow tints,
By Fancy's finger traced—
Are but Imagination's freaks,
Unsuited to endure,
And that on earth we ne'er can reach
The beautiful and pure!

Is there, indeed, no love like that
Which feeds the poet's dream,
As, wrapt in pleasing thoughts, he roves
Beside the greenwood stream?—
No Faith and Constancy like those
Which fill his midnight trance,
When poring o'er the Love that lights
The tales of old romance?

Can Friendship's altar now no more A holy flame procure?

Nor patriot feeling urge to deeds—

The beautiful and pure?

Forbid it, ye whose souls the world
Has fail'd as yet to win
To all its hollow, heartless ways,
Its folly and its sin.
By all the high and holy hopes
That cheer'd your youthful day,
Lift up your voices and proclaim
A loud, impassion'd Yea!—
Yea! there are Love and Friendship yet,
And Faith doth yet endure;
And there are hearts that cherish still
The beautiful and pure!

Then, wherefore thus, from age to age,
Do we our hopes outlive,
And yearn in youth for noble ends
The Future fails to give?
Why! but that, faithless to those hopes,
And pleased with idle toys,
We barter all our large desires
For momentary joys;
Charm'd with their tints we pluck the blooms—
A fading prize secure;
And lose the ripen'd, lasting fruit—
The beautiful and pure.

In holy league, ye ardent souls,
O! join, and lead the van,
And teach our age, by noblest deeds,
The dignity of man!
Abjure the cold world's callous ways,
Which would reward your pains
By hollow, unsubstantial praise,
And ill-assorted gains;
And build ye up this lofty faith,
That man may yet procure,
If faithful to his God and self,
The beautiful and pure!

Long before the verses we have quoted were written he had sung, in many keys and with considerable variations, of the true dignity and "worth of a human soul" in "Guardian Angels", "Poverty's Pilgrimage", "Town Longings", and other lyrics of real worth, but we are doubtful if he ever equalled, certainly he never surpassed, the above in any of his purely English pieces. The fine melody of his numbers, however, are nowhere seen to greater advantage than in those of his verses written more or less in the mother tongue. For whether he sings of "Hope", who

. . . biggit a bower on a sunny knowe,
Whare the flowers sprang fresh and mony—
Whare the wild bee pip'd its lonely strain,
And the birds sang sweet and bonny—
Whare the win', on its saft and scented wing,
Cam' whisp'rin' o' groves and streams—
And there she lean'd her the lee-lang day,
And painted her gowden dreams.

—a charming bit of word-painting—or descends to the mere chanting of a humble nursery rhyme, the movement of his lines is as musical to a Scotch ear as words could well make them. But what we like best about the "Lays of Bon-Accord" is that in them we get at the heart of the man; that there we find him truly at home in his slippers and arm-chair, in the easy abandon which a man enjoys so much in the company of old friends. In the "Flights", we, for the most part, see our author as a solitary thinker and dreamer, probing in a way the riddle of life, weaving his airy castle of possibilities, or revelling in the beauties of nature; but now, turning his e'e to "Our Auld Gate-en", the early associations of boyhood, which lie at the very core of man's life, are too much for him; he comes down from the platform of the "makir"; plays his old games o'er again; spends his market penny, and gives us altogether a resumé of boyish life at the Poynernook, which has thrown a beam of langsyne sunshine into many a lone and weary heart. Again, in "Capie Davison's Skweel", we get one of his graphic pictures —that, of a type of dominie and seminary now quite extinct. "Capie" required no Government-concocted codes to keep him straight in his pedagogic course, and by aid of which he might turn blockheads into geniuses, but believed in the good old plan of reducing the citadel of intellectual sloth and inaptitude-"by the help o' the tawrds and a wheen skeigit bottoms". Passing from the old-world aspect of boyish life in

these and other pieces—notably in his epistles to William Anderson—we come to local legends which he has given permanent form to in "A Dream of Dun Picte", "The Murder of Cairn a' Mount", "The Devil and the Tailor", and "The Devil's Stane". This last, embodying a local tradition anent the existence of a large rock which stands in the middle of a cultivated field near the Kirk of Kemnay, is one of his earliest and best contributions to our local budget of ballad lore. It opens with an account of the great sanctity and high-toned life of the parish priest, and a general condition of things in that district adverse to the rule of his Satanic Majesty, who

. . . aft when he stoppit his vengefu' flight
On the tap o' Benohie,
He vow'd and swore that the haly priest
A bitter death sud die!

For, far, far back in the aulden time,
'Tis said that Benohie
Was ane o' the ports o' the byrnand pit
Whaur the wicked torment dree—

That it flared wi' fire i' the midnight sky,
And spew'd out smoke at noon,
Till its very stonen foundiments
Frae its tap ran myltapd doon.

And the fiend aft sat on his auld door-stane,
Plotting an evil deed,
And aye the tither curse was hurl'd
At the priest o' Kemnay's head.

It was the feast o' Sanct Barnabas,
I' the merry month o' June,
When the woods are a' in their green livery,
And the wild birds a' in tune;

And the priest o' Kemnay has gane to the kirk,
And pray'd an earnest prayer—
"That Sathan might for ever be bound
To his dark and byrnand lair!"

And aye the haly organ rung,
And the sounds rose higher—higher,
Till they reached the fiend on Benohie,
And he bit his nails for ire.

And he lookit east, and he lookit wast,
And he lookit aboon—beneath;
And nocht could he see, save the bauld grey rocks,
That glower'd out through the heath.

He lifted aloft a ponderous rock, And hurl'd it through the air— "'Twere pity ye sud want reward For sae devout a prayer"!

The miller o' Kemnay cries to his knave, "Lift up the back sluice, loon!

For a cloud comes o'er frae Benochie,
Enough the mill to droon".

The boatman hurries his boat ashore,
And fears he'll be owre late—
"Giff yon black cloud comes down in rain
Its fit to raise a spate!"

But the ponderous rock came on, and on,
Well aimed for Kemnay kirk,
And cross'd it field, or cross'd it flood,
Its shadow gar'd a' grow mirk.

But the fervent prayers o' the haly priest,
And the power of the sweet Sanct Anne,
They turned the murderous rock aside
And foiled the foul fiend's plan.

And it lichted down frae the darken'd lift Like the greedy erne bird, And there it sits in the kirk lands yet, Half buried in the yird.

Almost every piece in this section enshrines some item of bygone local history—some fret, character, or custom linked to life in Bon-Accord—which gives them an enhanced importance as time runs on, and the changes in burghal life and manners take more cosmopolitan forms. Indeed, from the writings of Cadenhead and Anderson a better idea might be obtained of social life and manners fifty years ago than from any other printed source that we are acquainted with. They caught the living manners as they rose, and in a series of vividly portrayed pictures have fixed them for behoof of posterity.

Since the publication of "Flights of Fancy" Mr. Caden-

head's pen has not been idle; having put his hand to the plough he has not looked back, but has continued to follow the muse in the spare hours which a busy commercial life has left him. Most of these pieces have been contributed to newspapers and periodicals—some few of them, like "The Roman Soldier's Story", "A legend of St. Nicholas", and "The Pastor's Daughter", have been privately printed in pamphlet form for the use of friends, while, as acknowledged laureate of the local Burns Club, quite a host of songs, odes, and other commemorative pieces have fallen from his pen from then till now. Having been through life an ardent admirer of nature, he has always been ready with his pen to vindicate the public right to whatever of common or freedom was threatened to be taken away from the people. His last essay in this direction was on the occasion of a scheme being got up for running the sewerage of the city on part of the Links for irrigation purposes. At that time a four paged call to the inhabitants, commencing

What ho! my fellow citizens,
Again I lift the lay,
And strike the lyre that has been mute
For many, many a day—

was issued anonymously, but the familiar way in which he dealt with the old associations, which were in danger of being broken up for ever, betrayed to many who were not in the secret the hand of "W.C."

For many years (from 1850 on till the close of its career) the staff of the Herald had an annual trip, a day's outing, a bit of summer carnival, which even now, as a thing of memory, is a fresh and green spot to the few survivors who were wont to take part in it. These outings were duly reported in the paper, and form a valuable collection of topographical sketches, in which many gems of metrical legend and song, connected with the localities visited, are interwoven. Mr. Cadenhead was rarely absent form the "gamen and glee" of these holidays, and many of his happy "flights" and "lays" will be found in connection with them. He had acquired great facility in throwing into metrical form any subject which struck his fancy, through practising composing aloud, while travelling along our more lonely highways during his business journeys.

To such a man, with such a faculty, it was a bit of genuine pleasure to weave on the spot some ballad or song suggested by the locality in which "Our Annual Holiday" was spent. For instance, when the "jovial crew" visited Skene, the old legend of the origin of the family name sent him off on the wings of fancy, and in the account of the trip, which he wrote throughout, we find a ballad on the subject, which contains some excellent verses:—

Away to the Stocket Forest,
Away through glen and glade:
Ah! well may the antlered monarchs
Crouch down in the deepest shade;

Ah! well may they toss their antlers,
And snuff the tainted gale,
For many a tawny coat will be pierced
Ere the evening twilight fail.

Far through the waving forest
The gallant band have sped;
And the King sometimes he loitered,
And the King sometimes he led.

Falcons with streaming jesses
On the soaring quarry swoop,
Or answer sure to the swinging lure,
And the hunter's ringing whoop.

Loud twang the busy bow strings,

The shafts fly far and near,

While the glades resound with the bay of hound,

And the bleat of the falling deer.

There's a crashing amongst the branches,

There's a growling amongst the brush,

And a great wild boar, on our brave, good King,

Made a mad, impetuous rush.

* * * * * *

"Had I the axe at my saddle-bow,"
The good King Robert cried,
"Though all too good for such a foe,
I'd tame thy grizzly pride".

"My skeen! my skeen!" cried M'Donald, And he drew the glittering blade, And right to the heart of the bristly brute Its way it quickly made. * * * * *

"Thanks, thanks, my good M'Donald, We owe thee hearty thanks; That grizzly brute, but for thy good skeen, Had thinned our cheerful ranks.

And for thy blade and ready hand It is thy King's decree, M'Donald thou shalt be no more And Skeen thy name shall be.

And that we give not barren thanks,
Our will shall further list—
Unhood that good grey falcon
That sits upon thy wrist;

Unhood thy good grey falcon,
And let it freely flee,
And a falcon's flight, north, south, and west,
The lands of Skeen shall be".

The falcon was unhooded,
And it spread its good grey wings,
And up, as the lark from the dewy grass
At the dawn of morning springs;

Up like the lark the falcon flew,
And wherever it took its flight,
By loch or lea, by rock or tree,
It was the Skeen's by right.

Or again, during the visit to Huntly, while the younger members were busy dancing, our author "went a-bumming and a-strumming, till, before he reached the Brig o' Bogie, he handed the following song to one of the vocal members":—

Since ere my lips could lisp a sang,
My heart has been richt vogie,
And yearn'd and yearn'd, and still thought lang
For ae glint o' Stra'bogie.
Beside the stream sae famed in verse,
To coup a reamin' cogie,
And drink to ilka bonnie lass
That wons upon the Bogie.

The Bogie, O! the Bogie, O!
O leeze me on the Bogie,
And a' wha toom upon its banks
The bicker and the cogie.

I've stretched me mang the forest trees
On shaggy Balochbuie;
I've traced the "infant rills" o' Dee
By towerin' Benmacdhui.
I've stray'd to dream by strath and stream
On sunny day and foggy,
But aye the thocht that upmost wrought
Was yearnin' for Stra'bogie.

The Bogie, O, &c.

I've fuddled swats at Highland mills,
Wi' new mill'd meal o'er-reamin';
I've quaff'd my horn in mountain stills,
Dim wi' peat-reek and steamin'.
I've brewed my punch, and sung my sang,
Wi' mony a roisterin' rogie,
But something gart me aye think lang
To try the browsts o' Bogie.

The Bogie, O, &c.

Then here's to Huntly's lordly hame,
And ilka humbler dwallin',
To ilka man and mither's son
Whate'er his craft or callin'.
A bumper for the lasses, boys,
Ilk heart-ensnarin' rogie;
Soon may the maids be matrons a'
An' flourish in Stra'bogie.

The Bogie, O, &c.

As a song writer, with one or two exceptions, Mr. Cadenhead has not been so successful as in the ballad or other forms of our older minstrelsy, which he has often hit with rare felicity. Indeed, when we look over the many lyrical forms into which he has set his collected and uncollected poems, one is astounded at the flood of luck which has invariably followed him. Many of his sonnets, for instance, which have appeared in local and other publications, particularly those entitled, "Pig-iron Age", "The Caul' Calenders o' May", and "Shakespeare", are much beyond the common run of such things; while such local items as "The Auld Toon Ha'", "Kitty Brewster", "The Oscar", and "Aberdeen an' Twal' Mile roun' it", have a stamp of individuality about them which makes them akin to no other productions of these days.

We cannot close without noting one of the sweetest little lyrics he has recently given us. It occurs in "The Parson's Daughter", a love story noted above:—

It was a little rosebud
Tapped at a window-pane,
As, waving in the gentle wind,
It went and came again:
What do you see, wee rosebud,
That makes you seek within?
I see a pair of smiling lips,
I see a dimpled chin;
I see a pair of rosy cheeks
That fain with me would vie;
I see a heaving bosom
On which I'd love to lie.

O waken, gentle maiden!
The morning breaketh fair;
The little birds are carolling
All through the balmy air:
O! would I were a rosebud—
After one modest peep,
To tap upon thy window pane,
And wake thee from thy sleep!

It was a morning sunbeam,
A warm and golden streak,
It boldly pierced the window pane
And kissed the rosy cheek;
And tho' the branching rose tree
The light would fain eclipse,
It stole along the little nose
And kissed the smiling lips;
It lighted up the snowy neck,
Half hid in golden hair,
And when it reached the heaving breast
It fondly nestled there.

O waken gentle maiden!
The morning breaketh sweet;
The trees are softly whispering
To the flowers around their feet;
And, love, it makes me boldly wish
I were the morning beam,
Kissing those glowing lips of thine
To wake thee from thy dream.

In summing up the general value of his poetic work, while fully appreciative of all, we feel inclined to put most store on those floating and fleeting legends which he has fixed in lasting form, and on the pictures of our local life during his youth and early manhood. This life, though not very remote counted by years, is separated from the present by a vast gulf fixed. The complete change which social life and its surroundings have undergone is, perhaps, more marked in our quarter than elsewhere. Aberdeen remained isolated and distinct from other parts of the country until very recent times; and when at last increased intercourse with other parts took place, we rapidly lost many of those distinctive characteristics which perhaps we might have retained with some advantage. Of this lost life Cadenhead has helped to preserve the records, and we are grateful.