

TAIT'S EDINBURGH MAGAZINE.

SEPTEMBER, 1844.

THE BURNS FESTIVAL.

For thus the royal mandate ran,
When first the human race began,
"The social, friendly, honest man,
Whate'er he be,
'Tis he fulfils great Nature's plan,
And none but he!"

Oh mandate glorious and divine!
The followers of the ragged Nine,
Poor thoughtless devils, yet may shine
In glorious light,
While sordid sons o' Mammon's line
Are dark as night.

In what, or with whom the Burns Festival originated, we do not now very distinctly remember, neither do we care very curiously to inquire. Doubtless there are many clever people who have traced it to the worldly-wise enthusiasm of Ayrshire innkeepers, or Railway proprietors, sagacious of a dividend from afar, and satisfied themselves that what was begun in mercenary selfishness, was carried to a conclusion in a spirit of falsehood and insincerity. In this faith let them rest, enjoying the elevated pleasure which springs from that keen scent of unworthy motives and hollow pretensions, which is mistaken by themselves, and, the greater pity! by the good-natured world, for superior sagacity. Far different, however, were the feelings that stirred upon that memorable sixth of August, in the large heart of perhaps the most numerous assemblage ever brought together in Scotland, and far different the light in which this great national offering of homage and repentance must be regarded by every frank and generous mind.

When this Festival was first talked of, it was as of some slight muster of the friends of the poet's family, with a few others,—the more cordial admirers of his song; a sort of monster picnic party at best, where a few dozens of doubtful sherry, with a hamper of sandwiches, some half dozen or so of bad speeches, and the usual quantity of rain, were expected to complete the entertainment. Somehow or other, however, the thing expanded, till the cloud that was no bigger than a man's hand covered the face of the heavens. The word ran along the Carrick border, that the name of their bard was rife in the land. Kyle heard the murmur, and its echoes sounded even to distant Dumfries. In Mauchline and Tarbolton there was stir, and running to and fro. The foresters of Kilwinning answered to the call. Ayr thrilled through all her shuttles, and all at once it was known, that the whole country side, for forty miles round, had resolved to declare in one great gathering, how it was that this Robert Burns was esteemed amongst

them,—how they to a man were proud of him who had ennobled their order, and shed over the well-beloved streams and woods and fields and mountains among which they dwelt, the consecrating light of genius. As the appointed day approached, the hum of preparation grew louder and louder. Tidings of the busy doings of Girvan and Maybole came flying abroad upon the wings of *The Ayr Observer*. A dim awe was inspired by the accounts of the pomp and circumstance in which the ancient Order of Foresters from Covenanting Kilmarnock were to blaze out upon the eventful day, while the Masonic Lodges of New Cumnock and Dalry acquired a sort of national importance in the excited columns of *The Stranraer Gazette*. Those who had previously talked slightly of the whole affair, now began to display considerable interest in the proceedings. Busy speculation was afloat as to who of the illustrissimi were likely to be present. Their excitement was at its height when Mr. Andrew Park, a gentleman, as we understand, combining in himself the character of bookseller and bard, one of Glasgow's sweetest lyrists, the Theocritus, in fact, of the Candleriggs, issued, for the satisfaction of the curious, at the easy and accessible price of sixpence, a pamphlet, containing a programme of the whole proceedings, with a list of the distinguished ornaments of literature, who had been invited to grace the festivities with their presence. There, side by side with the patriarchal Wordsworth, and with Tennyson, the star of the new poetic era, an eager public saw with grateful expectation the illustrious names of Sandie Rodger, and of Mr. Andrew Park himself; and Leith, with a flush of excusable pride, felt its eyes grow dim as they lighted upon the name of its own gifted Gilfillan. The conjunction was remarkable—an intertangling of the lesser planets with the fixed stars not reconcilable with any of the known critical systems; but, if we felt for Mr. Andrew Park the blush of modesty rise into our cheek, which apparently forsook his own in the hour

when he saw his fame reflected from the eyes of Europe and the Gorbals, it soon gave way before the pleasing hope of seeing in the flesh these notable denizens of the Scottish Parnassus.

To ourselves it seemed a matter of minor importance, whether poet or historian, novelist or Magazine writer, the Tritons or the minnows of literature, or both, were to be present or not. Right glad should we have been to have seen there the venerable brows of the poet philosopher of Rydal,—the fresh cheek and joyous smile of Moore, like Burns, at once the tenderest and the most mirthful of lyrists,—Hunt with his thoughtful eyes, “grave with glad thoughts,”—the frank smile of Talfourd,—Carlyle, the earnest champion of sincerity and manly worth,—and Hallam gathering from that scene another glorious page for the *Literary History of Europe*. Yet delightful as the sight of those, whose gifted minds have ruled our own, must ever be, we looked forward to a sight more thrilling, more elevating than even this,—the sight of a great people, and that people the peasantry, and hardhanded workers of Scotland, testifying how all that was beautiful and noble in the character of Burns had sunk into their hearts, and was cherished there in grateful reverence. A manifestation of hero-worship not the least noticeable that the world has seen, and which we made up our minds, as matter of course, to see, even at the risk of being quartered in “the worst inn’s worst room,” and paying in exchange for one night of a precarious bedstead and most questionable dowlas, a larger amount of currency than, upon another occasion, would have purchased the fee-simple of the chamber and its contents.

For some days previous to the festival, Edinburgh was obviously labouring under considerable excitement, flushing up in the face, and wiping the perspiration off its forehead, with unusual warmth. Steamboats and coaches poured in more than their customary supplies of distinguished foreigners, of wandering Jews, and wondering Englishmen; and, pacing the grass-grown desolation of her streets, you were pretty sure to stumble upon the one other man besides yourself who was in town. All were upon the alert and eager for the coming Tuesday. Literary men swarmed. At every turning, you were met by artists, sauntering leisurely along, with the obtrusive cigar, and redundant locks of genius; while, map in hand, your statistical German might be seen doubling the Cape of Hanover Street, or weathering the Straits of Ainslie Place. By Monday morning the faces of all were directed to the west. The *Pictorial Times*, with a staff of illustrators, started by a special train at eight, A.M. Nine o’clock beheld the *Illustrated News* in full pursuit. Our friend, Tait, with a select party of Radicals, was off by the eleven o’clock train. Maga and her men left town in a Conservative drag at one; and we found Punch at the Railway Station at three, in high wrath with the porters—every word a compound of sarcasm and fun,—at the disappearance of his dog and a certain suspicious looking valise of black leather. We should have enjoyed the struggles of the redoubtable satirist of the hunch in the recovery of his pro-

perty, but for the anxieties of two-and-twenty packages, which the considerate confidence of the ladies of our party had intrusted to our charge. Escaped from these, and the patronage of Mrs. Leo Hunter, into whose hands the freshly caught lion had fallen, we established ourselves in the one only vacant seat, which had been carefully preserved for us by our fair friends. Without, were the less fortunate, scrambling to and fro, in frantic, but hopeless pursuit of vacant places. The starting-bell had just rung! Within, were smiles and dancing spirits. The day was bright and the Festival before us. Who would not have given his heart a holiday, and resolved to see only “the gayest, happiest attitude of things?”

Merrily did Laplace bowl along his iron track, dragging at his heels a tail of carriages as long as Halley’s comet. Merrily rung the strokes of the piston, as we swept over field and brook, by tree and tower. Never did the powers of steam so annihilate time and space. Scarce have the solemn shadows of Linlithgow palace, and all that beautiful pageantry of lake and islet, and old ancestral trees and grassy upland, passed from our eyes, when we find ourselves at crested Falkirk, and beneath us, stretching away into the dim solitudes of the distant Ochils, lies the fairest landscape in all broad Scotland; and, oh how fair now, under the tender radiance of the westering sun! Castle Cary, with its richly wooded dell, is passed; Kirk-intilloch lies behind us like a dream, and lo, the interminable chimney of St. Rollox, spouting, like certain other saints, its smoke and venom in the face of the sweet heavens! Another convulsive scramble after the two-and-twenty packages of our fair friends,—omnibuses, officious porters, rapacious cads, and the other well-known pleasantries of a transit from one railway station to another, and we find ourselves seated among the well-stuffed cushions of the Ayrshire train, with only a return of one temper and two handboxes grievously wounded, and an umbrella, a reticule, and a couple of parasols missing.

If the hurry and scramble at Edinburgh were bad, here it was confusion worse confounded. You would have thought that Glasgow from Camlachie to Sauchie Hall was tumultuously making for the Land of Burns. On a picturesque pile of trunks, baskets, umbrellas, and cloaks, sat a disconsolate Cockney, like Marius among the ruins of Carthage, having exhausted himself in fruitless efforts to secure the assistance of the railway porters, while his affectionate wife and daughter, comfortably planted in a neighbouring carriage, were visibly enjoying his despair, and the animated attentions of a facetious traveller in the soft line. Inexorable clerks rushed to and fro,—baited by choleric gentlemen, shaking their umbrellas, and distracted females, all with handboxes and without tickets,—thickening the confusion, which they affected to dispel. The second bell has rung. The seatless madly fling themselves into any open door they can find, and shake themselves together anyhow. A whizz, a snort, a dozen of gigantic pants, and away we go. We hope our fellow-travellers are comfortable. Unquestionably *we* are.

Piercing the dun smoke of Paisley, skirting Lochwinnoch, with its beautiful lake, and whirling across the highway of wondering Irvine, we soon found the symptoms of the coming fête thickening as we advanced. Not a garden or plantation for miles round but had been laid under contribution; and the eaves and chimney-tops of every station were festooned with as many laurels as would have kept Parnassus in bays for a century. Every bridge and village-wall had its fringe of gaping rustics, and we entered Ayr amid the deafening yells of the accumulated urchinry of the town, who were planted in every variety of youthful posture along the enclosures of the Railway terminus.

Scarcely could we recognize that ancient and respectable burgh. Its wonted air of serenity and commonplace was gone. The Auld and New Brigs were emulously flaunting their triumphal arches at each other. How it might have been on the elder structure, where on any day

Two wheelbarrows tremble as they meet,

we cannot say; but we found the modern one rather too narrow for convenience; for, before we knew where we were, one of the ladies on our arm was swept away; and we only recognized her by the feather of her bonnet floating two arches off among a sea of heads. A desperate sortie having enabled us to recapture the lost Miranda, we threaded our uncouth way to the hotel through a crowd that would have done honour to Fleet Street. There having waited for the arrival of the two-and-twenty packages, which we had abandoned in despair at the terminus, trusting to a benign Providence for their reaching their destination, we retreated from a mob of legal and literary gentlemen, who were talking professional in the hall, to the not unwelcome delights of a parlour and tea.

The inquiry now arose—Who of the celebrated living authors were to be present at the Festival? Alas! of all Mr. Andrew Park's glorious list, it was ascertained that hardly one was to appear. The men of letters had proved men of *letters* indeed. Bulwer was dyspeptic, and had declined the pleasure. Talfourd, overwhelmed with briefs, could only promise the disappointed Secretaries, Messrs. Bone and Gray, to "drink a full bumper, on your day, to the memory of your genial poet, and another, as full, to the happiness of his sons!" Carlyle had characteristically intimated, that it would have given him "real pleasure to assist in any public testimony, as rational and earnest as our times permit, of the reverence entertained by Scotland towards this the most gifted of all her sons, for some generations past;" but his "sympathies, thanks, and good wishes," were all that he could contribute to the meeting, his engagements detaining him elsewhere. Where was Wordsworth? At Rydal, and Rogers with him, and both to remain there. James Montgomery, and Mr George P. R. James, both confessed to the literary malady, and, at its "great bidding," had stayed at home to nurse. Jerdan had declared off, in a letter containing one compliment to the Poet, and two to himself. Milman, Macaulay, Elliot, Milnes, Marryat, and Croly,

were all extremely sorry; but other matters ruthlessly demanded their attention. Excellent Leigh Hunt, with too good an apology in the illness of his wife, had communicated it in a letter full of his own impulsive character. We might question the excuses of some of his compeers; but no man doubted the sincerity of *his* regret for being absent. "I have been one of Burns's greatest admirers from my boyhood," he wrote, "and could, with pleasure, even in these days of steam and swiftness, have walked through merry England into merrier Scotland, (for your poetry beats ours in impulse and animal spirits,) and paid the mite of my homage at his shrine. Who so fit for a festival as he; for all the candour, the large-heartedness, the high reasonableness, which one feels in one's veins during the honest flow of wine? I cannot help fancying myself under its influence at this moment—standing midway between your noble and learned Presidents, glass in hand, and, with the leave of the chivalry and poetry which they represent, daring to utter my testimony to the honour and glory of one whose books are his veritable self—Nature's own work—a fervid, large-hearted, open-hearted, manly, unhyppocritical, uncastrated edition of a human being—one who, though he could make a heaven for himself out of love and song, had anxious thoughts for the whole human race; and was Christian enough, like divine Uncle Toby, to wish the very devil himself out of his 'den.'" A letter like this was the next best thing to the actual presence of the poet himself. We had his heart with us for certain.

Here, however, was a sad thinning of the expected literary galaxy. Still, things were not utterly desperate: for, although Tennyson and Moore had failed us, there was a hope, that on the morrow we should not want a Rodger and a Park to supply the void. Poets will be perverse. Tender sensibilities and delicate digestions seem to be inseparable. We wished the bards and novelists better appetites and sounder spirits, took a parting glance at the stars, to make sure that it was to rain next day, and tumbled off to bed, where we were soon fast locked in the arms of that happy deity, whose embraces are permitted indiscriminately by the youth of both sexes.

We awoke next morning with a firm conviction that we were in the Haymarket theatre during the first scene of a new farce, for some fifty bells were ringing in all directions along the usually tranquil staircases of the King's Arms. To begin a farce with a clatter of bells, and an ingenious rush of waiters across the stage, has been, as every one knows, the foundation of a successful run time out of mind. There was character to a speculative observer in every ring. The irascible gentleman in No. 13 has gashed his cheek with a disordered Mechi, and is ringing for Boots, to work off his wrath upon him, in a little easy kicking. No. 24, headachy and full of qualms, and muttering comminations against *that* ham and eggs of last night, in total oblivion of the lengthened series of gin and waters which succeeded them, is furious for soda-water and brandy bottoms. The literary lady in No. 30, feverish lest the best of the break-

fast should be gone before she gets down stairs, rings the short, sharp, and decisive ring of excitable nerves and ardent temper for her waiting maid, who having found an old admirer in the head waiter,—we saw their little bits of tenderness last night,—is flirting in the stable-yard, unmindful of the Corinne who is keeping “this awful pother o’er our heads.” No. 16, the facetious traveller in the soft line, is exercising his bell-pull, not that he wants any thing, but merely that a personage so important—to himself—as himself—(he rather thinks he astonished that handsome girl in the train last night)—may not be forgotten. The Werter-faced poet in No. 10, having at last attracted the attention of an amiable chambermaid to the delicate timidity of his ring, is heard plaintively soliciting a jug of hot water. Another storm of rings! There goes the irascible gentleman in No. 13 again! Hush! his door opens, a few angry words are heard, a pair of boots clatters over the staircase, a heavy fall, and the door is slammed violently to. Boots picks himself up, a bag of bruises, and descends to the retirement of the scullery, cursing his destiny, and meditating deeds of blood. Heaven help the chambermaids! As for the landlord, how he is ever to get his hands again into the pockets where, for years, they have rested on vacancy, is a problem beyond Euclid.

The morning is dull and torpid. An attenuated drizzle, that will not fall to the ground, but keeps fluttering, with a dangerous power of insinuation, around the crowds, who are already stirring in the streets, omens but ill for the excellence of the day. Not the less loud, however, is the note of preparation. Coach after coach, laden to the peril of its springs, rattles into the High Street. Mauchline belles, generally three in a row, and linked arm-in-arm, stream along the streets, in all the radiance of the gayest calico. Rosy-cheeked sons of the soil, loitering on the skirts of the pavement, in their Sunday’s best, are canvassing the charms of rival beauty, as the Phyllises of Tarbolton or Monkton stride vigorously along, hanging stoutly upon the arms of their bonneted and plaided Strephons. Old blue bonnets, “grey with hoar antiquity,” and looking as ancient as the mountains where they have passed from infancy to age, “stoit” along, staff in hand, with eyes full of wonder, and mouths agape for marvels. Here, rounding by the Market Place, comes the Kilbarchan band, and although theirs is not quite

“A princely music, unbeddined with drums,” not ungracefully does their “mighty brass” blare out the cadences of “Beautiful Venice.” Heard ye yon shrilly note? The shepherds of Straiton are deploying across the Auld Brig, headed by a staff of pipers. Caracolling amid the shouts of admiring youngsters, behold a mounted Paladin of King Crispin, lustrous in silk of crimson and blue, on his way to join the courtly train of his royal master! And, see! again the windows are thronged, for the drums of the Saltcoats band are heard from afar, thundering, with more emphasis than discretion, that “Scots wha ha’e wi’ Wallace bled” which no Scottish ear ever hears without a thrill. A proud man this day is yonder Jupiter of the

drum. The ophicleide feels that the eyes of the world are upon it, and growls majestic inspiriting. We envy the tranquil pride of that cornopean.

As the morning advanced, the tide of population flowed even more strongly. Train, panting after train, poured in its thousands, and steamers, reeling under surplus cargoes, were seen ploughing their way through the mist towards the harbour. Where all the people came from became a marvel, and how they were to get away nobody could see. It was as if one half of Scotland had transported itself into Ayr, now no longer thin. The streets were by this time a living sea of human beings, gay with flags, and music, and merry hearts, heedless of the somewhat sullen sky, that was lowering above them. The mustering of the procession had begun, and the more active sight-seers were all making for the Lower Green, a large meadow close upon the shore, from which it was to start. The scene from this point is at all times one of rare beauty; and this morning, although we could have wished it brighter, there was a stern and solemn tone over it, not uncongenial to the earnestness of the occasion, which had crowded these lonely shores. A fine sweep of coast, terminating in a bluff headland, the spectral shadow of Ailsa Craig, seen in the mist beyond, and the dim outline of the mountains of Arran, forming the opposite coast, with the summit of the majestic Goatfell rising through mist and cloud into the central blue, carried the attention away for a time from the busy crowds that were gathering around. In the details of the procession there were, of course, the usual materials for mirth; for, when weavers, and gentlemen of the awl, bent and gaunt with toil, get swords into their hands and scarfs over their shoulders, they are apt to suggest ridiculous images to a sportive fancy. But, until some other practicable method of uniting men in a demonstration of any public kind, which will at once give heart to their own proceedings, and excite the interest of lookers-on, shall be suggested—and the world is now pretty old, and this has not yet been done—we shall not quarrel with the flaunting of banners, the fanfare of trumpets, or the gaiety of parti-coloured badges.

The mystic tie must certainly enfold more than the average quantity of the male population in the western counties, for there was no end of masonic lodges streaming into the Green, each with an ushering of music at its head. A loud cheer salutes the royal Crispin, as he sweeps with all his chivalry into the admiring square, and the solitary constable of the burgh trembles in his shoes, for the eagerness of the crowd to behold the regal splendours threatens to carry them into the space set apart for the muster. The wail of the pibroch mingles with the din of drums; and see, where come the shepherds, all in bonnet and plaid—their crooked staves significant of their patriarchal calling—a band of stalwart men, that are a pride to look upon. Noticeable, too, are yonder troop of foresters arrayed in Kendal green—a remnant of the olden time, which we hope may long flourish in the land—stout hearts and strong hands, worthy to draw the old Scottish bow. Still are seen fresh

banners advancing towards the rallying ground. Fresh bursts of music rise upon the air. When will the muster cease? We did not wait the answer to our query, but sauntered along the beach towards the Doon, musing upon matters manifold.

Could we dip our pen in the colours of Vanderfelde, now should we paint these solitary sands, where Burns first heard the ever-various music of the eternal sea. Or, if the fresh eye and truthful hand of Ruysdael were ours, the finely-wooded road that runs up by the banks of the Doon towards Kirk Alloway, with its noble archway of branching boughs, should live upon our page. Here, too, should be seen lad and lass, peasant and gentle, footing it merrily towards the Pavilion,—merrily, though a merciless descent of rain is scattering dismay among the white stockings of the ladies, and blighting the symmetry of the gentlemen's pantaloons;

“For we'll take no care,
If the weather prove fair,
Nor shall we vex now, though it rain.”

Old Izaak Walton's creed is the creed of all sprung from our hardy soil on an occasion like this. Phew! here comes a plump, indeed! and, by your leave, the shade of yonder melancholy boughs for us. A horseman, bending under the cataract to his saddle-bow, canters up the road. Lord Eglintoun, by the “rainy Hyades!” His lordship must have uneasy reminiscences of the Tournament and its deluge. For *his* sake, if for no other, we are sorry the day is not a better one. But there is hope yet; for the rush of the rain has dwindled into a patter, and now the leaves are sparkling in the sun—every drop an emerald!

We thought we had left all the world upon the Green, but here the crowd is even more dense. Tree and wall are overhung with adventurous youth; and if we wished to break a gentleman of impetuous temper into a moderate pace, we should drop him into the crowd which is blockading the highway from Ayr to the New Brig of Doon. The locality is full of interest; for here the eyes of Burns were first lifted to the heavens; here, first they drank in the beauties of nature, long before his gentle heart had learned, in passion, and suffering, and broken hopes, that tenderness of sympathy with all created things, which could give an almost human interest to the crushed beauties of a daisy, or the sorrows of a field-mouse. Kirk Alloway—which, doubtless, he had often regarded in his boyhood with a dim, religious fear, for which he retaliated, by making it the scene of his witches' revels—is suffering a state of siege. The Scotch lasses are proud of their ankles; with what cause we had rather not say; and they scruple not to step high and boldly, over the style, into the already-overcrowded kirk-yard. Pity it is, say we, that they have seen that least imposing of ruins. The Tam O'Shanter is less of a reality to them from this hour forth. No paradox this, although it may seem to be so. But beside it lies what is mortal of the poet's father,—that “brave, hard-toiling, hard-suffering father,” from whose simple integrity Burns learned—what we in turn learned

from him—wherein lay the core of worth and true manhood; and in whose stern endurance, smothering down into silence the pangs of a sorely saddened heart,

“Struggling in vain with ruthless Destiny,”

we see the type of much that was best in the poet's character. All honour, then, to his grave! It is good for the heart of man or woman to stand by the grave of such a man. Better were it, indeed, that each of the thousands who have done so this day, had been there alone; but the memory of it will come over them by their own hearths, or on the lea-rig, or in the far glen; and come, bringing with it the reverence which the hurry and bustle of the present hour may prevent them from feeling.

And now we are upon the banks of Doon—of bonnie Doon—a spot dearer to the national heart than even Yarrow, the beloved of song. Many a change has been wrought upon these banks, along this the most interesting portion of them, since they rose to the poet's fancy, fair and freshly blooming. The foxglove, with its clustering bells, the golden broom, the tufted heather, and the wild luxuriance of the bramble, have given place to flower-plot and shrubbery. Still are these banks most beautiful; for the hand of art has been judiciously applied, and Nature, at every turning, tempts the artist to come and learn of her, of what elements pictures may be made. Most beautiful are they now, in their luxuriant vesture of green, and with the brimming river bearing its tale of triumph proudly to the sea, and sending up its acclaim of recognition, through the canopy of boughs, to the crowds who are gazing down upon it from the bridges and overhanging banks. But we cannot linger among these things now, for the swell of distant music proclaims that the procession is advancing; and if we are to see it, we must lose no time in finding our way to the platform, in front of which it is to pass.

Proceeding along the hedgerow which encloses the graceful monument to the poet, fitly reared upon a spot which his genius has made classic ground, we reached the platform, where we found those upon whom had devolved the leading parts in the ceremonies of the day. There, beside the poet's sister, Mrs. Begg, and her two daughters, and the poet's sons, who, of course, formed the objects of leading interest, stood the Earl of Eglintoun and his beautiful Countess; Professor Wilson, the foremost among the distinguished of Scotland's living sons; the Lord President, the head of her bar, with his fine glowing cheek, and the graceful snows of a kindly old age scattered upon his venerable brows; Robert Chambers, whose name will be remembered along with that of Robert Burns, not merely for his elaborate illustration of the poet's works, but for the active and unobtrusive benevolence that has smoothed the old age of the poet's sole surviving sister; Alison, noble in feature and form, who has dared, and successfully, to become the historian of the greatest epoch in European history; with many others of lesser note. Of literary strangers there were none, with the exception of Mr. S. C. Hall, and his lady, who, by her vivid pictures of

Ireland and its people, has helped to bring both nearer to the hearts of the sister countries. But we missed them not; or, if we thought of them at all, it was only with regret that they were not there to witness a scene, the interest of which must have been most deeply felt by those in whom aspiring intellect was combined with the generous sympathies of genius. Others we did miss, of whom we thought it was not well that they should be absent on an occasion so truly national,—names, which it would have pleased the people to have seen heading their own enthusiasm. Theirs was the loss, however, and theirs only. When the voice of a people is raised, and the bosoms of thousands are throbbing with one great emotion, the greatest of individuals is forgotten, nay, is himself borne away, a bubble on the mighty stream.

But not long could even beauty, or the radiant brows of genius have detained the gaze from the animated scene, in the heart of which we stood. On one hand lay the noble expanse of meadow, which had been provided for the sports of the day, already alive with its thousands; while farther on, peering from the deep verdure of a belt of trees, was seen the cottage where the poet was born, and, issuing into the sunshine, the first gleam of the procession, with its pomp of banners. Low and faint at first, but ever opening out into richer bursts of sound, swelled the approaching music, along the road, the line of which was marked by its crowded walls. Behind us lay the monument with its garniture of trees, in which the procession was lost for a time, to re-emerge upon the New Bridge of Doon. Onwards it came, circling, with its banners and glancing spears, and thickening din of sound, under the shadows of the trees that skirted the acclivity beyond. Again its foremost ranks disappear behind yonder time-worn homestead, which,—half-hidden among venerable elms and ash trees,—looks down upon the Auld Brig, that lies halfway between it and where we are standing. The crash of trumpets rings clearly out upon the sunny air, and, rounding into the road that leads across the Bridge, behold the vanguard of the procession! Look on that landscape now, and sigh for the painter's hand, "to express what then you see!" At your feet, a small enclosure, crowded with eager and animated looks, and bounded by a slanting hedge-row, fragrant with honeysuckle and the wild-brier. Beyond it, with its grassy slopes, and the various verdure of its wooded banks, the Doon, invisible from this point,

Is heard, and scarcely heard to flow.

And stretching far away rises a luxuriant upland, studded with trees, and fading along a mountain ridge into the sky. Athwart the picture, undulating among foliage and branching stems, winds the road, across the grey archway of the Bridge, now spanned with its arch of laurel; and, all along, a stir of moving multitudes glances amid the green. On they come, pouring like a winter flood, and now the foremost of the line is under the platform. The bonnet is snatched from every brow, and with lifted hand and flashing eye, peasant and gentle, yeoman and artisan, give glorious welcome to the poet's sons.

It was a sight to make brighter and bolder the fearless heart of youth,—to take years from the brows of age,—to see that "noble peasantry, a country's pride," banded in so generous a cause, marshalling in devoted homage before the sons of their poet. Not on them, indeed, had fallen their father's mantle,—they had never essayed

To sing as simple sang,
For puir auld Scotia's sake;

But it was for these sons that the poet's heart had been so often and so sorely troubled with anxieties, for which all had since mourned; on them the dark splendours of those eyes of his, which now burned before their memory, had often rested with the tenderness of tears. To look upon them, was, as it were, to draw nearer in the bonds of actual brotherhood to him who had been more than a brother to their minds. Fame! This was fame, indeed. To hear assembled thousands sounding in the ears of those who had sat around the poet's knees, the triumph of his passionate song,—raising with audible voice, that note of praise which should be prolonged into immortality!—What are now the pains and wrongs of genius!

Hoc unum est pro laboribus tantis.

The feelings of these three men, now brought together upon their native soil, after long years of separation, under circumstances such as these, what must they have been? It is easy to imagine them—the deepest, and the most sacred, of which the heart is capable—which, to attempt to describe, would be to profane. And she, the poet's aged sister, who is standing by their side, whose emotions overflow in frequent tears, as cheer succeeds cheer, and eyes are bent in kindly recognition upon her venerable face, what memories must be thronging in upon her from the shadowy past? The clear joyous voice of her brother making merry the sunshine of a blithe harvest field, the eyes beautiful in the sadness of tender thought, beneath the "brent brow and raven locks" of his youth, all too sadly changed to the harsher utterance and haggard cheeks of the prematurely aged man, dying amid the haunting fears of that poverty, which her own past experience enabled her to estimate, alas! only too well. These things, and much more than these, must have crowded before her now in vivid contrast to the honours paying in her living presence to the name of that much loved brother. Nor, do we believe, did one thought of reproach for coldness and neglect shown towards that brother by his countrymen while he lived, now mingle with the feelings of her full heart. She knew, that if they had not done for him all that they might have done, he had himself not always been careful to avoid the sources of privation and neglect, and bitterness of heart. The blame was not all theirs. He had passed away before his genius was widely known and felt; and when Scotland became aware how great a man had gone to his rest from the troubles of a dark and uncherished lot, she had not been slow to make the only amends in her power, by a deep and glowing homage to his genius.

Look at these men, who are passing before us now—the farmers and shepherds of the country—and say if these are men that would let worth and genius go to the grave, without stretching out to them a helping hand. A noble body of men they seem, as they bare their brows—brows that, on the solitary hills, beneath rain and sunshine and storm, have grown thoughtful in looking upon the heavens,—and gaze earnestly upon the sons of the poet, to see if, upon their faces, they can read the familiar lineaments of their father. Look at them there, young and old, all manly men, proud of their order, and never prouder of it than now, each of them the centre of a circle of sympathies, and home ties; and think why is it that they are here? It is because in Burns the throbbing of their own manly hearts, which had else been mute, have found utterance. They have laughed and wept with him. With him they have clenched their hand, and pressed their foot more firmly upon the heather, thinking of the freedom which invader never wrested from their beloved land. He has quickened the natural glow of honour and independence in their breasts. Their streams and woods and hills have brightened to them under the light of his song. They have wooed and won their brides in *his* verses; and they know that poet of ancient or modern time never sang to noble lady strains of more fervent tenderness, couched in the sweetest words, than he has enabled them to pour, in the inspiration of their love, into the not unwilling ears of those who are now the mothers of their children. There is not a man among them, but feels that he has been a better man, and had something more to live for, from the hour that he became familiar with the noble thoughts, and was elevated by the world-wide sympathies, of Robert Burns.

But they pass on, and the eye involuntarily follows them—these gallant blue bonnets—till, crossing the temporary bridge that has been thrown over the hedgerow into the adjacent meadow, the crooked staves, that are rested upon their shoulders, are lost to the sight amid the general throng. To them succeeds, in long array, winding slowly onward, lodge after lodge, the banded men of every village and town in the county, many of them vaunting the time-stained banners that have waved over generations of their forefathers, and erewhile stirred the simple wonder and emulation in themselves, which, doubtless, they have inspired to-day in the hearts of many a rustic urchin. These banners are all reverently lowered, and every brow is bared, as they pass before the platform, and deploy into the meadow, in which not a patch of green may now be descried for the gathering multitude. Still moving along the circuit of the road between the two bridges, a stream of banners is seen, which seems to have no end. Beneath us now is Crispin, ridiculous in royalty, with his paladins and peers, uneasy in their grandeur. Mimic king and noble bend in humble *devoir*, and are soon forgotten in the shining splendours of the Odd Fellows, who follow close upon their heels. Amid the storm of cheers which have been raised by each succeeding body, we have not been deaf to the music of their

respective bands, each playing with more or less ability some well-known air, which Burns has wedded to immortal verse,—an array of rustic minstrelsy, that speaks strongly for the national love of music, and gives hope of no contemptible attainments in an art which must be new to the country. Yonder, headed by their mounted captain, the Ancient Order of Glasgow Foresters is seen descending from the Auld Brig. Welcome are their green jerkins to the eye, and a louder cheer salutes them from the platform, as they approach. They too have passed—a troop of handsome fellows; and see, struggling up the steep, in the rear of the procession, a gigantic Scotch Thistle, borne high above the crowd! Wearied as were the bystanders with the apparently interminable procession, and hoarse with protracted cheers, no one thought of this now, as the old cherished emblem met their view, heralded by a banner on which were visible the poet's well-known words—

I turned the weeder-clips aside,
And spared the symbol dear.

They saw but the symbol around which were clustered all the prideful memories of their country, and hailed it with a simultaneous and protracted cheer. It was easy to see, that there was a good stroke, if need were, in each of these strong hands, that were now raised in acclaim towards the rugged flower. A burst of enthusiasm so spontaneous and so strong, must have shown to the most unbelieving, that the old national spirit burned with unabated fire. It was not confined to one class or to one quarter, but was shared equally by all, gentle and simple, lady and lass, peasant and peer. And when Professor Wilson, as the Thistle bent towards him, snatched a branch from its resisting stem,—an example quickly followed by those beside him,—the action was too natural an expression of the prevailing impulse, to be regarded with any feeling but that of general sympathy. Another and another deafening cheer rose into the air. The Thistle, stripped of half its glories, passed onwards. The procession was at an end, and the crowd closed around the platform.

The general ardour of the bystanders now broke through the restraints which had hitherto held them back, and hands innumerable were thrust forward to claim the grasp of the poet's sons. Then from the heart of the crowd rose a cheer for Wilson; who is dear to the Scottish peasantry and people, for no man understands them better, and no man has spoken of them more worthily than he; and well pleased were they to see before them the noble features and stalwart form of him, who had fought a victorious fight against the detractors of their poet. Nor were the noble Eglintoun and his Countess forgotten: for a redoubled cheer proclaimed that there was no jealousy in the breast of the meanest man there towards rank and more fortunate station; but that all felt, what self-styled popular leaders so constantly forget, that nobility of heart is not the less entitled to regard, because it is coupled with nobility of birth.

And now the poet's sons, dreading dislocation of their right arms, as well they might, from the vigorous shakes of the enthusiasts below them.

began to think of retreat, and the faces of all were directed towards the Pavilion. How that was to be reached, through the crowd that blockaded the bridge and the meadow beyond, was not very apparent. Much, however, may be done by a firm heart and strong elbows. So, following the general example, we plunged into the stream, and were borne along, supporting "the affrighted Belvidera at our side," till we found ourselves with our party, we cannot very well say how, comfortably seated in the Pavilion. Bright and gladsome was the aspect of that immense hall, with its vast tapestry of white, festooned with crimson; and pleasant was it to see, among the crowds that lined its long array of tables, so many fair faces, and so many respected heads, with whom one was proud to share the enthusiasm of the day. The music and the cheers without proclaim, that those who have hitherto formed the great feature in the proceedings,—the people,—are enjoying themselves after their own fashion, unenvious of the cold joints and equivocal sherry, which have been spread for our repast.

The clatter of universal mastication subsides into a dropping fire; and we resign in calm despair the impracticable leg of a duck, on which we have made several fruitless attacks. The usual loyal and patriotic toasts are disposed of in the usual loyal and patriotic fashion; a hush, and all eyes are directed towards the end of the hall. Lord Eglintoun is proposing "The Memory of Burns." Right well and manfully did he speak, his clear sonorous voice echoing to the cordial ring of his generous heart. His points were few, but admirably chosen. Every sentence told. The address was brief, graphic, and full of glow,—the model of a speech for such a meeting. There was genius in the use of the word "repentant," where he alluded to the neighbouring monument, "which an admiring and repentant people had raised to the poet." The felicity of the epithet was testified in the perceptible thrill with which it was answered in the breasts of all present. Nor could a more graceful compliment have been paid by rank to the genius, to which it looks up in common with the humblest, than when his lordship spoke of the descendant of those who dwell in the "castle of Montgomerie," as "feeling himself only too highly honoured in being permitted to propose the memory of him who had wandered, then unknown, upon the banks of Ayr."

The noble president sounded a strain not unworthy of the eloquence of Wilson, with which his address was followed up. Magnificent, indeed, was that eloquence, such as one may not in a lifetime again hope to hear. The whole strength and fervour of a great and matured mind, irradiated by a sublime imagination, were in it. Now it rose and swelled with majestic conceptions, clothed in majestic words,

Like that large utterance of the early gods.

Now it struck chords of tenderness that smote the eyes with tears. Again it made them rich with images of grandeur and beauty, scattering, as it proceeded on its stately way, flowers of poetry and of thought, till the attention failed amid the luxu-

riance of its wealth. And now, as the speaker's voice thrilled in the enunciation of some solemn truth, his massive form dilated, and his deep eyes kindled, till he seemed to stand before us,

—Attired

With sudden brightness, like a man inspired.

Brilliant as was the address, you were sure that no part of it was dictated by the ambition of oratorical display. The speaker felt that he had a great duty to perform—to fix the point of view from which the genius and character of the poet ought to be regarded; and that duty he nobly fulfilled. It has been objected, we see, by some, that the avoidance of all allusion to the defects of Burns as a man would have been in better taste,—that time had washed out the memory of these, and that, in any case, the presence of the poet's sons was no fitting place to have brought them into view. Not so did we feel; not so are we sure did the great mass of those feel, who listened to the thrilling words, in which he claimed for the frailties of genius that forbearance which men even of torpid hearts and sluggish blood feel that they too often need. It would have been weak and womanly to have shirked the truth upon an occasion like this. Burns had faults, grievous faults, the more dangerous because of his genius; "thoughtless follies," to give them their lightest title, which, in his own words, "laid him low and stained his name." Admit them, stamp them with the severest censure that sinful man may award to his erring brother, keep clearly in view that vice is vice, though genius be the transgressor; but forget not, on the other hand, its wayward impulses and burning passions, remember its predominating mood, which is that of virtue, and rather give your heart and homage to the man, who is still found manfully struggling on the side of honour and truth, and integrity and right,—the champion of every noble cause,—than to him who if, from sheer weakness of character, he is never greatly erring, is never, nor ever can be, greatly good. How necessary it was to meet this question boldly and fully, is apparent by this, that we even now hear a voice raised—a puny voice it is true, but to some a trumpet—as if the errors of the poet were all of him that was immortal. Far otherwise has the heart and voice of the Scottish people—a people conspicuous for its virtues and religious principle—pronounced its judgment. The professor's remarks on this point were persuasion in the garb of poetry; and they have doubtless, ere now, endeared him more deeply to the people of whom he spoke. "There is a voice" he said, "heard above, and below, and round about—far above the voice of mere admiration, as it has been expressed by men of taste or of criticism. There is a voice, which those who know how to listen to it can hear—a voice, which has pronounced its judgment on the character of Burns—a judgment which cannot on earth be required at a higher tribunal, and which never will be reversed. It was heard of old, and struck terror into the hearts of tyrants, who quaked, and quailed, and fled for fear from this land before the unconquered Caledonian spear. It is a voice

we are pleased to hear; it is like the sound of distant water-falls, the murmurs of the summer woods, or the voice of the mighty sea which ever rolls on and on, and is restless even in its repose. I mean the voice of the people of Scotland, of her peasantry and trades—of all who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow—the voice of her working men!”

When Professor Wilson sat down, it was felt that with the mighty pean of his oratory the chief business of the day had ended. Others spoke, all ably, some eloquently, and were listened to with pleasure, for the day was still young, and the flush of festivity had been visited by no chill. But what were the orators about, that no allusion was made throughout the day to the poet's sister, or to Mrs. Thomson, the Jessie Lewars of the poet, who was also present, and in whose arms he died? Was it, that they were forgotten, or that the speakers feared to travel out of the fervour of an eloquence, that had adjusted its periods in the closet? The omission was generally felt, and an opportunity was lost for a successful hit, which a dexterous speaker would have been eager to have seized. Too much, perhaps, was said merely about the poets, although this may have been difficult to avoid, and on such an occasion was not likely to be found fault with. Still, there were no symptoms of flagging interest to the end, and all would have gladly listened to a few more last words from Wilson, had he not, very properly, declined to acknowledge, save by a respectful bow, the drinking of his own health, on a day dedicated to another and greater bard.

And now the Festival is ended; and the rapid patter of rain upon the roof bodes destruction to the gaiety of silk and satin. Happy are they who have secured the few carriages of the county. Umbrellas are at a premium, and plaids worth gold. Hung are the heavens with black, and there is not a hope of sunshine. No matter—Ayr is only three miles off, and *there* good cheer and change of raiment await us. Out into the rain, across the meadow, and down the plashing road, go the guests, pleased and regardless of the weather, till we are left nearly alone in the Pavilion. Then we, too, take our solitary way, surprised to see silence and solitude where so lately thousands had been stirring,—now all gone, like fairy folk at the alarm of mortal tread. No traces of rib or revel offended the eye. The decorum which had marked the proceedings of the day was maintained to its close.

Our feelings, now that the festivities were over, were those of deep satisfaction, of pride for our countrymen; and we had been ignorantly cherishing these feelings as we wandered idly back to Ayr along the sounding shore. But we now discovered, by contact with certain bright and generous spirits, that we were all wrong—that we should not have been pleased—that the whole affair, from first to last, was, as they called it, tapping their foreheads significantly the while, “a hollow humbug.” Why, if all was felt for Burns which had been professed, why did no mausoleum encumber the grave of the Poet's father? Why had

the home of his birth not been purchased with a small mite of the national wealth? Shakspeare's had long been the property of the English people! Why had no monster pavilion spread its gratuitous canopy above the fifty thousands, whom the rain had too early scattered to their homes? Where were the hecatombs of roasted beeves, the myriad butts of eleemosynary ale, that should have regaled the starving and cruelly-neglected peasantry, who had staggered in feebleness of spirit and of limb before the heartless aristocrats, by whom the day's proceedings had been headed? Well did they, who asked the question, know of what stuff the men were made, whom they would have insulted with the alms-gifts of paupers! And, oh! where had been the seats of honour for those great prophets of the national literature, who had visited too highly favoured Scotland at their publishers' expense?

In this last question, carefully withheld till the last, lay the motive for all the others. Chambers, and Delta, and many others of high gifts and accomplishments, had been proud to take their places with the noteless throng, well pleased to enjoy the scene, without the uneasy restraint of being elevated to the general gaze. They came there to do honour to the memory of Burns, not to court notoriety or personal glorification; and they felt no chagrin, and spoke of the events of the day only with hearty pleasure. But no one, not even these mystical eidola, the secretaries Messrs. Bone and Gray, had thought of ministering to the vanity of certain literary gadflies, who, overestimating the importance, both of themselves and their vocation, dreamed of a prominence, which gentlemen always shun. Hence is it, that we have heard of omissions which were not felt. Hence is it, that we have heard of the insincerity of Eglintoun and Wilson; the frank, vigorous, cordial spirit of whose souls, these cynical pretenders to a monopoly of good feeling, and sympathy with lowly worth, cannot understand. Hence is it, that we have heard sarcasms levelled at an enthusiasm, which they who have coined them were incapable of sharing. Why were such men there at all, if they questioned the sincerity of the demonstration?

What! dared the slaves
Come hither, covered with an antic face,
To fieser and scorn at our solemnity!

There are matters too high, *pace tanti nominis*, be it said, for even the all-critical *Punch*; and the fervent expression of a nation's emotion is one of them. Little is he to be envied, who left the Banks of Doon that day with a sneer upon his lip!—whose exquisite sympathy and reverence for genius could not restrain sarcasms, that were stale in the satirists of a century back, against the country which that genius wisely worshipped; or withhold a sorry caricature of the poet whom he affected to exalt.

But the morbid sneer, and the wail of disappointed vanity, alike go down to oblivion, surely and soon; while the memory of inspiring impulse and generous thought,—and with these the remembrance of this day is fraught to thousands,—lives and expands, to be forgotten only with life.