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SCOTTISH VERNACULAR LITERATURE



SCOTTISH VERNACULAR LITERATURE

A SUCCINCT HISTORY

BY
T. F. HENDERSON, 1844-1923
" Thomas Finlayson "



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P R E F A C E

IN his Preface to *The Evergreen*, Allan Ramsay explains that he had intended to have given 'an account of the Authors of the following Collection,' but had 'delayed the Design' for the sufficient reason that he had not been 'furnished with such distinct Information as could be wished for that End at present'; and he virtually had to content himself with 'marking the Names of the Authors before and after their poems.'

Such was the total oblivion which, in the course of a few short generations, had engulfed the old 'makaris' and all their works! Already had they become

'subjects all
To envious and calumniating time.'

But many things have happened since the days of Ramsay, among them the birth of Robert Burns, whose striking poetic success, very much on the lines of the old vernacular 'makaris,' inevitably tended to strengthen the reviving interest in those forgotten masters of the fifteenth and sixteenth

centuries. Within the present century those old 'makaris' ceased among the educated Scots to be merely 'names,' and again became poetic personalities; and within the last few years the studious attention directed to this old vernacular poetry has been rapidly widening even on the Continent and in the United States, where many professors of English Literature have set an example to those in Great Britain by systematically including the subject in the English Literature course.

In such auspicious circumstances a succinct handbook of the whole subject—a handbook which should summarise the main features of this in many ways admirable literature, should trace its interdependence, even in prosody, from its earliest beginnings down to Burns and his immediate successors, and should serve as, at least, an introduction and guide to its more general and systematic study—is surely an almost imperative desideratum. No such handbook has up to the present been attempted, nor does any History of Scottish Literature exist that can be regarded as a substitute for it, the few Histories that have from time to time appeared, embracing only special aspects or special periods of general Scottish literature, while in none has the vernacular literature been dealt with as a separate entity.

It is only within recent years that such a hand-

book as that attempted in the following pages has become possible. It in a sense represents and summarises the labours of many preceding editors—labours whose results are here thankfully acknowledged—from Pinkerton, Laing, Irving, and other pioneers, to those of the Early English and Scottish Texts. Those Text Societies are, it may be, devoted more to the philological and antiquarian than the strictly literary aspects of the subject, but it is owing mainly to them and other learned Clubs—as the Bannatyne, the Maitland, the Roxburgh, the Hunterian—that Scottish Vernacular Literature has begun to assert its title to full literary recognition.

The older vernacular literature being comparatively unknown, more quotation has been deemed advisable than is usual in literary histories. In the quotations no attempt has been made to modernise the spelling, because (1) the special pronunciation is an essential part of the poetical effect, and (2) a proper knowledge of Scottish vernacular or any other literature is not obtainable by means of short cuts. It is hoped, however, that the side glossary will not only sufficiently guide the ‘general reader’ to an intelligent appreciation of the quotations, but tend to quicken an interest in one of the most graphic of literary dialects—a dialect which perhaps even yet has not wholly lost its efficacy to enrich modern English.

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To various peculiarities in spelling, as 'quh' for 'wh,' 'u' for 'v,' 'v' for 'u,' 'z' for 'y,' 'a' for 'o' (*e.g.* 'ane' for 'one'), and the dropping of the consonants at the end of words (*e.g.* 'fu' for 'full'), the reader will gradually become reconciled by practice.

T. F. HENDERSON.

October 10, 1898.

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I

THE SCOTTISH VERNACULAR

THE Scottish vernacular is mainly a development of the Teutonic dialect of that Northumbria which embraced the more eastern portion of Scotland and Northumbria. Britain from the Humber to the Frith of Forth. Here the Saxons obtained a firm footing early in the sixth century, the Cymri being, after a series of desperate struggles, either conquered or forced gradually westwards until they concentrated in Cumbria or Strathclyde, between the Mersey and the Clyde, where for some centuries they maintained a fragile independence. But the Saxons never wholly suspended their westward incursions; while the Scots or Gaels of the western regions beyond the Clyde indulged in attacks, of ever-augmenting severity, on their Cymric kinsmen from the north. During the next century the Northumbrian Saxons began also to push their conquests northwards over the Picts beyond the Forth, and succeeded in mastering certain districts south of the Tay; but after the great Pictish victory of Dunnichen in 685, the Saxon settlers in Pictland were either conquered or expelled; and although the Northumbrians renewed the struggle,

they failed to obtain permanent dominion beyond the Pentlands and the Forth. Their lack of success was due partly to internal contests, but chiefly to the creation of a new political influence through the union of the Picts and Scots under Kenneth M'Alpine some time before 843. If this federation was at first imperfect, and on the part of the Picts a matter rather of necessity than choice, it nevertheless created the germs of a northern potency, not only qualified to hold Northumbrian aggression in check, but destined to extend its influence southwards, until it embraced Northumbria north of the Tweed, and Cumbria north of the Solway.

The southern expansion of this northern state—this strange amalgamation of diverse races and principalities which became fused into the political entity known as Scotland—was powerfully aided by the effects of the great Danish immigrations of the ninth and tenth centuries, and the struggles between northern and southern England. Amid much that is uncertain as to the relations of the Scottish kings to these struggles, this much is clear, that, though they at first combined with the Danes of Northumbria and the Cymri of Cumbria in resisting the northward swoops of the west Saxons, they finally—from compulsion or self-interest—came to an understanding with the southern kings. Whether, or how far, they admitted the overlordship of these kings—Saxon or Danish—is of minor moment, since in the long-run

The Danish
immigrations,
and the
southward
expansion of
Scotland.

they were able to disregard it. Partly by right of conquest, partly by promises to assist the southern kings, the Scottish kings (1) were given in 945 a kind of deputed authority over Cumbria, which they ultimately succeeded in retaining in their full possession as far south as the Solway; and (2) between 970 and 975 obtained hold—whether in trust or not—of Northumbria north of the Tweed, which was also formally conceded to King Malcolm of Scotland in 1018.

But while the dominion of the Scottish kings was being thus consolidated in the south, it was threatened with dire peril through the remarkable and strenuous career of Macbeth, Maarmor of Moray. Though

The rebellion
of Macbeth,
and the Saxon-
ising of Scot-
land.

regarded by some as mainly the champion of the conquered Picts, Macbeth seems to have succeeded at last in enlisting the aid of the whole of northern Scotland. But whatever the exact blazon on his standard—whatever the special cause, political, racial, or dynastic, which he professed to champion—the movement he inaugurated virtually perished with his defeat and death in 1057. Subsequent Maarmors gave the Scottish kings occasional trouble, but among none of the leaders of northern or north-western insurrections did there arise a second Macbeth. If his adventurous purpose was in any sense fruitful of political consequences, it was in a direction entirely opposite to that intended by him—towards weakening rather than strengthening the

northern influences, whether Pictish, Celtic, or Norse. On the full rehabilitation of the old rule, mainly by southern aid, the southern civilisation gradually became dominant; nor was its dominance affected by subsequent temporary partitions of the kingdom. Through the marriage of Malcolm Canmohr—conqueror of Macbeth—with Margaret, sister of Edgar the Atheling, the old Scoto-Pictish dynasty became virtually Saxonised; and the triumph of the Saxon element was finally assured by the great influx of Saxons during the period of the Norman Conquest. Already much of the seaboard of Scotland north of the Forth had been overrun by the Scandinavian Vikings; and with the advent of the fugitive Northumbrians, the Teutonic speech and civilisation gradually penetrated into every district of the Scottish lowlands.

The direct effects of the Norman Conquest were late in reaching Scotland, nor when they appeared were they so potent as in the south. Though there was war with the Norman kings, there was no Norman Conquest of Scotland. The migration of Norman nobles thither was gradual and peaceful. They were patronised and favoured by the Scottish kings from the time of the marriage in 1100 of Matilda, sister of Edgar of Scotland, to Henry of England. Many of them accompanied David I., Matilda's brother, when from the Norman court of England, where he had spent his youth, he arrived

Norman influence considerable, but no Norman literature, and only slight fragments of Anglo-Saxon, preserved in Scotland.

in Scotland in 1107 to succeed to the throne of southern Scotland. Both in this southern Scotland and in northern Scotland, or Alban, to which he succeeded in 1124—the kingdom being reunited under his rule—he introduced a feudal system of government, modelled after that of Norman England. Thus, though the Normans never effected any formal conquest of Scotland, they left indelible marks on its political and social system; and though their speech—adopted at court—did not so strongly colour the final vocabulary as in the south, yet, as in England, so in Scotland, it lent its aid in effecting that radical change in the form of the language by which, from being inflectional and synthetic, it became non-inflectional and analytic. Materials illustrative of the process of transformation are, however, in all respects, much scantier in Scotland than in England, and in truth can scarce be said to exist. Of the earlier Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian, there survive only fragmentary remains on stone and monumental crosses, and a few Saxon words interwoven in charters and other Latin documents. Even of the minstrelsy or romances of the Normans—at least one of the fountainheads of Scottish poetry—not a verse has in Scotland been preserved; and only after the stage of transmutation is over, and the language has developed into a form of Early English, do proper data exist for determining its character.

When it first emerges from obscurity towards the close of the fourteenth century, the literary language

of the Scottish lowlands is found to be practically identical with that of England north of the Humber :

<p>The Scottish vernacular, originally identical with the Northern dialect of Early English, gradually became modified by contact with foreign tongues.</p>	<p>it belongs to the Northern dialect of Early English.¹ Compared with the Midland and Southern dialects, the Early Northern English, or Lowland Scottish, shows more traces of Scandinavian and Frisian, and less of Norman influences. But in Scotland this Northern dialect necessarily underwent a process of gradual</p>
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change other than that merely of natural development. It was placed in a new environment which exposed it on all sides to infection from foreign tongues. For the most part, also, the process of change affected the oral speech before it manifested its presence in the literary language. The literary language tended at first to become stereotyped—to remain assimilated to the language of Northumbria south of the Tweed; and latterly, it was in some degree biassed by the ascendancy of Chaucer and other southern writers; but the spoken dialect was being brought into contact with an immense variety of subtle linguistic forces—Cymric, Pictish, Gaelic, Norse, French — which, while they in many ways modified its pronunciation and altered its idioms, also enormously enriched its expressiveness.

The causes that co-operated to refashion the three

¹ It is almost unnecessary to mention the invaluable aid to the study of Early English which has been rendered by such pioneers as Dr. J. A. H. Murray, Richard Morris, and Professor Skeat.

dialects of Early English—Northern, Midland, and Southern—into two allied, but in many respects dissimilar, languages—English and Scottish—were mainly twofold: (1) the Midland dialect—for reasons that lie outside the present theme—gradually became the sole literary language of England, the Northern and Southern dialects not being absorbed in it, but vanishing almost entirely from English literature; and (2) Scotland—where the Northern dialect obtained supremacy—became, after Bannockburn, more and more severed from English influences, and, besides accomplishing its civilisation through the commingling of the diverse races within its own territory, entered into intimate relations with France. Scotsmen began to flock to France rather than to England to complete their education; in large numbers they also entered the French service, and many of them winning high renown under French banners were made naturalised citizens of France; Paris became a great Scottish resort; the Frenchman and the Scot associated as sworn comrades against a common foe; the royal houses of the two countries got to be strongly knit together by marriage ties, and the Scottish court formed a special centre of French customs and gaiety and culture, which began to give a certain veneer of refinement and civility to the rude and sombre Scottish manners; every variety of commercial interchange rapidly expanded; among the educated classes there was a flourishing apprecia-

Severance of
Scotland from
English
influences,
and its alliance
with France—
results on the
vernacular.

tion of French literature, and the French language was more and more taught and spoken.

Thus it comes about that while the Early Scottish—the Scottish of Barbour and Wyntoun—differs but slightly, if at all, from Northern English, the Scottish of later writers—as, for example, Dunbar and Douglas and Sir David Lyndsay of the Mount—is a composite language, which, however the vocabulary of one writer may differ in many particulars from that of another, is characterised universally by a great, and in some respects barbarous, wealth of diction—a diction which, though it does not scruple to borrow from Chaucer and other English poets,¹ is derived largely from other sources than either the new English or the Northern dialect, and is coloured much more strongly than any of the old dialects with a French element—an element not wholly naturalised.

Yet if the writers of this later period over-represent the French element in the oral speech of Scotland, the number both of French words and idioms which had already passed into the texture of the language is very great;² nor can it be doubted that had the old

¹ The old Scottish ‘makaris’ regarded their language—the language of lowland Scotland—as English. Thus Dunbar refers to Chaucer as ‘of our Inglisch all the lycht.’ Douglas distinguishes between Scottis and Inglis, and proposes to use mainly ‘our own language,’ though he does not disdain the occasional use of ‘sudrone’ speech; but Lyndsay actually refers to Douglas as ‘in our Inglis rethorick the rose.’

² See specially on this subject Francisque-Michel’s *Critical Inquiry into the Scottish Language*, 1882.

external conditions not sustained a sudden wrench, and had the Scottish vernacular literature been permitted a longer lease of full and vigorous activity so as to have afforded time for shedding of immaturities and accidental accretions, and for a more complete assimilation of French and other elements, a literary language would have obtained of a more perfected individuality, of still greater variety, picturesqueness, and power, and perhaps more than rivalling literary English in fertility of idioms, and in wealth, beauty, and efficacy of diction. Is it presumptuous to even express regret that these two streams, issuing originally from a common fountainhead, had not, after each gathering volume from its own special rivulets, been permitted more fully to commingle, so that the final literature of the two reunited peoples should have represented even in its grammar and vocabulary something more of the northern genius, temperament, racial characteristics, and nationality? But instead of contributing to any such consummation, the northern stream presently became dammed up and sank into the earth; and if at last it partially reappeared, it was in sadly diminished volume, and never again as the complete medium of the nation's literary expression. Before the influences which were fertilising and perfecting the language had time to become properly absorbed, circumstances arose which meanwhile effectually hindered any further literary advance. In truth, Scottish vernacular literature as a distinct

Enrichment of the vernacular not fully realised, and the literature checked before reaching full maturity.

tively national possession had scarce begun to exist ere it had ceased to be; and in its original and unrevived form may be said to have attained all the maturity it was fated to reach some half-century before the arrival of Shakespeare.

The Scottish Reformation, which the vernacular literature in some sense heralded, and in many ways

Scottish
literature
smothered by
the Reforma-
tion.

assisted to bring about, in the end effectually smothered that literature. In Scotland the Reformation assumed a complexion exceptionally stern and rigid: a complexion not merely sentimentally, but Calvinistically and logically Puritan. It was particularly inimical to art, as in part a specious variety of idolatry, in part an insidious conspiracy to drape Satan as an angel of light. Secular poetry thus came under its peculiar ban, and indeed almost every form of secular literature—literature underived from or uninterlarded with Scripture—as essentially mundane and frivolous, and therefore sinful. Its democratic spirit precluded such an illogical compromise with the world as more or less obtained in England. The sudden, full, and immediate contact of the rude intelligence of the masses with a book, every word of which was supposed to have been directly dictated by God, upset—as it was bound to do—the nation's mental and moral balance. Superstition, whose grip the Renaissance and other influences had begun to loosen, acquired a new authority, and laid hold of the nation with a still firmer because more logical clutch—

a clutch which for the time being effectually strangled the national literature. By the impulse and with the guidance of this renovated superstition, an organisation was gradually perfected which endeavoured to comprehend within itself, and to utilise for its own ends, all the nation's energies, and to subject not merely what are usually termed the morals, but everything else besides, of each individual, high or low, rich or poor, cultivated and clever or illiterate and foolish, to its inspection and control. Thus, notwithstanding the impulse of a true poetic tradition, and the fostering influence of James VI., the vocation of art or literature in Scotland became gradually impossible. All this is undeniable fact, only more patently manifested by pretentious attempts to gloss it over. It must be accepted in its unvarnished drab reality, and either with condemnation or approval, or such a blending of the two as the special circumstances demand. And at least it would be churlish to withhold a certain meed of admiration from such honesty of conviction, and such a sterling—however in the long-run impossible—effort to square practice with theory. The bulk of the nation then believed what it professed to believe. In the Biblical idolatry of Scotland there was also this compensating benefit, that the Bible—general familiarity with which was so strenuously promoted, and even enforced—contains much admirable literature, and that at last it circulated in Scotland, as in England, in the marvellous English prose version whose charm is still as

fresh as it was nearly three centuries ago. Its general perusal was bound in some degree to cultivate and purify the nation's literary taste, and to foster a latent capacity to appreciate good secular literature, as soon as circumstances removed the embargo from it.

But besides practically suppressing the vernacular literature, and filching from life the zest without

Effect of the Reformation on the vernacular. which no healthy literature can flourish, the Scottish Reformation called into operation activities which made inevitably

for the disintegration of the vernacular language: which slowly robbed the language of its characteristically northern features, and gradually but surely transformed its most picturesque peculiarities into sober and estimable English. Direct consequences of the Reformation were the severance of the old relations with France, and the resumption of a perpetual alliance with the 'auld enemy,' England. This led first to the union of the crowns, and finally to the union of the kingdoms. After these unions the vernacular could not, under any conditions, have long retained its pristine purity; but had circumstances before the union of the crowns been different, the process of disintegration, though inevitable, would also have been different. It would have been less rapid, and in the end less complete and fatal, had Scotland all along been in possession of a vigorous national literature. Sooner or later the lesser was bound to become merged in the greater

literature; but it was by no means necessary that the bulk of the special vocabulary and idioms of the north should in the process utterly perish. From them English literature might have acquired still greater opulence of expression, and especially an added piquancy and vigour. But alas! the vernacular had almost ceased to be wedded to a living literature before even the union of the crowns; and the vernacular language itself had already become smitten with symptoms of decay. The universal circulation of the Bible in English gradually introduced a new fashion of expression. While the broad Scottish pronunciation of necessity retained its currency even among the educated and upper classes, many of the old Scottish words and idioms began to drop out of the oral speech, and after the creation of a kind of amorphous dialect—quaintly compounded in irregular and lawless proportions of Scottish and English—English went on conquering and to conquer. Even the common speech of the peasant in the remoter regions began to suffer from the weekly deluges of Scoto-English, and the daily enforced perusal of the English Scriptures; and so the vernacular of each succeeding generation became less purely Scottish than that of its predecessor.

It thus follows (1) that much of the vernacular Scottish—vernacular that had no place in the only partially developed and prematurely blasted literature—has hopelessly perished; (2) that some of the literary

The old and
the revived
vernacular.

vernacular cannot now be certainly interpreted; and (3) that the revived vernacular from Sempill to Burns is more or less Anglified Scottish: not, for example, the Scottish of Dunbar and Lyndsay and their contemporaries, but partly imitated from these older writers, partly a dialect more or less local, and partly English with a Scottish accent. Old ballads entirely pagan in sentiment, and old songs of a gaiety and frankness and ingenuous indecency which bespeak relation with an age of primitive simplicity, survived in the oral traditions of the people, the anathemas of the Kirk notwithstanding; but in the process of transmission from one generation to another, their form and cast of language—though not of essential utterance—underwent inevitable changes. Many of them also have come down to us only in broken snatches and isolated refrains. As for the literature of the revival, it was in a sense a mere exotic—largely an imitation of a literature that had been partly moribund for some centuries. The literary tradition was almost hopelessly dissevered. The gap between the present and the past became too wide to permit of proper re-connection. At the Reformation Scottish vernacular literature had ‘a great fall,’ and by no manner of means could be ‘set up again’ as an adequate national symbol. In the case of Sempill and other older poets of the revival—many of them innominate—the antique flavour is strong and genuine; in the case of Ramsay and his contemporaries it is a variable quantity,

partly artificial, and too often streaked with mere vulgarity and commonplace squalor. Several poets of later date than Ramsay have achieved a certain success in isolated vernacular songs. Fergusson made not inconsiderable efforts to galvanise the dead corpse of vernacular literature into a semblance of real vitality; but Fergusson's career was too short to enable him to master more than the rudiments of his art, and it was reserved for Burns, by virtue both of unique endowments and special circumstances—his lowly birth, his peasant experiences, his deep and full humanity, his peculiarly impressionable genius, his mastery of the old national poetry in its spirit and essence, and his rare artistic sorcery—in a sense to re-create for us the old Scottish world, to breathe into the dry bones of the past the breath of life, and to fashion a form of vernacular poetry in which old and new elements are cunningly blended to the production of artistic effects unsurpassed, if not unequalled, by any vernacular predecessor. Burns had, and has, many imitators, but by the very nature of the case he could have no successors or disciples quite worthy to prolong his tradition. Necessarily he influenced, and does still influence, the poetic art of the nineteenth century, for no great poetic artist ever lived to himself alone; but while his spirit survives, his method may be said to have in great part perished with him.

II

MINSTRELSY AND ROMANCE

EARLY FRAGMENTS OF PATRIOTIC MINSTRELSY—‘THOMAS OF ERCELDOUNE’ AND ‘SIR TRISTREM’—HUCHOWN OF THE AWLE RYALE, AND OTHER WRITERS OF ALLITERATIVE ROMANCES.

THAT minstrelsy was in high repute in the Saxonised and latterly Normanised Picto-Celtic Scotland might have been assumed as certain, even had there not been the many proofs there are of early proficiency in music and song; for the nation was a blend of peoples among whom the vocation of the bard was ever held in high esteem. Yet of the earlier songs all that have reached us are a few paltry fragments, and even these we do not possess in quite their original dialect. Wyntoun (c. 1420) has preserved a ‘Cantus’ of eight lines forming the whole or part of what may be termed a national prayer for succour evoked by the parlous state of the country through the intestine troubles and devastating raids that followed the death of Alexander III. :—

Early Cantus
preserved by
Wyntoun.

‘Quhen Alysandyr oure kyng was dede
That Scotland led in luie and lé

Away wes sons off ale and brede, plenty
 Off wyne and wax, off gamyn and glé :
 Oure gold wes changyd into lede.
 Cryst borne into Vyrghnyté
 Succoure Scotland and remede
 That stad [is in] perplexyté.' fixed

The spelling and dialect is, of course, that of Wyntoun; but if destitute of any special linguistic value, the Cantus is metrically of interest as perhaps the earliest extant example of the interwoven octave formed of lines of four accents rhyming alternately.

Another fragment dating from the same troubled years is that of the 'mokkyshe ryme' made by the Scots in derision of the English after they had driven them back and burnt some of their ships during the siege of Berwick by Edward in 1296 :—

'What wenys Kynge Edward with longe shankys Why imagineth
 To have wonne Berwyk all our onthankys?
 Gaas pykes him. Let us
 And when he hath it
 Gaas dykeis him.'¹

It is a rude production enough; but scornful hate is worked into the chorus with a certain realistic emphasis.

The next of our fragments is the triumphant dance-song of the Scottish maidens after Bannockburn (1314): a naively exultant bantering of the forlorn plight of their bereaved English sisters :—

Song of the
 Scottish
 Maidens after
 Bannockburn,
 1314.

¹ So in Fabian's *Chronicle*; but in *Chron. Monast. S. Albani* (ed. Riley, 1865) there is a simpler version: 'Kyng Edward, wanne thu havest Berwic pike the, wanne thu havest geten, dike the.' To dike = to fence round, to enclose so as to make escape impossible.

darlings

Why
imagineth

‘Maydens of Englonde, sore may ye morne
For your lemmans ye have loste at Bannockisborne !
With heue a lowe.
What wenyth the Kynge of Englonde
So soone to haue wonne Scotlande ?
With rumbylowe.’

‘This songe,’ says Fabyan,¹ ‘was after many dayes sungyn in daunces, in carolles of ye maydens and mynstrellys of Scotlande, to the reproofe and dysdane of Englyshmen, *wt dyverse other which* I ouer passe.’

The phrases ‘With heue a lowe’ and ‘With rumbylowe’ are found both in later Scottish and English poetry. They here probably indicate the occurrence of a dance movement emphasised by special gestures or the beating of musical instruments.

Our last example is a pithy but halting quatrain made by the Scots after the marriage of David II., son of Robert the Bruce, to Jane or Joanna, sister of Edward III., whom, says Fabyan,² ‘they, in despite of the English, call “Jane Make Peace.”’ The quatrain, he further tells us, was but one of diverse ‘truffys, roundyes, and songyes’ made by the Scots to the Englishmen’s ‘more deryson’ :—

Quatrain after
the marriage
of David II.
in 1328.

‘Long berdys, hartles
Paynted hoodyes, witles
Gay cotis, graceless
Maketh England thryftles.’

Altogether these fragments form but a sorry wreckage from devouring Time; but, such as they

¹ *Chronicle*, ed. Ellis, p. 420.

² *Ib.* p. 440.

are, they do more to bring us into contact with the heart of the nation, in those wild and ingenuous ages, than do the bulk of the serious political documents of the period. In those early times the carols, and rounds, and rude rhymes were almost the only means of voicing the nation's sentiments, and formed a sort of presage of our present daily press. On the other hand, the more elaborate poems scarcely touched the present at all. In these long Romances we have passing glimpses of ancient manners and customs, but they make known little or nothing of the main concerns of the nation; they are mainly translations or paraphrases of translations, and deal with times already remote from those of the narrator, and with adventures in love and war of heroes and heroines belonging to a partly mythical antiquity.

Minstrelsy
is of more
historic in-
terest than
Romance.

The earliest name associated with Scottish poetry is that of the mysterious soothsayer Thomas of Erceldoune, usually called Thomas the Rhymour. A certain 'Thomas Rimour de Erceldoune' is witness to a deed of the Abbey of Melrose¹ which is undated, but, from certain other signatures attached to it, may be pretty certainly assigned to the latter half of the thirteenth century. That the Thomas Rimour who signed that deed either died or was executed or murdered, or went into monastic retirement or was kidnapped—whether by mortals or fairies—sometime before 2nd November

Thomas of
Erceldoune
—when did
he flourish?

¹ *Liber de Melros*, p. 269.

1294, may further be inferred from the fact that by deed of that date 'Thomas de Erceldoune, filius et heres Thome Rymour de Erceldoune,' conveyed all his lands held by inheritance in Erceldoune to the Trinity house of Soltra.¹ Whether Rimour was the family name of Thomas or his professional title is matter of dispute; and the question is of some importance, since if it was the family name, the mere occurrence of it coupled with Thomas in the documents settles nothing as to the period when 'true Thomas' flourished. Hector Boece (1527) is the first writer to call him Leirmont; but in the absence of this name from the early documents, Boece's authority must be regarded as worth little, though there is the possibility either that Leirmont was a title, or that a new family of the name of Leirmont came later into the possession of Erceldoune. Erceldoune was a castle and village in Berwickshire—on the site of the present Earlston—belonging to the Earl of Dunbar and March, but Thomas Rimour is supposed to have inhabited a 'tower' of his own, the so-called ruins of which are still pointed out; and it is, of course, certain from the deed executed by Thomas Rimour's son that the family held their lands independent of the Earl. The main evidence associating Thomas of the documents with Thomas of the prophecies is the statement of Bower in the continuation (*c.* 1430) of Fordun that the Rhymer, on the day before the death of Alexander III. (1286), pre-

¹ MS. Chartulary in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh.

dicted the occurrence on the morrow of a mysterious and destructive blast; but although antiquaries have accepted the anecdote as fact, and even Sir Walter has gravely surmised that the death of Alexander accidentally saved the reputation of Thomas as a weather prophet, the mere testimony of Bower, writing a hundred and fifty years afterwards, cannot be regarded as a sufficient authentication. Blind Harry must needs of course employ the intervention of Thomas in glorification of the national hero Wallace, and for this purpose introduces him as an inmate of the Abbey of Faile, near Ayr, at the time of Wallace's captivity there in 1296, and as predicting future victories for him after he was given up for dead; but it is surely folly to attach much importance to the poetical devices of Blind Harry, unless otherwise corroborated. As to Thomas's prophecy of the succession of Robert the Bruce to the Scottish throne, referred to by Barbour,¹ Barbour's statement is too vague to warrant the conclusion that the prophecy was necessarily made after the death of Alexander; and Barbour affirms nothing as to the period when the Rhymer flourished. A like remark applies to the 'derne' saying mentioned by Wyntoun² as prophetic of the battle of Kilblane; but if a certain forged prophecy, written before 1320,³ refer to the battle of Bannockburn, Thomas of Erceldoune, to

¹ *The Bruce*, Bk. II. v. 85-87.

² *Chronicle*, Bk. VIII. xxxi. 114.

³ MS. Harleian, 2253, l. 127.

whom it is assigned, must have been alive as late as 1293.

Thus, though taken singly each item of evidence as to the date of Thomas is of somewhat uncertain significance, yet collectively its general drift is towards the identification of Thomas the Rhymer with Thomas Rimour of the documents. Nor is it difficult to understand what exceptional opportunity the troubled years following the death of Alexander III. afforded to one reputed to possess the awesome gift of speaking in 'derne.' Since also Thomas rhymed on the eve of the great struggle with Edward I., it was inevitable that after his death his sayings should acquire a factitious importance, that his fame should deepen and expand with each supposed fulfilment of his prophecies, and his rhymes be distorted or mutilated to fit particular emergencies, and at last be gradually submerged by a countless variety of forgeries. Having died, moreover, before war with England had begun, he was not originally regarded as specially a Scottish partisan, and therefore his repute seems to have been, at first, quite as great in England as it was in Scotland. But being a Scot, it was inevitable that he should in the end be appropriated as the one great Scottish prophet—with gifts outrivalling even those of the more ancient but un-Scottish Merlin—who had special intimations of all the main events of Scottish history down to a period of indefinite futurity; and it was equally inevitable that his character as 'true Thomas'

should be assiduously preserved by apparently whole hosts of forgeries composed after the occurrence of the events foretold. Thus, notwithstanding the Rhymer's fame, or rather perhaps because of it, no rhyming prophecy exists that can be certainly authenticated as his. Neither Barbour, nor Wyntoun, nor Blind Harry has professed to quote verbatim any of his prophetic rhymes; and it is vain, from among the many forgeries that have passed current as sayings of his, to attempt to select a single specimen that actually represents his opinions or forecasts, far less enables us to form any judgment as to his literary or poetic gifts.

As for the old romance of *Thomas of Erceldoune* in three fyttes,¹ detailing the confabulations of Thomas with the Elf Queen, it is plainly, in great part, the work of an Englishman, who could not have written or refurbished it earlier than 1400; and even if he made use of an old romance of which some Scotsman was the author, that romance was indubitably derived from the older one *Ogier le Danois*. The prophecies of the third fytte Dr. Murray regards as refurbished prophecies, originally of very ancient date; and of course it is just possible that Thomas was himself a refurbisher of ancient prophecies, which were again refurbished by the author of the fytte. Nor is more

The old
romance of
'Thomas of
Erceldoune.'

¹ Published complete, so far as the several MSS. permit, by the Early English Text Society, ed. Dr. J. A. H. Murray, 1875; and by A. Brandl, Berlin, 1880.

light, but rather darkness visible, to be got from the consultation of the *Whole Prophecie of Scotland, England, etc.*,¹ even after comparison with certain *Scottish Prophecies*, printed by J. R. Lumby, from a manuscript of the fifteenth century.²

We come then, last, to the traditional rhymes collected by Scott,³ Robert Chambers,⁴ and Henderson ;⁵

Traditional rhymes attributed to Thomas. but how interesting soever these may be as specimens of folk inventiveness and credulity, it would be vain to pretend that they are in the remotest degree representative either of the prophetic or poetic gifts of 'true Thomas.' Here, however, is one of them. It is not known to have been as yet fulfilled, but its 'derne' gruesomeness is almost enough in itself to account for the mysterious awe attaching to the name of Thomas—whether he really uttered it or not :—

'At three-burn Grange in after day
There shall be a lang and bloody fray ;
When a three-thumbed wight by the reins shall hald
Three kings' horses baith stout and bauld ;
And the three Burns three days will rin
Wi' the blude o' the slain that fa' therein.'

In addition to his prophecies, true Thomas is credited by Sir Walter Scott with the authorship of two romances—*The Horn Child*, or *the Gest of King Horn*,⁶ and *Sir Tristrem*.

¹ 1603, and in the Bannatyne Club, 1833.

² Early English Text Society, 1870.

³ *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*.

⁴ *Popular Rhymes of Scotland*.

⁵ *Popular Rhymes of Berwickshire*.

⁶ Published by the Early English Text Society, ed. Lumby, 1866.

Sir Walter thought the French romance of *King Horn* might be a version from the English one, and that the Thomas therein mentioned might be he of Erceldoune; but this Anglo-Norman version is of older date than the English one, being written about 1170; and besides, the English version of *King Horn* is not the work of a northern poet.

The claims of Thomas to some sort of authorship of *Sir Tristrem* deserve more serious consideration; and the question is besides of greater literary moment. Since Sir Walter’s time the balance of learned opinion has turned very much against the claims of

‘Sir Tristrem’
—was it written
by Thomas of
Erceldoune?
Evidence of
Mannyng.

Thomas; but Mr. G. P. McNeill, the latest editor, ‘is unable to concur in regarding *Sir Tristrem* as the work of an unknown author other than Thomas of Erceldoune.’ The main authority on the subject is the *Chronicle* of Robert Mannyng, or De Brunne; and the most probable—if not the only—interpretation of Mannyng’s words is that he believed, rightly or wrongly, that *Tristrem* was written by Erceldoune. In explaining why he had written his own *Chronicle* in the octo-syllabic couplet, and not in one of the more complicated staves then so much in fashion—as *ryme couée*, or *étrangère*, or *enterlace*—Mannyng goes on to remark:—

‘I see in song in sedgeyng tale
Of Erceldoun and of Kendale,
Non tham says as thai tham wrought
And in ther saying it semes noght :

That may thou here in Sir Tristrem,
 Ouer gestes it has the esteem,
 Ouer all that is or was,
 If men it sayd as made Thomas.
 But I here it no man so say
 That of som cople som is away.
 So thare fayre sayng her beforne
 Is thare travayle nere forlorne.'

These lines as they stand might be interpreted to mean that Mannyng attributes *Tristrem* either to Thomas of Kendale or to Thomas of Erceldoune, or to a third Thomas. But there is even a fourth theory very much in favour with ingenious antiquaries. Since the author of the only copy of *Tristrem* known to exist¹ begins his tale thus—

'I was a[t Erceldoun]
 With tomas spak y thare ;
 Ther herd y rede in rounne
 Who tristrem gat and bare'—

rhyme

it has been argued that Mannyng meant to indicate a joint authorship; or more precisely, referred to *Tristrem* as a vamp by Kendale of an earlier romance by Erceldoune. But is it likely that Kendale could have the effrontery to attempt the refurbishing of a poem by such a famous contemporary? Of course Mannyng—if misled by these introductory lines—might have made this (very foolish) supposition; but Mannyng

¹ Auchinleck ms. in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, by a southern fourteenth-century transcriber of some northern copy of much earlier date. Published by Sir Walter Scott, 1804; by Kölbing at Heilbronn, 1882; and by the Scottish Text Society, ed. G. P. M'Neill, 1886.

was himself approaching manhood before Erceldoune died, and as he also professes to be thoroughly versed in the history of the tale, we may assume that he knew the facts at first hand. Besides, he plainly refers to the romance as it was first written, not as altered by a later author, however skilled: ‘as made Thomas,’ he writes—not ‘as made Thomas the first and vamped Thomas the second.’ Further, Mannyng elsewhere in his *Chronicle* mentions definitely the tale of Kendale as a chronicle of north of England events; and we must therefore infer that unless Mannyng meant to attribute the authorship of *Tristrem* to another Thomas than either he of Kendale or he of Erceldoune, he meant to attribute it to the last. True, a tale of *Tristrem*—of which the writer of this later *Tristrem* must undoubtedly have made use—was written about 1170 by an Anglo-Norman Thomas, but it was written in French, and written in couplets.¹ We have thus no other Thomas to whom to ascribe *Sir Tristrem* except he of Erceldoune; and whether he wrote it or not, if once the claims of Thomas of Kendale be excluded, no reason is left for assigning its authorship to one on the English rather than on the Scottish side of the Border. Nor can it be said that the references in the poem to Thomas of Erceldoune are inconsistent with his own authorship of it. On the contrary, may not the introductory lines be interpreted to mean that the scribe wrote the poem

¹ Published in Francisque-Michel’s *Poetical Romances of Tristan in French, in Anglo-Norman, and in Greek*; London, 1835-39.

from the dictation of Thomas? But whether this be so or not, the version that has reached us is in substance—as well as in metre—clearly that of the author whom Mannyng believed to be Erceldoune.

If there be exaggeration in Mannyng's praise of *Sir Tristrem* as the best of all the 'gestes' that 'ever is or was,' it is at least the most elaborate
Literary merit of 'Sir Tristrem.' and perfect of the early romances dealing with the story of Tristan and Ysonde: a story which, after passing through many prose versions—in French, German, Danish, Spanish, Italian, and English,—has in modern times furnished a theme for varied imaginative treatment, has inspired Wagner with one of his greatest achievements in music, and has mirrored the several idealisms of Arnold, Tennyson, and Swinburne. The *Sir Tristrem* of Erceldoune is hardly poetical. It is only a rhymed story, told in the simple, naïve, and spirited style which would best impress the wondering and childlike audiences of the Middle Ages: it relates in a manner well fitted to captivate their unsophisticated hearts the marvellous adventures in love and war of Tristan. The hero and the other personages of the story are not undeftly drawn, but their motives are elementally simple, direct, and unconventional; and whenever the narrator is in difficulties, the miraculous is ever at hand to supply the needed solution. Yet is the narrative far from being prolix; on the contrary, it is crowded with incident, and abounds in graphic natural touches; and when it is added that metrically the work is

one of high accomplishment, it is not difficult to account for the praise bestowed on it by Mannyng, nor to understand that, recited by a minstrel thoroughly versed in all the methods of giving emphasis and effect to the story, it must have made a quite exceptional impression. The romance has also a certain perennial interest for its pictures of ancient observances, but regarded as literature it is its stave that is chiefly worthy of note. Here is an example:—

‘To prison thai gun take
 Erl baroun and knight.
 For Douke Morgan sake
 Mani on dyd downright.
 Schaftes thai gun shake
 And riuen scheldes bright;
 Crounes thai gun crake
 Mani, ich wene, aplight.
 Saunfayl,
 Betvene the none and the night
 Last the batayle.’

outright
 without
 pause

The stave of *Sir Tristrem* is an admirable example of interwoven rhyme in short lines, combined with alliteration. No earlier instance of this ^{The stave of} rhymed stave is known to exist in any of ‘*Sir Tristrem*.’ the old English dialects, although it is employed by Lawrence Minot in one of his songs on Edward III.¹ It consists of eight lines each of three accents, with alternate rhymes, and to this is added a bobwheel,²

¹ Wright’s *Political Poems*, i. 74.

² The wheel is the return of a peculiar rhythm at the end of each stanza. In its simplest form it consists of two short lines rhyming with each other. The bobwheel is a wheel beginning with a short abrupt line or bob (*i.e.* small wheel), as ‘Saunfayl’ in the example now given.

consisting of a bob of one accent introducing a new rhyme, and followed by two lines generally of three accents—but occasionally, as in the stanza quoted above, of only two,—the former of which lines rhymes with the line preceding the bob, and the latter with the bob. There are early monkish Latin examples of the interwoven octave in lines of three accents, and the bob itself probably derives from the Latin staves. The simplest form of the bobwheel consists of the bob and a single line rhyming with the bob. The bob may introduce a new rhyme, or, as in the case of the original *Christis Kirk*, the bob and the line following it may rhyme with the last line of the preceding octave or be unrhymed; and this bobwheel was further simplified, in the case of Ramsay and later Scottish poets, by the substitution of a refrain consisting of an unrhymed line of two accents. The special bobwheel of *Sir Tristrem* was no doubt derived from the French. An approximate example occurs in an Anglo-Norman stave, quoted in Archbishop Langton's Sermons, and dating probably from the beginning of the thirteenth century:—

‘Bele Aliz matin leva,
 Sun cors vesti e para
 Enz un verger s’entra
 Cink flurettes y truva
 Un chapelet fet en a
 De rose flurie ;
 Pur Deu, trahez vus en la
 Vus ki ne amez mie.’

More elaborate forms of the bobwheel were made by

doubling, or, as in *The Pistill of Swete Susan* (p. 36), trebling the first section of the wheel.

Next to Thomas of Erceldoune in date comes the poet named by Wyntoun, Huchown of the Awle Ryale:—

Huchown
of the Awle
Ryale.

‘That cunnand wes in literature.

He made the gret gest off Arthure, /

And the Awntyre off Gawaine

The Pystyll als off Swete Swsane ;

also

He wes curyws in hys style,

Fare of Facund, and subtile,

eloquence

And ay to plesans and delyte

Mád in metre mete his dyte :

writing

Lytil or nocht nevyrtheles

nothing

Waverand fra the suthfastness.’

truth

Of the three works here mentioned by Wyntoun, the last, *The Pistill of Susan*,¹ is that alone about whose identity there has been practically no dispute, and it therefore supplies an important basis for further conclusions regarding Huchown and his other works. The earliest ms. of *The Pistill*, that in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, dates about 1380 ; but the many evident corruptions it contains indicate that it was very far from being a first-hand copy of the original, which therefore must have been of considerably earlier date. Further, notwithstanding the prevalence of Midland and Southern spellings in all the five extant

‘ The Pistill
of Susan ’—
its value as
evidence
regarding
Huchown,
who was
probably Sir
Hew of
Eglinton.

¹ Published in Laing’s *Select Remains of the Ancient Poetry of Scotland*, 1822 (2nd ed. 1885) ; since which the best of several editions are those of Kössler (Strassburg, 1895) and of the Scottish Text Society in *Scottish Alliterative Poems*, ed. Amours, 1896-97.

MSS., the Northern origin of the poem can be clearly established by the rhyme endings. We are thus able to conclude, first, that the author flourished about the middle of the fourteenth century; second, that he was a northern poet; and thirdly, since he is so circumstantially lauded by Wyntoun, and at the same time referred to familiarly as 'Huchown of the Awle Ryale,' that he was a Scot. But if he was a Scot, his name could scarce have been omitted from the death-roll of Dunbar's stately *Lament for the Makaris*, and therefore he is usually identified with the Sir Hew of the *Lament*:—

'The gude Syr Hew of Eglintoun,
Ettrik, Heryot, et Wyntoun
He hes tane out of this cuntré :

taken

Timor mortis conturbat me.'

Some have identified him with Clerk, or rather the Clerk, of Tranent, referred to in the lines:—

'Clerk of Tranent eik he has tane,
That made the anteris of Gawane';

also

but it is unlikely that 'Huchown' could have two such different designations. Moreover, a Sir Hew, Lord of Eglinton—married to Egidia, half-sister of Robert II.—died about 1375, and was therefore a contemporary of Huchown, whoever Huchown may have been.

But Mr. Amours, the latest editor of *The Pistill*, surmises that there were two contemporary Sir Hews of Eglinton—the one a knight, and the other a priest. The epithet 'gude' has also been adduced in support of the

Were there
two Sir Hews
of Eglinton?

theory that Sir Hew was a priest, although it is also commonly used by the poets, not to designate priestly, but knightly, qualities. Mr. Amours' special objection against the knighthood of Sir Hew is that 'it is incredible that Wyntoun should have called a nobleman of high rank by the curt and familiar name of Huchown in a passage meant to be as eulogistic as Wyntoun could make it.' But the objection surely is as valid if Huchown were a priest; and in any case, it loses its cogency if we reflect that Sir Hew may himself in the character of poet have adopted the title of 'Huchown of the Awle Ryale'; and, on the whole, it is more credible that there was only one Sir Hew of Eglinton than two contemporaries of that title—the one a nobleman, and the other his parish priest. The phrase 'Awle Ryale'—or in one MS., 'Auld Ryall'—is of uncertain signification; but the interpretation 'Royal Palace' is as feasible as any that has as yet been suggested.

The identification of the two other works of Huchown mentioned by Wyntoun is rendered difficult by the number of existing romances that would fit the titles. Internal evidence, based on a comparison with *The Pistill*, is specially deceptive in the absence of northern copies; but Dr. Trautmann¹ has adduced reasons—based mainly on the use made of it by Wyntoun in his *Chronicle*, and specially on the fact that it contains

Other works
of Huchown.

¹ *Der Dichter Huchown und seine Werke*, in *Anglia* (1877), pp. 109-188.

the very mistake of mentioning Lucius Tiberius as emperor instead of procurator, to which Wyntoun specially refers—for identifying *The Gest of Arthure* with the non-rhyming alliterative poem *Morte Arthure*.¹ Further, notwithstanding the contrary opinion of Dr. Trautmann, Mr. F. J. Amours adduces strong reasons for identifying *The Awntyre of Gawaine* with a rhyming alliterative poem, *The Awntyrs of Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne*.² Other poems attributed to Huchown are the long unrhymed alliterative *Geste Historiall of the Destruction of Troy*, translated from Guido delle Colonne's *Historia Troiana*;³ *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*;⁴ and *Golagros and Gawaine*.⁵ The first of these Dr. Trautmann endeavours, from internal evidence, to show could not, though the work of a Scots translator, have been the work of the author of

¹ In the Thornton ms. at Lincoln, ed. Halliwell, 1847; and also published by the Early English Text Society, ed. E. Brock, 1865.

² Published in Pinkerton's *Scottish Poems*, 1792, under the title *Sir Gawain and Sir Galaron of Galloway*; by David Laing in *Select Remains*, 1822 (2nd ed. 1885); by the Bannatyne Club, ed. Sir F. Madden, 1839; by the Camden Society, ed. Robson, 1842; and by the Scottish Text Society in *Scottish Alliterative Poems*, ed. Amours, 1896-97.

³ Early English Text Society, ed. Donaldson and Panton, 1869-74.

⁴ Bannatyne Club, ed. Sir F. Madden, and Early English Text Society, with three religious poems from the same ms., and by the same author, ed. Morris, 1864. Abridged ed. by Jessie L. Weston, 1898.

⁵ Printed with other Scottish pieces by Chepman and Myllar, Edinburgh, 1508; facsimile reprint by David Laing, 1827; included in Pinkerton's *Scottish Poems*, 1792; published also by the Bannatyne Club, ed. Madden, 1839, by Dr. Trautmann, in *Anglia*, 1879, and by the Scottish Text Society in *Scottish Alliterative Poems*, ed. Amours, 1896-97.

The Pistill and *The Morte Arthure*; as for the second, notwithstanding various objections suggested by the versification and vocabulary, it has some claims to be regarded as a rival to *The Awntyrs of Arthure* for identification as *The Awntyre of Gawaine*, and these claims are strengthened by the fact that at the beginning of the MS. is the name 'Hugo de'; and as to the last, an adaptation from the French, though there is no convincing evidence that it is, as some editors hold, of later date, it differs utterly in style from the two undoubted works of Huchown. There is some probability that it is the *Anteris of Gawaine* ascribed by Dunbar to Clerk of Tranent; but nothing can be inferred as to his date from Dunbar's mention of him, Dunbar's chronology in the three previous stanzas being quite promiscuous.

All these works—whether Huchown's or not—appear to us now more or less bizarre. Though linguistically of great interest, and though metrically they left traces of their influence on later poetry, they are devoid of any such qualities as could attract the interest of the modern reader;¹ but the *Awntyrs of Arthure* especially has a good deal of graphic force. All the four assigned to Huchown—two being his without doubt, and two having rival claims to be

Metrical
characteristics
of the
Alliterative
Romances.

¹ It may be that a Cymric tradition lent, in Cumbria, a certain special interest to these romances; but the *Awntyre of Gawaine* has been traced to a French source, and when Huchown wrote, the Arthurian legend was the common property of the romancists of all countries.

reckoned his—are in different metres. In *Morte Arthure* the metre is unrhymed alliteration, but in the others alliteration is combined with rhyme. Of the stave of *The Pistill*—which is merely a versified paraphrase of the story of Susanna and the Elders in the Vulgate—here is an example :—

‘Thenne the folk of Israel fel vppon knes¹
 And loued that louely lord, that hire the lyf lent ;
 Alle the gomes that hire goode wolde gladen and gleees
 This prophete so pertly proues his entent,
 Thei trompe bifore this traitours and traylen hem on tres
 Thorwout the citee, be comuyn assent.
 Ho so leeueth on that lord, thar hym not lees,
 That thus his seruauant saued that schuld ha be schent
 In sete.
 This ferlyes bifel
 In the dayes of Daniel.
 The pistel wittenes wel
 Of that prophete.’

The stave thus consists of an interwoven octave of lines rhyming alternately, followed by a complex bobwheel; the bob of one accent, introducing a new rhyme, being followed by three short lines each rhyming only with each other, after which comes a short line rhyming with the bob. Various examples of the

¹ ‘Then the people of Israel fell upon their knees, and loved that lovable lord that granted her life. All the knights that would her welfare celebrate and sing (this prophet so openly proves his case), they sound the trumpet before these traitors and drag them on trees throughout the city by common assent. Whoso trusteth in that lord, need not be lost, that this his servant saved, who should have been injured in his place. These marvels happened in the days of Daniel. The book of that prophet testifies to their truth.’

same bobwheel are to be found in other poems of the fourteenth century. In *The Awntyrs of Arthure* we have an admirable example ^{The stave of 'The Awntyrs.'} of the most common form of rhymed alliterative romance. Here is a stave :—

'Bare was hir body, and blake to the bone ¹
 Alle by-claggede in claye, vn-comlyly cledde ;
 It veryit, it waye-mettede lyke a womane,
 That nowther one hede, ne one hare, hillynge it hade.
 It stottyde, it stounnede, it stode als a stane.
 It marrede, it mounede, it moyssede for made.
 Vnto that grysely gaste Sir Gaweayne es gane :
 He raykede to it one a rase, for he was neuer rade ;
 For rade was he neuer, nowe who that rychte redis.
 One the chefe of the cholle,
 A tade pykit one hir polle ;
 Hir eghene war holkede fulle holle,
 Glowand als gledis.'

It begins, as does *The Pistill*, with an interwoven octave rhyming alternately ; but this is followed by a ninth line, introducing a new rhyme, and to this succeeds three hemistichs rhyming only with each other, the stanza being concluded with a half hemistich rhyming with the ninth line. But the most notable feature of the poem is the device of iteration ; the ninth line generally beginning with the repetition

¹ 'Bare was her body, and black to the bone, all clagged with clay and uncomelyly clad. It cursed, it lamented like a woman, so that it had a covering for neither head nor hair. It halted, it was astonished, it stood as a stone. It was demented, it moaned, it mused as if mad. Unto that grisly ghost Sir Gawayne is gone. He went to it with a rush, for he was never afraid, for afraid was he never, now who that reads right (believe me). On the upper part of the jaw a toad pecked on her head ; her eyes were sunken full hollow, glowing as burning coal.'

of the last half of the eighth in a kind of inverted order, while the one stanza is connected with its successor by the transference to it of the last line. Thus the stanza following the one quoted begins:—

'Alle glowede als gledis the gaste whare scho glydis.'

The *Awntyrs* furnishes the chief extant example of the persistent use of this device. Gradually, however, the author lost patience, as he well might, and in the latter portion of the poem it occurs only intermittently.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, whether by Huchown or another, West Midland or Northern, poet, is, if a more poetical, metrically a less elaborate, achievement than *The Awntrys*. It consists of non-rhyming alliterative lines separated, as the exigencies of the situation suggest, by a rhyming bobwheel, of which the wheel of one accent continues the previous line, the four following hemistichs rhyming alternately. Here is an example of the bobwheel:—

‘ A hundreth of hunters ; as I haf herde telle
Of the best
To trysteis vewters zod :¹
Couples huntes ofkest,
Ther ros for blastez gode
Gret rurd in that forest.’

Certain romances, as *Sir Gray-Steel*, and *Roswall*

¹ 'To the stations the keepers went; the huntsmen cast off the couples; by good blasts [of the horn] a great noise rose in the forest.'

and *Lillian*, both in the octo-syllabic metre, which were long popular in Scotland, exist only in modernised languages, and may be of English origin. There are also Scoto-English translations of ^{Other} French romances, as *Lancelot of the* ^{Romances.} *Lak*,¹ and part of the *Romaunt of the Rose*; but of the translators nothing is known.

¹ Maitland Club, ed. Madden, 1839, and Early English Text Society, ed. Skeat, 1865.

III

HISTORICAL POETRY

BARBOUR'S 'BRUCE'—WYNTOUN'S 'CHRONICLE'—BLIND
HARRY'S 'WALLACE.'

It is with *The Bruce* of Barbour that Scottish vernacular literature, as a distinctive national product, first begins to take shape. The old national rounds and songs were, as we have seen, very rude and simple, and all but a few fragments of them have perished.

Scottish literature properly begins with Barbour's 'Bruce.'

Then the ancient romance poetry was a general product of the early Middle Ages, created by a strange commingling of different races and civilities. By the conditions of its birth it represented a merely temporary phase of sentiment; it was concerned mainly with a remote past, and towards the close of the fourteenth century it began to lose its hold on human interest. But *The Bruce*, by its very scope and intent, is linked to generations yet unborn; it portrays the triumph of a splendid struggle for independent nationality—a struggle which, for good or evil, was successful, and therefore enshrined for ever in the nation's memory; and if not entitled to

rank as a great national epic by virtue of qualities essentially poetic, it yet celebrates the daring and victorious career of a national hero in a manner not unworthy of the stirring theme.

Of John Barbour (1320 ?-1395), its author, scarce anything is known except what is official. The surname indicates that, like the Bruce, John Barbour
(1320 ?-1395). he was of Norman origin; and the family may well have come to Scotland in the train of one of Bruce's ancestors. But neither of his parents, nor of the date or place of his birth, is there any record, the first mention of his name, 13th August 1357, being as Archdeacon of Aberdeen. To his very special accomplishments the varied allusions in his poem *The Bruce* bear testimony; and the zeal with which he cultivated his scholarly tastes is shown by safe-conducts granted him during several successive years to go both to Oxford and to France for purposes of study. In 1372 he became clerk of audit of the king's household, and he also during various years acted as auditor of the Exchequer. He finished *The Bruce* in 1375. That he was high in favour with the king is proved by a gift to him, 14th March 1377-78, of ten pounds; by a grant, 29th August 1378, of an annual pension of twenty shillings to 'our beloved clerk,' and his heirs and assigns for ever; by a gift in 1380-81 of a ward of a minor; and by a grant, 5th December 1388, of a yearly pension of ten pounds—'pro suo fideli servicio nobis impenso.' He died 13th March 1395.

Besides *The Bruce*, Barbour, according to Wyntoun, was the author of two poems now lost—*The Brut* and *The Stewartis Oryginalle*. Certain fragments also of a translation of *The Siege of Troy* are attributed to him by the fifteenth-century transcriber of the MS. in Cambridge University Library; but it has been argued from internal evidence that they could not have been written by Barbour. He has further been credited, but on insufficient evidence, with the authorship of the *Legends of the Saints*, which have been published, from the MS. in the University Library, Cambridge, by Horstmann at Heilbronn, 1881-82, and by the Scottish Text Society, ed. Metcalfe, 1887-1896. The literary interest of these *Legends* is but slight, and they present no features calling for special comment.

*The Bruce*¹ is the main Scottish authority for the events it records, John of Fordun not having completed his Latin Chronicle further than the death of David I. (1153), and Wyntoun—in view of Barbour's *Bruce*—resolving to 'lightly overpass the story of these years.' How far *The Bruce* is accurate history

Works attributed to Barbour.

'The Bruce,' a poetic narrative. How far is it trustworthy?

¹ Printed first at Edinburgh in 1571; reprinted by Hart at Edinburgh in 1616, and more or less erroneously, at different succeeding dates, from Hart's edition; edited by Pinkerton, 1790, from a MS. in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, written by John Ramsay in 1489; by Jamieson, 1820, from the same MS.; by Innes for the Spalding Club, 1856, from the collation of this MS. with another in St. John's College, Cambridge, written also by John Ramsay in 1487; by Skeat for the English Text Society, 1870, from a collation of these MSS. with Hart's edition; and by the same editor for the Scottish Text Society, 1894.

it would be rash to assert. It was written six-and-forty years after the death of its hero; and although for some of the incidents Barbour had the vouchers of eye-witnesses, he no doubt got many of his stories from tradition or from second-hand testimony. But in many details he is corroborated even by English chroniclers; and Scottish State documents, so far as they are available, on the whole substantiate his declaration that to the best of his wit his aim was—

‘To put in wryt a suthfast story.’

true

Still, *The Bruce* is intended to be a poetic narrative, not a mere prose narrative in metre. Something must be allowed for imaginative embellishment even of what is ‘suthfast,’ for the artistic need to fill in vague outlines with effective colouring, and to round off a story with adequate impressiveness. Since, moreover, the theme was essentially patriotic, facts were bound to be more or less distorted by prejudice or enthusiasm, especially when dealt with poetically; for even your modern war correspondent, how unpoetical soe’er he be, can scarce resist the craving to fight, if only in description, on his country’s side. But Sir Herbert Maxwell’s insinuation¹ that Barbour, contrary to his strong professions of regard for ‘suthfastness,’ may have suppressed or modified the truth from mere sordid motives, can scarce be given heed to on mere conjecture. Such an hypothesis seems, in fact, superfluous.

¹ *Robert the Bruce*, p. 8.

Bruce was the object of the nation's wild idolatry; and Barbour, sharing in that idolatry, depicted him *con amore* from the standpoint of national adoration. Neither the grant, nor the hope, of a royal dole, a thousand times greater than the pittance he received—but as matter of fact he was not in the receipt of a royal bounty while writing *The Bruce*—could have so well inspired him to glorify Bruce as the ambition to do honour to a national hero, and so to celebrate his deeds that they should ‘last aye furth in memory.’

In *The Bruce*, as we now have it, there is, however, one glaring error. Bruce at the beginning of the romance proper is referred to as ‘The Bruce I spak of ayr.’ Now the Bruce spoken of in the introduction was not the patriot, but his grandfather; and it has therefore been assumed that Barbour had recourse to the extraordinary device of confounding the deliverer of Scotland with his grandfather, in order to put King Edward outrageously in the wrong, and further because—as Cosmo Innes expresses it in the introduction to his edition of *The Bruce*—his hero was ‘not to be degraded by announcing that he had sworn fealty to Edward, and once done homage to Baliol, or even joined any party but that of his country and freedom.’ No doubt this is a most plausible explanation, but is it the only possible one? And unless it be the only possible one, ought Barbour to be lightly credited with so glaring and deliberate,

Curious
genealogical
error in ‘The
Bruce.’

and at the same time so foolish and vain, a falsehood? Is there not at least the faint chance that Barbour may have made an accidental slip, or that the error was the work of some copyist? This last alternative obtains some corroboration from the fact that in the portion of *The Bruce* preserved by Wyntoun, instead of the lines—

‘This lord the Brwss, I spak of ayr,
Saw all the Kynryk swa forfayre,’

before
kingdom so
forlorn

we have—

‘Quhen all this sawe the Brwss Robert
That bare the crowne soone efftirwart.’

And even if Wyntoun has merely altered his copy of Barbour, the fact that Wyntoun has not, at least, accepted the accidental or intended fiction, indicates that there was no general desire among the Scots to bolster up either their cause or that of Bruce by such a stupid artifice. Further, Barbour had no need to have recourse to it, for his theme did not include the years in Bruce's life when, perhaps, his patriotism was stifled by his rivalry with Baliol; and to have introduced him simply as the grandson of him he ‘spak of ayr’ would equally well have suited his purpose. Lastly—and this seems conclusive,—if Barbour did wilfully falsify facts, how could he have set himself to expose his own falsification by compiling the genealogy of the Stewarts, ending with Robert II. of Scotland?

But here we are less concerned with the historic trustworthiness of *The Bruce* than with its merits as literature. Written in the octo-syllabic couplet, it extends to about 12,500 lines, and thus in mere bulk is a considerable achievement. Its aim, according to its author, is to tell the story of Robert the Bruce and his companion in arms, the good Sir James of Douglas:—

Barbour's
aim in 'The
Bruce.'

strong
tumult
void of
cowardice

'That in thar tyme war wycht and wyss,
And led thar lyff in gret trawail,
And oft in hard stour off bataill
Wan richt gret price off chawalry,
And war woydyt off cowardy.'

* Rightly to appraise it as a literary achievement, we must take into account that it was an original venture in literature—the first poetical effort in Scotland to break away from the wonders of the old romances. Like the greater Chaucer, Barbour had no poetic predecessor worthy of the name. Though Chaucer was his contemporary, he was in no way Chaucer's disciple; and indeed *The Bruce* was written before the bulk of Chaucer's best work. Barbour is virtually the father of Scottish literature, just as Chaucer is the father of English literature; but with the proviso that he is not in the same plane of greatness with Chaucer, who further was regarded as their master by certain later Scottish poets.

Barbour's language is that current in the lowland Scotland of his time, as well as in northern England.

As for the octo-syllabic couplet—afterwards a favourite measure of Scottish poets for chronicles and tales—we have no evidence regarding its previous use in Scotland. It was common in French verse, and was used by Mannyng, and also by Chaucer. Several examples also exist in earlier English poems; but in these the rhythm is looser and more uneven than that of Barbour, who, for his time, is a most correct, if not remarkably musical, metrist.

Barbour's
language and
metre.

The poem relates the thrilling tale of Bruce and his comrades as champions of Scottish freedom: their distresses, jeopardies, toils, hairbreadth escapes, subtle stratagems, heroic combats, until, from being a houseless wanderer in the mountains of Galloway, Bruce becomes the victor of Bannockburn, and the immutable sovereign of a nation emancipated by his prowess. Necessarily, the interest of the story culminates with Bannockburn; but though the narrative of the Irish and other wars is poetically an anti-climax, than the final incidents in Bruce's life no better close is conceivable: his resolve that since he had been unable—by reason of his stern struggle for his crown and for Scottish freedom—to fulfil an early vow to embark in the Crusades, his heart should be borne on 'goddis fayis' by that one whom his lords should deem most worthy. That the Douglas should be chosen; that the Douglas should die in the act of performing his great leader's behest; and that the bones of Douglas

The story of
the poem.

and the heart of Bruce, rescued from the Infidel, should be brought back to mingle with the dust of the fatherland, to whom both had rendered such imperishable service, is also, we discern, a consummation uniquely blessed. Whether or not Barbour's portrait of Bruce harmonises with actual fact in all its details, matters, on the whole, comparatively little. One who so strove and achieved, and nobly vowed and finely bequeathed, was — whatever the inconsistencies of his earlier years—one of the elect among heroes.

For a Scottish poet there could be no more excellent theme than Barbour's; and in intent and

Barbour's
treatment of
his theme. purpose, at least, his treatment is not inadequate. His tact is subtly perfect, his tone and temper beyond all praise.

Naturally and inevitably he exaggerates the exploits of Bruce and his fellow-champions; but the exaggeration, though in some instances gross—especially as regards the numeration of their foes—is on the whole that of the artist, not that of the empty braggart or foolish fanatic. Neither does he fall into the artistic blunder of reviling or belittling the enemies of Bruce. On the contrary, Sir Edward Caernarvon is commended as one of the 'starkest' men to be found in 'any country'; Sir Aymer de Valence is described as 'wyss and wycht,' and by virtue of his own nobility and bravery, sincerely appreciative of the feats of Bruce; Sir Ingram de Umfraville was, we are told, renowned for his 'high prowess'; Sir Henry de

Bohun, the champion whom Bruce vanquished and slew in sight of the two armies at Bannockburn, was the 'worthy' Sir Henry

'That was ane gud knight and hardy' ;

King Edward's host at Bannockburn, its 'multitude' and 'beauty,' is exhibited to us in all its formidable magnificence; and the heroic death of Sir Giles de Argentine—who, when he saw King Edward preparing for flight, bade him 'gud day,' and turning his bridle, rode single-handed on the foe—is recorded with sympathetic sorrow: 'Of his ded was great pittye.' King Edward had, of course, in Barbour's view, a bad cause; he fought for 'might' only, Bruce and the Scots for their lives, their children and wives, and the freedom of their land; but Englishmen and Scots alike met foemen worthy of their steel, and both with kindred ardour devoted themselves nobly to 'do chivalry.'

But *The Bruce* is not a mere record of adventures and combats: as a political masterpiece it occupies an exceptional place in literature; and much of its effect is gained by the vein of noble sentiment that animates it. The keynote is struck by the famous eulogy of freedom, beginning:—

'The Bruce'
a political
masterpiece.
Its lofty
idealism.

'A! fredome is a noble thing !
Fredome mayss man to haiff liking ;
Fredome all solace to man giffis,
He levys at ess that frely levys !
A noble hart may haiff nane ess,
Na ellys nocht that may him pless,

makes
pleasure

Nothing else

yearned for
above

nor

Gyff fredome failzhe ; for fre liking
Is zharnyt our all othir thing.
Na he, that ay hass levyt fre,
May nocht knaw weill the propyrte,
The angyr, na the wrechyt dome,
That is cowplit to foule thryldome.'

And the same lofty idealism pervades the whole poem. Here, for example, is an excellent commendation of loyalty :—

Loyalty

without
strong

'Leavte to luff is gretumly ;
Through leavte liffis men rycht wisly ;
With a wertu of leavte
A man may zeit suffieyand be :
And but leawte may nane haiff price,
Quhethir he be wycht or he be wyss ;
For quhar it failzeys, na wertu
May be off price, na off valu,
To mak a man sa gud, that he
May symply gud man callt be.'

Then the efficacy of love is thus persuasively set forth :—

great

fellows
such
many

'For luff is off so mekill mycht
That it all paynys makes lycht ;
And mony tymis maiss tendir wychtis
Of swilk strength and swilk mychtis,
That thai may mekill paynys endure
And forsakis nane aventure.'

And apropos of love, here is a naively excellent couplet on the service of women :—

much
ways

'In wemen mekill comfort lyis
And gret solace in mony wiss.'

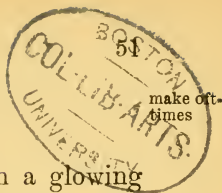
Again, the value of fearless decision is thus admirably presented :—

If

'For gude begynning and hardy,
And it be followit vittily,

BARBOUR'S 'BRUCE'

May ger oftsiss onlikely thing
Cum to right fair and just endying.'



And, to conclude these quotations, from a glowing eulogy of 'vorschip' (*i.e.* valour), here is a most happy definition of the thing itself:—

'For hardyment with foly is wice
Bot hardyment, that mellit is
With vit, is vorschip ay, per de :
For but vit, vorschip may not be.'

vice
mingled
wit; valour

Thus though *The Bruce* is primarily a patriotic epic, it at the same time presents us with a living picture of chivalry more vivid, through its generous patriotism, than that of Froissart. It glows with the true chivalric spirit of romance and adventure, not summoned, as in the case of most poets, from the mere imaginative past, but inspired by sympathetic regard for actual warriors, scarce a generation removed from that of the writer, and by the very moral atmosphere of a time identical in sentiment with theirs. Thus it is that Barbour is the main poetic progenitor of Sir Walter Scott. Scott 'kindled at his flame'; indeed, without Barbour's flame to kindle at, he might never have written his poetic romances, and he would certainly not have written them as we now have them. He was content to model himself in a great measure after the poet of *The Bruce*, or, in other terms, Barbour is a primeval, a half-articulate Scott. Barbour's vocabulary is somewhat stinted and monotonous, his artistic

Chivalric spirit
of 'The Bruce.'
Barbour the
precursor of
Sir Walter
Scott.

elaboration rude and incomplete, his intellectual standpoint very primitive, but in outline, in embryo, he has all the qualities of an artist intrinsically akin to Scott; and as regards romantic poetic narrative, he is, allowance being made for his so different circumstances, not so greatly inferior to his successor.

The great merits of *The Bruce* are its absolute clearness, its masterly selection of facts and details, its cunning regard for the picturesque, and its graphic compression. Notwithstanding his inevitable tendency to exaggerate the exploits of the Scottish heroes, Barbour particularly excels in the description of adventures and combats; and here especially Sir Walter wisely placed himself under his tutelage, for Barbour was theoretically a master in the art of war as practised by the ancients, and had listened to the recital of knightly feats by the tongues of famous warriors.

Here is part of a fight in which 'the King
Barbour as a slew the three men that swore his
depicter of death':—
combats.

'Thai abaid till that he was
 Entryt in ane narow place,
 Betuix a louchside and a bra ;
 That wes sa strait, ik wnderta,
 That he mycht nocht weill turn his stede.
 Then with a will till him thai gede ;
 And ane him by the bridill hynt :
 But he raucht till him sic a dynt,
 That arme and schuldyr flaw him fra.
 With that ane othir gan him ta

hill
 on each side

to; went
 seized
 reached to
 him; blow

take

Be the lege, and his hand gan schute
 Betuix the sterap and his fute :
 And quhen the King felt thar his hand,
 In sterapys stythly gan he stand,
 And strak with spuris the stede in by ;
 And he lansyt furth delyuerly,
 Swa that the tother failzeit fete ;
 And nocht-for-thi his hand was zeit
 Wndyr the sterap, magre his.'

straight up

nevertheless

As to the sequel, it must suffice to state that though the third combatant suddenly leapt on Bruce's horse from behind, Bruce was equal to the occasion, turning instantly round, dragging him forward and killing him, and then sending the reeking sword into the 'felon foe' at his stirrup.

Wonderfully vivid are also the descriptions of the various fights and stratagems of Bruce while pursued in the mountains by a 'sleuth-hund,' especially his adventures during a moonlight night, when, watching alone, he heard

At the ford.

'A hundis quhistlyng apon fer,
 That ay com till him ner and ner,'

to

which was followed by the 'haill rowt' of his foes, whom he resolved to withstand at the pass of the ford, where they could meet him only one by one; and, according to Barbour, he withstood them with such success that:—

'In litill space he left lyand
 Sa feill, that the vpcom wes then
 Dittit with slayn hors and men ;
 Swa that his fayis, for that stopping,
 Micht nocht cum to the vp-cummyng.'

so many
closed up

But of course the classic combat is that of Bruce on his grey palfrey, 'littil and joly,' against the

English champion De Bohun on his war-steed—'the first strak of the ficht' at Bannockburn. Indeed, the whole portrayal (Books XI. and XII.) of the eventful Bannockburn is, after its own fashion, a masterpiece. It could only have been accomplished after the most careful investigation and the most patient pondering of facts; and the knowledge—which clearly forms the substratum of the description—is so admirably animated with patriotic prejudice, with ingenuous admiration of every thought and act of Bruce as the one heaven-born commander, and with an unerring sense of the dramatically appropriate—whether the incidents of the drama be invented or embellished, or merely selected,—as to be almost irresistible in compelling sympathetic belief. The whole panorama of incident from the time that King Edward with his mighty host—their burnished arms glancing in the sun, so that 'all the felde ves in ane leyme,' and their 'baneris richt freschly flawmand'—took his way from Berwick, until

Barbour as the poet of Bannockburn.

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boat
way

'That he with sevintene in a bat
Wes fayne for to hald hame his gat,'

is set before us with full circumstantiality of detail, enlivened with apt and frequent anecdote. We realise the scenes with something of the vividness of actual pageantry and battle; we are made to

share in the uncertainties and fears, the resolves and hopes, and final triumph of the Scots ; so that in truth Bannockburn, as described by Barbour, has done more to perpetuate the sentiment of Scottish nationality than even Bannockburn as fought and won by Bruce.

But properly to appreciate Bannockburn as an achievement of Barbour's hero, it is necessary to know the 'nobill king'—his hardihood, ^{Barbour's portraits.} audacity, hopefulness, courtesy, supreme wisdom in council, and unmatched prowess in arms—as portrayed with such adoring skill throughout the whole poem. All Barbour's heroes are, in truth, admirably drawn—drawn, it is evident, from the life, that is, from well-verified tradition, and with an appreciation at once intelligent and sincere. Generally we have no formal portrait ; but here, in conclusion, is one of the Black Douglas :—

' He wes in all his dedis lele ;	loyal
For him dedeynzeit nocht to dele	he deigned
With trechery, na with falset.	falsehood
His hart on hey honour wes set ;	
And hym contenyt on sic maner,	he demeaned
That all him luffyt that war him ner.	him ; such
Bot he wes nocht sa fayr, that we	
Suld spek gretly off his beaute :	
In wysage wes he sumdeill gray,	something
And had blak har, as ic hard say ;	
Bot off lymmys he wes weill maid,	
With banys gret and schuldrys braid.	
His body wes weyll maid and lenye,	
As thai that saw him said to me.	
Quhen he wes blyth, he wes luffy,	
And meyk and sweyt in cumpany :	

But quha in battaill mycht him se
 All othir contenance had he.
 And in spek wlispit he sum deill;
 Bot that sat him rycht wonder weill.'

Andrew of Wyntoun's *Orygynalle Chronykil of Scotland*¹ is, like *The Bruce* of Barbour, the pro-

Wyntoun's
 'Chronicle'—
 its aim.

duct of the exulting sense of nationality inspired by the permanent triumph of Robert the Bruce. It is indited to set forth the glory and honour of Scotland as an independent kingdom. But while the aim of Barbour is to quicken the sentiment of patriotism by a recital of the illustrious achievements of Scotland's deliverer, Wyntoun's main purpose—like that of his contemporary Latin chronicler, Fordun—is to justify the claims of Scotland to an independent nationality by an appeal to the authority of antiquity, by a recital of the history of the Scottish nation from the earliest dawn of tradition.

Of the author scarce anything is known beyond what may be gathered from his own *Chronicle*. By

Andrew of
 Wyntoun
 (fl. c. 1395-1424).

baptism, he tells us, he was Andrew of Wyntoun, and this seems to imply that he was a cadet of a good family of that name, of which several are mentioned in Scottish documents of the period. Further, he mentions that Sir John of the Wemyss, at whose instance he compiled his *Chronicle*, had his 'service in his ward'; but he says nothing more of his obligations to the

¹ Published, ed. Macpherson, 1795; and in *The Historians of Scotland* series, ed. Laing, 1872-79, from the collation of numerous MSS.

laird of Wemyss. Originally a canon regular of St. Andrews, Wyntoun was, by the grace and favour of his fellow-canons, elected, some time before 1395, prior of St. Serf's Inch in Lochleven, where—with much the same outlook of water, wood, and hill as that which, blent with the gloomy memories of a prison, was to become stamped on the brain of Mary Stuart—he continued to pass the uneventful days of a scholar and recluse until probably his death. This must have taken place not long after the conclusion of his *Chronicle*, between 1420 and 1424; for in his prologue to the last book he refers to 'sudden and fierce maladies' with which he was sorely troubled, and which admonished to 'see for a conclusion,' for, says he, with the conviction of pious humility—

'Wal I wate, on schorte delay
At a court I mon appeire
Fell accusationis thare till here.'

Well I wot
must
Dire; to

Like *The Bruce*, Wyntoun's *Chronicle* is written in the octo-syllabic couplet, but it is in no proper sense a poem. Even as a mere metrist Wyntoun is inferior to Barbour; nor is his narrative—except by widely isolated fits and starts—warmed with anything of Barbour's patriotic glow. Rarely, except in reporting mythological marvels, does he show symptoms of enthusiasm; and on the whole he keeps very much to the commonplace conventional level of contemporary chroniclers. No more than they had he any just and sufficient conception of history as it was later

Characteristics
of the 'Chron-
icle.'

understood. His aim is neither faithfully to picture nor thoroughly to expound the past, although he intermittently relieves the tedium of the narrative by a certain anecdotal garrulosity. His most marked want is that of individuality. Thus his character-sketches are often very much a mere summary of conventional virtues, and smack mainly of the funereal eulogy. Here is how he panegyrises Alexander III. :—

charitable
To

‘ He honryd God and Haly Kirk,
And medful dedys he oyswd to wyrk.
Till all prestys he dyd reverens
And sawffyd thare statys wyth diligens.
He was stedfast in crystyn fay ;
Relygyows men he honoryde ay.
He luivyd all men that war wertuows ;
He lathyd and chastyd all vytyows.’

And the perfections of Sir Andrew Moray are catalogued thus :—

‘ He wes a Lord of gret Bowntè
Of sobyr lyf and of chastytè ;
Wyse and wertuows of cownsale ;
And of his gudis libérale.
He wes of gret Devotyown
In Prayeris and in Orysown ;
He wes of mekil Almows-dede ;
Stowt and hardy of manhede.’

The standpoint of Wyntoun is in fact essentially that of a Churchman and recluse. The animating events of the past, the glorious achievements of great warriors, the stir and struggle of battle, have not for him quite the same puissant charm that they possess for

Wyntoun's
standpoint
that of a
Churchman.

Barbour. Though he does not disdain to mention jousting tournaments—everything is fish that comes to his net—chivalry was not for him, as for Barbour, a name to conjure with. In his antipathy to the English he is therefore something more virulent. While Barbour expresses mild astonishment that King Edward, who had so little mercy on captured Scots, could 'trastly' ask mercy of God, Wyntoun does not scruple to give his decisive ghostly verdict against Edward's salvation:—

'The sawlys that he gert to slay down thare	made
He sent quhare his sawle nevyrmare	
Wes lyk to come, that is the blys	
Quhare alkyn joy ay lestand is.'	every

And he thus roundly asserts the starkly unprincipled conduct of the English in regard to their most solemn obligations:—

'It is of Inglis natioune	
The commone kend conditioune	known
Of Trewis the wertu to forget,	Truces
And rekles of gud Faith to be.	
Quhare thai can thare Avantage se	
Thare may na Band be maid sa ferm	
Than thai can mak thare Will thare term.'	

Wyntoun entitles his *Chronicle* 'orygynall' because, as he himself explains, it begins at the beginning, namely, with man's creation, and with a history of man as an inhabitant of the world in general, or so much of it as was known to Wyntoun. In the adoption of such a pedantic comprehensiveness, he and other chroniclers

Subject and
Sources of the
'Chronicle.'

were, it may be, partly influenced by scriptural example, but no doubt it was also Wyntoun's aim to emphasise the dignity of the Scottish nation as possessing annals which were interwoven with the world's history. After a general outline of the more wondrous events of the half-mythical ages, Scotland is seen gradually emerging from the obscurity of the past; but not till the reign of King Ewan in 724—commencing with the sixth book of the *Chronicle*—is its history related with much detail. For all his events Wyntoun is careful, so far as possible, to give the year; and while well acquainted with the standard authorities on ecclesiastical and European history, he had clearly access to various Scottish monastic records which are now destroyed. Several portions of a Latin chronicle were also utilised; and he further incorporated a Scottish chronicle, written, like his own, in octo-syllabic metre, and embracing the years from the birth of David II. to the death of Robert II. Besides this he took the liberty of borrowing some 300 lines of Barbour's *Bruce*, bringing events down to the time when Bruce slew the Comyn; but for the remainder of Bruce's career he modestly refers the reader to Barbour, who, he says,

made

'In Brws hys Bwk has gert be sene
Mare wysely tretyd into wryt
Than I can thynk with all my wyt.'

It is clear that Wyntoun was, according to his lights, a conscientious and painstaking chronicler;

and even the credulity which he shares with other writers of his time gives a certain piquant flavour to much that is otherwise tedious, and increases rather than not the historic value of his rhymes, for it at least supplies us with interesting outlines of superstitious belief. Who, for example, would wish to lose his version of the wondrous story of the Sheepstealer, and the striking exposure of his prevarication by the dead beast itself? The thief, it would appear, had already devoured it, or the most part of it, and with portions of its members in the process of digestion was so brazenly bold as, when summoned before St. Serf, to deny the theft, whereupon

Wyntoun's
credulity—the
Sheepstealer.

'The schape thare bletyd in hys Wame.
Swa wes he taynted schamfully
And at Saynt Serf askyd mercy.'

Belly

Then we have the great theological tilt between St. Serf and the Devil, recorded with the delicate appraisement of metaphysical niceties which stamps the scholastic connoisseur.

St. Serf and
the Devil.

Wyntoun had also, it is plain, a special pride in recording this august encounter, from the fact that it took place on the very 'Inch' where he was penning his *Chronicle*. So mortified, he vauntingly narrates, was the arch-enemy by the superior astuteness of the Saint, that in disgust he suddenly vanished,

'And nevyr wes sen thare till this day.'

Akin to this we have an elaborate version of Pope Sylvester's infatuated treaty with the Devil, whose spiritual dominion he finally eluded by
 Pope Sylvester. delivering up to him, one by one, his fleshly members.

But the most interesting of all the traditions is the original version of the interview between Macbeth
 The Weird Sisters. and the weird sisters, which, as embellished by Boece, forms the basis of Shakespeare's great tragedy:—

going]
 those

Cromarty

‘ A nycht he thowcht in hys dreming
 That sittand he was besyd the King
 At a sete in hwntyng, swa
 In-till a leysh had grewhundys twa.
 He thowcht quhile he was swa sittand
 He sawe thre wemen by gangand,
 And thai wemen than thowcht he
 Thre werd systrys mast lyk to be.
 The fyrst he hard say gangand by,
 “ Lo yhondyr the Thayne off Crwombawchty ” !
 The tothir woman sayd agayne,
 “ Off Morave yhondyre I se the Thayne.”
 The thryd than sayd, “ I se the Kyng.”
 All this he herd in his dremyng.
 Sone efftyre that in his yhowthad
 Off thyr thayndomys he Thayne was made ;
 Syne neyst he thowcht to be Kyng
 Fra Duncanys dayis had tane endyng.’

Historically the most valuable part of the *Chronicle* is that from the death of Bruce ; and for these eighty or ninety years it is the most important and trustworthy record we possess.

Although *The Actes and Deidis of the Illustre and*

Vallzeant Campioun Schir William Wallace, by Henry the Minstrel,¹ belongs to a considerably later date than Barbour's *Bruce*, or Wyntoun's *Chronicle*, its historic theme suggests the propriety of dealing with it in the present chapter.

According to the historian John Major, Henry the Minstrel, who was blind, Major says, from his birth, composed the whole book of William Wallace during Major's infancy, that is, between 1450 and 1460. In the Lord

Blind Harry's
'Wallace.'

Blind Harry,
or Henry the
Minstrel (fl. c.
1450-1492).

High Treasurer's *Accounts* there are several entries of small sums paid to 'Blin Hary' for recitations given before James IV., the last entry being in 1492; and it is almost certain that he died in that or the following year, for in Dunbar's *Lament for the Makaris* his name precedes that of Patrick Johnstoun, who died not long after 12th June 1494. In his catalogue of the deceased 'Makaris,' Dunbar does not adhere to chronology with absolute strictness in every case, but he seems to profess an adherence to it in the stanza in which Blind Harry and Patrick Johnstoun are introduced, and apparently means to affirm that the 'schot of mortal hail' reached Johnstoun after it had struck Blind Harry and Sandy Traill.

¹ MS. in the Advocates' Library, written in 1488 by John Ramsay; printed about 1508 (but only fragments of a copy of this edition exist), 1570 (copy in the British Museum), 1594, and at different periods down to 1790; edited from the original MS. by Dr. Jamieson, 1820, and by Mr. James Moir for the Scottish Text Society, 1884-89.

Both Blind Harry and his poem are something of a conundrum. Harry was professionally a minstrel,

Major on and his chief theme seems to have been
Blind Harry Wallace; for Major informs us that by
the Minstrel, the recitation of his book on Wallace
and Blind Harry on him-
self. *coram principis* (*i.e.* in the halls of the

nobles or gentry) he deservedly obtained food and raiment. Of himself Blind Harry says: 'It is well known I am a burel' (*i.e.* boorish, or unlearned) 'man'; he also describes his poem as 'but a rurall' (*i.e.* rude or unpolished) 'dytt'; and he further thus apostrophises it:—

'Go nobill buk, fulfillyt off gud sentens,
Suppose thow be baran off eloquens;
Go worthie buk fullfyllt off suthfast dede,
But in language off help thou has gret ned.'¹

true exploits

This, it may be said, is but the conventional pose of graceful modesty; and in a modern writer it might even be accepted as symptomatic of the modesty which is the blossom of culture. Moreover, the merits of the poem are not quite those of the modern rustic bard; and in his own time Harry may be ranked next to Henryson. As a mere metrical achievement the poem is a great advance on Barbour's *Bruce*; and although Harry is not usually classed as a Chaucerian, there can be no doubt that he shared, directly or indi-

¹ In this envoy Blind Harry was doubtless inspired either by Chaucer (*Troilus and Criseyde*), Lydgate (*Temple of Glas*), or James I. (*The Kingis Quair*). It most closely resembles the last:—

'Go litill tretise, nakit of eloquence
Causing simplese and pouertee to wit.'

rectly, in the Chaucerian influence. It is significant, not merely that for the bulk of his poem he chose the heroic couplet—possibly the earliest extant example of its use in Scotland,—but that in the two instances in which he varied his metre he made choice of Chaucerian staves, introducing in Book II. 170-354 a nine-line stanza, aab, aab, abb (occasionally bab), identical with that of Chaucer's *Compleynte of Faire Anelida upon False Arcyte* and with Dunbar's *Goldyn Targe*, and at the beginning of Book VI. the ballat royal or French octave of three rhymes—ab, ab, bc, bc—in its five accented form. Of course Harry may have got these metres from another than Chaucer, and indeed the ballat royal was in common use in England from the fourteenth century,¹ but Chaucer, we know, wrote to be publicly 'red,' or 'elles songe,' and it is not improbable that he was recited, if not by Harry, at least in Harry's hearing. Anyhow, Harry employs the ballat royal in such a manner as to show that he had an admirable perception of its proper poetic function. Here, for example, are two stanzas forming part of a nobly pathetic strain, not unworthy of either Henryson or Dunbar:—

' Now leiff thi myrth, now leiff thi haill plesance ;
 Now leiff thi bliss, now leiff thi childis age ;
 Now leiff thi zouth, now folow thi hard chance ;
 Now leiff thi lust, now leiff thi mariage ;
 Now leiff thi luff, for thow sall loss a gage
 Quhilk neuir in erd sall be redemyt agayne,
 Folow fortoun, and all hir fers owtrage ;
 Go leiff in wer, go leiff in cruell payne.

whole

Which ; earth

¹ Wright's *Political Poems*, *passim*.

frail Fy on fortoun, fy on thi frewall quheyll ;¹
 Fy on thi traist, for her it has no lest ;
 Thow transfigowryt Wallace out off his weill
 to Quhen he traistyt for till haiff lestynt best ;
 here His plesance her till him was bot a gest
 no constancy Throw thi fers cours, that has na hap to ho ;
 pleasant Him thow ourthrew out off his likand rest,
 into Fra gret plesance, in wer, trawaill, and wo.'

Harry's classical allusions, astronomical lore, and use of French words and phrases have also been adduced as proof that 'he was by no means an unlearned man.' Further, since he affirms that he composed his poem

Which ' Eftir the pruiiff geyffin fra the Latin buk
 Quilk master Blayr in his tym vnderduk,'

it has been supposed that he had Latin sufficient to enable him to paraphrase a Latin *Life* of Wallace, now unknown, written by a person, now equally occult—a certain John Blair, whom Harry declares to have been Wallace's chaplain. Moreover, the composition of so long, so complicated, and, after its own fashion, so meritorious a poem, has been pronounced beyond the powers of one born blind; for in the days of Harry the blind were not taught the art of reading, which forms the basis of education.

But notwithstanding this accumulative array of specious argument, the hypothesis that best fits the whole circumstances of the case is that Harry—otherwise nameless except as 'Blind'—was, as Major states, blind from

¹ The wheel of Fortune is frequently alluded to by Chaucer, and is elaborately depicted in *The Kingis Quair*.

his birth, and, as he himself records, a 'burel' or unlearned man. Of course, he neither could have been blind nor unlearned if he did himself read or translate Blair's Latin *Life* of Wallace. But so far from affirming that he had either seen or read the aforesaid book, Harry does not even affirm that it then existed; and if he does not actually imply that it no longer existed, he refrains from stating where, or from whom, he had access to it. Further, nothing whatever is now known of this Latin *Life*; for the so-called *Relationes Arnoldi Blair*, even if authentic and the original of the *Scotichronicon* account of Wallace, instead of being derived from it, supply but the slightest materials for an account of Wallace. Nor was the existence of Blair's book known to Major, who gives only partial credit to Harry's stories; nor to Wyntoun, who wrote of Wallace:—

'Off his gud dedis and manhead
Gret gestis I hard say are made,
But sa mony, I trow nocht
As he intill his dayis wrocht';

not
during his
lifetime

nor, in fact, to any writer—except Harry—previous to the inventious Dempster (1627), who, further, does not scruple to assign to Blair an admirably selected companion volume, *De Tyrannide*. The truth, therefore, seems to be that Harry's main sources were the 'gestis' mentioned by Wyntoun; nor is it at all unlikely that the mythical Latin *Life* was the invention of one of those earlier bards.

But if Harry knew not Latin, whence, it may be

asked, those classical allusions of his? To this the sufficient reply is that there are allusions and allusions, and that those of Harry are in no degree identical in kind with those of Barbour, or Wyntoun, or other learned writers, but merely the common counters of the romancists. Nor as a symptom of education is more stress to be laid on his employment of French terms not now in use in Scotland, for, as we have already seen, the Scottish vernacular, even in its spoken form, has now lost many French words and idioms which at one time had been almost woven into the language; and besides, Harry, while frequenting courts and castles, had many opportunities of picking up French phrases. The truth is, that though uneducated, as we now understand the term, Harry, as a professional minstrel, must have undergone a special literary training. We must disabuse our minds of preconceptions of education as solely derivable from books; for Harry and his brother minstrels and reciters were to their generation very much what the printed book is to ours. Born blind, Harry, in all likelihood, was dedicated to the office of minstrel from boyhood, and instructed for it by accomplished minstrels. Like other minstrels, he would presumably learn by heart much of the traditional and current poetry of his day; for originally poetry was composed solely for recital, nor did the art of writing ever become so complete a substitute for recital as the art of printing.

Harry's education as Minstrel.

But, of course, being but a minstrel, Harry has the special defects of the minstrel's qualities. Compare the *Wallace*, for example, with Barbour's *Bruce* or Henryson's *Fables*, and the general inferiority of calibre proclaims Harry to have been but a 'burel' man. An accomplished minstrel, it is true—though representing minstrelsy in its decadence, minstrelsy divorced from chivalry,—and saturated with various poetic influences and traditions; also, it is clear, of robust personality, and animated with much rough poetic ardour, but devoid of true intellectual discipline as of consistent moral dignity; wofully, if not wilfully, heedless of patent historic facts; childishly credulous, and combining with a certain rugged pathos a braggardism that is frankly, and even fervently, brutal.

The *Wallace* of Blind Harry is, in truth, the mere hero of a pantomime. Witness, for example, his really burlesque encounter with Percy and his horsemen at the Water of Irvine, when he was engaged in fishing, and had no other weapon at hand than the pole of a drag-net. On one of the horsemen approaching him with drawn sword, to compel him to give up his fish,

'Willzham was wa he had na wappynis thar
 Bot the poutstaff, the quhilk in hand he bar.
 Wallas with it fast on the cheik him tuk
 Wyth so gud will, quhill of his feit he schuk.
 The suerd flaw fra him a fur breid on the land.
 Wallas was glaid, and hynt it sone in hand ;
 And with the suerd awkwart he him gawe
 Wndyr the hat, his crage in sondre drawe.

sorry
 netpole ;
 which
 until
 breadth
 took
 neck

By; the
others

if

That; both
other

Be that the layff lychtyt about Wallas ;
He had no helpe, only bot Goddis grace.
On athir side full fast on him thai dange ;
Gret perell was giff thai had lestyt lang.
Apone the hede in gret ire he strak ane ;
The sherand suerd glaid to the colar bane.
Ane ither on the arme he hitt so hardely
Quhill hand and suerd bathe on the feld can ly.
The tither twa fled to thar hors agayne ;
He stekit him was last upon the playne.
Thre slew he thar, two fled with all thair mycht
Efter thar lord, bot he was out off sicht.'

And this is but a very mild sample of the hero's
'acts of prowess eminent.' As Harry says of him—

streaming

'It was his lyff, and most part of his fude,
To se thaim sched the byrmand southrone blude.'

Or at least it was the 'lyff' and 'maist part of the
fude' of Harry so to depict him; for the poem is
really a mirror of Harry's Scottish audience, of Scot-
land after the age of chivalry had gone, and now for
generations at bitter feud with England.

Of course, poetic justice, and even probability,
demanded that such a resistless champion should,

Wallace's
mythical
march on
London.

whatever his final fate, taste, at least
once, the crowning triumph of bringing
Edward and England to their knees.

Harry, therefore, presented his hearers with the
mythical march on London—a twin conception to
that which must have haunted the brain of Prince
Charlie on the eve of his famous fiasco—when 'in
awful fer' Wallace and his wild host travelled
'through the land' of the Southron. The Commons

of England urged their mesmerised monarch to make some effort against the resistless Scots, but, asseverates the unblushing Harry,

‘Awfull Eduuard durst nocht Wallace abid
In playn battaill for all England so wid.’

The recreant English king—erstwhile *Malleus Scotorum*—having thus in trembling terror retired within the battlements of the Tower, Wallace, The terror of Edward. shortly before reaching St. Albans, despatched a message to the effect that unless overtures of peace were immediately proffered he would assail him ‘at Londonis zettis.’ Naturally such a menace greatly perturbed the ‘awfull Eduuard’ :—

‘With gret wness apoun his feit he stud,
Wepand for wo for his der tendyr blud’ ; difficulty

and at last he did accept the advice of his council ‘to take pees in tyme.’

But a new difficulty arose :—

‘Na man was thar that durst to Wallace wend,’ The Queen sent as ambassador to Wallace.
for the mere sight of an Englishman
‘moyis him ay to wer.’ But, happily, the queen herself was already, so says Harry, a little enamoured of the conqueror

‘For the gret woice off his hie nobilnes’ ; fame

and having, therefore, a laudable curiosity to behold the wondrous hero, she volunteered to be the messenger. All the lords at once seconded her proposal; and to stay the wrath of this terrible

Achilles the king had nothing for it but 'with awkward will' to give his consent.

One beautiful summer morning, therefore, when Wallace and two knightly attendants were sauntering near St. Albans 'atour the feyldis green,' they saw coming riding soberly from the south none other than the Queen of England with a great train of ladies and old priests, who when they reached Wallace's pavilion, conspicuous by the effigy of the Scottish lion,

then

'To ground thai lycht, and syne on kneis can faw,
Prayand for pece thai cry with petous cher.'

Wallace received the distressful queen with gracious courtesy :—

'Quhen scho him saw, scho wald haiff knelyt doune ;
In armys sone he caught this queyn with croun,
And kyssyt hyr withoutyn wordis mor ;
Sa dyd he neur to na sotheron befor.'

But, of course, the incorruptible patriot was proof against her promises, her prayers, her bribes,

made ; for
that purpose

('Thre thousand pound, off fynest gold so red,
Scho gert be brocht to Wallace in that sted.
"Madam," he said, "na sic tribut we craiff ;
Anothir mendis we wald off England haiff "') ;

and even her soft confessions of love :—

reputed

"Wallace," scho said, "yhe war clepyt my luff :
Mor baundounly I maid me for to pruff ;
Traistand tharfor your rancour for to slak ;
Methink ye suld do sum thing for my saik."

Though much flattered, he warily and wisely declined

to enter into political understandings merely with ladies: he would treat only with the King:—

‘All the hail pass apon himselff he sal tak
Off pees or wer quhat hapnyt we to mak.’

whole busi-
ness

All, therefore, that was left for the queen was, on her return, to advise the king and his lords

‘To purches pees, with outyn wordis mar :
For all Ingland may rew his raid full sayr.’

And Edward had nothing for it but to agree to the terms dictated by Wallace—to give up Roxburgh, Berwick, and other castles, and to renounce his claims to a Scottish overlordship.

For much of the preposterousness of Harry's stories—especially his amazing accounts of combats—his blindness must be held responsible. He could not recognise the sheer impossibility of many of his glosses or inventions. Some have indeed argued, from what is termed

Defects of the
poem due
partly to
Harry's blind-
ness.

his ‘feeling for nature,’ that he must at one time have possessed the faculty of sight. But this ‘feeling’ is shown merely in his references to the influences of the seasons, and to the charms of a spring or summer morning—influences and charms to which the blind are specially susceptible; and indeed the very general character of his recorded impressions of nature is almost proof positive that he was born blind. His descriptions of Wallace's wanderings display, for example, no more detailed topographical knowledge than is contained in a mere map of names.

Yet gross travesty of the truth though *Wallace* be, it no doubt embalms a considerable modicum of fact.

The *Wallace*
of *Harry*, and
the *Wallace* of
fact.

It even records important facts—such as the visit of Wallace to France—not to be found in Wyntoun or Bower. The original ‘gestis,’ on which the poem is partly founded, must have had their foundation in actual occurrences, however much these occurrences may have been embellished, or even transformed, by successive minstrels; and although to ‘tickle the ears of the groundlings’ was ever Harry’s main aim, we may nevertheless be certain that the leading features of so great a personality as Wallace would—so far as the common crowd could understand it—be preserved under all the external accumulation of fable. Nor, allowance being made for national partialities and prejudices, does Wallace, as portrayed by Harry, differ essentially from the robber chief, the freebooter, the murderer, the malicious incendiary, of the English chroniclers. Clearly a hero who—even when there was no war with England—was only too pleased to take an Englishman at a disadvantage and assassinate him, and who, when closely pursued by sleuth-hounds, did not scruple to slay his companion, of whose fidelity he was nothing more than doubtful, and did so with probably, as Harry more than hints, a view of providing something that would prove a ‘great stoppage’ of the hounds,—clearly such a hero was not possessed of a specially scrupulous sense of honour, and may very well have been the ‘le Wallas’ who in his youth

was guilty at Perth of robbing a widow of her ale. It is, in fact, more probable than not that Wallace was a warrior very much after the type of Rob Roy: that his audacity, his skill in arms, and his other great qualities as a leader were perfected in the course of his experiences as a freebooter. But this augments rather than diminishes the greatness and glory of his actual achievements. The bare, undisputed facts of his marvellous career—his rise from obscurity into unrivalled eminence, even when feudalism was at its strongest, as the marshaller of the nation against the might of England, and the stand he made in the name of the people as the champion of the country's freedom, when king and nobles were succumbing to Edward's diplomacy—sufficiently attest not merely his political insight, and his ability and prowess in war, but the stupendous power of his personality.

IV

THE SCOTTISH FÁBLIAU AND THE DECAY OF ROMANCE

‘ ANE BALLAT OF THE NINE NOBLES ’—‘ RAUF COILZEAR ’
—‘ COLKELBIE’S SOW ’—‘ KING BERDOK ’—‘ THE
GYRE-CARLING ’—‘ LORD FERGUS’S GHOST.’

THE great crucial struggle of Scotland with the Edwards, which issued in its triumph over the gigantic efforts of England to effect its conquest, naturally tended to lessen the interest of the people in the half-mythical stories of the old romances. For the fables of the romancists Barbour sought to substitute ‘suthfast’ stories about Scotland’s own heroes; and ‘gret gestis’ of the deeds of Wallace were, as we have seen, current among the people long before Blind Harry began, in that hero’s behalf, to make the round of the Scottish castles. A curious example of the preference of the Scots for their own heroes to the old traditional ones is found in *Ane Ballat of the Nine Nobles*.¹ The ballad, after devoting a stanza to each of the nine heroes of

¹ Printed in Laing’s *Select Remains*, 1822 (second ed. 1885), from a MS. copy at the conclusion of a MS. copy of Fordun’s *Chronicle* in the University Library, Edinburgh.

antiquity—Hector, Alexander, Cæsar, Joshua, David, Maccabeus, Arthur, Charlemagne, and Godfrey—concludes thus:—

‘Robert the Brois throu hard feichtyng, With few venkust the mychthy Kyng Off Ingland, Edward twyse in fycht, At occupyit his realme but rycht ; At sumtyme wes set so hard At hat nocht sax till hym toward ; Ze gude men that ther balletis redis Deme quha dochtyast was in dedis.’	vanquished Who ; with- out six on his side these Decide
---	---

Thus although the fourteenth century saw the completion of several important tales of romance, for the bulk of the nation the old romance poetry was losing its charm; and before the influence of Chaucer had reached Scotland, the mirthful or humorous tale began to obtain that special place in Scottish vernacular poetry which it has never ceased to hold.

That the *Taill of Rauf Coilzear*, how he harbrait King Charles,¹ is, like the famed *Sir Thopas* of Chaucer, intended as a direct caricature of minstrels or romances, is not quite evident; for the old legends concerning Charlemagne are not here burlesqued as they were by Ariosto and other Italian poets, the marvellous being merely superseded by the humorous. But the

¹ Published at St. Andrews in 1572 (copy, the only one known, in the Advocates’ Library, Edinburgh); republished in Laing’s *Select Remains of Ancient Popular and Romance Poetry*, 1822 (second ed. 1885); for the English Text Society, ed. Herrtage, 1882; by Tonndorf, Berlin, 1894; and for the Scottish Text Society, in *Scottish Alliterative Poems*, ed. Amours, 1894-97.

very introduction of such a plain personage as a collier or charcoal merchant, with his panniers, is inconsistent with the dignity of the old romances. Properly, the poem is akin rather to the romantic ballad than the romance proper; and a similar theme figures in many later English and Scottish ballads, as *King Alfred and the Shepherd*, *Edward IV. and the Tanner*, *King James I. and the Tinker*, *Henry VIII. and the Cobbler*, etc. There is also a nearly contemporary English ballad, *John the Reve*,¹ which long enjoyed in Scotland a rival popularity with *Rauf*. Both are bracketed together by Dunbar and Douglas. Contrasting the rewards which those worthies received from their respective monarchs with his own neglect by James IV., Dunbar, in *Schir Remember*, reminds the king that

‘Gentle and semple of every clan
Keyne of Rauf Colzeare and John the Reif.’

Douglas gives the two knights a place cheek by jowl in his *Palice of Honour*:—

‘I saw Rauf Colzeare with his thrawin brow
Crabit John the Reif and auld Cowkellpis sow.’

But the growth of the romance ballad marked the decline of the old metrical romances. Further, the author of *Rauf* uses a stave specially associated with the serious romances, and the mere utilisation of it for the purposes of mirth or humour inevitably suggests burlesque. Some have indeed surmised,

¹ Percy folio MS., printed by the Ballad Society, ed. Furnivall, 1867-68.

from the fact that *Rauf* begins after a similar fashion to *The Awntyrs of Arthur* (p. 37), and is in the same stave, that it also may have been written by Huchown, but it is unlikely that Huchown would seek to parody himself. Besides slightly parodying *The Awntyrs*, *Rauf* is probably derived from some old Norman tale. In any case, the poet has really given it a Scottish setting. Though the scene is laid in France, the muir is a Scottish muir; the snowstorm is a right Scottish snowstorm; the collier is an honest, but rude, dour, unmannered Scot; and the humour of the vividly dramatic scenes is Scottish to the core.

One day, while hunting in the forest, Charlemagne, through the oncome of a snowstorm, got separated from his train.

The King
meets the
collier.

‘The wind blew out of the Eist, stiflie and stoure,
The deip¹ durandlie draif in mony deip dell’;

keen
continuous
drift

he lost his way, and when almost in despair, he, ‘on the wild muir in blinding storm,’

‘Sa come thair ane cant carll chachand the gait
With ane capill and twa creillis cuplit abufe.’

cheerful fel-
low; trudg-
ing the road
horse; pan-
niers

On the king asking the ‘cant carll’ to bring him to ‘sum herbery,’ the collier told him there was none in the neighbourhood, but made him welcome to his own dwelling ‘amang the fellis hie.’ As the king was clad in rough hunting raiment, the collier, taking

¹ It has been supposed that ‘deip’ is a misprint for some word meaning drift or snow. Drift is not, however, an old Scots word, and it is at least possible that ‘draif’ may here mean drift—that which is driven.

him for a common wayfarer—if not a highwayman—treated him with the familiarity of an equal, modified at first by wary suspicion. On arriving at the door, after stabling their horses, the collier motioned to him to enter first; and when the king ceremoniously insisted that the collier should precede him, the collier, unversed in the punctilios of politeness, and not quite easy in his mind as to the stranger's purpose, took him by the cuff of the neck and shoved him forward, saying—

If; ready
knew

‘Gif thow at bidding suld be boun or obeysand,
And gif thow of courtasie couth, thow hes forzet it clene.’

The collier, in fact, claimed sovereignty in his own house, and unhesitating compliance with the slightest indication of his wishes:—

Since else;
ignoranthow

‘Sen ellis thow art vnkawin
To mak me Lord of my awin,
Sa mot I thriue I am thrawin,
Begin we to threip.’

angry
quarrel

But the king was insufficiently heedful of this plain warning. When, therefore, on supper being ready, the collier invited him to take his wife by the hand and sit down at the board, he again politely suggested that the collier should first take his seat. This second exhibition of gross ill manners was too much for the choleric collier:—

Supper is
served.

without
more ado

‘He let gyrd to the King, withoutin ony mair,
And hit him under the cir with his richt hand.

Quhill he stakkerit thair with all,	Until
Half the breid of the hall.	breadth
He faind neuer of ane fall	
Quhill he the eird fand.’	felt the ground

On the king recovering himself, the collier called on his wife to take the guest by the hand and lead him to the board. The king submitted in silence, whereupon his host thus admonished him :—

“Schir, thow art vnskillfull, and that sall I warrand,	
Thow byrd to haue nurtour aneuch, and thow hes nane ;	ought ;
Thow hes walkit, I wis, in mony wyld land,	enough
The mair vertew thow suld haue, to keip the fra blame	guess
Thow suld be courtes of kynd, and ane cunnand courtier.	
Thocht that I simpill be,	Though
Do as I bid thee :	
The house is mine pardie	by my faith
And all that is heir.”’	

Though never in his life ‘thus-gait leird’ (taught in this way), and rather amazed at the collier’s notions of courtesy, the king took the collier’s rebuke in seeming good part, which at once restored the collier’s good-humour. The fare was of the best—rabbits, venison, and game from the king’s own forests, with wine of quite an excellent vintage—and as the evening advanced they ‘fure into fusion.’ Sitting round the blazing fire, the collier entertained his guest with stories of hunting feats in the king’s own forest, where, he affirmed, he brought down the fattest of the deer ; and having at last exhausted the budget of his confidences, he began to show some curiosity as to the name and pursuits of his guest, and inquired as to his ‘maist wyning,’ that is,

Supper and conversation.

his usual place of residence. The king informed him that he was a groom in the Queen's Chamber, and at the palace was known as Wymond of the Wardrobe. On leaving in the morning, he further advised his host to bring a load of coals to the palace and inquire for him, when he would be certain of a ready sale at a good price. This advice the masterful collier—much against the counsel of his wife, who could not believe that the stranger had forgotten all about the blow—resolved to accept; and his adventures at the palace are told with not a little of the same admirable verve and humour which characterise the narrative of the great supper scene in his own dwelling.

A knight, Sir Roland, whom the king had directed to watch for the collier, told him he had orders to bring him before the king; but the sturdy collier declined to be at the service of any one until, in accordance with his promise, he had brought his load of coals to Wymond of the Wardrobe. Both were obstinate, but of necessity the determination of the collier triumphed, who further at parting challenged Sir Roland to meet him on horseback for single combat at the same place and at the same hour on the morrow. On the collier inquiring at the palace gate for Wymond of the Wardrobe, he was by the king's orders admitted; and pushing his way unceremoniously through the throng of courtiers into the royal hall, he at last got a sight of his guest, when he mused thus:—

The collier's
adventures at
the palace.

“I ken him weill, thocht he be cled in vther clething
In clais of clene gold, kythand zone cleir.

* * * * *

In faith he is of mair stait than euer he me tald.

Allace, that I was hidder wylit,

I dreid me sair I be begylit !”

The King preuillie smylit,

Quhen he saw that bald.’

know;
though
glittering
brightly
yonder
more

sorely

bold one

Then, while the collier stood lost in perplexity and wonder, the king began, greatly to his alarm, to relate his adventures of the previous night, and concluded by asking the company what they thought should be done to one who had treated him in this fashion. The ‘courageous knights’ suggested that he should be hung, but the king took a different and more human view of the collier’s character and conduct:—

“God forbot,” he said, “my thank war sic thing

To him that succourit my lyfe in sa euill ane nicht !

Him semis ane stalwart man and stout in stryking,

That carll for his courtasie salbe maid knight ;

I hald the counsall full euill that Christin man slais,

For I had myster to haue ma,

And not to distroy tha

That war worthie to ga

To fecht on Goddis fais.”’

my thanks
were such
a

fellow

need ; more
those

fight

Raised to his new rank, and provided with a horse and a suit of rich armour, Sir Rauf, therefore, on the morrow sallies out to keep his ap-
pointment with Sir Roland. As he nears
the place of tryst he sees approaching a gigantic knight riding on a camel, whom, taking him for Sir Roland, he attacks at full speed. At the first shock the spears of both are splintered and

The collier
as knight.

their steeds killed; and when they are engaged in a desperate fight on foot, Sir Roland himself appears and separates them, when the opponent of Sir Rauf is found to be Magog, a great Saracen knight, sent to proclaim war against France. A speech of Sir Roland suddenly converts the Saracen to Christianity, and the three knights over their swords swear eternal friendship. Magog marries the Duchess of Anjou, and Sir Rauf finally becomes Marshal of France, when, to mark his gratitude to the king, he causes to be erected a hostel for wayfarers on that spot on the muir where he first met him.

In *Sir Rauf* the old metrical romance forms are utilised to exhibit one of the great heroes of romance

‘Colkelbie’s
Sow’—its
character.

mainly from a humorous point of view.

In the rude and grotesque production called *Colkelbie’s Sow*,¹ a remarkable picture of ancient rustic manners, the alliterative stave of the romances is discarded; and although the author also incorporates with his story a tale of chivalry, he gives it merely on the authority of his grandame Gurgunnald:—

peace; wars

‘Scho knew the lyfe of mony faderis ald,
Notable gestis of peax and weiris in storrye,
Fresche in hir mynd and recent of memorye.’

The author had also made the acquaintance of Chaucer’s poetry, for he refers to that chanticleer—

‘Of quhome Chaucer treitis in to his buke.’

¹ Bannatyne MS. ; also published in Laing’s *Select Remains*, 1822 and 1885.

Like that of the poet Skelton, the rhyme of *Colkelbie* is ‘ragged, tattered, and gagged,’
and, according to the poet himself, designedly so:—

Metre of the poem.

‘Bot, for Godis luv and his appostill Peter,
Pardoun the fulich face of this mad metir.
Sen the sentence to feill is fantastike
Lat the lettir and langage be such like.’

Since ; know

The rough and ready metre is the appropriate vehicle of the boisterous merriment which pervades most of the story, and secured it a lasting popularity rivalling that of *Rauf Coilzear*.

The tale, which is preceded by a short Prohemium in irregular heroic couplets, consists of three parts or fyttes. The first is in similar short couplets to those of Skelton’s *Colin Clout*; but since *Colkelbie’s Sow* is entered as having been included in the Asloan MS., and is referred to both by Dunbar and Douglas as a well-known Scottish classic, the poem must be older than *Colin Clout*, and the author, of his own impulse, must have adopted the device of treating the octo-syllabic couplet in a somewhat more unceremonious fashion than his predecessors.

Divisions of the poem : the first fytte.

Once upon a time there was a ‘merry man’ called Colkelbie, who had ‘a simple black sow,’
which he sold for three pennies, and these pennies he disposed of thus:—

The subject of the poem.

‘The first penny of the thre
For a girle gaif he ;

ford (of a
stream)
hoard

The secund fell in a furde ;
The third he hid in a hurde.'

The poet then puts the query, 'Which of the pennies was best bestowed?' and he proceeds to give the answer, beginning with the second penny, that which 'fell in a furde.' It was found by some one, who bought with it a little pig; but a harlot who lived hard by, wishing to give a great feast to her patrons, and having 'no substance at all,' resolved that the little pig should grace the board. To the feast she invited the whole *élite* of contemporary blackguardism :—

One
experienced
beggar
witch ;
weaver
cheat ;
sponger
carter
castrater

' On apostita freir,
A peruerst perdonair,
And practand palmair,
A wich and wobstare,
A milygant and a mychare
A fond fule, a fariar,
A cairtar, a cariar,
A libbar and a lyar,' etc.

When this select company had convened, they proceeded to kill the victim; but the poet informs us that, unlike dogs, swine are 'lovand beastis' towards each other, and that—

If one
learns

' And on of thame be ourthrawin,
That his cry may be knawin,
All the remanent that leiris
Cumis in thair best maneiris,
To reskew as thay may :
So did thay this day.'

Then we have a picturesque roll of the names of the valiant rescuers :—

‘Wrotok and Writhneb,
Hogy evir in the eb,
With the halkit hoglyn,
Suelly Suattis Swankyn,
Baymell bred in the bog,
Hog hoppit our hog,’ etc.

hacked

All this great horde came

‘With sick a din and a dirdy,
A garray and a hirdy girdy,
The fulis all afferd wer,
And the harlot hurt thare
With bair Tuskyis tuth.
And for to say the verry suth,
In that fellon affray
The littill pig gat away,
And ilk bore and ilk beest
Defoulit the fulis of the feest.’

bustle and
confusion

truth

every

But this was not the worst. The several owners of the pigs hearing the uproar, and afraid that so ‘curst a company’ designed to steal their live-stock, raised an alarm by the blowing of stock-horns, and with minstrels and dancers, as knights of old were wont, issued forth to the rescue:—

The muster of
the swine-
owners; the
dance; the
attack.

‘Gilby on his gray meir,
And Fergy on his sow fair,
Hoge Hygin by the hand hint,
And Symy that was sone brint,
With his lad Lowry,
And his gossep Gloury,’

led
sun-struck

and many heroes more, in higgledy-piggledy confusion. As they advanced with banners flowing and pipers blowing, they saw approaching them a similar company, whom they at first took for enemies, but

found to be allies aroused by their alarm. In the joy of meeting each other, the two companies forgot for a time the serious matter which had called them to arms, and with one accord commenced dancing:—

at once

‘And all the menstralis attonis
Blew up and playit for the nonis;
Schipheid, nolt hirdis,
And swyn hirdis outgirdis
For to dance merily.’

cow-herds

stepped out

From the exhaustive list of dances of every variety that were performed, we gather that the merriment must have lasted an unconscionable time; but at last one of the leaders called to them, as both minstrels and dancers were getting exhausted, to remember for what purpose they were assembled. They therefore at once hurried to the house of the harlot:—

‘Fyll on the fairsaid Sottis,
And ourthrew all the ydiottis
Both of the swyne and the men.’

Little glory was, however, gained by either party; for, as the poet sagely observes, the only real victor was the little pig:—

great

‘And all this grit brawling,
Babbling and vthir thing,
Wes for a pig as ze hard sayn,
Zit he eskapit onslane.’

Yet

The extravaganza forming the first part is the only portion peculiarly and characteristically Scottish. In the second part the poet sounds an entirely dignified note; and, on the authority of his grandame, proceeds in

The story
of the first
penny: a tale
of chivalry.

Chaucerian couplets to narrate a tale of chivalry, changing Colkelbie, without so much as a word of warning, for the nonce into a Frenchman. With the first penny Colkelbie bought from a blind man a girl, whom he gave in marriage to his own son Flannisie. Flannisie was a skilful archer; and the King of France having lodged one night at Colkelbie’s hostelry, was on the morrow so impressed with the feats of Flannisie at a ‘great shooting,’ that he made him his body squire. Finally he became a knight, his fair lady Adria—whom Colkelbie had bought from the blind beggar for a penny—being made one of the queen’s chamber ladies. Both grew more and more in favour with the king and queen—the lady by her beauty and goodness, and the husband by his deeds of valour, until the king resolved to create for them an earldom, which, by a union of portions of their two names, he termed Flandria (Flanders).

The story of the third penny is less romantic, but also sufficiently edifying. After keeping it hoarded for some time, Colkelbie bought with it twenty-four hen eggs, of which he made a gift to his godson Colkalb; but the mother disdainfully declining this gift, this ‘simple thing,’ Colkelbie sent them to his hen-wife, charging her to ‘do her care’ and ‘make them fruct.’ The ‘fruct’ was twelve male and twelve female chickens, whose names and qualities the poet sets forth in thorough fancier fashion; and by and by Colkelbie was able, in a solemn assembly of relations, to

Story of the
third penny :
practical and
edifying.

present his godson with no less a sum than £1000, saved with 'grace divine' from the twenty-four eggs. Finally—

'This Colkalb grew efter to grit richness
Throw this penny : he grew the michtiest man
In ony realme.'

A more direct burlesque of the romances is the curious fragment *King Berdok*,¹ which relates the adventures of the great king of Babylon, The tale of King Berdok. Berdok, who in summer dwelt 'in till ane bowkail stok' (cabbage stock), and in winter in 'a cokkil shell.' He wooed the 'golk' (cuckoo) 'sevin zeir of Maryland,'² and after going over sea and land to visit her, saw her 'milkand her myderis ky,' and put her in 'a creil upon his back' to carry her home to his own country, but on his return found he had nothing but a 'howlat's nest.' The fact was, he was being circumvented by her father, 'the king of Fary,' who afterwards, calling to his assistance the kings of Pechtis and Portugal, of Naippilis and Navern, besieged King Berdok in a killogie (the air-hole of a lime-kiln), where he had taken refuge. There they attacked him with guns ammunitioned with 'raw daich' (dough); but the gracious god Mercury turned him into a 'braikane buss' (fern bush).

'And quhen thay saw the buss waig to and fra,
Thay trow'd it wes ane gaist, and thay to ga ;

a ghost ; left

¹ Bannatyne MS. ; published also in Laing's *Select Remains*, 1822 and 1885.

² Merryland or Fairyland. Cf. Dunbar's *In Secreit Place* :—
'Wylcum ! my golke of Maryland.'

Thir fell kingis thus Berdok wald haif slane,
 All this for lufe, luveris sufferis pane :
 Boece said, of poyettis that wes flour,
 Thocht lufe be sweit, aft syiss it is full sour.’

Those
 mighty

ofttimes

This light and graceful skit strikingly contrasts with the weirdly gross love-tale of *The Gyre-Carling*,¹ ‘the mother-witch of Scotland, with stories of whom Sir David Lyndsay used to ‘comfort’ the young king, James v. The tale is written in the rhymed alliterative staves of the *Awntyrs of Arthur* and other romances.² The Gyre-Carling dwelt in ‘awld Betokis bour’ in the Tinto Hills, where she lived on Christian men’s flesh and raw hides. Near by her there lived one Blasour, who, we are told, for love of her ‘lawchane’ (gaping) ‘lips,’ ‘walit and weipit,’ and since he was unable to soften her hard heart, resolved to make her his by force:—

‘He gadderit ane menzie of modwartis to warp doun the tour ;
 The Carling with ane yrne club, quhen that Blasour sleipit,
 Behind the heill scho hatt him sic ane blaw,
 Quhill Blasour bled ane quart
 Of milk pottage inwart.’

multitude
 of moles ;
 undermine
 iron
 hill ; such a
 blow
 That

The Carling laughed at his discomfiture, and during her merriment, in quite unconventional fashion, produced North Berwick Law. But her exultation was short-lived, for the king of Fary, with his elfs,

¹ Bannatyne ms. ; published also in Laing’s *Select Remains*, 1822 and 1885.

² An alliterative romance, *The Warres of the Jewes* (Warton’s *History of English Poetry*, ed. Ritson, etc., ii. 147), begins like the *Gyre-Carling* thus:—

‘In Tyberus’ tyme the true Emperour.’

proceeded to besiege her, and all the dogs from Dunbar to Dunblane, with all the tykes of Tervey—wherever that may be—gathered to the fray. The dogs began to gnaw ‘doun with thair gomes mony grit stane’; but when the case seemed hopeless for the Carling, she changed herself into a sow, and went ‘gruntlyng our the Greek sie’ to Asia, where she became ‘quene of Jowis’ (Jews), and married Mahoun. But her expatriation from Scotland was not unmourned:—

Since then
sorrow
since then
savage witch
who;
troubled;
worried

‘Sensyne the cokkis of Crawmound¹ crew nevir a day,
For dule of that devillisch deme wes with Mahoun mareit,
And the hennis of Hadingtoun sensyne wald nocht lay,
For this wyld wilroun wich thame widlit sa and wareit.’

Another of these mock tales of wonder is the ‘gentill geist’ of *Lord Fergus’s Ghost*.² Since there is a reference in this tale and *The Gyre-Carling* to ‘Betokis bower,’ it has been rashly surmised that both are by the same author. But from *The Gyre-Carling* you gather that the story of Betok, bred of an acorn, was well known in Scotland. There is a further suggestion that the author of both was James Wedderburn, the author of certain plays against the Papists. Wedderburn, we are told by the historian Calderwood, counterfeited ‘the conjuring of ane goust which was indeed practised by Friar Lang’;³ but there is nothing to show any

¹ Cramond is a village five miles west of Edinburgh, but the name is merely introduced for the pun’s sake.

² Bannatyne MS.; printed by Scott in his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, and in the 1885 edition of Laing’s *Select Remains*.

³ *History*, vol. i. p. 142.

connection between Lord Fergus and the friar. After various misdemeanours—such as stealing God’s ‘whittle,’ a ring and other ornaments, from ‘piteous Abraham,’ and a pair of ‘awld yrn ‘schone’ from the man of the moon, besides strangling an old chaplain—the ghost was finally conjured by a little Spanish fly—

‘That with her wit and ingyne,	cleverness
Gart the gaist leif agane ;	Made ; live
And syne mareid the gaist the fle,	then
And cround him kyng of Kandelie ;	
And they gat thame betwene	
Orpheus king and Elpha quene.’	

Of others of these old tales mention may be made of the *Tailis of the Fyue Bestis*,¹ if only because the Hart’s tale has reference to the fortunes of Sir William Wallace.

¹ Asloan MS. Printed in Laing’s *Select Remains*, ed. Small, 1885.

V

THE EARLY CHAUCERIANS, ETC.

JAMES I.—ROBERT HENRYSON—JOHN CLERK—RICHARD
HOLLAND—PATRICK JOHNSTOUN —MERSAR — SIR
JOHN ROULL—QUENTINE SCHAW.

WHILE the old romance poetry was being superseded by 'gestis' concerning Scotland's own heroes, by such patriotic epics as *The Bruce* and *Wallace*, and by comic tales after the type of the ancient *fabliau*, a new impulse was given to Scottish poetry through contact with the master influence of Chaucer. The honour of introducing Chaucer to Scotland has usually been assigned to James I. There is no evidence of his earlier introduction; and if, as Bower states, James was in the habit of giving much of his time to the cultivation of literature; and if, as Major—corroborated by all subsequent Scottish historians, including Buchanan, who professes to criticise from personal knowledge — affirms, he actually wrote poetry, he could just as little avoid, while in England, becoming a disciple of Chaucer as he could abstain from making Chaucer known to those who cultivated

Chaucer
probably
introduced to
Scotland by
James I.

the art in Scotland. This, apart from the question whether James I. was the author of the *Kingis Quair*,¹ which has, for the first time, been seriously disputed by Mr. J. T. T. Brown in *The Authorship of the Kingis Quair*, 1896.

For crediting James I. with its authorship, the original authority is the historian John Major (1518), who says that James 'wrote an ingenious little book about the Queen while he was yet in captivity, and before his marriage.'

'The Quair'—
argument
against the
authorship of
James I.

Nothing further was known of this 'little book' until, about 1783, Bishop Tanner drew Tytler's attention to the MS. in the Bodleian, where, also, the authorship of the poem is attributed to James I. But Mr. Brown proposes to discredit both authorities, and to adopt the only other possible theory—that the poem was an ingenious forgery. His main arguments are in substance these: (1) Major wrote his history about eighty years after the death of James I., and his testimony therefore is of very little value; (2) the transcriber of the MS. is in error as to the authorship of five out of ten other poems in the MS., and therefore the chances are at least equal that he errs in regard to the authorship of *The Quair*; (3) James I. does not appear in Dunbar's *Lament for the Makaris*, and it is therefore almost certain that he was not known to Dunbar as a poet; (4) in the

¹ Published (ed. Tytler) 1783, from the only known MS.—that in the Bodleian Library, Oxford; and frequently reprinted, the best and only satisfactory edition being that edited by Professor Skeat for the Scottish Text Society, 1884.

poem the age of James I., when he was captured by the English, is given as ten, whereas we now know he was eleven, and since Wyntoun states he was captured in 1405 instead of 1406, the poem must have been partly forged from Wyntoun; (5) the poem is written in an artificial dialect by some Scotsman who sought to counterfeit the dialect of Chaucer, and belongs to the same class of poems as part of *The Romaunt of the Rose*, as *The Court of Love* and *Lancelot of the Lak*, regarding the authorship of which no proper explanation is possible; and (6) various sentiments in *The Kingis Quair* are borrowed from *The Court of Love*, a poem presumably of later date than the time of James I.

It may be admitted that if Mr. Brown has not established his case, it is simply because it cannot be established; for he lacks nothing in ingenuity, and his learning is employed to the best advantage possible in such a cause. But (1) Major, though writing over eighty years after the death of James I., was fifty years of age when he so wrote, and was not severed from the reign of James I. by more than one generation; he also prided himself on his critical incredulity, and he had plainly seen and read this little book whose authorship he, as a matter of course, assigns to James. (2) The transcriber of the MS.—which may have been written before 1488, and must before 1513, and was long in the possession of the noble family of Sinclair—was a Scot, and

The argu-
ments for the
authorship of
James I.

therefore by no means so likely to be mistaken regarding the authorship of a famous Scottish poem as the authorship of English ones of much earlier date. (3) The testimony of Major and that of the transcriber ought not to be disposed of separately; they agree, and their agreement incalculably strengthens both. (4) The absence of James I. from Dunbar's *Lament* is at the best merely negative evidence; and its value as such is further greatly discounted by the universal testimony of Scottish historians that James I., whether he wrote *The Quair* or not, was a 'makar.' Moreover, the omission may be explained by the fact that distinctively he was king rather than 'makar,' and by the distressing circumstances of his death. (5) It is absurd to attach the smallest importance to the possible mistake of one year in the statement of the king's age at the time of capture. What more vitally concerns the question of forgery is the fact that Wyntoun, from whom the forger is supposed to have got his facts, states that the capture took place, not in March, as the poem affirms, but in April. Further, it would appear that the inference of Sir William Hardy¹ that the capture took place in the end of February, or beginning of March, is founded on an error of one month in his calculation. The first entry of payment for the king's expenses in the Tower, on 14th August 1406, amounts to £44, 7s. 10d., which, at the rate of 6s. 8d. a day, implies an imprisonment there of only 133 days,

¹ Burnet's preface to *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, vol. iii.

and seems to show that he was sent to the Tower about the beginning of April; and as we know his father, Robert III., died on 4th April, shortly after the son's capture, all the probabilities point to about the middle of March as the date, and thus corroborate the poem; although, of course, a poet can choose an arbitrary date. (6) The language and grammar of the poem—a combination of the Northern speech with the Midland dialect of Chaucer—exactly corresponds with what might be expected if James I. was its author; for the probability is that, mingling largely with companion prisoners from Scotland, he retained his early knowledge of the Northern speech, and never thoroughly mastered the Midland dialect. (7) To say the least, it cannot be affirmed that dependence on *The Court of Love* is proved; some of the resemblances are accidental, and others have a common source. But unless the resemblances absolutely demonstrate that *The Court of Love* was written before *The Quair*, there is no reason for doubting the authorship of James I.¹ (8) Unless James was known as a poet, no one would dream of passing off a forged poem as his; and if he did write poetry, as he is reputed to have done, he is by far the most likely author of *The Quair*. Further, no motive for the forgery is apparent; and the emotion of the poem—this each reader can decide for himself—seems to be thoroughly genuine, and the record of an actual experience.

¹ See on this subject, especially, Professor Skeat's introduction to *The Court of Love*, in *Chaucerian and other Poems*, 1897.

The poem is a classic example of the love allegory developed in Italy and France, and disseminated in England through Chaucer's translation of the *Roman de la Rose* and his *Troilus and Criseyde*. It is written in the seven-line stanza of *Troilus*—ab, abb, cc—known since the time of Gascoigne as *rime royal*. But though the author, besides closely modelling his style and method after Chaucer, borrows unconsciously portions of his phrases and turns of expression, the poem is not a mere servile imitation of the English master: it has a special individuality of its own. Through all the artificial imagery and traditional love mechanism there is ever present the note of a peculiar personal experience, supplying an emotional warmth and tenderness which are absent from Chaucer, and are not fully attained either in Lydgate's *Temple of Glas* or in *The Court of Love*. The poet's own case—if the poet was James I.—furnished a quite ideal theme for chivalrous allegory. To him in captivity love was an exceptional joy and solace; it was also the means of deliverance from it; and through love his cup of bliss became so absolutely full, that he was ready to praise even the place of his captivity and the day when he was taken prisoner:—

'The Quair,' a classic example of the love allegory, but represents also a personal experience.

'And thankit be the fairë castell wall,
 Quhare as I quhilome lukit furth and lent.
 Thankit mot be the sanctis marciall
 That me first causit hath this accident.'

It has, however, been too rashly assumed that the poet was actually a strict prisoner in a tower after the fashion described in the poem; that he first saw Jane Beaufort by accident in the garden of the castle—usually supposed to be Windsor—while looking from his lattice. As matter of fact, he was not at Windsor when introduced to the lady; and we may believe that they first met under different circumstances, for the marriage was promoted by Henry of England from reasons of state. The lattice scene must be regarded as merely figurative, although embodying the essence of an actual experience; it is modelled after that of Palamon and Emelye in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*.

Scene of meeting merely figurative.

Love at first sight—as described by Chaucer and James I.

But it is only in the environment that the two scenes resemble each other. Chaucer's is a light external description of love at first sight, but than the scene in *The Quair*, notwithstanding the traces of an artificial mode, no more consummate description of the dawn of love exists in verse; and we must almost inevitably conclude that it represents the poet's own experience:—

‘ And there-with kest I doun myn eye ageyne,
 Quhare as I sawe, walking vnder the toure,
 Full secretly new cummyn hir to pleyne,
 The fairest or the freschest zongë floure
 That euer I sawe, me thoght, before that houre,
 For quhich sodayn abate, anon astert
 The blude of all my body to my hert.

play

instigation;
 started

And though I stude abaisit tho a lyte, then a little
 No wonder was ; for-quhy my wittis all
 Were so ouercom with plesance and delyte,
 Onely throu latting of myn eyën fall,
 That sudaynly my hert became hir thrall,
 For euer, of free wyll ; for of manace
 There was no takyn In hir suetë face.

And In my hede I drewe ryght hastily, soon after-
 And eft-sonës I lent It forth ageyne, wards
 And sawe hir walk, that verray womanly,
 With no wight mo, bot onely wommen tueyne. person
 Than gan I studye in my-self and seyne, said
 “ A ! suete, ar ze a warldly creature,
 Or hevinly thing in likenesse of nature ?

“ Or ar ze god Cupidis owin princesse,
 And cummyn are to louse me out of band ?
 Or ar ze verray nature the goddesse,
 That haue depaynted with zour hevinly hand
 This gardyn full of flouris, as they stand ?
 Quhat sall I think, allace ! quhat reuerence
 Sall I minster to zour excellence ?

“ Gif ze a goddesse be, and that ze like avoid
 To do me payne, I may It noght astert ; maketh me
 Gif ze be warldly wight, that dooth me sike, sigh
 Quhy lest god mak zou so, my derrest hert, pleased
 To do a sely prisoner thus smert,
 That lufis zow all, and wote of noght bot wo ? knows
 And therefor, merci, suete ! sen It is so.” ’

This fair creature is, of course, depicted as attired, not in the apparel of an English gentlewoman, but in the figurative bravery of a queen of love. For the description, all that can be said is that it is admirably done according to the accepted mode, but the poet attains

The poet's
description
of the lady.

to more than artistic artificiality in the passion-inspired lines:—

know

‘And, aboue all this, there was, wele I wote,
Beantee enench to mak a world to dote,’

and in the stanzas detailing the lady’s gifts and graces of character as shadowed in her mien, concluding thus:—

‘Throw quhich anon I knew and vnderstude
Wele, that sche was a warldly creature ;
On quhom to rest myn eyë, so mich gude
It did my wofull hert, I zow assure,
That It was to me Ioye without mesure.’

The allegorical description of the means whereby the lover attains to success in his suit—his visits to Venus, Minerva, and Fortune,—though ornate and artistic, and informed throughout by emotional earnestness, fails, through its antiquated method, to secure the full sympathy of the modern reader. The poem ends with stanzas of thanks to the goddesses who, by their ‘might celestial,’ had brought his suit to a happy ending, to the nightingale who sang that song of love in the garden where his lady walked, to the flowers as emblems of her innocence and beauty, to the castle wall where he ‘lukit furth and lent’ when the vision of her loveliness first met his gaze, to the saints of the month of March who brought about the captivity which led to such perfect bliss, and to the ‘grene bewis bent,’ under which his heart’s remedy and comfort first appeared to him.

The allegorical visits to Venus, etc., and the close of the poem.

Besides *The Kingis Quair*, Major ascribed to James 'alium artificiosum cantilenum ejusdem' (that other song in elaborate metre) *Yas Sen*; and 'jucundum artificiosumque illum cantum' (that mirthful poem in elaborate metre) *At Beltayne*. The title of the former of these is plainly incorrect; 'Yas,' which has no meaning, being a clerical error for some term unknown. Pinkerton¹ printed an anonymous song from the Maitland MS., beginning,

Other poems
attributed to
James I.: 'Sen
that Eyne,'
and 'Sen throu
vertew.'

'Sen that eyne that workis my weifair,'

since; eyes

as probably that referred to by Major; but the resemblance of its initial words to those quoted by Major is too faint to justify the ascription of it to James I. In *The Gude and Godlie Ballates* (see *post*, p. 270), a poem of three stanzas in *rime royal*, beginning,

'Sen throu vertew encressis dignite,'

is assigned to James I.; and the poem is printed in the Scottish Text Society's edition of *The Kingis Quair*. As in both the Cambridge MS. and the Bannatyne MS. it appears anonymously, the editor of *The Gude and Godlie Ballates* may have had no special authority for ascribing it to James I.; but though in the Northern dialect, and though there is nothing except the initial word 'Sen' to show it is the song referred to by Major, its sentiment and style

¹ *Ancient Scottish Poems*, 1786, p. 214.

is not unlike that of *The Kingis Quair*, and it may well have been written by James I.

As to the third poem, the mirthful *At Beltayne*, there is almost no doubt that Major, 'At Beltayne':
Professor rightly or wrongly, meant to ascribe to
Skeat's views. James I. the humorous poem *Peblis to the Play*,¹ beginning,

'At Beltane quhen ilk bodie bownis.'

The only reason for doubting that this was Major's intention is that he adds in reference to *At Beltayne*, 'quem alii de Dalkeith et Gargeil mutare studierunt.' How, or in what way, or for what reason, some persons of Dalkeith and of Gargeil sought to change the poem, Major does not say. No such place as Gargeil is now known, but a possible interpretation of the words is that some persons of Dalkeith and Gargeil sought to make the poem apply to these places instead of to Peebles. The theory of Professor Skeat is, however, that certain poets of Dalkeith and Gargeil—though it is difficult to believe that these places contained several poets of reputation—sought to parody the king's poem, and that in all likelihood it is one of these parodies, and not the original poem, which has survived. To clinch his argument finally, he also boldly proposes to make a statement in Major, usually interpreted as referring to the king, refer to the poem: he would shut up the mirthful poem instead of the disconsolate king in the castle where the lady dwelt with her mother. Why any one—

¹ Maitland ms.; printed in Pinkerton's *Select Scottish Ballads*, 1783.

whether the king or his executors—should shut it up in the company of the two ladies, or how, if it were so shut up, the Dalkeith and Gargeil poetasters could have got hold of it to parody it, or why they should be seized by such a mania to parody in a mirthful manner a poem that was already mirthful, he does not explain. In any case, Major must have been permitted to look at it; and the poetasters, both of Dalkeith and Gargeil, must somehow have got copies, which, however, they would no doubt destroy after they had completed their parodies. But if the mirthful poem were not shut up, as Professor Skeat asserts, nor destroyed by the poetaster rivals of the king, the chances are that the original *At Beltayne*, reputed in Major's days to have been written by James I., would survive any parody by obscure village versifiers if such parodies there were. Certain Scottish poets may, of course, have clothed it in a Scottish dialect; but this is very improbable, since if James I. knew Scots, he would inevitably use it in depicting such specially Scottish scenes.

Once, however, you admit that *Peblis to the Play* is the *At Beltayne*, or even a parody of the *At Beltayne* mentioned by Major, it becomes impossible to relegate it, as has been done, to the sixteenth instead of the fifteenth century. Whether the work of James I. or another, it could not, if it came into existence only in the sixteenth century, have been ascribed by Major, writing in 1518, to

'At Beltayne'
(*'Peblis to the Play'*) and
'Christis
Kirk': mutually
corroborative
evidence for the
authorship of
James I.

JAMES I., who died in 1437. More than this, Major's mention of it in such a fashion is almost proof positive that it belongs to the earlier half of the fifteenth century, or at least that it can't be later than the first quarter of the last half; for Major was born in 1469, and he could not so write of *At Beltayne* unless the tradition that it was by JAMES I. dated from his youth. Further, the mere mention of *At Beltayne* by Major—if *At Beltayne* has any connection with *Peblis to the Play*—makes it impossible—a fact totally ignored by Professor Skeat and others—for it to have been the work of JAMES V., for when Major wrote JAMES V. was but six years of age. This is a most important point when considered in connection with the companion poem *Christis Kirk on the Green*.¹ They are in the same rollicking metre; and their style and humour are so absolutely similar, that they are universally ascribed to the same author. Now in the Bannatyne MS. *Christis Kirk* is attributed to JAMES I.² True, a later tradition grew up that it was written by JAMES V., and it is assigned to him by Bishop Gibson and by Watson; but if we trace back that tradition, we find that it derives solely from the

¹ Bannatyne and Maitland mss. ; printed by Bishop Gibson, 1691 ; by Watson in his *Collection*, 1706 ; by Tytler, along with the *Kingis Quair*, 1763 ; by Pinkerton in *Select Scottish Ballads*, 1783 ; and frequently in various collections.

² Bannatyne's testimony has been scouted because he accidentally represents Dunbar's *Dregy* as sent to JAMES V., not to JAMES IV. ; but JAMES IV. and JAMES V. were, of course, successive sovereigns, whereas JAMES I. preceded JAMES V. by about a century.

fabling Dempster (1627); and if any value at all attaches to Major's statement about *At Beltayne*, *Christis Kirk*, if by the same author as *At Beltayne*, could not have been the work of James v. Further, the Bannatyne ms. and Major—two excellent authorities both—must be regarded as corroborative of each other; for while Major affirms that the mirthful *At Beltayne* is by James I., the Bannatyne ms. ascribes a very similar poem to the same king, while there is a general consensus of tradition that one or other of the two kings was the author of the poems. It has, indeed, been pointed out that the *Justing of Barbour and Watson* by Sir David Lyndsay begins in a similar strain to *Christis Kirk*:—

‘In Sanct Androis on Witsoun Monanday
Was never sene sic Iusting in no landes.’

And it is further true that these expressions in *Christis Kirk*—

‘His lymmis were lyk twa rokkis. . . .	distaffs
Ran vpoun otheris lyk rammis. . . .	
Bet on with barrow trammis’	shafts

are found interwoven in the same poem thus:—

‘Quod Iohne, “Howbeit thou thinkis my leggis lyke rokkis. . .	
Zit, thocht thy braunis be lyk twa barrow-trammis,	calves
Defend the, man !” Than ran thay to, lyk rammis.’	

From this circumstance Professor Skeat draws what he terms ‘the obvious conclusion’ that ‘*Christis Kirk* belongs to the reign of James v.’; but surely the only absolutely ‘obvious conclusion’ is that Lyndsay had read *Christis Kirk*; and it is further

probable, if not 'obvious,' that *Christis Kirk* was earlier than the reign of James v., for Lyndsay was more likely to incorporate lines from an ancient than from a contemporary writer.

All the reliable external evidence, therefore, points to James I. as the author of those poems; and this being so, the internal evidence by which mainly it has been proposed to deprive him of their authorship requires very careful scrutiny. Chiefly from deference to the authority that justly attaches to Professor Skeat's opinion, I have hitherto disbelieved in the authorship of James I., and entered on this inquiry strongly biassed against his claims; but more minute consideration convinces me that there is no evidence against them. What is the internal evidence on the subject?

1. There is what may be termed the moral objection, thus expressed by Guest, and adopted by Skeat: 'One can hardly suppose those critics serious who attribute this song (of *Christis Kirk*) to the moral and sententious James the First.'¹ This merely means that a poet cannot be a poet of strikingly contrasted moods; or, in other terms, that the human personality is an absolutely simple and consistent individuality instead of a curious conjunction of contrarieties. How, on such a theory, could we even conceive of James, the refined, sentimental, poetic artist, as the most energetic ruler of his time?

External evidence favours the authorship of James I.

The internal evidence: the moral objection.

¹ *English Rhythms*, ed. Skeat, p. 624.

But let the question be confined to poetry. If, for example, we accept Shakespeare as the creator of the moral and sententious Hamlet, must we then rob him of the sententious but inimitably immoral Falstaff? Or to go to Scotland for an illustration: let us take the case of Burns, like James I., both an English and a Scottish poet, like him influenced by two distinct poetic traditions. From Burns illustrations may be obtained in almost bewildering profusion: enough that he who has given us the matchless presentment of blackguard revelry in *The Jolly Beggars* is the same who did the admirably conventional sketch of peasant piety in *The Cotter's Saturday Night*.

2. There is the question of language. It is not, of course, denied that James I. retained some knowledge of the Northern dialect in captivity, or that he regained his knowledge of it The language question. when he returned to Scotland.¹ Indeed, Professor Skeat argues that he knew this dialect, and he prints along with *The Kingis Quair* a poem in it. All, therefore, that we have to decide is whether the language of these poems belongs to an earlier or later date than the time of James I. But here the evidence is almost wholly of a negative kind; for lateness of transcription so tends to alter the phraseology, that it is impossible to draw any certain conclusion except in the case of the rhyming words.

¹ Not by Professor Skeat, though it has been—without evidence—by Mr. J. T. T. Brown.

Nor does Professor Skeat profess to point out more than one instance of 'obvious lateness.' In stanza xix. of *Peblis* 'stokks' is made to rhyme with 'ox,' whereas with James I., we are told, the plural of stok is 'stokkis.' But is this not to take too solemn a view of this amusing stanza? The curious thing is that the transcriber in the same stanza makes 'Lockkis,' not 'Locks' or 'Lockks,' to rhyme with 'ox'; and may it not well have been the aim of the poet's mirthful muse to make 'ox' for the nonce rhyme with 'stokkis' and 'lokkis'? But besides the plural 'is' is constantly used not only in other stanzas of *Peblis*, and of *Christis Kirk*, but by David Lyndsay, to name no more. In truth, even had James I. lived in Lyndsay's day, his natural impulse would, as much as ever, have been to write 'stokkis.'

3. As to the metre: Professor Skeat contents himself by affirming that 'it will be found by no means easy to point out any undoubted example of the use of the rollicking metre of this poem anterior to the year 1450; whereas James I. died in 1437.' This is a very guarded statement—so guarded that it is insufficient for Professor Skeat's purpose. Even to admit that a specimen of this metre of as early a date as 1450 has come down to us, goes a far way to prove that the metre is of earlier date; for the poetry of this early period that survives is but a fraction of the whole. It is also very difficult to date anonymous poetry; but amongst the anony-

mous poetry in this metre which has not perished are the old ballads of *The Battle of Otterbourne* and *The Hunting of the Cheviots*, the originals of which probably date from the beginning of the fifteenth century, if not earlier. Here is a stanza of *The Hunting of the Cheviots* as ‘carefully printed from the Ashmole ms.’ in Professor Skeat’s own *Specimens of Early English*:—

‘The dryvers thorowe the woodes went
 For to reas the dear ;
 Bomen byckarte vppone the bent
 With ther browd aros cleare ;
 Then the wyld thorowe the woodes went
 On every syde shear ;
 Grea hondes thorowe the grevis glent
 For to kyll thear dear.”

As matter of fact, this rollicking metre was intended to be chanted or sung: and this may explain why so few early specimens of it exist; for scarce any of the songs of the minstrel were committed to writing; and of the numerous songs whose names have been preserved in the writings of ancient Scottish authors almost none survive.

Apart from authorship, to prove the possible antiquity of these poems is of some importance, for metrically they seem to form a curious blend of the old ballad and the alliterative romance. The stanza may, indeed, be described as a sort of ballad variation of that of *Sir Tristrem*—*Sir Tristrem* changed into rollicking metre, and the bobwheel simplified, but

The metre a
 blend of the
 ballad and
 the metrical
 romance.

the alliteration—which survived much longer in Scotland than in the south—preserved as elaborately as ever. Here, as an example, is the admirable second stanza of *Christis Kirk*:—

those ;
dressed
gay of
manners
doeskin

Lincoln

skittish ;
nighed
goats

‘To dans thir damysellis thame dicht,
Thir lassis licht of laitis,
Thair gluvis wes of the raffel rycht,
Thair schone wes of the straitis¹ ;
Thair kirtillis wer of lynkome licht,
Weill prest with mony plaitis.
They wer so nyss quhen men thame nicht
Thay squeilit lyk ony gaitis,
So lowd,
At Chrystis Kirk of the grene that day.’

The poems are further classic specimens of the utilisation of the combined ballad and romantic methods in depicting the humours of everyday life ; and their influence on the after vernacular poetry can scarce be over-estimated, this apart from direct imitations of their method. Another poem in the same stanza, of probably about the same date, but whether earlier or later it is impossible to say, is the ecclesiastical satire of *Symmie and his Bruder* (p. 286), the heroes of which were two palmers who used to stand begging in the ‘old grey cathedral city’ by the sea. A later piece is the amusing *Jyusting and Debait vp at the Drum*, by Alexander Scott (p. 248). *Christis Kirk* was published by Allan Ramsay with a second part added by himself, and this second part is one of the

¹ This is explained by some as coarse woollen cloth ; and also as the Straits of Gibraltar, on the way to Morocco.

best of Ramsay's humorous pieces. *Christis Kirk* and *Peblis* are also the models metrically and poetically of Fergusson's *Leith Races* and *Hallow Fair* and of Burns's *Holy Fair* and *Ordination*. Neither as poems nor as pictures of the humours of rustic life are they equalled by Fergusson, nor without them would we probably have had much that is best in Burns. They necessarily suffer from the flight of time; for besides that the customs, modes, and manners which are the subject of their wit have passed away, the niceties of the old language can no longer be fittingly apprehended by the most learned and Scottish of the Scots; but their vividness and truth still penetrate even these obstacles to appreciation. In *Peblis* the humours of the old village fair of four centuries ago are reproduced with a colour and life not yet faded beyond recognition. It is not so vigorous a production as *Christis Kirk*, but as a study of rustic manners it is equally good, and it is plainly the work of the same 'makar.' As for *Christis Kirk*, which depicts the wild revels and disorders rather than the humours of the fair, its fervour and *abandon* are irresistible. Near the beginning of the poem we have a most arch and amusing glimpse of the distresses and whims of a love-lorn damsel:—

'Off all thir madynis myld as meid
 Wes nane so gympt as Gillie,
 As ony ross hir rude wes reid,
 Hir lyre was lyk the lillie :

mead
 slim
 rose; cheeks
 skin

Full Fow yellow yellow wes hir heid,
 But scho of lufe wes sillie.
 Though ; Thocht all hir kin had sworn hir deid,
 death Scho wald haif bot sweet Willie
 Allone,
 At Chrystis Kirk of the grene.

 jibed Scho skornit Jok and skraipit at him,
 derided And mvrionit him with mokkis ;
 He wald haif luvit, scho wald nocht lat him,
 For all his yallow loikkis :
 hang He chereist hir, scho bad ga chat him,
 beetles Scho compt him nocht twa clokkis ;
 So schamefully his schort gown set him,
 distaffs His lymmis wes lyk twa rokkis,
 Scho said
 At Chrystis Kirk of the grene.'

But the fun soon begins to get fast, and after passing through various phases of the absurd, finally becomes furious :—

madmen ; 'Twa that wes heidmen of the heird,
 unafraid Ran vpoun vtheris lyk rammis,
 Beaten Than followit feymen rycht onaffeird,
 Bet on with barrow trammiss ;
 mouths ; But quhair thair gobbis wes vngeird,
 unguarded Thay gat vpoun the gammis ;
 gums Quhill bludy berkit wes thair beird
 Until ; As they had wirreit lammis,
 clotted Maist lyk
 worried At Chryst Kirk of the grene.

 youngsters The wyvis kest vp ane hiddouss yell,
 set to Quhen all thir yunkeris yokkit,
 lightning Als ferss as ony fyr-flaucht fell,
 terrible Freikis to the feild thay flokkit :
 Stout fellows Tha cairlis with clubbis coud vder quell,
 men Quhill blud at breistis out bokkit.
 Until ; So rudly rang the commoun bell,
 belched Quhill all the stepill rokkit
 For reird,
 noise At Chrystis Kirk of the grene.'

This final scene is indeed one of mere blind, rude, rustic savagery; but the verve and spirit of the piece are wholly admirable.

After James I. the most notable name in Scottish poetry in the fifteenth century is that of Robert Henryson (1425 ?-1506 ?), second among the old Scots bards only to Dunbar, who belongs to both centuries. As in the case

Robert
Henryson
(1425 ?-1506 ?)

of most poets of this century, only the faintest outline of his history survives. Of his parentage there is no record, and the tradition that he was progenitor of the Hendersons of Fordell seems to rest more on fanciful imagination than on fact. There is no evidence that he studied at the University of St. Andrews; and Glasgow University, not founded until 1451, was probably not in existence in his student days. He was therefore, most likely, educated abroad. In any case, his name is found among the incorporated members of Glasgow University, 10th September 1462, as 'the venerable Master Robert Henryson, licentiate in arts, and bachelor in decrees,' which implies that he graduated somewhere in law; and if he was not a lecturer in law in the University, he must have been deemed a person so eminent in learning that his enrolment was intended as an honour either to the University or to him. On the title-page of his *Fables* he is designated 'Schoolmaster in Dunfermline'; and he is no doubt also the *Magister Robertus Henrison, notarius publicus*, whose name appears as a witness to certain deeds in March 1477-78

and July 1478. Whether he was in priest's orders is unknown; but he seems to have been, as a certain John Henderson was in the sixteenth century, 'master of the grammar-school within the Abbey of Dunfermline.'

Sir Francis Kynaston, who in his Latin translation of *Troilus and Criseyde*, 1635, was the first to point

out that Henryson was the author of
 His death.

The Testament, states that 'being very old, he dyed of a diarrhea or fluxe,' regarding which he relates a 'merry, though somewhat unsavoury tale.' It is about a wise woman or witch who, when he was a-dying, entered his house and told him that if he would be cured, he must go to a whikey tree at the end of his orchard and walk round it three times repeating the rime:—

' Whikey tree, whikey tree,
 Take away this fluxe from me.'

This, Henryson affirmed, he was too weak to do, and he jocularly proposed instead to repeat certain words to the oaken table in his room. To adapt it to this new divinity it was necessary to vary the wording of the request, but it must suffice to state that he proposed to make it rhyme with 'Oaken burd, Oaken burd.' The proposed compromise was naturally unpleasing to the wise woman, who, we are told, 'seeing herself derided and scorned, ran out of the house in a great passion, and Mr. Henderson within half a quarter of an hour departed this life.' The anecdote is quite credible of the author of *Sum*

Practysis of Medecyne, and if true, shows that Henryson retained his cheerful spirit to the last. He probably died not long before 1506, when Dunbar wrote thus of Death in his *Lament for the Makaris*:—

‘In Dunfermelyne he has done rovne
With gud Maister Robert Henrisoun.’¹

just whis-
pered

In Henryson the Chaucerian influence is at its strongest, and in part supersedes the old Scottish tradition. His favourite stave is either the *ballat royal* (or French octave) in three rhymes—ab, ab, bc, bc—in its four accented or five accented form, with a refrain, or the seven-line stanza in *rime royal*; and he also introduced the nine-line and ten-line interwoven stanza from Chaucer’s *Faire Anelida and False Arcite*. But the rollicking metre of *Robene and Makyne*, *The Garmond of Gud Ladyis*, and *The Bludy Serk* was no doubt derived from the ballads of the older minstrels; while in *Sum Practysis of Medecyne* we have his one solitary example in the rhymed alliteration of the old romances. Again, the stave of *The*

Henryson’s
staves.

¹ The poems of Henryson—Bannatyne, Maitland, Asloan, Gray, Harleian, and Makculloch mss.—were first published in a collected form, ed. David Laing, in 1865. The sixteenth-century editions of his poems are *Orpheus and Eurydice*, with the ballad on *The Want of Wise Men*, printed by Chepman and Myllar, Edinburgh, 1508; *The Moral Fables*, by Lekprevick, St. Andrews, 1570; and *The Testament of Cresseid* in Chaucer’s *Works*, London, 1532, and separately by Henry Charteris, Edinburgh, 1593. Numerous subsequent editions of these were published, and pretty full selections from his works appeared in Ramsay’s *Evergreen*, 1724, and in the collections of Lord Hailes, 1770, Sibbald, 1804, etc.

Salutation of the Virgin—ab ab, ba ab, ba ab—was probably derived from the old Latin Hymns.

Robene and Makyne, while it is the most characteristically Scottish, is also the gem of Henryson's productions; and indeed one of the most perfect, because one of the least artificial, pastorals in literature. Never has the ingenuous naturalness of rustic love been suggested in verse more deftly or with less intimation of caricature. The theme is a slight one. We are introduced to Robene 'on gud grene hill' besieged by the love-lorn Makyne. He, however, nothing knows of love; and her endeavours to instruct him in 'luvis lair' (learning) proving vain, he, quite at a loss to understand her pleadings, answers her—

wot
unrest
happy
in good
health
If

"I wait nocht quhat is lufe;
But I haif mervell incertaine
Quhat makis thé this wanrufe.
The weddir is fair, and I am fane,
My scheip gois haill aboif,
And we wald play us in this plane
They wald us bayth reproif."

But too late he suddenly discovers that he in turn has become the victim of the passion. When, on seeing Makyne again, he follows after her and calls that all his 'luve it salbe' hers, she tells him, half sadly, half scornfully—

to
by my faith
thinketh

"Robene, that warld is all away,
And quyt brocht till ane end;
And nevir agane thairto, perfay,
Sall it be as thow wend."

And the poet is too remorselessly faithful to truth to gratify the sentimental reader with the usual happy ending:—

‘Makyne went hame blyth anewche	enough
Attour the holtis hair.	over the
Robene murnit, and Makyne lewche ;	grey uplands
Scho sang, he sichit sair :	laughed
And so left him bayth wo and wreuch,	sighed
In dolour and in cair,	sad ;
Kepand his hird under a huche	wretched
Among the holtis hair.’	crag

It is a rustic episode, not idealised, still less caricatured, in any way, but etched in its simplicity, its rude truthfulness, and its lugubrious faliance, as it actually happened ‘on gud grene hill.’

Most of the other minor poems are of a meditative, moral, and semi-religious cast ; reflecting, no doubt, a very prevalent mood of the author, especially in his old age. In *The Garmond of Gud Ladyes* allegory is employed with quaint effect to depict the excellences that are desirable in woman. It is an ingenious example of the allegorical methods then in vogue, and though antiquated in form, is both tasteful and spirited. Here are two stanzas:—

‘Hir gown suld be of gudliness,	
Weill ribband with renowne,	
Purfillit with plesour in ilk place,	each
Furrit with fyne fassoun.	fashion
Hir belt suld be of benignitie,	
About hir middill meit ;	
Hir mantill of humilitie	
To tholl bayth wind and weit.’	endure ; rain

And he concludes :—

‘Wald scho put on this garmond gay,
I durst sweir by my seill,
That scho woir nevir grene nor gray
That set hir half so weill.’

became

The Bludy Serk, on the other hand, is an adaptation of the ballad form for the purposes of religious allegory. The story agrees very much with one of the *Gesta Romanorum*, and the poem is chiefly of interest as indicating that the ballad stanza, since it is here used for parody, must have existed before Henryson’s time. The ballad begins in this romantic fashion :—

‘The Bludy
Serk.’

last

‘This hindir yeir I hard be tald,
Thair was a worthy King ;
Dukis, Erlis and Barronis bald,
He had at his bidding.
The Lord was anceane, and ald,
And sixty yeiris cowth ring ;
He had a Dochter, fair to fald,
A lusty lady ying.’

embrace

And this is how the *Moralitas* begins :—

‘This King is lyk the Trinitie
Baith in hevin and heir.
The Manis saule to the Lady :
The Gyane to Lucefeir.
The Knycht to Chryst, that deit on tre,
And cost our synnis deir :
The pit to hell, with panis fell ;
The syn to the woweir.’

Of the unallegorical and emotionally reflective there are two, *The Abbey Walk* and *The Prais of*

Age, each in its own way beautiful and touching expressions of a particular mood, and both remarkably fine examples of musical versification in the octave of three rhymes.

‘The Abbey
Walk,’ and
‘The Prais of
Age.’

Here, for instance, is a nobly dignified stanza from *The Abbey Walk* :—

‘Thy Kindome and thy grit empyr,	
Thy ryaltie, nor riche array,	
Sall nocht endeur at thy desyre,	Shall not
Bot, as the wind, will wend away ;	
Thy gold, and all thy gudis gay,	
Quhen fortoun list, will fra thé fall :	
Sen thou sic sampillis seis ilk day,	Since; such ;
Obey, and thank thy God of all.’	each

The poem specially sets forth the bliss of contentment with one’s inevitable lot. But in *The Prais of Age* another note is struck, a note of sadness and despondency, inevitable in the case of a simple unworldly man living in such corrupt and calamitous times. That it was only a mood is, however, shown by representing *The Prais of Age* as sung by an aged minstrel :—

‘In tyl ane garth, under ane reid roseir,	Into a gar-
Ane auld man, and decrepit, hard I syng ;	den ; rose
Gay wes the noit, sweit was the voce and cleyr ;	
It wes grit joy to heir of sic ane thyng.	such a
“And to my doume,” he said, in his dytyng,	As ; fate ;
“For to be young I wald nocht, for my wyss,	song
Of all this warld to mak me lord and King :	not ; because
The moyr of aige the nerar hevynnis bless.	of my know-
	ledge
“Fals is this warld, and full of varyance,	Overcome ;
Oureset with syt and uther synnys mo ;	sorrow ;
Now trewth is tynt, gyle hes the governance,	grievances
And wrachitnes hes turnyt al fra weill to wo :	more
	lost

expelled

Fredoume is tynt, and flemyt the Lordis fro.

And cuvattyce is all the cause of this :

gone

I am content that yowthheid is ago ;

The moyr of aige the nerar hevynniss blis.”

Other reflec-
tive poems.

The evils of the times are also more specifically

dealt with in *The Want of Wyse Men*,
with the curious refrain—

Since

‘Sen want of wyse men makis foulis sitt on binkis.’¹

Another poem in a similar vein is that *Aganis Haisty Credence of Titlaris*. *The Ressoning Betwixt Aige and Youth* and *The Ressoning Betwixt Deith and Man* tell also much the same tale of the vanity of life. The latter is almost wholly didactic, and of small poetic value ; but the former gives a striking series of contrasted portraits of youth and age according to their respective methods of regarding the same aspects of life. Here are two stanzas :—

enclosed
grounds ;
decked

Those

tell

‘Quhen fair Flora, the goddess of the flowris,
Baith firth and feildis freschely had ourfret,
And perly droppis of the balmy schowris,
Thir woddis grene had with thair watter wet ;
Musand allone in mornyng myld, I met
A mirry man, that all of mirth cowth mene,
Syngand the sang that richt sweetly wes sett,
“O yowth be glaid in to thy flowris grene !”

faded
eyes ; hol-
low ; hoarse
coughing
Shrivelledtrue without
lies
very

I lukit furth a litill me befoir,
And saw a catiff on a club cumand,
With cheikis leyne, and lyart lokis hoir ;
His ene was howe, his voce was hache hostand ;
Wallowit and wan, and waik as ony wand ;
Ane bill he beure upoun his breist abone,
In letteris leill but les, with this legyand,
“O yowth thy flowris faidis ferly sone !”

¹ Benches ; as judges or governors.

But the poet concludes by adopting the burdens of both as true :—

‘ O youth, be glaid into thy flowris grene ;
O youth, thy flowris faidis ferly sone.’

In *Orpheus and Eurydice*, an allegorical adaptation from Boethius of some 630 lines, the classical learning has almost quite smothered the poetic inspiration ; but the *Testament of Cresseid*—intended to complete Chaucer’s tale of *Troilus and Criseyde* in a manner more consistent with moral if not poetic justice—is by traditional criticism regarded as Henryson’s masterpiece. He here claims comparison with Chaucer, and some think not entirely to his disadvantage. Yet the poem is merely an imperfect amalgam of Chaucer and Henryson, the complete effect being rather mixed, for the temperaments of the two were essentially different. Still, largely imitative though it be, and while imitative, not only quite at variance with the tone of Chaucer’s story, but by the very strenuousness of its morality in some degree both poetically and morally repulsive, it is interesting as a poetic *tour de force*, and is also sprinkled with passages of richly ornate beauty. In the portraits of the seven deities who sat in judgment on Cresseid’s sin the poet reaches the very acme of the old allegorical art. Here the piquantly vivid realism—the peculiar realism of the Scottish muse—triumphs over the artificial methods, the portraiture being both strongly

‘ Orpheus and
Eurydice,’
and ‘ The
Testament
of Cresseid.’

graphic and delicately felicitous. In the case of Saturn the Scottish method is specially victorious:—

frosted	‘ His face frosnit, his lyre was lyke the leid,
shivered	His teith chatterit, and cheverit with the chin,
eyes ; hollow	His ene drowpit, how, sonkin in his heid,
moisture	Out of his nois the meldrop fast can rin,
blue	With lippis bla, and cheikis leine and thin,
icicles	The iceschoklis that fra his hair doun hang,
wondrous	Was wonder greit, and as ane speir als lang.
Out over ;	
grey	Atour his belt his lyart lorkis lay
tangled ;	Felterit unfair, ovirfret with froistis hoir,
spangled	His garmound and his gyis full gay of gray,
attire	His widderit weid fra him the wind out woir ;
withered	Ane busteous bow within his hand he boir,
dress	Under his girdill ane flasche of felloun flanis,
strong	Fedderit with ice, and heidit with hailstanis.’
sheaf of cruel	
arrows	
Feathered	

In quite a different vein is the portrait of Jupiter.
Here is a stanza:—

eyes	‘ His voice was cleir, as cristall wer his ene,
	As goldin wyre sa glitterand was his hair ;
edges ; slash	His garmound and his gyis full gay of grene,
burly	With golden listis gilt on everie gair ;
sharpened	Ane burelie brand about his middill bair,
	In his right hand he had ane groundin speir,
	Of his father the wraith fra us to weir.’

But the leprous scene at the close of the poem is—except perhaps the silent meeting between Troilus and Cresseid—scarce more than grimly forbidding: a strenuous morality has extruded not merely adequate emotional pathos, but even true poetic art; and apart from the repulsiveness little remains but wearisome didactic prosing.

The true individuality of Henryson is to be found, not in such laboured and ambitious efforts as *Orpheus* or *The Testament*, but in the wholly simple and ingenuous *Robene and Makyne*, and the naively humorous naturalism of the *Moral Fables*. While Henryson but for 'Chaucer, glorious' could not have been what he was, he perhaps allowed his admiration for the 'flower' of 'Makaris' to override too much his own personality; indeed, it must further be confessed, that while Scottish poetry gained incalculably from the comprehensive genius of Chaucer, it suffered not a little in freedom and spontaneity from the stiffening artificiosity of various Chaucerian conventionalisms. But in *Robene and Makyne* Henryson writes as if Chaucer had never written; and in the *Moral Fables* (paraphrased from Æsop) we have some of the most delightful examples of allegory in literature. Both *Robene* and the *Fables* show that his strength lay not in the old allegorical love-tale, or the old allegorical morality: that just as Chaucer is truly great—great almost as Shakespeare—in various and penetrating knowledge of the world, so Henryson is at his best as an interpreter of rustic character or animal life—or, in other terms, when his poetry is inspired by the experiences of his own quiet days.

The *Fables* have by some been pronounced prolix, but they will be found so only by those who can discover nothing of their humour (delicate but shrewdly wise), whose sympathy with the

The true individuality of Henryson to be found in 'Robene,' and in the 'Moral Fables.'

'The Fables.'

fresh and artless aspects of nature is but tepid, and to whom the world of animal life is a virtual blank. As an animal allegorist Henryson has no superior: by no fabulist is the human in the animal better realised, while the special animal characteristics are admirably preserved and indicated. Incidentally, also, an old phase of Scottish life, as it existed in this ancient ecclesiastical city and its rural surroundings, looms peacefully out of the mists of the past with a charm all the more enticing because of a certain indistinctness.

The slightest of the *Fables* is *The Cock and the Jasp*; but the picture of the cock is truthful and spirited. Much fuller of incident and adventure, as well as of allegorical significance, is the *Uplandis Mous and the Burgess Mous*.

suffered	'This rurall mous in to the wynter tyde,
	Had hunger, cauld, and tholit greit distress ;
	The uther mous that in the burgh can byde,
	Wes gild-brother and maid ane free burgess :
also, without	Toll fre als, but custum mair or less,
	And fredome had to ga quhair ever scho list,
chest	Among the cheis in cask, and meill in kist.'

The burgess mouse went on a visit to her sister in the country, whose humble home is thus prettily described:—

dwelling	'As I hard say, it was ane sober wane,
moss and fern	Of fog and fairn full febilie wes maid,
frail shelter	Ane sillie scheill under ane steidfast stane,
not	Of whilk the entres wes nocht hie nor braid ;
without	And in the samyn thay went but mair abaid,
more delay	Withoutin fyre or candill birnand bricht,
such pickers	For commounlie sic pykeris luffis not licht.'

The country mouse entertained her sister with ‘nuttis and peis,’ but the epicurean burgess lady could not ‘accord’ with such ‘rude diet,’ and proposed that her rustic sister should leave ^{A visit to town.} ‘this hole,’ and come to her ‘place’ in town, where was to be had all the choicest gustatory dainties. They therefore hied them thither, creeping now under rank grass and corn, now under bushes ‘privily’ until they ‘fand the town,’ when they took their ‘herberie’ in a well-stored spence. But while sumptuously dining on all ‘the coursis that cuikis culd defyne,’ they were suddenly disturbed by a visit of the butler, which caused the timorous rural mouse to swoon for very dread. However, he left without discovering the ‘pykeris’; but hardly had they sat down again to the banquet, when Gib-Hunter, the ‘jolie cat,’ looked in on them. The sharp-witted burgess mouse, quick as ‘fyre of flint,’ darted into her hole; but alas! her rustic sister was unequal to the emergency, and Bawdrons, pouncing on her, caught her by the back:—

‘Fra fute to fute he kest hir to and fra,	
Quhylis up, quhylis down, als cant as ony kid ;	Now; playful
Quhylis wald he lat hir run under the stra,	
Quhylis wald he wink, and play with her bukhid.	hide-and- seek
Thus to the selie mous greit pane he did,	
Quhill at the last, throw fortune and gude hap,	Until
Betuix ane burdë and the wall scho crap.’	

Happily she escaped, more frightened than hurt. But the fright was enough; the choicest delicacies ceased to be enjoyable when danger seemed to lurk in every morsel; and as soon as Gib-Hunter took his

baffled departure she leapt down from her concealment, and took instant leave of her sister and of the ‘mangerie’ so ‘myngit all with cair’ :—

‘Bot I hard say, scho passit to hir den,
 Als warne als woll, suppose it wes nocht greit,
 Full benely stuffit, baith but and ben,
 Of beinis and nuttis, peis, ry, and quheit ;
 Quhen ever scho list scho had aneuch to eit,
 In quyet and eis, withoutin ony dreid,
 Bot to hir sisteris feist na mair scho geid.’

As ; wool
 comfortably;
 in kitchen
 and parlour
 enough

went

Of *Schire Chanticleir and the Foxe*, perhaps the

‘Schire Chan-
 ticleir and the
 Foxe.’

most deliciously humorous stanzas are
 those setting forth the sorrowful and
 other reflections of the three widowed

hens, Bertok, Sprutok, and Tappok :—

“Allace !” quod Pertok makand sair murning,
 With teiris greit attour hir cheikis fell,
 “Yone wes our drowrie, and our dayis darling,
 Our nichtingaill, and als our orlege bell ;
 Our walkryfe watche, us for to warne and tell
 Quhen that Aurora, with hir curcheis gray,
 Put vp hir heid betuix the nycht and day.

out over
 That one ;
 love
 clock
 wakeful
 head-dress

lover

“Quha sall our lemman be ? quha sall us leid ?
 Quhen we are sad, quha sall unto us sing ?
 With his sweit bill he wald brek us the breid
 In all this world wes thair ane kynder thing ?”

But Sprutok deems such extreme sorrow quite uncalled for, finding in her bereavement sufficing consolation in the proverb that ‘as gude luve cummis as gaes’ ; while Tappok, again, is neither sad nor glad, but simply self-righteously content :—

‘Than Tappok lyke ane curate spak full crous,
 “Yon wes ane verray vengeance fra the hevin ;

conceitedly

He wes sa lous, and sa lecherous ;

He had," quod scho, "Kittokis¹ ma than sevin ;

Bot rychteous God, haldand the ballandis evin,

Smytis richt sair, thocht he be patient,

For adultrie that will thame nocht repent."

more
balance
sorely

The various other fables, in which the Fox or Wolf (or both) figures, are all admirably droll, the wit being both barbed and tempered with the writer's shrewd wisdom ; while contemporary political or social depravations are indicated and satirised with great skill and subtlety. *The Tod's Confession to Freir Wolf* is perhaps the most caustic of any. This stanza is delightful:—

Other fables
of the Fox or
Wolf.

"Art thow contrite, and sorie in thy spreit

For thy trespas ?" "No, schir, I can nocht dude ;

not do it

Me think that hennis are sua honie sueit,

And lambis flesche that new are lettin bluid,

For to repent my mind can nocht conclud,

Bot of this thing, that I haif slane sa few."

"Weill," quod the Wolf, "in faith thow art ane schrew." rascal

The Preaching of the Swallow indicates perhaps more than any of the others the poet's keen sympathy with the animal creation, and his delight in the sights and sounds of Nature. In *The Testament of Cresseid* he has given us a glimpse of himself sitting down in a winter night to read Chaucer:—

'The Preach-
ing of the
Swallow':
a spring
morning.

'I mend the fyre, and beikit me about,

Than tulk ane drink my spreitis to comfort,

And armit me weill fra the cauld thairout,' etc.

warmed

¹ A common name for a loose woman.

In the following stanza from *The Swallow* we see him, as, leaving the cloisters of the old Fife city, he 'passit forth' one fine spring morning to ramble amongst the fields and woods:—

gone	'That samin seasoun, in to ane soft morning,
other birds	Richt blyith that bitter blastis wer ago,
then	Unto the wod to se the flouris spring,
Moist; fit	And heir the maveis sing, and birdis mo,
this way	I passit furth, syne lukit to and fro,
stone fence	To se the soyll, that was richt seisonabill,
loved	Sappie, and to resaif all seidis abill.
abode; com- fortable	Moving thus gait greit mirth I tuke in mynd,
wondrous	Of lauboraris to se the besines,
therewith	Sum makand dyke, and sum the pleuch can wynd,
every	Sum sawand seidis fast, from place to place,
side	The harrowis hoppand in the saweris trace :
large	It wes greit joy to him that luift corne,
	To se thame laubour, baith at evin and morne.
	And as I baid under ane bank full bene,
	In hart greitlie rejosit of that sicht,
	Unto ane hedge, under ane hawthorne grene,
	Of small Birdis thair come ane ferlie flicht,
	And doun belyif can on the leifis licht
	On everilk syde about me quhair I stude,
	Richt mervelous ane mekill multitude.'

Here also is a companion summer picture from the *Prologue to The Lyoun and the Mous*:—

A summer
morning.

boughs	'Sweet wes the smell of flouris quhyte and reid,
broad	The noyis of birdis richt delitious,
grasses	The bewis braid blomit abone my heid,
	The ground grawand with gersis gratus ;
	Of all plesance that place wes plenteous
	With sweit odouris, and birdis harmonie,
stronger	The morning myld, my mirth wes mair firthy.

The roisis reid arrayit on rone and ryce,
 The prymerois, and the purpour viola ;
 To heir it wes ane poynt of Paradice,
 Sic mirth the mavis and the merle couth ma.
 The blossommis blyith brak upon bank and bra,
 The smell of herbis, and of foullis cry,
 Contending quha suld haif the victorie.'

bough and
branch

Such ; black-
bird ; make
slope

As a poet of Nature, Henryson is a kind of pioneer : the traditional realism of the north enabling him, at least intermittently, to escape from the old hackneyed classical imagery, and to record his impressions in the language of simple sincerity. As a poet of Nature, Henryson is a pioneer. Compared with Cowper and Wordsworth. Passion he has none, but he can be nobly emotional ; and if seldom or never strongly pathetic, he frequently attains to a stately seriousness which is not unimpressive. Except in *Robene and Makyne* the theme of love has scarce a place in his poetry, for in *The Testament of Cresseid* love becomes merely a text for a sermon. Among modern poets he is most akin to Cowper and Wordsworth, and more to the former than the latter ; but he is more graphic, perhaps more really poetic than Cowper, and although he has none of the comprehensive reflectiveness or essential greatness of Wordsworth, his love of Nature is indicated with less insistent obtrusiveness, while his humour, more various, idiomatic, and constant, if less frolicsome than that of Cowper, tends to redeem even his occasional excesses in sermonising, and guards him against the worst Wordsworthian lapses into almost fatuous commonplace.

As we gather from Dunbar's *Lament*, and from references by Gavin Douglas, David Lyndsay, and others, there were several contemporaries of James I., Blind Harry, and Henryson not quite without repute in their day, although in some cases their works have wholly perished, and all that survives of the whole of them is, taken together, comparatively insignificant in quantity, although not so in quality.

Of James Afflek and John Clerk, distinguished for 'balat making and trigidë,' nothing very certain is known. Afflek may possibly be a certain James Afflek (d. 1497 ?). James Auchinleck who was 'servitor to the Earl of Rosse,' and died while holding the chantry of Ross, sometime in or about 1497. It has further been supposed that he was the author of a poem in the Selden MS., *The Quair of Jealousy*, to which the name Auchin is attached; but necessarily all this is little more than surmise.

John Clerk is presumably he whom Dunbar in *The Testament of Mr. Andro Kennedy*, represents as obtaining from Kennedy the bequest of 'God's braid malison and mine.' In the Bannatyne MS. there are five poems which are assigned to Clerk, but in the only case in which they are assigned by the writer of the MS. the name is erased. The five are (1) *My wofull Hairt me stoundis throw the vanis*, a religious ballad in the French octave of four accents with a refrain (assigned to Clerk by another than the writer of the MS.), in which Christ

is represented as detailing the events of the Passion; (2) *Sons hes bene ay exilit owt of sicht*, in *rime royal* (assigned to him by Ramsay), a lament on the growth of pride among the lords and barons; (3) that remarkably witty but somewhat broad ballad *In Secreit Place*, in seven-line stanzas—aa, bb, cbc—with a refrain (assigned to him by Ramsay), but in the Maitland and Reidpath ms. assigned to Dunbar; (4) even that fine antique, *The Wowing of Jok and Jynny* (see p. 289), prototype of many songs in the same vein, including the three dedicated to the fortunes of Duncan Gray (in this case the name inserted by the writer of the ms. is deleted); and (5) another song in a five-line stave—aa, bab—of four accents, *Fane wald I luve, but quhair about* (assigned to him by Ramsay, but possibly by Dunbar), partly humorous but wholly moral, and ending thus:—

‘Bot quha perfyttly wald imprent,
 Sowld fynd his luve moist permanent :
 Love God, thy prince, and freind, all thre ;
 Treit weill thy self, and stand content,
 And latt all vthir luvaris be.’

If Clerk was the author of any of the three last, he was possessed of no small sprightliness and wit, while all show very high metrical accomplishment.

Sir Richard Holland—bracketed by Dunbar along with Barbour, and a priest and a follower of the Douglasses, who, for rebellion, was, while in England in 1482, excepted from pardon—is the author of a curious political

Sir Richard
 Holland
 (fl. 1482).

allegory, *The Howlat*,¹ written for Elizabeth Dunbar, Countess of Moray. It is mainly interesting as a curious and solitary example of the engraftment of allegory on the old alliterative romance stave. At the time it was composed the allusions may have been pretty well understood and appreciated, but for us the allegory has now wholly lost its point. It is a sort of variation of the tale of the Jackdaw in borrowed plumage, the borrower in this case being the Owl or Howlat. Being dissatisfied with his shape and appearance, he applies to the Peacock, the Pope of Birds, to cry upon Christ to reshape him; but this being impossible, he is referred to the Eagle, representing the temporal power, who decrees that 'ilk fowl of the firth' should send him a feather. Becoming 'flour of all foulis throw fettern so fine,' he grows so insolent that it is found necessary to deprive him of all his false finery, and his final plight is thus described:—

praise
Then
with clamour
cursed the
season
made; fear

sobbed (?);
sighings
oathsomest;
monster;
woe

'Than this Howlat, hideous of hair and of hyde,
Put first fro poverty to pryce, and princis awin peir;
Syne degradit fra grace, for his grit pryde,
Bannyt bittirly his birth bailfully in beir.
He welterit, he wrythit, he wareit the tyd
That he wes wrocht in this warld in wofull weir;
He criplit, he cryngit, he cairfully cryd
He solpit and sorrowit, in sichingis seir;
He said, "Allace, I am lost, lathest of all,
Bysyn in bale beft;

¹ Bannatyne and Asloan mss., printed by Pinkerton in a *Collection of Scottish Poems*, 1792, vol. iii.; in the Bannatyne Club, ed. Laing, 1823; by Arthur Diebler, Chemnitz, 1893; and by the Scottish Text Society in *Scottish Alliterative Poems*, ed. Amours, 1897.

I may be sample heir eft
 That pryd yit nevir left
 His feir but a fall.”’

example
 hereafter
 companion
 without

The poem contains a few vigorous stanzas, and, besides other interesting references to the Douglasses, quotes the lines :—

‘O Dowglass, O Dowglass,
 Tender and trewe !’

embroidered on the coat-armour of the pursuivant. But the allegory is so complicated by a great variety of under plots that it loses its unity, and the whole becomes a puzzle which it is impossible, even if it were worth the trouble, to decipher.

Patrick Johnstoun, who was unable to escape the ‘shot of mortal hail’ which slew Blind Harry, is no doubt the same Patrick Johnstone to whom there are various references in *The Exchequer Rolls* and *The Treasurer’s Accounts* as performing plays before the king, and who died not long after 12th June 1494. He is the disputed author of a poem in the French octave, *The Three Deid Pows*, assigned to him in the Bannatyne MS., but in the Maitland MS. to Henryson. It is, of course, impossible to decide which of the two was the author. It may well have been written by Henryson — although only in the leprous scene in *The Testament* does he compass a mood of such ruthless severity. The three death’s-heads are supposed to address mankind in a strain of which this opening stanza may suffice as a sample :—

Patrick
 Johnstoun
 (d. 1494 ?)

Which

hollow eyes

true

unbold

“O sinfull man ! in to this mortall se
 Quhilk is the vaill of mvrnyng and of cair
 With gaistly sicht behold oure heidis thre,
 Oure holkit ene, our peilit pollis bair
 As ye ar now, in to this warld we wair
 Als fresche, als fair, als lusty to behald :
 Quhan thow lukis on this swth examplair
 Off thy self, man, thow may be richt vnbold.”

Following the reference to Johnstoun, Dunbar in
 Mersar. the *Lament* pays this high encomium to
 a dead ‘makar’ :—

‘He [Death] hes reft Merseir his endite
 That did in luf so lifly write,
 So schort, so quyk of sentence hie :
Timor mortis conturbat me.’

Mersar is further mentioned in Lyndsay’s *Papyngo*
 as one of six poets who

Though ;
 writings

‘Thocht they be deid their libels been levand,’

but so far as the facts of his life are concerned he is
 now to us little more than a name; and it is im-
 possible to single him out from among several Mersars
 mentioned in the *Treasurer’s Accounts*, or indeed
 to tell whether he really is mentioned there. He
 is usually referred to only as the author of one
 authenticated poem, *The Perell of Paramours*, but
 in addition to it other two are assigned him in
 the Bannatyne MS.: (1) *Off Luve quhay Lyikis to
 haif Joy*, and (2) *Thir Billis are Brevit*; and all
 three exactly tally with Dunbar’s eulogy of him,
 for they are by no means bad examples of the
 aphoristic love-ballad. *Off Luve quhay Lyikis*,

partly in the French octave of five accents, partly in *rime royal*, is occupied with advice in the art of love, and begins thus:—

‘Off luve quhay lyikis to haif joy or confort,	
Ye man begin and leir this A. B. C.	learn
Heireftir writtin ; quha will it rycht repoit ?	
First to be courtess, wyiss, gentill and fre,	
Lairge, honest, gentill, bayth secreteit and prevë	
And of him self na vantour, as I wene :	deem
Be sobir, trew, and every day lustë,	
And quhair thow luvis se thow be senedill sene.’	seldom seen

Here also is a sample of its particular advice:—

‘Gif mony luvaris thi lady will persew,	
Swa at thow leif nocht in jolesy ;	See
Scho is the bettir swa that scho be trew :	so
Non wald hir luve was scho nocht womanly.	not
Repair nocht till hir ay oppinly,	
Bot in all tyme be reddy hir to pleis,	
Howbeit thi hairt thow think sumtyme at weiss.’	opposed

The Perell of Paramours, in the French octave of four accents with a refrain, takes, however, a much severer view of love, as may be judged from this opening stanza:—

‘Allace, so sobir is the micht	
Of wemen for to mak debait,	
Incontrair menis subtell slicht,	skill
Quhilk ar fulfillit with dissait.	Who are filled full
With tressone so intoxicait	
Ar mennis mowthis at all houris,	
Quhome in to trest no woman wait :	knows
Sic perrell lysis in paramouris.’	

The last, *Thir Billis*, in *rime royal*, is intended for the special behoof of ladies, and concludes:—

‘Be war for weir, latt nevir your wit go wyld,	Beware of
For every day ane sample may ye se ;	trouble

young man

without
goodness ;
pin

Scho that is farest fra tyme hir fame be fyld
 Thair will no berne be blyth of hir bewte,
 Bot ay are skornand bayth he and he.
 Thus I conclude, suppois my wit be grene,
 Bewty but bonty is nocht wirth a prene.'

Of the two Roulls thus lamented by Dunbar—

'He has tane Roull of Aberdene
 And gentill Roull of Corstorphine ;
 Twa better fallows did no man se
Timor mortis conturbat me'—

nothing is known, though one or other must have been
 the author of *The Cursing of Sir Johne*
 Sir John Roull. *Rowlis Upon the Stelaris of his Fowlis*,¹
 a sort of mock excommunication of those who had de-
 frauded him of his religious dues. Written in the octo-
 syllabic couplet, it is a curious compound of jest and
 earnest, blasphemy, and, apparently, piety, and amid
 much of the merest Billingsgate contains some passages
 of real denunciatory vigour. Here is a sample:—

loathsome ;
toad

'Deip Acheron zour saulis invaid
 As blak, as mich as ony taid ;
 Snaykis, serpentis and eddeirs
 Mott stuff zour bellyis and zour bledderis,
 In hellis hoill quhair nevir is licht,
 Nor nevir is day, bot evir nicht,
 Quhair nevir is joy evin and morrow,
 Bot endles pane, dule and sorrow ;
 Quhair nevir is petie nor concord,
 Nor amitie, bot discord,
 Malice, rancour and invy,
 With magry and malancholy ;

ill-will

¹ Bannatyne and Maitland mss., printed in Lord Hailes' *Collection*, 1770 ; Pinkerton's *Ancient Scottish Poems*, 1786 ; and Laing's *Select Remains*, 1822, second ed. 1885.

Quhair thair is hunger, cald, and thirst
Dirknes, mirknes, rouk, and mist,
And Cair, but consolatioun
With eternal damnation.⁷

exhalation
without

The only other poet mentioned in *The Lament*—known to be the author of any poems that survive, is Quintyne Schaw, whom Kennedy in his *Flyting* with Dunbar calls his ‘cousing Quintine,’ and who, Dunbar in his *Flyting* states, composed with Kennedy a poem in their own praise. He and Kennedy belonged to Ayrshire, Schaw being the son of a certain John Schaw of Hails, who in 1467 was an ambassador for the marriage of James III. with Margaret of Denmark. He died some time after 8th July 1504. Since he was in receipt of a pension of £10, and occasionally got other gifts, it is probable that like Dunbar he frequented the court, and this obtains some corroboration by the only poem, known to be his, that has come down to us. It is entitled *Adveyce to a Courtier*,¹ and if not remarkable as poetry, is soundly sensible in its counsel. The stave consists of five lines of four accents, aa, bab. Here are two stanzas:—

Quintyne
Schaw
(d. 1504?)

‘Gif changes the wynd, on force ye mon
Bolyn huke, haik, and scheld² hold on.
Thairfor bewar with ane scharpe blawar :
Gif ye be wys avyce heiron ;
And set your sale a litle lawar.

If; of neces-
sity you
must

¹ Maitland ms., published in Pinkerton’s *Ancient Scottish Poems*, 1786.

² A technical description of the handling of a vessel, not now fully understood, although ‘Bolyn’ of course means bowline.

if; too tight
 blasts

must; wave

For gif ye hauld your sale our strek
 Thair may cum bubbis ye not suspek;
 Thair may cum contrair ye not know;
 Thair may cum stormes and caus a lek,
 That ye man cap by wynd and waw.'

Other poets mentioned by Dunbar—Heryot, Mungo Lockart, Sandy Traill, Sir John the Ros, 'Gentill Stobo'—have left nothing known to be theirs, although some anonymous poetry in the Bannatyne or Maitland or other MSS. may have been written by one or other of them. Sir Gilbert Hay, alluded to rather curtly, is only known as the 'makar' of translations—several in prose, and a very long one in verse, *The Buke of the Conqueror, Alexander the Great*.¹ It is unlikely that Dunbar, though he made no mention of James I., omitted other dead poets of note; but no doubt there were in this as in all other centuries a number of very minor bards, as one Glassinbery, a dull set of verses by whom is printed in Laing's *Early Metrical Tales* (1826, 2nd edition 1885). Of the large bulk of anonymous poetry (see *post*, p. 277) that survives much must belong to the fifteenth century, and various poets of note who wrote in the following century produced much of their best work in the fifteenth. Except Dunbar, none of these old Scots poets can claim to rank as great; but the general level of excellence—especially as regards form—is very high. Nearly all already alluded to cultivated poetry with

¹ MS. at Taymouth Castle—extracts printed by the Bannatyne Club, 1834.

the most strenuous endeavour after metrical excellence ; and while the Chaucerian influence assisted to widen and elevate their aims, the strong realism of the native tradition tended to prevent that Chaucerian degeneration which in England was in such marked contrast with the rise of the vigorous Scottish school, whose great master was Dunbar.

VI

DUNBAR AND WALTER KENNEDY

WALTER KENNEDY, the antagonist of Dunbar in *The Flyting*, enjoyed in his day a poetic fame only second, if second, to that of Dunbar. In Gavin Douglas's *Palice of Honour* he is entitled 'Greit Kennedie' and bracketed with 'Dunbar yit undeid'; and Sir David Lyndsay celebrates his 'terms aureate,' which no one can 'now counterfeit.' Born about 1460—probably in the same year as Dunbar—Kennedy was of noble descent, being the third son of Gilbert, first Lord Kennedy, who was heritable bailie of the Carrick district of Ayr. He was educated at the University of Glasgow, where he matriculated in 1475, and took his Bachelor's degree in 1476, and his Master's in 1478. From Dunbar's allusions in *The Flyting* one gathers that he was rather a needy younger son, and lived a rude country life; but he himself asserts that he had 'stores and stakkis,' and that Dunbar would be glad to gnaw stinking bones under his board behind the dogs' backs. Whatever may be the truth as to his 'stores,' little is known of him, except that in 1481 he was one of the examiners in Glasgow University, in 1492 was bailie-depute of Carrick, and in 1504

Walter
Kennedy
(1460?-1507?)

acquired the lands of Glentigh. Occasionally, to quote the invective of Dunbar, he 'brought the Carrick clay to Edinburgh corse'; but Dunbar derides him as a mere countryman, whose 'lippis' could 'blabber' only the 'Ershry' (the Erse language) of the Strathclyde Welsh. He was tall, and not improbably well enough looking, for Dunbar, conscious of his own short, and it may be rotund, figure, makes special mockery of his length and leanness:—

'The larbar lukis of thy lang lene craig,	lazy ; neck
Thy pure pynit thrott, pelit and owt of ply,	starved ; bare
Thy skolderit skin, hewd lyk ane saffrone bag	shrivelled
Garris men dispyt thar flesche, thow spreit of Gy :	makes ; con-
Ffy feyndly ffront ; ffy ! tykis face, ffy ! ffy !	temn
Ay loungand, lyk ane loikman on ane ledder ;	hangman
Thy ghaistly luke fleys folkis that pas thé by,	scares
Lyke to ane stark theif glowrand in ane tedder.'	strong ;
	staring ;
	halter

Unless the illness—under which he suffered when Dunbar wrote his *Lament*—resulted otherwise than was apprehended, Kennedy died probably in 1507, for he is the subject of this touching stanza:—

'Gud Maister Walter Kennedy	
In poynt of dede lyis veraly ;	death
Gret ruth it wer that so suld be :	
<i>Timor mortis conturbat me.'</i>	

This stanza would seem to indicate that Dunbar held Kennedy in high esteem, and the next that he even regarded him as his last remaining contemporary brother ; but it does not follow that *The Flyting* between the two poets—though sanctioned by ancient custom—was a merely playful duel in metrical skill and repartee. Even at the present day the Eastern Scot

'The Flyting,'
was it wholly
jest?

rather contemns (no doubt unjustly) his brother of the West; and in Dunbar's time the old antagonism between the Saxon of Lothian and the Welsh Celt of Cambria was more than latent, although not so active as between the Saxon and the uncivilised Celt of the Highlands. We may therefore infer that *The Flyting* indicates, if not direct enmity, a certain racial jealousy; but Dunbar was never one to cherish mere personal animosity, and perhaps enjoyed what he got almost as much as what he gave.

Kennedy's part in *The Flyting* cannot quite compare with that of Dunbar in metrical ease, in masterly alliteration, in sumptuousness of ribaldry, in variety of ridicule, or in impetuosity of invective; but it is not much wanting in any of these attributes, and in Dunbar's not uneventful career Kennedy had a richer supply of satirical material. More genealogical, historical, and specifically personal, he at least holds his own as regards asserted facts, and his final salute, though by no means his deadliest, and but a feeble reflex of Dunbar's metrical effects, is not without perorative power:—

Kennedy's
part compared
with that of
Dunbar.

‘Deulbere, thy spere of were, but feir, thou yelde,
Hangit, mangit, eddir-stangit, stryndie stultorum,
To me, maist hie Kenydie, et flee the felde,
Pickit, wickit, conwickit, Lamp Lollardorum.
Defamyt, blamyt, schamyt, Primas Paganorum.
Out! out! I schout, apon that snowt that snevillis.
Tale tellare, rebellare, induellar wyth the deuillis,
Spynk,¹ sink with stynk ad Tertara Termagorum.’

Devil-born;
war; with-
out doubt
offspring of
fools
Select

¹ Spynk = Finch, and is used of course as a term of reproach, but the exact meaning is now lost.

Owing, it may be, to his Western connection, few of Kennedy's other poems have been preserved, and we may well believe that none of these are the most characteristic, all of them being somewhat didactic.¹ Perhaps the best is that *Againis Mowth Thankles*. It is in the French octave with refrain, and shows a certain refinement of style. It begins—

Other poems
of Kennedy.

'Ane aigit man twyss fourty yeiris, Eftir the halydayis of Yule, I hard him say, amangis the freiris Of ordour gray, makand grit dule, Rycht as he wer a fowriwss fule ; Oft syiss he sicht and said, "Allace, Be Chryst, my cair ma nevir cule, That evir I scherwit mowth thankles."'	A Christmas lamentation Ofttimes he sighed served the thankless mouth
--	--

Like Kennedy, Dunbar was probably a scion of the nobility; for Kennedy taunts him with descent from Cospatrick, Earl of March, generated betwixt a she-bear and a 'deill,' and callit 'Dewlbeir and nocht Dumbar'; it has also been conjectured that he was the son or nephew of William, third son of Sir Patrick, who was the fourth son of George, tenth Earl of Dunbar; but there is no evidence on the point, beyond the fact that he was a native of Lothian born about 1460.

William
Dunbar
(1460?-1520?).

Intended for the Church from his 'nurse's knee,' Dunbar was educated at the University of St. Andrews, where he took his Bachelor's degree in 1477 and his Master's in 1479. From the fact that he dates one of his poems 'at

Dunbar as
a novice.

¹ Five are printed in Laing's ed. of Dunbar.

Oxinfurde,' it has been supposed that he continued his studies at Oxford University; but the poem indicates rather a mere casual visit to Oxford. It is much more certain that he studied at Paris. At some unknown date he entered the order of St. Francis, and while still in his noviciate went on a preaching and mendicant tour, and after making 'good cheir' in every 'lusty town and place'

'Off all Yngland from Berwicke to Kalice,'

and preaching 'eik in Canterbury,' he—so he rehearses in his poem *How Dunbar wes desyred to be ane Freir*—crossed from Dover and continued his wanderings through Picardy, where he not only the 'peple techit,' but engaged, as was indeed then almost the conventional habit of his profession, in quite contrariant practices:—

bear
God knows
falsehood
expelled

'As lang as I did beir the freiris style
In me, God wait, was mony wrink and wyle,
In me was falset with every will to flatter,
Quhich mycht be flemit with na holy watter:
I wes ay reddy all men to begyle.'

On his return from his wanderings, he felt unable to refuse the world and accept the monastic habit—

At the court
of James IV.

the offer of it scared him, he affirmed,
like the prospect of marriage to a ghost,
—but he became a secular priest. In 1491 he accompanied the embassy sent to negotiate for the marriage of James IV. with a princess of France, and this failing, it would seem that he also went

with the deputations to various other countries, for in his verses on *The World's Instabilitie*, he ventures to remind the king that he had served him also in Germany, Italy, and Spain, this in addition to England and Ireland. An allusion in *The Flyting* shows that he was also on one occasion wrecked on the coast of Norway. From at least as early as 1500—and it may be from or before 1491—he was a recognised official at court, probably a notary, for it was in this capacity that in 1501 he was included in the embassy to England for arranging the marriage of James IV. with the Princess Margaret. A favourite with Queen Margaret from the time that he celebrated the royal marriage in *The Thrissil and the Rois*, he was also on easy terms with the accomplished, manly, chivalrous, dissolute, superstitious, headstrong, and entirely human James IV.; and the society at the court of this characteristic Stewart king—its jovial freedom, its eager greed, its motley crowd of ‘solicitaris,’ its amusements, revelries, and coarse indecorums—is mirrored in the facets of his many-sided verse.

At the court he never held more than a comparatively humble post. His constant hopes of a benefice were doomed to disappointment; and though one can't accept the satires of Kennedy in *The Flyting* with perfect seriousness, we may, without doing great injustice to Dunbar, infer that his reputation was not quite consistent with his grave ambitions:—

His disap-
pointments.

such a
if

Useless
fellow

‘Ane benefice quha wald gyve sic ane beste,
Bot gif it war to gyngill Judas bellis,¹
Tak thé a fidill, or a fleyt et geste²
Wndought, than art ordanyt to not ellis.’

On 15th August 1500 he, however, obtained a pension of £10 for life, and this in 1507 was increased to £20, and in 1510 to £80. His poetic gifts were no doubt his main passport to the favour both of the king and queen, and if his designation as ‘the rhymer of Scotland’ in the grants to him by Henry VII. in 1501 is not to be taken as implying that he was formally recognised in Scotland as ‘poet laureate,’ he probably owed his pension chiefly to his poetry. At the same time he based his claims to a benefice, not on his poetical accomplishments, but on his personal services to the king.³ How he fared after the death of James IV. at Flodden in 1513 there is no record: he may have retained the pension of £80 until his death; but he never attained to any position at all commensurate with his ambition or his talents. Making a false step at the beginning of his career, he was all his after years in conflict with his circumstances; and the nut of life conceded to him no satisfying kernel:—

‘I seek abowte this world onstable
To find a sentence convenable;

¹ To betray Christ as Judas did.

² Take a fiddle or a flute and recite stories (as the minstrels did).

³ Mr. Oliphant Smeaton (*William Dunbar*, p. 50) suggests that Dunbar was confidential agent of the king both in politics and love. The surmise is perhaps feasible, but no sufficient evidence is adduced warrant the acceptance of the surmise as fact.

Bot I can not in all my witt
 Sa trew a sentence find of it
 As say it is dissavable.'

He died probably in 1520; but not even his place of burial is known.

Dunbar's poetry¹ is almost as full of self-revelation as that of Burns. With a candour that is entirely naive he paints the picture of his novitiate in its unedifying completeness, and unfeignedly proclaims his preference for the charms of secular licence to the 'holy weid' of the monk; if less scientifically skilled in the 'Hevins glory' of gastronomy than a Brillat-Savarin, or a Berchoux, he dilates on its blissful results with an equal enthusiasm; drink and good fellowship he sings

Dunbar's self-revelation.

¹ Dunbar's poems are preserved in the Asloan, Bannatyne, Maitland, and Reidpath mss., and there are individual poems in the Mackulloch ms. in the University of Edinburgh, in three mss. in the British Museum, and in a ms. vol. in the Town Clerk's Office, Aberdeen. Seven were printed in Dunbar's lifetime by Chepman and Myllar, Edinburgh, 1508. Selections were included in Ramsay's *Evergreen*, 1724, and were also published by Lord Hailes, 1770, Pinkerton, 1786, Sibbald, 1802, etc.; but the first collected edition was that by Laing, 1824, second edition with supplement, 1865. Of an edition by James Paterson, 1863, little can be said by way of commendation. The Scottish Text Society's edition, 1884-1893, is elaborate as regards introductions, vocabulary, and notes, but the most complete as regards text is that of Professor Schipper, Vienna (in the *Memorials* of the Imperial Academy of Sciences), 1892-93. Dr. Schipper has also published *William Dunbar sein Leben und seine Gedichte*, 1884, in which he gives specimens of Dunbar translated into German; and he has treated of Dunbar's metres in *Englische Metrik*, Bonn, 1882-1888, and *Grundriss der Englischen Metrik*, 1895. *William Dunbar* by Oliphant Smeaton ('Famous Scots' Series), 1898, gives some new particulars about Dunbar's earlier years.

with much of the devil-may-care fervour of 'rantin Robin':—

'Now all this tyme let vs be merry,
And set nocht by this world a cherry :
Now, quhile thair is gude wyne to sell,
He that does on dry breid virry
I give him to the devill of hell';

not

worry

his own characteristic capers at *The Dance in the Queen's Chamber* he parades with unaffected laughter at himself; he vies with Burns in allusions to the carnal; regarding his ambitions and disappointments he also gives you his full confidence; and in fine he hides from you none of his varying moods: neither his profound persuasion of his own deserts, nor his general contempt for human nature, his sincere respect for occasional human worth, his poignant melancholy, his patience and blythe resolutions, his strong desires, his equally strong conviction that all is vanity, his overwhelming sense of the might and his dread of death, 'the strong unmerciful tyrand,' his more noble aspirations, his orthodox piety, his conventional hopes of heaven.

The peculiar virtue of his verse is that it palpitates with reality. It is an intensely true and living record

of himself, and certain aspects of the court
His reality. and burgess life of Scotland at the close of the Middle Ages; and no criticism of this strange and strong poet—not even Lowell's comparison of his works to a mere field of thistles—seems to me more hopelessly and delightfully inappropriate than the verdict

of Professor Courthope—usually careful and judicious—who, preferring to Dunbar's vivid verse the elaborate prolixities of Gavin Douglas, asserts that 'though his works are of great importance to the antiquary, he rarely touches those notes of human interest which are a passport to the sympathy of the general reader.' Here by one generalising sweep you have the human race apportioned into the two great orders of antiquaries and general readers, and you are further almost given to understand that 'the sympathy of the general reader' is the one criterion of 'notes of human interest.' But make of your 'general reader' what you will, Dunbar—who in life was quite other than dry-as-dust—is less than most of the old poets a fit companion for the mere antiquary. As for his 'notes of human interest,' he touches them if anything too often and too variously rather than too seldom. They are not all, it may be, a passport to modern sympathy; but if even the 'general reader' can find no congenial 'note of human interest' in, say, *The Lament for the Makaris*, *The Petitioun of the Gray Horse*, or *Meditatioun in Wyntir*, to name but three poems out of many similar ones, then the blame is not in Dunbar but in 'the general reader,' and 'the general reader' is also a much duller person than his worst enemies suppose.

In considering more specifically the characteristics of Dunbar, one is at once arrested by the ease and artistic finish of nearly all his productions. As a mere master either of metre or language, he is not

surpassed even by Chaucer, as he is not approached by any of his predecessors except in a degree by James I. or Henryson. The immense variety of his staves, and his almost uniform success in each, stamp him as quite an exceptional expert in the artistic use of words. For purposes of rhythm or rhyme language is in his hands an absolutely ductile material. Trace of effort in his verse there is little or none, and very rarely any faintest glimpse of the sacrifice of thought to form or form to thought. Most likely half or more of his poems have perished, for few were printed in his lifetime, and none known to be in his handwriting survive. But in the some ninety pieces that may fairly be ascribed to him, he attempted a greater variety of metrical form than any predecessor. Besides excelling in Chaucer's special metres, he profited somewhat by Lydgate, but he seems also to have studied nearly every form of the old English stave; and while, moreover, he did not disdain to use the unrhymed alliteration as well as the rhymed stave of the old northern romances, he also utilised his familiarity with the French poetic methods to introduce new metrical effects, especially in the case of refrains.

His one surviving poem in unrhymed alliteration is the more than Swiftian *The Twa Merrit Wemen* and the *Wedo*. Here is an example, in the beautiful lines describing the dawn of the summer morning which gladdens you, while the

A master of
metre and
language.

Unrhymed
alliteration.

‘gay wyffis,’ having just concluded the baring of their hearts to one another, are ‘cooling their mouths with comfortable drinks’ :—

‘The morow myld wes et meik, the mavis did sing	
And all remuffit the myst, et the meid smellit ;	meadow
Siluer schouris doune schuke, as the schene cristall,	bright
And berdis schoutit in schaw, with thair schill notis ;	the woods
The goldin glitterand gleme, so gladit ther hertis,	
Thai maid a gloriu gle amang the grene bewis.	
The soft souch of the swyr, et soone of the stremys,	sighing of
The sweit sawour of the sward, and singing of foulis ;	the wind in
Myght confort ony creatur of the kyn of Adam ;	hollows
And kindill agane his curage thocht it wer cald sloknyt.	though ;
Than rais thir ryall wivis, in ther riche wedis	quenched
And rakit hame to ther rest, through the rise blwmys.’	underwood

While in this short specimen the alliterative conventions of the older poets are broken—though broken rather by way of richness than of poverty of alliteration—not merely the perfect rhythmical flow, but the musical melody and suggestiveness of the lines indicate an admirable sense of the poetry of words.

In much of his rhymed verse, also, Dunbar makes skilful use of alliteration, and by lavish recourse to it in the more denunciatory passages of *The Flying* immensely enriches their ludicrous effect ; but the only surviving example of his—it is most probably his—in the rhymed alliterative stave of the old romances, with the bobwheel, is the ballad detailing in such daring terms the quenchless thirst of *Kynd Kittok*. Its stave differs somewhat from any of the examples of

The old
rhymed alliterative stave.

rhymed alliterative verse previously quoted (see pp. 36-38) in the formation of the bobwheel, the bob, which introduces a new rhyme, being a full hemistich. Here is an example:—

‘And for to brew and baik :

heartily

Friendis I pray you hertfully,

If

Gif ze be thirsty or dry,

Once

Drink with my gud dame as ze ga by

Anys for my sake.’

On one solitary occasion—in that rapid rush of denunciation *The Epi^taph for Donald Owre* (the Highland rebel, Donald Dubh)—he appropriates the old romance bobwheel to form a complete stave, as thus:—

The romance
bobwheel as
a stave.

‘In vice most vicious he excellis

meddles

That with the vice of tresone mellis ;

Though

Thocht he remissioun,

Have

Haif for prodissioun,

Schame and suspissioun,

Ay with him dwellis.’

Unless we regard the *Freiris of Berwick* as indubitably Dunbar’s, only once—in the wholesome

The couplet:
heroic, and
octo-syllabic.

contrast to *The Twa Merrit Wemen and*

the Wedo, the lines in *Prays of Women*—

does he adopt Chaucer’s heroic couplet;

but he writes the octo-syllabic couplet of Barbour and Chaucer with ease and spirit, as well as with ornamental touches which lend to it additional point and vivacity. He employs it in nearly all the several ritualistic divisions of *The Dregy*, in his picturesque catalogue of *The Solisitaris in Court*, and both in

his *Complaint* and his *Remonstrance to the King*. In *The Dregy* he, however, introduces variations in the responses, adopting from the French what was then known as the common rondeau, in imitation of a peal of bells inviting to the services of the church:—

‘Tak consolatioun
in zour pane ;
In tribulatioun
tak consolatioun ;
Out of vexatioun
cum hame again :
Tak consolatioun
in zour pane.’¹

Of the French octave—ab, ab, bc, bc—both in its four accented and five accented form, Dunbar makes large use. Unlike Chaucer, he occasionally enriched it—as in several stanzas of *The Flyting*—by the device of internal rhymes, and, unlike Chaucer, he never made use of it in the complete French ballade form, where the identical rhymes of the whole first stanza are repeated throughout the poem, but except in the solitary instance of *The Flyting* he introduced the refrain.

The French
octave, with
refrain.

¹ Response No. 2 has two final lines in couplets, and Professor Schipper (*Altenglische Metrik*, p. 382) therefore regards it as a form of *rime couée*—ab, aa, bb—with internal rhyme. Mr. G. P. M’Neill (Scottish Text Society’s edition of *Dunbar*, III. clxxxix) justly observes that the final couplet ‘is not an integral part of the strophe’; but it has further no right to a place in the response, the title—*Iube Domine benedicere*—having been omitted. Two other examples of this rondeau in old Scots poetry are *Polwart, zee peip*, etc., in Montgomerie’s *Flyting* (p. 257), and an anonymous piece, *Thus I propone* (p. 298), in the Bannatyne and Maitland MSS., printed in Pinkerton’s *Ancient Scottish Poems*, p. 211.

This device was not, however, as editors have stated, a free adaptation by Dunbar of the French ballade; for (1) the octave without refrain, as written by the Scots 'makaris,' is as common in French poetry as the ballade; (2) the French ballade has the refrain, and it is found in Chaucer's English ballades; and (3) the octave with refrain as written by Dunbar was not only used by French poets—as by Villon in his double ballade,¹—but besides being frequently found in Early English poetry,² was used by Henryson and the Scots poets of the fifteenth century. Nevertheless, Dunbar utilised it with special ingenuity and with great variety of effect: in elegies, as in that on Lord Bernard Stewart, where the changes are impressively rung on the 'flower of chivalrie'; in the celebrations of 'the blyth and blissful burgh of Aberdein,' and of London, 'the flower of cities all'; in the enforcement of special moral maxims, as that 'without gladness availis no tresour'; in personal eulogies, as that on Lord Bernard Stewart on his return to England 'With gloire and honour, lawd and reverence,' and on Queen Margaret—'Gladeth thou Quenye of Scottis regioun'; in religious pieces, the refrain being usually a Latin quotation, as in *Done is a Battell*—'Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro'; and in the enforcement of petitions, as in *Sen that I am a Prisoneir*, where only the last word 'prisoneir' is common to all the refrains throughout the poem.

¹ *Œuvres*, ed. Prompsault, Paris, 1835, pp. 150-153.

² See Wright's *Political Poems*, passim.

But in the bulk of Dunbar's other poems the refrain is also a prevailing form. For the French *kyrielle* — aa, bb — he shows a special partiality, using it in the stately *Lament for the Makaris*, with its melancholy burden 'Timor mortis conturbat me'; in the remonstrance *Of James Dog*, with the humorous recapitulated warning, 'Madam, ye heff a dangerous Dog'; in the whimsical *Amendis to the Tailzours and Sowtaris*, with the ludicrous iteration, 'Tailzours and Sowtaris blest be ze'; and in some other dozen pieces with an equally admirable discernment of its relation to particular effects.

The *Kyrielle*.

He also adapted the refrain to the five-line stave, of four or five accents, derived from the French *rondeau*. This stave, either aa, bb, a, without the refrain, or aa, bab with the refrain,¹ is responsible for more than a third of Dunbar's pieces. Here is the stave as exemplified in part of a *rondeau* of Villon:—

The five-line
stave, with
refrain.

'Sire, clarté perpétuelle,
Oui vaillant, plat n'y escuelle
N'eut oncques, n'ung brin de percil.
Il fut rez, chef, barbe, sourcil
Comme ung navet qu'on racle et pelle.'

Here is a stanza of unrefrained Dunbar, from *My Heid did Zak*:—

¹ For an example of a stave thus arranged, but without refrain, see *Adveyce to a Courtier*, by Quintyne Schaw, *ante*, p. 139.

‘Full oft at morrow I wprise
 Quhen that my curage sleipeing lyis,
 For mirth, for menstrallie and play,
 For din, nor dancing, nor deray
 It will nocht walkin me no wise.’¹

sport
 not awake

And here are two stanzas—from *Of Ane Blak-Moir*
 —as modified by Dunbar’s special device of the
 refrain:—

‘Quhen scho is claid in reche apperrall
 Scho blinkis als brycht as ane tar barrell;
 Quhen scho was born, the sone tholit clippis
 The nycht he fain faucht in hir querrell :
 My ladye with the mekle lippis.

smiles
 suffered
 eclipse
 gladly
 big

Quhai for hir saik, with speir and scheld,
 Preiffis maist mychtelye in the feld,
 Sall kiss, and withe hir go in grippis
 And fra thyne furth hir luff sall weld ;
 My ladye with the mekle lippis.’

Who
 most
 thence

We have also two examples—*The Petitioun of the
 Gray Horse*, and *Now Culit is Dame
 Venus Brand*—of a stave of six four-
 accented lines—aaa, bbb—the last two
 forming a double refrain, thus:—

Six-line stave
 with double
 refrain.

‘Quhen I was zoung and into ply,
 And wald cast gammaldis to the sky,
 I had beine bocht in realmes by,
 Had I consentit to be sauld.
 Schir, lett it nevir in toun be tald,
 That I sould be ane zuillis zald.’²

in condition
 capers
 bought;
 adjoining

Christmas

¹ This is the *In Memoriam* stave of Tennyson, plus an additional line at the beginning.

² Zald, yald, or yaud = an old, worn-out horse, not worth being cared for.

Another instance of a double refrain is found in *The Satire of Edinburgh*, which is properly a development of the five-line stanza with refrain, an additional line being added to the beginning, and an additional line of refrain being introduced in the form of a bob, the refrain thus taking the form of a bobwheel, and the stanza being composed of seven lines—aaa, bbab—six of four accents, and one of two, thus:—

The double
refrain in the
form of a
bobwheel.

‘At your hie Croce, quhair gold and silk
Sould be, thair is bot crudis and milk;
And at zour Trone¹ bot cokill and wilk,
Panches, pudingis of Jok and Jame:

high Cross
curds
whelk

Think ze nocht schame,
Sen as the world sayis that ilk
In hurt and sclander of zour name!’

not
Since; that
same

It should be noted, however, that the word ‘name,’ alone, is common to the last lines of refrain throughout the poem.

In the seven-line stave of Chaucer—ab, abb, cc—named by Gascoigne *rime royal*, Dunbar wrote *The Thrissil and the Rois*, and other serious pieces, but he never fitted it as some early English poets do (e.g. *Lament of the Duchess of Gloucester* in Wright’s *Political Poems*, i. 205, and Lydgate in that rollicking variety of the stave, the *London Lyekpenny*) with a refrain, using instead a stave thus arranged—aa, bb, cbc—a development of the five-line stave (see *ante*, p. 157).

The seven-line
stave without
and with
refrain.

¹ The Trone was the public weighing-beam, which occupied the site of the present Tron Church.

All his verse in this stave is of a more or less humorous, often coarsely humorous, kind. Here is an example in two stanzas from *Of a Dance in the Quenis Chalmer*, the broad buffoonery of the one stanza piquantly contrasting with the devoted sentiment of the other:—

Poet
nimble
disorderly
dance

until;
slipper

taught; the
others

‘Than cam in Dunbar the Mackar,
On all the floore thair was nane frackar,
And thair he dannset the dirrye dantoun;
He hoppet lyke a pillie wantoun,
For luff of Mwsgraeffe,¹ men tellis me;
He trippet, quhill he tint his pantoun:
A mirrear Dance mycht na man se.
Than cam in Maestriss Mwsgraeffe;
Scho mycht hef lernit all the laeffe;
Quhen I saw hir sa trimlye dance,
Hir guid convoy and countenance,
Than, for hir saek, I wissit to be
The grytast erle, or duik in France:
A mirrear Dance mycht na man se.’

Dunbar’s solitary example of a nine-line stave—
aab, aab, bab—is *The Goldyn Targe*. This stave was
used by Blind Harry and Robert Henry-
son, and also by Chaucer in *Faire Anelida*
and *False Arcyte*.

There is also a solitary example of the very old
octave stave in lines of four accents rhyming
alternately—ab, ab, cd, cd (occasionally
ab, ab, ab, ab, and ab, ab, ac, ac)—in *The*
Testament of Mr. Andro Kennedy, a
Latin line alternating with the English one, thus

¹ The wife of Sir John Musgrave, who accompanied Queen Margaret to Scotland. Dunbar’s jocular reference has been taken very seriously by some critics.

forming an imperfect variety of macaronic verse.
Here is a stanza:—

‘ <i>Nunc condo testamentum meum</i>	
I leiff my saull for euermair,	leave
<i>Per omnipotentem Deum</i>	
In to my lordis wyne cellare ;	
<i>Semper ibi ad remanendum,</i>	
Quhill domisday, without disseuer,	Until ; ceasing
<i>Bonum vinum ad bibendum</i>	
With sueit Cuthbert that luffit me never.’	

This blended Latin and vernacular poetry is of very early date. A long example in lines of three accents is a *Song on the Times*, 1388.¹

In that superb piece of word music and rhymal ingenuity, *Ane Ballat of Our Lady*, Dunbar makes use of an octave of alternating rhyming lines of four and three accents respectively, but enriches it in the four accented lines by two internal rhymes, and fits it with a Latin refrain introducing a bobwheel of three lines. Here is an example:—

‘ Haile sterne superne ! Haile in eterne,	
In Godis sicht to schyne !	
Lucerne in derne, for to discerne	darkness
Be glory and grace devyne !	By
Hodiern, modern, sempitern,	
Angelicall regyne !	
Our terne infern for to dispurn	fierceness
Helpe rialest rosyne.	
<i>Aue Maria, gratia plena !</i>	
Haile, fresche flour femynyne !	
Zerne ws, guberne, wirgin matern	Yearn toward
Of reuth baith rute and ryne.	pity ; stem

¹ Wright's *Political Poems*, i. 270.

'Imperiall wall, place palestrall
 Of peirless pulcritud ;
 Trywmpshall hall, hie tour royall
 Of Godis celsitud ;
 Hospitall riall, the lord of all
 Thy closet did include ;
 Bricht ball cristall, ross virginall,
 Fulfillit of angell fude.
Aue Maria, gratia plena !
 Thy birth has with his blude,
 Fra fall mortall, originall,
 Ws ranusound on the rude.'

For *rime couée* Dunbar shows no great partiality, but what varieties of it he has recourse to he uses with his accustomed mastery. An example of it, in a modification of its simplest form, is his *Sir Thomas Norray*, plainly suggested by Chaucer's *Sir Thopas* ; but instead of the Chaucerian six-line stave built on two rhymes—aab, aab—he uses a six-line stave built on three rhymes—aab, ccb—the head lines having four accents and the tail lines three :—

'Now lythis of ane gentill knycht,
 Schir Thomas Norray wyse and wicht
 And full of chivalrie :
 Quhais father was ane grandë Keyne,
 His mother was ane Fairë Queen
 Gottin be sossery.'

The stave is derived from the Latin, but the minstrels whom Chaucer burlesqued got it from the Anglo-Norman.¹

By the device of repeating the rhyme of the tail line, two six-line staves are linked together to form

¹ For Anglo-Norman example, see Wright's *Lyric Poetry*, p. 55.

the twelve-line stave of *The Dance of the Sevin Deidly Synnis* and *The Turnament*, aab, ccb, ddb, eeb.

Numerous examples of this stave are to be found in Early English, and there is a curious variation on it in Latin—*Against*

Rime couée—
twelve-line
stave.

the Lollards, 1381,¹ made by interchanging the rhyme of the head and tail lines, thus: aab, aab, bba, bba.

In *The Turnament* it admirably conveys the regular succession of incidents, and in *The Dance* the regular movements completing the dance of the several sins, a stanza being allotted to each sin, thus:—

'Than Yre come in with sturt and strife ;	Then Ire
His hand wes ay vpoun his knyfe,	
He brandeist lyk a beir :	bear
Bostaris, braggaris, and barganeris,	wranglers
Eftir him passit in to pairis,	
All bodin in feir of weir ;	clad in garb of war
In iakkis, and stryppis and bonettis of steill,	
Thair leggis wer chenzzeit to the heill,	covered with chain armour
Ffrawart wes thair affeir :	Frowart ;
Sum vpoun vdir with brandis beft,	gait
Sum jaggit vthiris to the heft,	beat
With knyvis that scherp cowl scheir.'	handle
	cut

Dunbar supplies only one example of the common eight-line stave divided into two equal sections,

Quha will behold of Luve the Chance,

which is built on two rhymes only, aaab, aaab, the head lines being of four

Rime couée—
eight-line
stave.

accents, and the tail lines of two only; but we have two instances of a sixteen-line stave, *The Fenzzeit Freir*, and—if it be Dunbar's—*Ane Littill Interlud*

¹ Wright's *Political Poems*, i. 231.

built on four rhymes, aaab, cccb, dddb, eeeb. In *The Fenzeit Freir* the tail lines have three accents, and the first and concluding staves are of twenty-four lines. In *Ane Littill Interlud* the tail lines have two accents only.

The only remaining example of *rime couée* is *Thir Ladyis Fair*, of twelve lines built on four rhymes, aab, aab, ccd, ccd, the head lines having only two accents and the tail lines three. It is formed by doubling a six-line stave fashioned on the imperfect Iambic tetrameter,¹ of which there are examples in Early Norman, and which became very common in England in the sixteenth century. The six-line stave is used by Alexander Scott (see *post*, p. 244) both singly and as part of a compound stave.

But apart from his mere achievements in rhyme and rhythm, Dunbar is a special master of the art of expression, and if not a greater, a more curious master than Chaucer. In such excessively allegorical poems as *The Goldyn Targe* and *The Thrissil and the Rois*—where the influence of the English ‘makaris’ is at its strongest—he exhibits wonderful expertness in the floridly ornamental style which was deemed the fitting convention for such themes. It is all elaborately artificial—for even the ‘intense sense of colour,’ which some critics praise, is a mere mechanical intensity assumed for the nonce and

Rime couée—
twelve-line
stave of short
lines.

Dunbar as a
master of
‘terms aureate’
—‘The Thrissil
and the Rois.’

¹ See Guest, *English Rhythms*, p. 587.

resulting in the production of a landscape which, instead of glorifying, gives the lie to Nature—but the effect, if really cold, is at least nobly melodious. Here is an example from *The Goldyn Targe*:—

‘ Full angellike thir birdis sung thair houris	those
Within thair courtyns grene, in to thair bouris,	
Apparlit quhite and red, with blumys suete ;	
Anamalit was the felde wyth all colouris,	
The perly droppis schuke in silvir schouris,	
Quhill all in balme did branch and levis flete ;	float
To part fra Phebus, did Aurora grete,	
Hir cristall teris I saw hyng on the flouris,	
Quhilk he for lufe all drank vp with his hete.’	Which

In deference, it may be, to the English convention, Dunbar thought fit to celebrate the praise of London in the same highly decorative fashion. But, all the same, the poem indicates a special London. mastery in the art of eulogy, and if occasionally the imagery be too formal and traditional, yet to what stately music has he set his numbers !

‘ Aboue all ryuers thy Ryuer hath renowne,
 Whose beryall stremys, pleasaunt and preclare,
 Under thy lusty wallys renneth down,
 Where many a swanne doth symme with wyngis fare ;
 Where many a barge doth saile, and row with are,
 Where many a ship doth rest with toppe-royall,
 O ! towne of townes, patrone and not compare :
 London, thou art the floure of Cities all.’

Yet excellent, in their own way, though these samples of Dunbar’s ‘terms aureate’ be, they are mainly an echo of other ‘makaris,’ and moreover the echo of an affectation: they represent Dunbar as the disciple, the imitator, the masquerader, not

Dunbar as himself, as a new poetic force, as the assimilator of many poetic influences—English, Scottish, French—to his own growth in individual skill and grace. Never, of course, is his individuality entirely hid amongst the profusion of his ‘terms aureate’: even in *The Goldyn Targe*, besides the rhythmical music and the polished diction, we have occasional examples of the condensed vividness of phrase and epithet in which he excels all his predecessors (e.g. ‘The skyis rang for schouting of the larkis,’ ‘Ane sail as quhite as blossom vpon spray,’ ‘The schour of arrowis rappit on as rayn,’ ‘For reird it semyt that the raynbow brak’); but these are mere isolated violations of his ‘terms aureate,’ violations that prove the rule. It is only when he departs from the allegorical and mannered method of his predecessors, and trusts to his own artistic instincts—to his personal observations of nature and man, and to the racy vernacular of which he had such limitless command—that he does suitable justice to his gifts. Happily his lapses into the allegorical and artificial were only occasional. Indeed it is one of his chief merits that he was not content to be merely imitative even in manner, that he bent his energies to the discovery of the mediums best fitted for the direct and apt expression of each particular theme.

In no preceding poet does the verse, even in its rhythmical form, more exactly mirror the sentiment or thought. In the specially poetic quality of terse-

ness he outvies all his contemporaries or predecessors. Even Chaucer is chargeable with the prolixity which is the prevailing sin of all the early English poets from Chaucer to Lydgate; but in the case of all Dunbar's more characteristic pieces, not a stanza, not a line, not even a word is superfluous. His terseness. In this matter we may assume the influence of his French predecessors and contemporaries, which is further manifest in the polished perfection of his stanzas, and he also owed not a little to the racy vigour of the Scots vernacular; but only by his own sincerity and strength could he have achieved his own individual triumphs. Yet the triumphs were achieved at a certain cost. He is perhaps too succinct, too unexpansive. His genius was, it may be, 'cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd' by his metres, by his mere love of form, as it was by the peculiarities of his career and circumstances; but at least within his own sphere he is, by virtue of his strong originality and the perfection of his art, fully entitled to a place among the worthiest.

The main theme of Dunbar is human nature, as found in himself and the world around him, and especially human nature represented from the humorous or satirical point of view. His view is comprehensive, and his method absolutely thorough and sincere. Whatever, for example, may be thought of his choice of such a subject as *The Twa Merrit Wemen and the Wedo*—however strange its coarse Rabelaisism may appear to modern eyes—there can

scarce be two opinions as to its remarkable qualities as literature. The great poetic beauty of several passages, the cunningly executed contrasts between appearances and reality, the vivid vigour of the narrative, the entire matter-of-fact air that pervades the indelicate gossip of the ladies—all contribute to the deadliness of the satire. Analysis of the poem is almost impossible, and quotation difficult; but the following lines from the introduction, though rather in Dunbar's ornate manner, will show how skilfully he indicates the painting of the outside of the cup and platter:—

	'I saw thre gay ladeis sit in ane grene arbeir,
decked with	All grathit in to garlandis of fresche gudellie flouris ;
That ;	So glitterit as the gold wer thair glorius gilt tressis,
grasses	Quhill all the gressis did gleme of the glaid hewis ;
Combed	Kemmit was thair cleir hair, and curiouslie sched
Out over	Attour thair schulderis doun schyre, schyning full bricht ;
kerchiefs ;	With curches, cassin thame abone, of kirspe cleir and thin ;
fine cloth ;	Their mantillis grein war as the gress that grew in May sessoun,
beautiful	Fetrit with thair quhyt fingaris about thair fair sydis :
Fastened	Off ferlifful fyne favour war thair faceis meik,
marvellous	All full of flurist fairheid, as flouris in June ;
	Quhyt, seimlie, and soft, as the sweit lillies ;
opened	New vpspred vpon spray, as new spynist rose ;
verdure	Arrayit ryallie about with mony rich wardour,
	That nature, full nobillie, annamalit fine with flouris
every ; man	Of alkin hewis under hewin, that ony heynd knew :
	Fragrant, all full of fresche odour fynest of smell.
those	Ane marbre tabile coverit was before thai thre ladeis,
cups	With ryale cowpis apon rawys full of ryche wynys.'

Two of the fair ladies were married to lords and the third was a widow, 'wantoun of laitiss.' The more they 'wauchtit at the wicht wyne,' the more

unvarnished became their confidences to each other, until they ‘sparit no materis,’ the matters they did not spare being especially those of love and matrimony. The two noble ladies’ opinions of their husbands are too expressive for quotation, and the experiences, ‘wayis,’ and ‘wonderful gydingis’ of the widow are expounded with still greater liveliness. As for the poet, his attitude is entirely neutral: he merely reports ‘thair pastance most mery,’ and contents himself with the ironical query:—

‘Ze Auditoris, most honorable, that eris has gevin
Onto this vncouth aventur, quhilk airly me happinit;
Of ther thre wantoun wiffis, that I haif writtin heir,
Quhilk wald ze wail to zour wif, gif ze suld wed one?’

those
Which;
choose; if

In somewhat piquant contrast to this gorgeous picture of candid voluptuousness is the daguerreotype of the two mutually dissembling old women, who, in affected dread of Lentern ‘leanness,’ are seen early on Ash Wednesday in earnest methodical bibulation:—

‘Rycht airlie on Ask Weddinsday,
Drynkand the wyne satt cumeris tway;
The tane cowth to the tother complene,
Graneand and supband coud scho say,
“This lang Lentern makis me lene.”

gossips two
could
Groaning
lean

On cowch besyd the fyre scho satt,
God wait gif scho wes grit and fatt!
Zit to be feble scho did hir fene;
And ay scho said, “Latt preif of that:
This lang Lentern makis me lene.”’

God knows
Let me taste

Both are equally concerned about the debilitating effects of Lentern, and each with ready deference to

the other's judgment recognises the virtue that lies in wine as a sovereign antidote, and so:—

sup
Such
 ' Off wyne owt of ane choppyne stowp,
 Thai drank twa quartis sowp and sowp,
 Sic drowthe and thirst was thame betwene,
 Bot than to mend thai had gud howp :
 That Lanterne sould not mak them lene.'

Another—still more impressive—instance of female thirst is that recorded in *Kynd Kittok*—usually assigned to Dunbar,—detailing the experiences of the alewife of Falkland Fells in the other world. Though she died of 'thirst,' she set out to heaven without misgiving, and, after wandering a little, met a newt riding on a snail, who permitted her to sit behind him until they reached the inn at heaven's gate. Here she had an opportunity of quenching her thirst, and on the following morning eluded St. Peter and got into heaven privily. 'God,' we are told, 'lukit and saw her lattin in, and lewch his hert sair'; but for seven years she lived quite soberly as Our Lady's hen-wife,

' And held Sanct Petir in stryfe,
 Ay quhile scho wes in Hevin.'

But happening one day 'in an evil hour' to look out, the sight of the alehouse revived the old thirst:—

highway ; go
 ' And out of Hevin the hie gait cowth the wyfe gang
 For to get ane fresche drink, ze aill of Hevin was sour.'

Nothing doubting, she again returned and rang the bell for re-entrance, but St. Peter was this time on

the look-out, and drove her away with his club, so that she had nothing for it but to go back to her old occupation—the ‘pitcheris to pour,’ to ‘brew and to baik’—in this other-world alehouse, where the Poet recommends his friends to call, on their way heavenwards, and

‘Drink with my gud dame as ze ga by
Anys for my sake.’

Once

All these three sketches of female frailty are qualified by a certain humorous mirth. In that grim imagery of the recreations of Satan, *The Dance of the Sevin Deidly Synnis*, the mood is wholly saturnine. Suggested by the pageant of the *Dance of Death*, and by traditional conceptions of the seven deadly sins—such as those of Langland and Chaucer—the poem is yet a great individual achievement. It has been compared, to its disadvantage, with Langland’s portrayal of the sins, but Langland is not so strictly poetical as expository, whereas Dunbar presents us with rapid kaleidoscopic scenes of startling vividness. The stanza on Ire has been already quoted (p. 163), and here is a compendious spectacle of ‘sweirness’ or sloth:—

‘Syne Sweirnes, at the secound bidding
Come lyke a sow out of a midding,
Full slepy wes his grunzie :
Mony sweir bumbard belly huddroun
Mony slute daw and slepy duddroun,
Him serwit ay with sounzie ;

Then Sloth

snout
stupid ;
sloven
sluttish slug-
gard ; drab
hesitation

chained
together

He drew thame furth in till a chenzie,
And Belliall, with a brydill renzie,

loins

Evir lascht thame on the lunzie :

In dance they war so slaw of feit,

They gaif thame in the fyre a heit

motion

And maid thame quicker of counzie.'

The grimness of the horrid pageant is slightly relieved by the ludicrous episode of Piper Macfadyane and the Highlandmen ; but the noise of the outlandish crew proved too much for the nerves even of Satan, and with the gruesome stoppage of it the poem concludes :—

Gaelic began

croak

deafened

smothered

'Thae tarmegantis, with tag and tatter
Ffull lowd in Ersche begowth to clatter,

And rowp lyk revin and ruke :

The Devill sa devit wes with thair zell

That in the depest pot of hell

He smorit thame with smvke.'

Other general satires are the *Ballat against Evil Women* ; *The Dream*, directed against corruptions in Church and State ; and those indictments of contemporary society, *Devorit with Dreime*, and *Quhome to sall I complene my Wo*, the latter filled with scathing stanzas like the following :—

Other general
satires.

every single

eye

In

'Fra everilk mowth fair wirdis proceidis,
In every hairt disceptioun breidis ;

Fra everylk E gos luke demure,

Bot fra the handis gois few gud deidis :

Into this world may none assure.'

And ending with solemn reminders of a judgment other than that of man :—

‘ O ! quha sall weild the wrang possessioun,	who
Or the gold gatherit with oppressioun,	
Quhen the angell blawis his bugill stoure,	strong
Quhilk vnrestorit helpis no confessioun ?	Which
Into this world may none assure.’	

Satires of more specific application are *Tidings from the Sessioun* and the *Ladyis Solisitaris at Court*, both dealing—and the latter somewhat suggestively—with the corruptions of the law-courts; *The Satire on the Trades*, or *the Devil’s Inquest*, directed against the asseverations of tradesmen as to the quality of their goods; *Solisitaris at Court*, a succinct summary of the expedients employed to win the royal favour; the *Satire on Edinburgh*, a graphic but unflattering picture of the street scenes of old Edinburgh, of its smells and squalor, its craftsmen, minstrels, street sellers, and shouting crowds of sturdy beggars; and *How Dunbar was desyrit to be ane Friar*, which is mainly biographical, and concludes with the revelation that his tempter was not St. Francis but the Devil:—

‘ He vaneist away with stynk and fyrie smowk
 With him me thoct all the househend he towk
 And I awoik as wy that wes in weir.’

one; trouble

Some satirical pieces have particular persons for their theme, as *The Flyting* (*ante*, p. 142); the picturesque *Testament of Andro Kennedy* (*ante*, p. 160), suggested, it may be, but nothing more, by the testaments of Villon; that amazing parody of ancient combats, *The Turnament*,

Satires of
 specific
 application.

Satires on
 individuals.

a mock heroic account—the Devil being patron and referee—of an actual set-to betwixt a certain tailor and a certain shoemaker; the stinging *Epitaph* ‘on the fell strong traitour,’ Donald Owre (*ante*, p. 154); the ballad on the peculiar knightly adventures of Sir Thomas Norray (*ante*, p. 162); *We Lordis hes chosin a chiftane mervellous*, which ‘chiftane mervellous’ was the Regent Albany; *The Wowing of the King Quhen in Dunfermline*, in which the ‘ferly case’ of his Majesty in the character of a tod (fox) is set forth in caustic but unedifying detail; and *The Fenzeit Freir of Tungland*, inspired by the doings of a scientific quack, the Lombardian John Damian—promoted by the king to be Abbot of Tungland,—and especially by his futile attempt by artificial wings to rise into the air at Stirling.

Some of the stanzas of this exuberant and brilliant production are a sort of anticipation of Burns’s *Death and Dr. Hornbook*; but its main feature is the realistic picture of the attack on this new and strange bird by the different fowls of the air, the flight, movements, and cries of the birds being suggested with great skill. Here is one round of the combat:—

‘The Fenzeit
Freir of
Tungland.’

cloud
merlins;
hawks; sea-
mews
dashed

shout

‘Thik was the clud of kayis and crawis,
Of marlezonis, mittanis and of mawis,
That bikkirt at his berd with blawis
In battell him about;
They nybbillit him with noyis and cry,
The rerd of thame raiss to the sky;
And evir he cryit on Fortoun “Fy!”
His lyfe was in to dowt.’

Finally he only escaped death by slipping out of the 'feddreme' (feathering) into a bog up to the eyes. His assailants thereupon 'dang' at the 'feddreme,' sending all the feathers into the air, while he lay scarce daring to breathe :—

' And he lay at the plunge evirmair So lang as any ravin did rair ; The crawis him socht with cryis of cair In every schaw besyde.	bush
Had he reveiled bene to the rwikis, Thay had him revin all with thair clwikis ; Thre dayis in dub amang the dukis He did with dirt him hyde.	mire; ducks
The air was dirkit with the fowlis That came with zawmeris and with zowlis With skryking, skrymming and with scowlis, To tak him in the tyde.	darkened lamentings; howls screeching; screaming
I walknit with the noyis and schowte, So hiddowis beir was me abowte ; Sensyne I curss that cankerit rowte Quhair evir I go or ryde.'	awoke uproar Since then; irritated

As to the satiric tale *The Freiris of Berwick*, with its curious glimpse of the ancient hostelry, and its deftly humorous sketches of friar human nature, there is no evidence that it was written by Dunbar; and though quite worthy of his powers, it seems to lack the special savour of his salt. It is therefore dealt with under ANONYMOUS POETRY (see p. 277).

Although so specially addicted to satiric humour, Dunbar was, as eulogist, at least the equal of most poets laureate. The classic stanzas on London have been already alluded to

Eulogistic
Pieces.

(p. 165); and *Blyth Aberdeen*, commemorative of the queen's visit to that city in 1511, is a delightfully cheerful sketch of ancient burghal pageantry. Again, the ballad of *Lord Bernard Stewart*, if a little too ornate and high-flown, is skilfully attuned to the pomp and circumstance of war; and while the several pieces in honour of the queen are seemingly written *con amore*, the warmth of their loyalty is so tempered with discretion as never to verge on fulsomeness, although a certain poem, *To the Queen*, written on Fastern's Eve, startlingly reveals that the discretion of those days was different from that of our own.

Most of Dunbar's poems addressed to the king take the form of requests; but there is one exception, *A New Year's Gift*, a faultlessly graceful expression of good wishes. It begins:—

give thee

' My prince in God gif thé guid grace,
Joy, glaidness, confort, and solace,
Play, pleasance, mirth, and mirrie cheir
In hansell¹ of this guid new zeir.'

Specially interesting are those pieces in which Dunbar directly or indirectly deals with himself: his personal circumstances or his particular moods. Some are strongly Epicurean. Thus, in that strange parody of the Romish funeral service, *The Dregy to the King bydand too lang in Stirling*, he humorously invokes the whole spiritual hierarchy that the king may be delivered from his penitential sorrows to the jovial bliss of

¹ Hansell = the first gift, the gift on New Year's Day.

‘meriness’ with Dunbar and the court at Edinburgh :—

‘ Patriarchis, profeitis, and appostillis deir, Confessouris, virginis, and marteris cleir And all the saitt celestially,	tribunal
Devotely we vpoun thame call, That sone out of zour painis fell,	dire
Ze may in hevin heir with ws dwell, To eit swan, cran, pertrik, and plever And every fische that swymmis in rever ;	crane ; partridge
To drynk with ws the new fresche wyne, That grew upoun the rever of Ryne, Ffresche fragrant clairettis out of France Of Angerss and of Orliance, With mony ane course of grit dyntie ; Say ze amen for cheritie.’	

We cannot suppose that this admirable—if rather scandalous—parody was actually sent to the king at Stirling, for James was serious enough when the fit was on him, but we may well believe that by the jovial ‘company of lordis and knychtis,’ in whose name Dunbar writes, its recital would be received with much merry approbation.

There is every reason to suppose that Dunbar himself devoutly practised the doctrines which he thus enticingly expounded. In his naive complaint as to the ‘painfulness’ of his purse, *Sanct Saluatour: Send Siluer Sorrow*, he thus laments :—

‘ Quhen men that hes pursiss in tone, Passis to drynk or to disione, Than mon I keip ane grauetie, And say, that I will fast quhill none : My panefull purss so pricliss me.	tune (well filled) déjeuner must ; a until noon
--	---

such
coin stay

My purss is maid of sic ane skyn,
Thair will na corss byd it within ;
Fra it as fra the Feynd thay fle,
Quha evir tyne, quha evir win ;
My panefull purss so pricliss me.'

lose

It is indeed only too probable that his many importunate addresses to the king, for promotion to a benefice, were prompted by constantly recurring pecuniary difficulties due in part to his jovial habits. They are curiously outspoken, and abound in shrewd aphorisms, partly bitter, partly humorous, and expressed with much cleverly varied felicity. In *The Petitioun of the Gray Horse* humour is subtly mingled with pathos :—

'The Petition
of the Gray
Horse.'

'I am ane auld horss, as ze knaw
That evir in duill dois drug and draw ;
Great court horss puttis me fra the staw
To fang the fog be firthe and fald ;
Schir, latt it nevir in toun be tald
That I sould be ane zuillis zald.'¹

pull
stall
catch

Christmas

It is mainly when he touches on human life—its follies and delights, its mischances, griefs, uncertainties and vanity—that he kindles into true poetic warmth. In none of his few love-poems does he attain to passionate emotion ; he does on one occasion refer to 'a deadlie passioun dolorous,' and in another makes use of the Language of Flowers to illustrate to a lady that she has every virtue except pity ; but we probably possess none of

Love-poems.

¹ A worn-out horse, not worth being cared for.

his youthful verses on the passion, none written before he had acquired such convictions as the following:—

‘Discretion and considerance	
Ar both out of hir gouirnance ;	
Quhairfoir of it the short plesance	
May nocht indure ;	not
Scho is so new of acquaintance,	
The auld gais fra remembrance :	
Thus I gife our the obseruanss	give over
Of luvis cure.’	

But apart from passion his outlook on life is strongly emotional. Such pieces as *Meditatioun in Wyntir* and *The Changes of Life* indicate a special susceptibility to the influences of the weather and the seasons:—

‘Quhen that the nycht dois lenthin houris,	
With wind, with hail and havy schouris,	
My dule spreit dois lurk for schoir,	
My hairt for languor dois forloir	
For laik of symmer with his flouris.	troubled spirit ; cower for dread wearies
.	
Zit, quhone the nycht begynnys to schort,	
It dois my spreit sum part confort,	
Off thocht oppressit with the schouris.	
Cum, lustie symmer ! with thy flouris	
That I may leif in sum disport.’	live

Sometimes his mood is recklessly jovial, as in *He that His Gold*, ending ‘Now all this time let us be merry,’ etc. (see *ante*, p. 150), and in *Man sen thy Lyfe is ay in Weir*, with the refrain, ‘Thyne awin gud spend quhill thou has space.’ Yet he never attains to the light-hearted levity of

Jovial mood.

Villon, and indeed he most commonly advocates a merely cheerful stoicism :—

not

‘Be mirry man ! and tak nocht far in mynd
 The wavering of this wrechit warld of sorrow
 To God be hymill, and to thy freynd be kynd,
 And with thy nychtbouris glaidly len and borrow ;
 His chance to-nycht it may be thyne to-morrow.
 Be blyth in hairt for ony aventure,
 For oft with wysmen it hes beene said aforrow
 Without glaidness awailis no tressour.’

aforetime

But occasionally—from illness or special disappointments—his mood is much more sombre. In

‘The Lament
 for the
 Makaris.’

The Lament for the Makaris the poignancy of the pathos is intensified, and the melancholy deepened, rather than relieved, by the very nobleness and sincerity of the eulogy, and by his proud reverence for the vocation in which he, like those he lamented, had ‘played his pageant.’ His respect for the Muse was kin to that of Burns, and equally with him he was convinced that he had earned a lasting title to his country’s remembrance. No contemporary worker—no architect, builder, goldsmith, lapidary, or other artificer at the court—had, he declares in his *Remonstrance to the King*, accomplished anything which would outlast what he had done :—

remem-
 brance
 complete

‘Als lang in mynd my wark sall hald !
 Als haill in every circumstance,
 In form and matter and substance,
 But wering, or consumptioun,
 Roust, canker, or corruptioun,
 As ony of thair workers all,
 Suppois that my rewarde be small !’

Without
 wearing

The *Lament* was no doubt more than suggested by Villon's ballads on the 'dames' and 'seigneurs' of olden time; but while Dunbar's thoughts concentrate on his poetic predecessors, Villon contrasts himself with those of whom he sings, and his mood is lightly defiant rather than melancholy.¹

Sometimes Dunbar's own hard lot made him, as we have seen, specially bitter against the unrighteously prosperous, and it begot an occasional melancholy which revealed itself in such refrains as 'All erdly joy returns in pane.'

Dunbar's
melancholy.

¹ Dunbar's final stanza, 'Sene for the deid remeid is none,' may be held to express only the conventional view of the priest; but let us take these two:—

'Onto the ded gois all Estatiss,
Princis, Prelotis, and Potestatis
Baith riche and pur of all degre;
Timor mortis conturbat me.

poor

Sen he has all my brether tane
He will nocht lat me lif alane;
On forse I man his nyxt pray be:
Timor mortis conturbat me.'

Since; taken
not
Of necessity;
must

The first of the stanzas reads like a mere echo of the first four lines of Villon's *Huitain*, xlii.; but the whole tone of the poem, as is more especially seen in the second stanza now quoted, is in absolute contrast with that of Villon as evidenced in the latter part of the *Huitain*:—

'Puys que Papes, Roys, filz de Roys
Et conceux en ventre de Roynes,
Sont enseveliz mortz et froidz;
En aultruy mains passent les Reynes;
Moy, pauvre mercerot de Renes
Mourray Je pas? Ouy se Dieu plaist;
Mais que J'aye faict mes estrenes:
Honneste mort ne me desplaist.'

Compare also Dunbar's much inferior *Memento*, *Homo, Quod cinis est*.

Necessarily also with advancing years—years spent, it may be, in penury and neglect, and, at any rate, saddened with the defeat of many hopes—melancholy tended more and more to prevail, and it occasionally assumed a hortatory form, as in *Vanitas Vanitatum*:—

Forth from constant those	‘Walk furth pilgrame, quhill thow hes dayis lycht, Dress fro desert, draw to thy dwelling-place ; Speid home, for-quhy anone cummis the nicht Quhilk dois the follow with ane ythand chaise ! Bend up thy saill, and win thy port of grace ; For and the deith ourtak the in trespas Then may thou say thir wourdis with allace ! <i>Vanitas Vanitatum, et omnia Vanitas.</i> ’
---	--

Such pieces are usually classed as moral or religious, but they represent rather the sapience of old age.

Religious pieces.	Widely human as a moralist, Dunbar was no ardent religionist. Thus his hymns and other strictly religious pieces, apart from impres- sive references to the shortness and uncertainty of life, are sonorous and stately, but little more. He remained nominally true to a great time-honoured faith which, though it impressed his imagination, had not much hold of his intellect, but for whose impos- ing machinery he seems to have entertained a strong traditional respect, and whose mysteries and observ- ances he celebrated in nobly musical stanzas, em- bodying sentiments and beliefs which were mainly mechanical.
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A place among poets of the first rank has been claimed for Dunbar by Sir Walter Scott, who asserts that ‘in brilliancy of fancy, in force of description, in

the power of conveying moral precepts with terseness, and marking lessons of life with conciseness and energy, in quickness of satire and in poignancy of humour,' he may 'boldly aspire to rival' Chaucer.¹ This strong verdict—even if allowance be made for patriotic prejudice—should at least have assured to Dunbar more careful, if not respectful, consideration than some modern critics have bestowed on him.

His place
among poets—
verdict of Sir
Walter Scott.

By the late J. Russell Lowell² the very notion that Dunbar was a poet at all was received with mere derision. In his 'serious verses' he could find nothing that was not 'tedious and pedantic,' and his melodious and polished stanzas he could only liken, for all the world, to 'unwieldy hay-stacks of verse.' His humour was to Lowell only the 'dullest vulgarity'; his satire, he conceded, 'would be Billingsgate if it could,' but, failing, becomes 'a mere offence in the nostrils.' Professing to regard Dunbar with the same horror as he would a haggis, he 'puts his handkerchief to his nose, wonders, and gets out of the way as soon as he civilly can.' The only excuse for such uncivil, if amusing, language—language which would apply equally to much of the poetry, not merely of the old classical writers, but of Chaucer, and even Shakespeare, which confounds poetry with convention, takes no account of the fact that Dunbar merely wrote as it was then customary

The late
J. Russell
Lowell.

¹ *Memorials of George Bannatyne* (Bannatyne Club, 1829), p. 14.

² *The English Poets*, in the Camelot Series, London, 1888, pp. 13-17.

to talk, and belittles or ignores all his admirable verse that might be read without offence in the precisest of drawing-rooms:—the only excuse for such sportive mockery of a great writer is that, Dunbar being somewhat difficult reading, Lowell allowed himself to be scared from a systematic perusal by abnormal moral delicacy!

But once a process of detraction is begun it is bound more or less to run its course, and echoes of Professor Lowell's criticism may be found reverberating noisily or faintly in almost every recent allusion to the old Scottish 'makar.' Thus Professor Courthope¹ proposes, as we have seen, to confine Dunbar mainly to the care of the antiquary. Taking what he regards as a 'cooler estimate of his genius' than earlier critics, including Sir Walter, and led astray by the initial mistake that Dunbar's 'talents were always employed in satisfying the momentary taste of his patrons,' he confines his reader's attention to *The Goldyn Targe*, *The Thrissil and the Rois*, *Bewty and the Prisoneir*, and *The Sevin Deidly Synnis*; the first three being introduced as special instances of allegory, and the last in order to point out that in the one instance in which, it would seem, 'original genius' is claimed for him, he is 'hardly entitled to it.'

No recent critic has more fully recognised the merits of Dunbar as a metrist than Mr. Gosse,² who

¹ *History of English Poetry*, i. 370-74.

² *Modern English Literature*, pp. 48-51.

also does justice to other qualities, but withholds the 'first rank to his gorgeous talent,' and this solely on the ground that 'he never escapes from the artificial in language,' that he is 'defective in taste—rhetorical, over-ornate.' But Mr. Gosse has failed to recognise that Dunbar has two styles—the artificially ornate, and the rich and racy vernacular Scots. One of his chief claims to greatness is, in fact, his subtle and comprehensive mastery of expression: while such pieces as *The Goldyn Targe* show that, as Lyndsay expresses it, he 'language had at large,' the bulk of his best poetry really consists of 'escapes from the artificial in language.'

Dunbar was the disciple of Chaucer—his greatest disciple, but he was something more. So far as he was a mere Chaucerian, or only the ingenious contriver of varieties of traditional allegory, he has not much claim to 'first rank,' notwithstanding his 'gorgeous talent.' Such claim must be based mainly on the belief that he got from Chaucer, from nearly contemporary French poets, and from the Scottish tradition a peculiar and varied artistic training, which tended only the more perfectly to develop his own poetic idiosyncrasy. He could be truly great neither as Chaucerian nor as Scoto-Frenchman, but as essentially a Scottish poet. How far he is great is another matter; but uniting to his mastery of expression a rare command of metrical effects, almost as rich and brilliant a humorist as Burns, and an equally caustic

Mr. Gosse.

Dunbar more than the disciple of Chaucer. His claim to 'first rank.'

and more various satirist, strongly emotional and illumined by a vivid and daring imagination,—if he cannot be ranked with the greatest of English poets it is less for lack in himself than in his circumstances. Certainly these were far from propitious. His very priestly profession was a great handicap; and though he succeeded as poet—partly because he was an unsuccessful, an abortive priest—the result was that his life remained ‘bound in shallows,’ if not in ‘miseries.’ Then he was the poet of ‘times that were out of joint’; he lived on the borderland of change; mediævalism was passing away, and the new era had not quite arrived, nor was it fully to arrive in Scotland for many generations. But as fully and truly as Chaucer, he is the poet of his own time and country, such as they were; more various, if more fragmentary, in his methods, he is as effective in depicting whatever comes within the range of his experience; equally sincere and penetrating, he is, if less genial and comprehensive, more succinct and intense. His genius was never perhaps so fully kindled, but that he has failed to obtain similar, if not equal, appreciation is mainly part of the same bad luck which dogged him while alive. The poetic school of which he was the great master became presently smitten as with sudden palsy; the veil of Biblical obscurantism descended on his countrymen; for generations he was as extinct to them as the Dodo; and now his vocabulary is to many almost as effective a veil as the ancient insen-

sibility. Isolated very soon as regards Scotland, he remained totally unknown in England, and had no connection with the creation of the new poetic era that was to dawn in England some half-century after he went to his forgotten grave; but this again was rather his misfortune than his fault. His brilliant genius became buried for a time in complete oblivion, but that very oblivion of him, and of the poetic school of which he was the chief, was to be the means of only the more signally attesting its vitality; for this forgotten school of old Scots 'makaris' was, more than two centuries and a half after the death of Dunbar, to culminate in Burns.

VII

GAVIN DOUGLAS AND SIR DAVID LYNDSEY

IN marked contrast with the fortunes of Dunbar were those of his contemporary—though some fifteen years younger—Gavin Douglas. Like Dunbar Gavin Douglas (1475?-1522). the cadet of a noble house, he was the third son of Archibald, fifth Earl of Angus, known by the expressive sobriquet of ‘Bell-the-Cat,’ and also as the ‘Great Earl’—the great earl of a race that had long posed as rivals of even the royal line,—and became, by virtue of his abilities and his training as ecclesiastic, the political counsellor of his illustrious family in all its ambitious intrigues. He was born about 1475, and being designed for the Church, studied, like Dunbar, at the University of St. Andrews, where he matriculated in 1489, and graduated M.A. in 1494. It has also been affirmed that he continued his studies at Paris; and it is more than likely that he somewhere completed a course of civil law. But as early as 1496 he had taken priest’s orders, and was presented to Monymusk, Aberdeenshire, after which he became pastor of Linton and rector of Hauch, or Prestonhauch (now Prestonkirk), near Dunbar.

Here in 1501 he wrote *The Palice of Honour*, in which he makes mention of 'Dunbar zit undeid'; and if the two poets up till then had never met, they doubtless did meet shortly afterwards when Douglas was preferred to the important dignity of Provost of the Collegiate Church of St. Giles, Edinburgh.

For twelve years or more the two poets walked the same streets, worshipped before the same altar, and mingled in the same modish society, but the one as a great ecclesiastical dignitary, the other as a penurious hanger-on of the

Douglas and
Dunbar in
Edinburgh.

court, soliciting in vain for 'ane kirk scant coverit with heather.' On 20th September 1513, Douglas—his translation of Virgil having been completed in the previous July—was 'without charge' also made a free burgess of the city—whether for political or literary reasons is uncertain; but, anyhow, the older and greater poet, whose genius, like that of Burns, was perhaps in his own day as much dreaded as admired, and whose *Satire of Edinburgh* was scarce fitted to commend him to the powers that were, is not known to have lured from them any souvenir of literary approval.

Flodden, 9th September 1513, which put an end to all Dunbar's hopes of further favours from at least James IV., only opened up to Douglas

new possibilities of preferment. Greatness was virtually thrust on him. Appointed

Douglas as
candidate for
a bishopric.

one of the new Lords of Council to give special guidance to the widowed queen, faithfulness to his house

demanded that he should make all possible use of this rare opportunity of advancing its interests. He it was, mainly, who effected the match between the queen and his nephew and chief, the sixth Earl of Angus; and after the marriage, 6th August 1514, his ecclesiastical promotion became a matter of prime consequence to his patrons. When asking from the Pope confirmation of his appointment, the queen commended him, no doubt justly, as worthy 'of the very highest ecclesiastical authority, even the Primacy.' It so happened, also, that before the matter of the abbacy was settled, the archbishopric of St. Andrews actually fell vacant, 25th October 1514, and immediately both the queen and her brother, Henry VIII., sent earnest entreaties to the Pope on Douglas's behalf. They were, however, ineffectual; and he even lost the abbacy of Arbroath, which was conferred on Archbishop Beaton of Glasgow, the chief opponent of Angus and the Douglasses. In the spring of 1515 he obtained the see of Dunkeld, but the return of Albany from France in May entirely checkmated the ambitious schemes of Angus, and Douglas shared in his fall. He was thrown into prison on the ground that the Papal confirmation of his appointment had been procured by the illegal interference of Henry VIII., and was not set at liberty until a year afterwards, when Angus, for reasons of his own, came to terms with Albany.

On obtaining his liberty, Douglas, by various humiliating apologies to his old ecclesiastical opponents,

obtained consecration and access to his see. For some time he enjoyed in his beautiful Highland retreat the lettered ease which he probably preferred to either ecclesiastical state or political intrigue, but he could not escape the destiny appointed for him by his family connection. While Albany was still in Scotland he was sent in 1517 to complete a treaty at Rouen between France and Scotland against England; but no sooner had Albany, in the same year, returned to France than Douglas became engaged in new intrigues for his nephew's return to power. For a time Angus and the Douglasses triumphed, but their triumph wasn't final. Douglas did his utmost to warn Wolsey and Henry VIII. to take precautions against Albany's return in 1521, but in vain; and when he did arrive in November, Douglas and Angus had no resource but immediate flight to England. There, though Douglas retained the respect both of Wolsey and the king, and the special friendship of Lord Dacre, he found himself latterly deserted by the 'unworthy Earl of Angus.' Deprived of his bishopric, and disdaining to return to Scotland so long as Albany remained there, he continued to reside in London, making acquaintanceship, among other learned men, with Polydore Vergil, to whom he supplied some traditional information on the early history of Scotland—opposed to certain critical statements of Major—which Vergil embodied in his *History of England*. He never saw Scotland again, but died of the plague

Political
intrigues,
exile, and
death.

in September 1522, and was buried in the Hospital Church of the Savoy.

Notwithstanding various conjectures and assertions, Douglas is not known as the author of other poetry than *The Palice of Honour*, *King Hart*,
The works of Douglas. to which is attached some stanzas on *Conscience*, and *The XIII. Bukes of Eneados of the Famous Poete Virgile Translated out of Latyn Verses into Scottis Metir*. The *Palice* was written while he was still at Linton, the *Translation* was completed some months before Flodden, and *King Hart* is supposed to be of intermediate date: so that his nine years of political prominence were barren of any literary fruit.¹

Douglas represents almost solely an extreme development of the allegorical method introduced by James I., practised variously by Henryson, cultivated most likely by 'Greit Kennedie'

¹ An edition of *The Palice of Honour* appeared at London some time before 1579, when an edition appeared at Edinburgh, in which there is also references to copies of the work 'set furth of auld amang ourselfis.' The Edinburgh edition was reproduced in Pinkerton's *Ancient Scottish Poems*, 1786, republished at Perth 1787, and reprinted in 1829 by the Bannatyne Club with variations from the London edition. *King Hart*, preserved in the Maitland ms. at Cambridge, was also published by Pinkerton in 1786. The *Virgil* was printed at London by William Copland in 1553, and reissued 1710, ed. Ruddiman, with corrections from the Ruthven ms. in the Edinburgh University Library; and an edition based on the ms. in Trinity College, Cambridge, was printed for the Bannatyne Club in 1839. Other mss. are the Elphinstone in Edinburgh University Library, that in the Lambeth Library, and that belonging to the Marquis of Bath. Douglas's *Works*, ed. Small, were published at Edinburgh 1874, in four volumes.

—whose ‘terms aureate’ are specially lauded by Sir David Lyndsay—and exemplified in several highly ornate productions of Dunbar. As allegorist, Douglas may have been the pupil of Kennedy, and he was partly the pupil of Dunbar; but his two poems are more laboured and extensive examples of pure allegory than any that survive in Scottish verse.

As for his language, though he is the first to regard himself as a ‘Scottis’ not an ‘Ingliš’ makar, and though in the first prologue of his *Æneid* he professes to have taken special pains His language. to be vernacular—to ‘mak it braid and plane,’ and to keep ‘na Sudroun but our own language,’—he had yet to confess that ‘Scottis’ was sometimes insufficient for his needs:—

‘Nor zit so clene all Sudroun I refuse
Bot some word I pronounce as neychtbour doise,
Lyk as in Latyne bene Grew terms sum,
So me behovit quhilum, or than be dum,
Some bastard Latyne, French, or Inglis oiss
Quhair scant war Scottis—I had na wther choiss.’

Southern
do
are Greek;
some
behoved
sometimes
use

The racy and rough vernacular was in fact unsuited for artificial verse; and—*King Hart* excepted—not only does Douglas have more frequent recourse than Dunbar to the southern speech, but he quite outvies him in the multiplicity and variety of his coinages from French and Latin, his language being often as incongruous as much of his allegorical imagery.

The distinctive note of *The Palice of Honour* is the intermixture of Sacred History and the Christian Faith with Heathen Mythology. It represents the

Catholic theology and morality humanised, only in part and unconsciously, by Greek and Roman poetry, and clothed in an imagery incongruously compounded of Christianity and ancient Paganism. Even if it had been essentially poetic, its fantastic framework was bound to be fatal to its permanent popularity; but not only does it represent a merely artificial phase of sentiment, a temporary conjunction of streams of tendency bound in opposite directions: it is loaded with such a superfluity of learned allusion as could not but be fatal to poetic inspiration.

Written partly in the nine-line stave of *The Goldyn Targe*—aab, aab, bab,—partly in a variation of it—aab, aab, bcc,—*The Palice of Honour* is an allegorical representation of the difficulties and dangers attending the journey to true glory and honour, and in several ways anticipates Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, whether Bunyan borrowed from it or not. According to the approved fashion, the poet having in a garden fallen into a swoon finds himself in a 'desert terrible' near by a horrible river, roaring in flood and swarming with yelling monsters. All around is only the waste wilderness, and he is beat upon by wild tempests of rain. Suddenly he hears the stamping and cry of a herd of beasts, and hides him in a clump of bushes, whence looking forth he sees pass successively before him the courts of Minerva, Diana, and Venus, the latter goddess attended by Mars and Cupid, and

'The Palice of Honour.' Its distinctive note.

Its subject.

having in her train all the famous lovers—men and women—of sacred and classic story: some in hope, some in ‘greit thirlage’ (bondage), some in despair, some in perfect happiness and joy. Greatly commoved, he begins to sing a ballad on the ‘inconstancy of love,’ in which he curses the ‘world’s felicity, fortune, and all his pleasures,’ which so enrages the goddess that he is seized and brought before her for judgment; but as sentence of condign punishment is about to be passed, the Court of the Nine Muses, attended by the great poets of ancient and modern times, arrives on the scene. Calliope interposes, and at her suggestion he composes and recites ‘a ballad for Venus’ plasour,’ which mollifies Venus, ‘and instant scho and her court was hence.’ Under Calliope’s protection, and on a splendid courser, the poet, with his fellow-followers of the Muses, then, swift as thought, traverses all the most famous countries of the world to the Castalian Fount, where, at a great feast, Ovid recites the deeds of ancient heroes, Virgil ‘plays the sportes of Daphnis and Corydone,’ Terence the comedy of Parmeno, etc. Then on their swift horses the company set forth on their journey to the Palace of Honour. Dismounting at the foot of the hill, the poet proceeds to climb it guided by an attendant nymph. Near the summit they are faced by a terrible abyss, from which rise the smoke of brimstone, pitch, and burning lead, and the wailing cries of unworthy pretenders who had vainly attempted to cross it. While he stands before it almost

paralysed, his guide seizes him by the hair of the head, and brings him to the top of the hill. Here he sees below him the storm-tossed sea of the world, on which rides the carvel (ship) of the State of Grace; and looking above he beholds the Palace of Honour, standing in 'a plane of peerless pulchritude.' Entering the outer gate of its enclosure, he stands for a time rapt in admiration of its beauty, and is then conducted to Venus' Mirror, where he views the great events of Eternity and Time, and the 'deeds and fate of every earthly wight.' Next he is brought to the 'crystal palace white,' on the walls of which are engraven the wondrous sights of the universe, after which his guide discourses with appalling prosiness on 'Virtue as the only way to Honour, and not riches or hie blud.' Then bethinking her that after such an ordeal of wonders the poet would be benefited by 'taking the air,' she proceeds to conduct him to the garden, when in crossing the narrow bridge he falls into the moat and awakes. The poem then concludes with a ballad in commendation of Honour and Virtue, introducing inner rhymes in the manner of Dunbar. Here is the last stanza:—

to	'Hail rois, maist chois, till clois thy fois greit nicht,
which	Hail stone quhilk schone vpon the throne of licht,
	Vertew, quhais trew sweit dew ouirthrew al vice,
each; made	Was ay ilk day, gar say the way of licht;
	Amend, offend, and send our end ay richt.
	Thow stand, ordant as sanct, of grant maist wise,
To; degree	Till be supplie, and the hie gre of price.
soon; shame;	Delite thé tite me quite of site to dicht,
cleanse	For I apply schortlie to thy deuise.'

Less ambitious and grandiose than *The Palice of Honour*, *King Hart* is not so digressive and incoherent. Its theme is more strictly moral and its method more direct, the cumbrous mythological imagery being altogether dispensed with. It opens with this description of King Heart (the heart of man):—

‘ King Hart, into his cumlie castell strang	
Closit about with craft and mekill vre,	toil
So semlie wes he set his folk amang,	
That he no doubt had of misaventure :	
So proudly wes he polist, plane and pure,	
With zouthheid and his lustie levis grene ;	leaves
So fair, so fresche, so likelie to endure,	
And als so blyth as bird in symmer schene.	also
For wes he never zit with schouris schot,	
Nor zit ourrun with rouk, or ony rayne ;	mist
In all his lusty lecam nocht ane spot,	body ; not
Na never had experience into payne,	Nor
Bot alway into lyking, nocht to layne,—	to tell the
Onlie to love, and verrie gentilnes	truth
He wes inclynit cleinlie to remane,	
And wonn vnder the wyng of wantownness.’	dwell

In this castle he is waited on by a troop of attendants—Strength, Rage, Wantonness, Green Lust, Disport, and many more—who, while they appear to minister to his wants, really have him under their control. He has also five servitors—the five senses—to guard him from enemies without and within, but they occasionally betray him. They show special hostility to the entrance of Honour, who, however, manages to enter by scaling the wall, and proceeds to the great tower which he adorns with ‘mony florist

floure.' But near by the castle is the palace of Dame Pleasaunce, and on her passing by the castle, the king sends out Youthheid and Fresh Delight to reconnoitre, who are immediately taken captive, as are also various other succeeding scouts. Thereupon King Hart resolves to give battle to the Dame, but is defeated, wounded, and taken prisoner. Being attended also by Dame Beauty, he of course gets worse, but by the treachery of Dame Pity he is set at liberty, and then makes Dame Pleasaunce a prisoner in her own palace. At last, however, Old Age gets admission, and his youthful attendants thereupon deserting him, Conscience and Sadness intrude, and so vex Dame Pleasaunce that she leaves her own palace. Left alone in this 'empty pleasure house,' he is advised by Wisdom and Reason to return to his own castle, but has scarce reached it before Decrepitude with attendant ailments gets entrance, and inflicts on him a mortal wound—only sufficient strength being left him to make his will, by which he bequeathes to Dame Pleasaunce his palfrey Unsteadiness, to Fresh Beauty, Green Appetite, and so on.

The theme is a representation of human life from the traditionally Catholic point of view, and the triteness of the theme is not redeemed by exceptional vigour or brilliancy of treatment. The language is, however, simpler and purer than that either of *The Palice of Honour* or *The Æneid*, the narrative clear and comparatively concise, and the versification—in the French octave—flowing

Its char-
acteristics.

and melodious. What is mainly wanting is poetic afflatus. Eloquent and rhetorical Douglas often is; but though also a thorough proficient in poetical technique, he remains only a highly accomplished versifier.

The main performance of Douglas is his translation of *The Æneid* into heroic couplets, a remarkable achievement for his 'barbarous age,' and Translation of a not inconsiderable one in itself; for 'The Æneid.' though his language is an incongruous blend of the familiar and the ornate, though his, on the whole accurate, renderings are achieved with excessive effort, and though he does not scruple for the sake of being better understood to clothe occasionally the old ideas in modern garb—representing Virgil, for example, as a baron, and the Sibyl as a nun—he is thoroughly interpenetrated with the Virgilian atmosphere, and succeeds in communicating this to the reader.

His prologues to the several books have also been much admired, especially the seventh, twelfth, and thirteenth, describing respectively Winter, May, and June. Douglas here shows that he had almost kindled at the flame of Virgil, the Virgil of the *Georgics*. They indicate at least great accuracy of observation: he records what he knows, and records it with a certain vigour and picturesqueness, but the redundancy of detail is fatally inconsistent with true poetical effect. Here is a short passage—one of his best—which may have suggested Burns's description of the flooded Ayr, but which needs only to be com-

pared with that vivid picture that its lack of poetic inspiration may be felt:—

‘Reveris ran reid all thair bankis downe,¹
And landbrist rumbland rudely with sic bier,
So loud ne rummist wyld lioun or beir.
Fludis monstreis, sic as meirswyne or quhailis
For the tempest law in the deip devallyis.

Soure bittir bubbis, and the schowris snell,
Semyt on the sward ane similitude of hell,
Reducyng to our mynd, in every steid,
Goustly schaddois of eild and grisly deid,
Thik drumly scuggis dirknit so the hevyne.
Dym skyis oft furth warpit feirfull levyne,
Flaggis of fyir, and mony felloun flawe,
Sharp soppis of sleit, and of the sny pand snawe.
The dowy dichis war all donk and wait,
The law vaille flodderit all with spait.
The plane stretis and every hie way
Full of fluschis, doubbis, myre, and clay.
Laggerit leys wallowit farnys schewe
Broune muris kithit thair wysnit mossy hewe,
Bank, bra, and boddum blanschit wolx and bair;
For gurl weddir growyt bestis haire;
The wynd maid wayfe the reid weyd on the dyk
Bedovin in donkis deyp was every syk.’

¹ Rivers ran red down all their banks, the breakers rumbling rudely with a noise louder than the bellowing of wild lion or bear. Sea monsters, such as porpoises and whales, remained on account of the tempest low in the deep. . . . Sour bitter blasts seemed on the sward a similitude of hell, creating to our imagination, in every place, ghostly shadows of eld and grisly death—thick gloomy shadows darkened so the heavens. Dim skies frequently sent forth fearful lightning, flashes of fire and many a dreadful blast, sharp blasts of sleet and of the biting snow. The dreary ditches were all dark and wet, the low valley flooded with overflow. The plain streets and every highway full of overflowing water, pools, mire and clay. Mud-covered pastures showed decayed ferns, brown muirs showed their wizened mossy hues. Bank, incline, and level became white

The third last line—introducing the ‘bestis haire’—is itself a fatal exposure of Douglas’s inartistic and hap-hazard method. The whole description is, in truth, a mere catalogue of facts accurately and minutely observed, but not grouped so as either to indicate their relative significance, or to lead to any proper poetic climax.

Several of the prologues are written in stanzas: the second in *rime royal*, the third in the less frequent variety of the nine-line stave, the fourth in *rime royal*, the fifth in the nine-line stave of the third, the sixth in the French octave, the eighth in the alliterative romance stave with the bobwheel, the tenth in the five-line stave of Dunbar—aa, bb, a,—and the eleventh in the French octave.

Sir David Lyndsay of the Mount, Lyon King-at-Arms, the only one of the older Scots ‘makaris’ whose popularity remained unbroken by the Reformation, and survived to modern times, was the son of David Lyndsay, who possessed two estates—The Mount in Fife, and Garmylton, near Haddington. On account of this duality, the son’s birthplace, as well as place of education—Haddington or Cupar Grammar-School—is a matter of doubt. That he attended St. Andrews University is inferred from the name ‘Da.

Metres of the
Prologues.

Sir David
Lyndsay
(1490-1555). His
early life.

and bare. On account of the stormy weather the hair of animals grew. The wind made the weed wave on the stone fence. Filled with deep water was every rill.

Lindesay' in the roll of incorporated students of St. Salvator's College, 1508-9—immediately above that of 'Da. Bethune' (afterwards Cardinal); but the student at St. Andrews could scarce have been the Lyndesay who, as equerry of the young prince, received in 1508 a certain sum for 'his fee and his horse's keep.' In any case, the poet had in 1511-12 a pension of £40 a year as a member of the Royal Household, though a blank in the Treasurer's Accounts from 1508 renders it impossible to state when the pension began.¹ Since, also, a sum of £3, 4s. was on 12th October 1511 paid for a play coat to him, for a play performed at Holyrood, he was probably at first employed chiefly as an actor or musician; and confirmation of this seems to be supplied by his own statements. On the birth of James v., 10th April 1512, he was 'appointed the Keeper of the Kingis Grace's person'—not his tutor, but his attendant and companion; and in his *Epistle to the Kingis Grace* he mentions that he was accustomed, 'lute in hand,' to sing the young prince to sleep; and that he amused him sometimes with dancing, sometimes 'with play-and farces on the floor.'

' And sumtyme, lyk ane feind transfigure,
 And sumtyme lyk the greislie gaist of Gye,
 In divers formis oft tymes disfigure;
 And sumtyme dissagysit full plesandlye.'

¹ It should also be noted that in *The Dialog* (ll. 597-8), Lyndesay regrets that he hadn't 'the tongues,' and seems even to imply that he was ignorant of Latin. His lack of a University education would also account for the fact that he was merely the attendant not the tutor of the young prince.

These accomplishments partly explain Lyndsay's appointment in 1529 to be Lyon King-at-Arms, for this implied official charge of what Knox terms the 'farcings, maskings, and other prodigalities,' then such an essential feature of royal fêtes. A pretty accurate notion of the pageantry on these occasions may be gathered from Lyndsay's own sorrowful lament, in the *Deploration of the Death of Queen Magdalene*, over the preparations for her coronation, thus rendered abortive. Of the arrangements for the reception of Mary of Guise at St. Andrews in May 1538 he had also special charge. She was received, Lyndsay of Pitscottie tells us, with 'greit joy and mirriness, of fearssis and plays maid and prepared for hir'; and first at the New Abbey Gate there was erected a triumphal arch 'be Sir David Lyndsay of the Mont, Knight, alias Lion King of Armes, who caused ane great cloud to cum doun out of the heavines abone the yett: out of the quhilk cloud came doun ane fair ladie, most like ane angell, having the keyis of Scotland in hir hand, and delyvered them to the queines Grace in signe and token, that all the heartis of Scotland war oppin for ressavng of hir Grace.'

As Lyon King Lyndsay compiled a *Register of Scottish Arms* (published in 1820). He was also often sent on embassies to foreign courts; and while at Brussels in 1531 was witness of a great tournament, of which he wrote for the king a description, 'in

As Lyon
King.

His later
years. Was
he a 'Pro-
testant
Reformer'?

articles,' which is now lost. In May 1546 he was intrusted by Parliament—where he sat as Commissioner for Cupar—with the official duty of summoning the murderers of Cardinal Beaton to surrender the Castle of St. Andrews, which in December he did, but without result. Perhaps about the same time he was privately engaged in penning his *Tragedy of the Cardinal*, printed in London, 1546-7; and, according to Knox, he was in close communication with the Reformers, and advised that Knox should take upon him the office of preaching. But he can scarce be held responsible for what Knox did actually preach, and there is no evidence that he ever formally joined the Reformers, or even once attended the preaching of Knox. The fact that he remained formally a Catholic, and that he ceased to satirise between the death of James v. in 1542 and the murder of Cardinal Beaton in 1546, largely accounts for his escape from prosecution, and his retention of office till his death, 18th April 1555.

Lyndsay was married in 1522 to Jonet Douglas, who was probably a female attendant on the young prince, and at anyrate, even after her marriage, received various sums for sewing the 'kingis sarkis.' They had no children; but that their married life was unhappy is a mere inference from the 'terms in which he commonly talks of the sex.'

His wife.

Lyndsay's¹ poetical relations to his time are in a measure paralleled by those of Dunbar to the immediately preceding period; but the contrasts are greater than the similarities. Dunbar's satires were prompted partly by his chronic dissatisfaction with his lot; but only once, and just before he became Lyon King, does Lyndsay—*Complaynt to the King*—express special discontent at lack of reward for his services. Unlike that of Dunbar, his verse is less the utterance of accidental moods than of permanent convictions. Versifier rather than poet, and influenced by a definite practical purpose, he is both narrower and more superficial in his judgments—his point of view being that of the average man, his art that specially fitted to tickle the crowd. Yet moralist though he professes to be, he quite outvies Dunbar, if not in the candour, in the coarseness of his allusions, and this, in part, because not otherwise could he amuse and gratify the gross multitude he sought to convince.

Lyndsay compared with Dunbar. His coarseness.

¹ Lyndsay's *Complaynt of the Papyngo* appeared at London in 1538; *The Tragedy of the Cardinal* at London c. 1546-47; *Ane Dialog betuix Experience and ane Courteour* at Copenhagen (? St. Andrews), probably in 1554; editions of his *Poems* at Paris, 1558, Copenhagen (? St. Andrews), 1559, and London, 1566; *The Pleasant Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* was first published at Edinburgh in 1602; the interludes, more fully than in the 1602 edition, are preserved in the Bannatyne ms. It was included in subsequent editions of his *Poems*, many of which appeared in the seventeenth as in the sixteenth century, but fewer in the eighteenth. The modern editions are those of Chalmers, 3 vols., London, 1806; the English Text Society, 1865-71; and David Laing, 3 vols., Edinburgh, 1879. Laing gives a pretty full bibliography of previous editions.

To select ribald buffoonery as the special medium for the promulgation of a strict conventional morality, may strike a modern reader as the very acme of the preposterous; but lacking ribaldry all the satiric verse of this period in Scotland would have been almost wholly ineffective. Still, Lyndsay and his fellow-satirists themselves partly shared in that special penchant for ribaldry, which is the efflorescence of a disordered social system; and that being so, the free course permitted, for generations, to the poetry of Lyndsay amongst a community too Puritan to peruse the best secular poetry of England, is an impressive example of the, at least occasional, irrationalities of ecclesiastical opinion. Lyndsay's method, effective for the time being, was bound in the long-run rather to defeat than further that portion of his purpose which concerned specially the laity; and it may be that his sustained popularity among the mass of the people has some connection with the specially fescennine character of much of the Scottish folk poetry.

As satirist a superficial pupil of Dunbar, Lyndsay also largely utilised the allegorical machinery which

His practical aim. Dunbar and Douglas had done so much to elaborate. Like Douglas and unlike Dunbar he was a poet with a purpose, and, as in Douglas, the strenuous moral aim is more manifest than the poetic inspiration. Douglas, the poet of the old Catholic morality, curiously blended with chivalry and classicism, was primarily meditative and abstract. Lyndsay, the precursor of Puritanism, depicts the

Catholic morality in its decay, and is above all things practical. For Douglas he had a special esteem as the 'lamp' of 'this land,' and 'in our Inglis rethorick the rose,' and no doubt obtained from him valuable hints in the construction of his peculiar variations of the traditional allegory; but though *The Dialog* is as comprehensively pedantic as *The Palice of Honour*, even it is by no means so exemplary; while nothing could be in stronger contrast with Douglas's irreproachable allegories than some of Lyndsay's plain, practical, and ribaldly moral medleys.

It may be that in his earlier years Lyndsay practised various forms of poetry for the amusement of the young prince; and it seems to have been largely his special interest His relation to the Clergy. in the young king's welfare that moved him, as late as 1528, to make his formal appearance as a serious poet. If he specially satirised the clergy, it was because he regarded them as largely responsible for the political and social mischiefs of the time. Taking an essentially common-sense view of human conduct, he had no difficulty in exposing the glaring contrast between the ecclesiastical ideal and the ecclesiastical reality. He represented in part the resentment of the nobles and gentry at the grasping ambition of the Church, in part the derision of the people at the Church's open violation of its own moral code; but he was further specially incensed at the injurious influence exercised by the clergy over the king.

Lyndsay's productions have sometimes a curious biblical or theological framework, and even when the biblical influence is not, as it is in *As Satirist.* *The Dialog*, paramount, they frequently teem with theological allusions; but except as satirist he is dull and commonplace, and much of his effect as satirist is due to the fact that the subject lent itself so easily to satire. Merely to state the truth, and nothing but the truth, was almost satire sufficient. Still, to state it as he has stated it implied at least an ardent and strong, if not quite poetic, personality; and though his wit too often sinks into mere buffoonery, the buffoonery is not without cleverness, and the wit was no doubt thoroughly enjoyed by the rude community to whom it was addressed.

The earliest of Lyndsay's pieces, *The Dreame* (1528), is comparatively exemplary and only partially satirical. Written in *rime royal*, it is a kind of allegorical medley, bringing within the compass of its survey Hell, Purgatory, the Starry Firmament, Heaven, the Earth, Paradise, and Scotland, and all this to impress on the king his obligations as ruler of the nation. It opens with an *Epistle to the King*, full of personal reminiscences, such as those already quoted (p. 202), after which, in his prologue, he details how one bleak day of January he wandered to the seashore, and falling after the accustomed manner asleep in a cave, dreamed the 'marvellous vision' he sets himself to record.

The poem contains the story of his adventures with Dame Remembrance, who, to cure him of his melancholy, proceeded to conduct him on a tour through the Universe, beginning with the Lowest Hell. Here his attention was first engrossed by the shoals of ecclesiastics, from popes and cardinals down to 'cunning clerkis' and 'priestis secularis,' who for 'covatyce, lust and ambition' were doomed

Its story—
visit to Hell.

'eternallie [to] dwell
Into this painefull poysonit pytt of Hell.'

But heretics innumerable were also to be seen, 'with carefull cryis girning and greityng,' as well as 'princes, lordis temporal, and caitive kings,' all well represented, and even many noble ladies,

'Lyk wod lyonis, were carefullie cryand
In flame of fyre richt furiouslie fryand.'

mad

Nor was the 'pain that is perpetuall' reserved alone for the learned and powerful, for

'mony ane thousand
Common pepill lay, flichterand in the fyre,
Of everilk stait there was ane bailfull band.'

every

After this 'dolorous dungeon,' Purgatory failed to greatly impress him, but he viewed with some interest the Place of Perdition tenderly 'reserved' for 'unbaptised infants'! and also that mild dungeon of our 'forefathers,' termed the Lympe.

Purgatory.

Emerging through the bowels of the earth from 'these places perrelous,' they ascended beyond Earth, Water, Air, and Fire, and made the round of the Seven Planets (learnedly described after the lore of the 'cunning astrologis' of the time). Beyond their melodious harmony, they then mounted up through the 'Chrystallyne' Heaven, until they entered Heaven itself, peopled according to the accepted theological arrangements.

On his way down through the 'spheres of the Heavens' he was then granted a view of the Earth, 'all at one sight,' after which he was permitted to behold the original Paradise, which, in lines faintly anticipatory of those of Milton, is thus described :—

'The cowntre closit is aboute, full rycht
 With wallis hie, of hote and birnyng fyre,
 And straitly kepit be ane Angell brycht,
 Sen the departyng of Adam, our grandschyre ;
 Quhilk, throw his cryme, incurrit Goddis yre,
 And of that place tynte the possessioun
 Baith from hymself and his succession.'

From Paradise he proceeds to Scotland, whose advantages and 'great commodoties'—its lochs and rivers teeming with fish, its fruitful mountain pastures, its lusty vales for corn, its forests of deer, its metals and precious stones, its wholesome fruits, and its fair and ingenuous people—prompt the query as to its strange poverty. To this the reply is want 'of justice, policy,

The Seven
 Planets and
 Heaven.

Paradise.

Since
 Who
 lost

Scotland.

and peace,' due to the negligence of the 'infatuate heidis insolent,'—that is, the bishops and those of the nobles who were usurping the functions of government.

But while the poet and his guide were thus 'talking to and fro,' they

'Saw a bousteous berne cum ouir the bent
But hors, on fute, als fast as he mycht go,
Quhose rayment wes all raggit, revin and rent ;
With visage leyne, as he had fastit Lent :
And fordwart fast his wayis he did advance,
With ane rycht melancolious countynance.'

vigorous
fellow ;
moorland
Without

a

This was John the Commoun Weill, who, having been maltreated in every district of the country, was 'with scrip on hip, and pyik staff in his hand,' hastening to leave it. Asked when he would return, he answered not until the court was guided by the wisdom of 'ane gude auld prudent king':—

John the Com-
moun Weill.

'Als yit to thee I say ane uther thyng :

I see rycht weill, that proverbe is full trew :

"Wo to the realme that hes ouer young ane king"—

too ; a

With that he turnit his bak and said "Adew."

The Complaynt to the King—in the octo-syllabic couplet—written in celebration of the king's escape from the Douglasses in 1529, is, while 'The Complaynt to the King' (of the king's advisers), and admonitory (of the king himself), in substance a plea on the poet's part for some recognition of his past services. The manner of that recognition he leaves to the king himself,

but is rather inclined to suggest the loan of one or two thousand pounds, which he undertakes to pay on conditions having plainly a satirical reference to the all too ready oaths of indigent borrowers:—

‘Quhen the Basse and the Yle of Maye
Beis sett vpon the Mont Senaye ;
Quhen the Lowmond, besyde Falkland,
Beis lyftit to Northumberland ;
Quhen kirkmen yairnis no dignitie,
Nor wyffis no soveranitie ;
Wynter but frost, snaw, wynd, or rane ;
Than sall I geve thy gold agane ;
Or, I sall mak the payment
Efter the Daye of Jugement,
Within ane moneth at the leist,
Quhen Sanct Peter sall mak ane feist
To all the fycharis of Aberladye,
Swa thow have myne acquittance reddye ;
Failyand thareof, be Sanct Phillane,
Thy grace gettis never ane grote agane.’

The following year Lyndsay wrote the much more pungent *Testament and Complaynt of our Soverane*

Lordis Papynge (parrot). It opens with a prologue—in the nine-line stave, aab, aab, bcc—in which, after a warm eulogy of several famous ‘makaris,’ from Chaucer to his own day, he humorously declares that

‘in all the garth of eloquence
Is no thyng left, bot barrane stok and stone
The poleit termes are pullit everilk one,
Be thir fornemit Poetis of prudence’;

and that since he could find ‘none uther new sentence,’ he had resolved to record the ‘complaynt

of ane woundit Papyngo.' He then utilises the impalement of the king's parrot on a stake by a fall from a lofty tree for the exposition, in the parrot's name, of his own views on Church and State. After lamenting—in *rime royal*—her rashness in climbing to such a giddy height, the dying bird proceeds—also in *rime royal*—to 'breve' her counsel (1) to the king, and (2) to her 'Brether of courte'; and this is followed by (3) the 'commonyng betuix the Papyngo and hir holy executouris.'

The first epistle is a shrewd and outspoken address on kingcraft, in which his Majesty is reminded that of his fivescore and five predecessors on the Scottish throne, no less than five-and-fifty had been slain,

The first
epistle.

'And moist parte, in thair awin mysgoverance.'

The second epistle illustrates by interesting examples from Scottish history—such as the cases of the Duke of Rothesay, Murdoch, Duke of Albany, Cochrane, the favourite of James III., the dowager Queen Margaret herself, Archbishop Beaton, and the Earl of Angus—the 'over-leaping' of that 'ambition' which seeks either to usurp the sovereignty or to make the sovereign its bondman.

The second
epistle.

But it is in the 'commonyng' of the wise bird with her 'holye executouris'—the pyot (a canon regular), the raven (a black monk), and the gled (a holy friar), that the satire is most biting.

'The Com-
monyng.'

Though their professional visit to the dying bird was

avowedly dictated by concern for its ghostly interests, their solicitude was all centred on its 'goods and chattels.' The pyot recommended itself as executor, because it was 'ane holye creature'; but the immediate arrival of the raven and the gled changed the situation. The three worthies combined in the general interests of the Church and of one another, and the gled in their name vowed that if the dying bird made a 'memorial of its gear,' they would make its funeral feast, burying its bones with 'great bliss,' and afterwards twenty masses all at once:—

'And we sall syng about your sepulture
 Sanct Mongois matynis and the mekle creid :
 And syne devoutely saye, I yow assure,
 The auld Placebo bakwart and the beid ;
 And we sall weir, for yow, the murnyng weid :
 And, thocht your spreit with Pluto war profest,
 Devotely sall your Diregie be address.'

To this the Papyngo replied with many acute
 observes on ecclesiastical worldliness; and though,
 having no other option, she accepted
 them as executors, she bequeathed her
 personality thus: her 'gay galbarte of grene,' her
 'brycht depurit ene,' her 'burneist beik,' her 'music'
 and 'voce angellycall,' her 'tounge rhetoricall,' and
 her 'bones,' respectively to the owl, the bat, the
 pelican, the cuckoo, the goose, and the phoenix, and
 her heart to the king, leaving to the executors only
 her 'trypes,' with her 'luffer and lowng to part
 equale' among them. But instead of giving faithful
 effect to her wishes, hardly had she said *In Manus*

larger
 then
 clothes
 though

The Will.

Tuas when all three began incontinently to devour her body, and when nothing was left but the heart, away flew the gled with it hotly pursued by the other two.

To some of Lyndsay's counsel the king made reply in pretty scurrilous verse; for in *The Answer to the Kingis Flyting*—in *rime royal*—

Short pieces
written during
the lifetime of
James V.

he retaliates with some rather abusive admonition, the more piquant portions of which are, however, too graphic for quotation. Other short pieces, written in the lifetime of James v., are *Ane Publict Confessioun of the Kingis auld Hound callit Bagsche*—in the French octave,—a satire on the intrigues and quarrels of the courtiers; *The Deploratioun of the Death of Queen Magdalene*, in *rime royal*; *The Justing betuix James Watsoun and Jhone Barbour*—in the heroic couplet,—an account, mildly modelled after Dunbar's *Turnament*, of a mock encounter between two 'medicinaris' of the court; *Kitteis Confessioun*—in couplets,—a more than witty exposure of the misuses of auricular confession; *Ane Supplicatioun againis Syde Taillis*, one of the coarsest, yet one of the most diverting of his skits, and a most lively sketch of contemporary female fashions. Here are a few decorous lines:—

'Bot, I lauch best to se ane Nun
Gar beir hir taill abone hir bun,
For nothing ellis, as I suppois,
Bot for to schaw hir lillie quhyte hois;
In all thair Rewlis, they will nocht find
Quha suld beir up thair taillis behind.

a

Make bear

not

Poor
draggled-
tail wenches
Who

Kittie ;
last night
To-morrow
ewes

houghs
cow-house ;
stay
with her
burghs
longest

vexation

nose

eyes

clothes

Bot I have maiste into despyte
Pure claggokis cled in roiploch¹ quhyte,
Quhilk hes skant twa markis for thair feis,
Will have twa ellis beneath thair kneis :
Kittok, that clekkit wes yestrene,
The morne, wyll counterfute the Quene :
Ane mureland Meg, that milkit the yowis,
Claggit with clay abone the howis,
In barn, nor byir, scho wyll nocht byde
Without her kyrtyll taill be syde.
In burrowis, wantoun burges wyiffis,
Quha may have sydest taillis stryiffis,
Weill bordourit with velvoit fyne :
Bot following thame it is ane pyne,
In somer quhen the streittis dryis,
Thay rais the dust abone the skyis ;
None may ga neir thame at thair eis,
Without thay cover mouth and neis,
Frome the powder to keip thair ene :
Considder gif thair cloiffis be elene !'

But the most characteristic and the cleverest of Lyndsay's productions is *Ane Pleasant Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis in Commendatioun of Vertew and Vituperatioun of Vyce*. An adaptation to current political and social questions of the old morality play, it is a nearer approximation to the regular drama than any contemporary English production. The idea was not of course original, for in England John Heywood's merry interludes against the Papists preceded—some of them, at least—Lyndsay's *Pleasant Satyre*, and John Bale, who utilised the morality play for the same purpose, was his contemporary. Further, a Scottish friar

¹ Coarse undyed woollen cloth.

named Kyllour 'set forth,' in 1535, a play 'against the Papists'¹ at Stirling. But the interludes of Heywood were mere single acts; and while the plays of Bale differ little from the old moralities, Kyllour's play, which has not been preserved, was a mere adaptation of *The History of Christ's Passion*. It may be, however, that apart from Lyndsay, Scotland was at this time slightly in advance of England in drama, as she also was in poetry. That strange fragment, the *Interlude of the Droichis Part of the Play*—preserved in the Asloan and Bannatyne MSS., dating from at least the earlier years of the sixteenth century, and supposed by some to have been the work of Dunbar,—seems to indicate the existence, even in the reign of James IV., of some better examples of drama than possibly even Lyndsay's *Pleasant Satyre*. We are also told by the historian Calderwood² that James Wedderburn, about 1540, 'made divers comedies and tragedies,' wherein 'he nipped the abuses and superstitions of the time,' among them 'The History of Dionysius the Tyrant, in form of a comedy which was acted in the playfields' of Dundee. Robert Birrel also mentions that, on 17th June 1568, a play by Robert Sempill was performed before the Lord Regent,³ but we know nothing of its character. Playgoing seems, however, to have been common for some time after the Reformation, for James Melville records that John Davidson, one of the Regents of St. Andrews Univer-

¹ Knox, *Works*, i. 62.

² *History*, i. 142-3.

³ Diary in Dalrymple's *Fragments*, p. 14.

sity, made a play at the marriage of John Colvin, which was played in Knox's presence, 'wherein, according to Knox's doctrine, the castell of Edinburgh was besieged, taken, and the Captain, with an or twa with him, hangit in effigie.' In Melville's time it was also customary to have declamations, banquetings, and plays at graduation time.¹

In 1575 the Kirk, while it prohibited altogether the performance of clerk plays upon the 'canonical parts of Scripture,' advised that such as 'confer upon the policy' should make provision 'that comedies, tragedies, and other profane plays, which are not made upon authentic parts of Scripture,' might be considered before they were acted publicly. More consistent, perhaps, in its rigour than any censorship that now exists, this method was, we may infer, so effective that secular equally with sacred plays were gradually suppressed; and in any case Lyndsay's *Pleasant Satyre* is the only example of the older Scottish drama which now survives.²

¹ *Diary* (Bannatyne Club edition), p. 22.

² In 1599 a company of English comedians visited Edinburgh, and after playing before the king, obtained a precept to the bailies of Edinburgh to obtain for them a house for performances. One was got in Blackfriars Wynd. But the clergy, says Calderwood, 'fearing the profanitie that was to ensue,' convened the four sessions of the Kirk, who passed an Act that 'none resort to these profane comedies, for eschewing offence of God' (*History*, v. 765). Called before the king, the clergy sought refuge in an Act passed against 'slandorous and undecent comedies.' The king, however, remaining firm, they were compelled to rescind their Act; and a proclamation was issued by the Privy Council 'in favour of the English comedians now playing in Edinburgh,' in which the inhabitants were informed

From certain references to the *Rex Humanitas* of the play as unmarried, it has been inferred that *The Pleasant Satyre* was written and performed before the marriage of James V., and probably in 1535; and from the references in certain interludes it has also been argued that this first performance took place at Cupar Fife; but the earliest authenticated performance is that before the king at Linlithgow on the Feast of Epiphany, 6th January 1540.¹ It was also acted on the Castle Hill at Cupar at some unknown date, and at Greenside adjoining Edinburgh in 1554, before the Queen Regent.

A notable feature of the *Pleasant Satyre* is the

that they were at liberty to attend the performances without incurring 'ony pane, skaith, censuring, reproche, or sclander,' or being found fault with by the 'ministeris, magistratis, or sessionis of the said burgh' (*Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, vi. 39-43). After the accession of James to the English throne several English companies visited Scotland; and in 1603 was published at Edinburgh a comedy written in the vernacular and in stanzas—*Ane verie excellent and delactibill Treatise entituled Philotus: qvhairn wee may persave the greit inconveniences that fallis out in the Marriage betwene Age and Youth.*' (Reprinted in Pinkerton's *Scottish Poems*, 1792, vol. iii.) It has been suggested that this was Robert Sempill's play, but the theory is unsupported by evidence, external or internal.

¹ Of the effect produced by its performance in 1540 a record has been preserved in a letter of Sir William Eure to Cromwell, 26th January 1540. 'The king,' he states, 'did call upon the Bishop of Glasgow, being chancellor, and other bishops, exhorting them to reform their fashions and manners of living, saying that unless they so did, he would send six of the proudest of them unto his uncle in England, and, as they were ordered, so he would order all the rest that would not amend.'

variety of its metres.¹ The poem begins with a stanza (spoken by Diligence, the master of the ceremonies) in the rhymed alliterative measure of the old romances with the bobwheel; and in the same speech we have stanzas of sixteen lines—ab, abb, cbc, ded, cc, fef—of which there are both early Latin and French examples, and also stanzas of eight lines in *rime couée*—aaab, cccb—of which there are very early examples in English, and which is found in Towneley *Mystery Plays*, sometimes with a bobwheel. The bulk of the dialogue of the *Pleasant Satyre* is either in this measure, or in the octo-syllabic couplet; but he introduces also the heroic couplet, as well as other forms of *rime couée*: the six-line stave—aab, aab—and several occasional variations including the six-line stave used in Burns's *Address to the Deil*²—aaa, bab,—which is not to be found in any earlier Scottish poetry that is not anonymous. The kyrielle and the French octave are also represented.

No production of any old Scottish 'makar' gives such a detailed picture as does the *Pleasant Satyre*, not merely of the customs and manners, but of the inner life and thought of the period. We are transported back to the years when the old religious system was tottering to its fall; the

¹ Professor Schipper (*Altenglische Metrik*, vol. i. pp. 522-31) has devoted much serious attention to Lyndsay's rhythm; but most of Lyndsay's peculiarities were mere imperfections, Lyndsay being a very careless metrist.

² See *post*, p. 244.

crisis of the struggle is pictured in the play, and those concerned in the crisis are personified, so far at least as to enable us to know the main types. The excessive frankness—not to say coarseness—of much of the dialogue, and especially the rude buffoonery of the interludes, enhances the value of the play as a representation of the old social life. We obtain a deeper insight into the character of the times than we could otherwise compass. In modern plays the realities of human nature are greatly veiled by conventions, but Lyndsay's play deals with society at a time when the old conventions had broken down, and human nature disported itself very much according to the moods of its lawless instincts.

The play is constructed with considerable skill, even judged by modern standards: it is evidently not the work of a novice; and we must infer from it that Lyndsay had at least much previous experience in the construction of farces, masks, and other pieces. Dramatically, the interludes are much the better portions; but if in the play proper the serious characters are mere wax figures, the less reputable personages are very distinctly realised.

Part I., divided into two Acts, represents the Temptation of Rex Humanitas by Sensualitie, who is introduced and recommended to the King by Wantonness, Placebo, and Solace, the eloquence of the last in praise of her charms being coloured by the liquor he has consumed. Sensualitie,

Its construction.

Part I.

attended by her two maidens Homeliness and Danger, then enters, and to her insinuating address the King replies :—

‘ Welcum to me peirles in pulchritude ;
 Welcum to me thow greiter nor the lamber,¹
 Quhilk hes maid me of all dolour denude.
 Solace, convoy this Ladie to my chamber.’

than
 Who

When the stage is cleared of the disreputables, Gude Counsall appears, but is immediately followed by the three Vices, Flatterie, Falset, and Dissait, in the guise respectively of Devotioun, Sapience, and Discretioun. On the entrance of the King the three step forward and salute him ; and after they have flattered and beguiled and cozened according to their several methods, he gives them cordial welcome as ‘ three men of gude.’ Meanwhile Gude Counsall is standing modestly near the door, and the King, espying the stranger, sends his three newly discovered friends to bring him forward ; but instead of doing so they ‘ hurl ’ him out with the direst threats, and on returning to the King tell him that the fellow is a detestable housebreaker whom they have ordered to be sent to the thief’s hole. Sensualitie and her ladies now begin to sing a song, and the King sits down among them ; but hardly has he done so ere Veritie enters, who, however, at the instance of Spiritualitie, the Abbot, and the Parson, is immediately put in the stocks. Chastitie then makes her appearance, but the Lady Prioress, Spiritu-

¹ Amber used for the making of images.

alitie, the Abbot, and the Parson all in turn disown her acquaintance with marked rudeness, and the curtain falls whilst even Temporalitie is advising her that she had best be gone.

After Act I. followed the first Interlude. It represents a coarse and uproarious scene between the Sowtar and Tailor and their two Wives, who surprise the two worthies soberly entertaining Chastitie in an alehouse. Chastitie they chase away with foul abuse, and then, as the stage direction expressively puts it, the two termagants 'speik to their gudemen and ding them'; and the Interlude ends with the Sowtar's Wife 'lifting up hir clais (clothes) abone hir waist,' and entering 'the water' on her way to the town for wine to celebrate the victory.

The first
Interlude.

Act II. opens with the introduction of Chastitie—by Diligence, the master of the ceremonies—to the King, but Sensualitie plainly tells the King that he can't have both of them.

Act II. of
Part I.

Thereupon Chastitie is put into the stocks by the three guardian Vices; but on the sudden arrival of Correctioun's Varlet they immediately recognise that the game is up. Flatterie hastily bids farewell to his two friends; but Dissait and Falset are determined not to leave empty-handed, and while the King is sleeping resolve to steal his box. This Falset does, but claiming on that account the larger share of the money, is attacked by Dissait, who finally runs away with the box through the 'water.' Immediately

thereupon Divine Correctioun enters, by whom Gude Counsall and Veritie are set free from the stocks, and Sensualitie is dismissed. She affirms that she does not care ‘twa strais’ for the King, and will fare much better among bishops and cardinals: as she does, being welcomed by Spiritualitie as their ‘dayis darling.’ The King then receives into his service Gude Counsall, Veritie, and Chastitie, and embraces with ‘a humble countenance’ Correctioun, who also graciously pardons Wantonness, Placebo, and Solace, provided they ‘do no other crime’ :—

‘For quhy? as I suppois,
Princes may sumtyme seik solace
With mirth, and lawful mirriness
Thair spirits to rejoyis.’

The first part being over, the audience are dismissed by Diligence to make ‘collatioun,’ with a variety of pleasant advice, as :—

‘Tarie nocht lang, it is lait in the day ;
Let sum drink ayle and sum drink claret wine.
Be gret Doctors of Physick, I heare say,
That michtie drink comforts the dull ingine.’

spirit

Part I. was followed by the Interlude of the Poor Man and the Pardoner, in which pathos, drollery, and other qualities are blended with no little skill. Entering the empty apartment tired and footsore, the Pauper, who is on his way to St. Andrews for legal redress against his ecclesiastical oppressors, climbs up to the King’s chair to rest him, but is driven away by Diligence, who, however, is so

The second
Interlude.

struck by his exclamation that 'thair is richt lytill play at my hungrie hart,' that in real concern he asks him to tell the story of his 'unhappy chances.' The 'blak veritie' he recounts is the utter ruin both of his father and him by the funeral dues demanded by the Church. Then while the Pauper lies down to rest him, a Pardoner enters, and proceeds to vaunt the merits of his wares:—

My patent Pardouns, ye may see,	
Cum fra the Cane of Tartarie,	
Weill seald with oster-schellis.	
Thocht ye have na contritioun,	Thouga
Ye sall have full remissioun,	
With help of buiks and bellis.	
Heir is ane relict, lang and braid,	a ; broad
Of Fine Macoull ¹ the richt chaft blaid,	true jawbone
With teith, and al togidder :	
Of Colling's cow, heir is ane horne,	
For eating of Makconnal's corne,	
Was slaine into Baquhiddier.	Balquhiddier
Heir is ane coird, baith great and lang,	
Quhilk hangit Johne the Armistrang : ²	Which
Of gude hemp soft and sound :	
Gude, halie peopill, I stand for'd	
Quha ever beis hangit with this cord,	
Neids never to be dround !	
The culum of Sanct Bryd's kow,	tail
The gruntill of Sanct Antonis sow,	snout
Quhilk buir his haly bell :	Which bore
Quha ever he be heiris this bell clinck,	
Gif me ane ducat for till drink,	a ; to
He sall never gang to hell,	go

¹ One of Ossian's heroes.

² The freebooter hanged in 1529. 'Iohnne ermistrangis dance' is mentioned in *The Complaynt of Scotland*, and Ramsay published a traditional ballad on him.

	Without he be of Baliell borne :
	Maisters trow ye, that this be scorne !
	Cum win this Pardoun, cum.
not	Quha luifis thair wyfis nocht, with thair hart,
to	I have power thame for till part :
	Methink yow deif and dum !
	Hes naine of yow curst wickit wyfis,
into ; vexa-	That halds yow intill sturt and stryfis ?
tion	Cum tak my dispensatioun ;
	Of that cummer, I sall mak yow quyte,
gossip	Howbeit your selfis be in the wyte,
to blame	And mak ane fals narratioun.
	Cum win the Pardoun, now let se,
	For meill, for malt, or for monie,
	For cok, hen, guse, or gryse.
young pig	Of relicts, heir I haif ane hunder ;
	Quhy cum ye nocht ? this is ane wonder !
	I trow ye be nocht wyse !'

Then follows a lively scene between the Sowtar, the Sowtar's Wyfe, and the Pardoner, who, after granting them divorce on certain unspeakable conditions, addresses them thus :—

	' Dame, pas ye to the east end of the toun ;
a	And pas ye west, evin lyke ane cuckold loon ;
broad	Go hence ye baith, with Baniel's braid blissing !
	Schirs, saw ye ever mair sorrowles pairting ?'

The interview between the Pardoner and the Pauper is not so satisfactory. The Pauper having received for his groat nothing except a promise—of 'ane thousand years of pardouns'—demands it back again :—

	' Quhat say ye, Maisters ? call ye this gude resoun,
a	That he suld promise me ane gay pardoun,
	And he resave my mony, in his stead ;
Then	Syne mak me na payment till I be dead ?'

The Pardoner refusing, Pauper attacks and routs him: 'Heir,' says the stage-direction, 'sall they fecht with silence; and Pauper sall cast doun the buird, and cast the relicts in the water.'

Part II. is more complicated—if not confused—in plot than Part I.; but if the modern reader will find it tedious, this is solely because he cannot

Part II.

realise the situations as Lyndsay's audience did. This part, dealing less with abstractions than Part I., and indeed wholly with 'burning questions,' bristles with points which must have kept the audience in a constant simmer of excitement. Absolutely candid in exposing the abuses in Church and State, Lyndsay employs all the resources of his art to incite the nation to drastic remedies. The three Estates of Parliament—Spiritualitie, Temporalitie, and Merchand—make their entrance on the stage walking backwards, 'led by the Vices': Spiritualitie by 'Covetice and careless Sensualitie,' Temporalitie by Publick Oppressioun, and Merchand by Falset and Dissait. At the instance of Correctioun the Vices are put in the stocks, greatly to the sorrowful indignation of Spiritualitie, who bids Sensualitie and Covetyce farewell with much show of feeling, and hopes they will do their utmost to return soon:—

'Want I yow twa, I may nocht lang endure.'

two; not

Temporalitie and Merchand manifest, however, no such regrets, and, on the advice of John the Commoun Weill, send instead for Gude Counsall, on whose

arrival John proceeds to detail to the Estates the evils that demand urgent attention; his complaint dealing chiefly with all sorts of idlers, specially

‘great fat Freiris,

Augustenes, Carmleits, and Cordeleirs ;

And all uthers, that in cowls bene cled,

Quhilk labours nocht, and bene well fed,’ etc.

are
Who ; not

Temporalitie and Merchand are much impressed by the address, and promise amendment; but since Spiritualitie declines to come to terms with Common Weill, the various representatives of the Church are finally summoned before Correction to give an account of their stewardship. Spiritualitie boasts :—

‘ I gat gude payment of my Temporall lands,
My buttock-maill,¹ my coattis,² and my offrands,
With all that dois perteine my benefice,
Consider now, my Lord, gif I be wyse.
I dar nocht marie, contrair the common law,
Ane thing thair is, my Lord, that ye may knaw.
Howbeit, I dar nocht plainlie spouse ane wyfe,
Yit concubeins I have had four or fyfe.
And to my sons I have givin rich rewairds,
And all my dochters maryit upon lairds,’ etc.

offerings

if

dare not

a

landowners

The Abbot extols himself in a speech of which this is the kernel :—

‘Thare is na monke, from Carrick to Carraill³
That fairs better, and drinks mair helsum aill.’

wholesome
ale

The Parson, while admitting that he does not trouble to preach, affirms that he is more zealous in

¹ Fine for fornication.

² Testament dues.

³ Carrick in Ayrshire, on the west coast, to Crail in Fifeshire, on the east coast.

the discharge of other, perhaps more important, duties of his office :—

'Thocht I preich not, I can play at the caiche ;	hand-ball
I wait thair is nocht ane amang yow all,	wot
Mair ferilie can play at the fut-ball ;	cleverly
And for the carts, the tabils, and the dyse,	cards
Above all persouns, I may beir the pryse.'	parsons

And the Lady Prioress, asked why she would not give 'harberie' to Lady Chastitie, calmly replies that her 'complexion would not assent.'

Correctioun then directs that Doctour should preach a sermon 'in Inglish tongue land folk to edifie,' much to the disgust of the Abbot and the Parson ; and it being observed that a certain Friar is about to leave to set 'the toun on stir' against the preacher, he is stripped of his habit, and found to be none else than our old friend Flatterie. The Prioress is also stripped of her habit, when lo ! she is seen to have been wearing beneath it a kirtle of silk. The three Prelates—who are also stripped of their habits, which are put on three young licentiates—go to confer with Sensualitie and Covetyce, but being now renounced by them with scorn, set out to discover a means of earning an honest living. John Commoun Weill is then clothed 'gorgeously' and given a seat in Parliament ; and finally Flatterie is pardoned on condition that he consent to act as executioner of his two old friends, Falset and Dissait, with whose execution and that of Commoun Thift—a Border reiver who had unwarily come into the meeting to obtain information

about the Earl of Rothes's 'best hacknay,' and is betrayed by his old master Oppressioun—and their dying speeches, Part II. is brought to an edifying close.

Part II. is followed by an after-piece—Interlude III.—containing the 'Sermon of Follie,' a buffoon who, after a ludicrous account of his adventures on the way to the playhouse, proceeds to preach a sermon on a saying of Solomon—*Stultorum numerus infinitus est*,—and after a definition of various kinds of folly, goes on to indicate these supremely foolish persons whom he deems to have worthily earned one of his 'Follie Hattis or Hudes.'

Of the other productions of Lyndsay little need be said. The satirical *Tragedy of the Cardinal*, 1547—
Other works of Lyndsay. suggested as to form by Boccaccio's *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium*, which he professes to be reading when the wounded ghost of the cardinal appears to him and recounts the cardinal's own history—is one of the dullest of his short pieces. *Pedder Coffeis* gives an amusing sketch of seven varieties of contemporary cheats. *The Historie of Squire Meldrum* narrates, after the fashion of the old romances, and with no small sprightliness, the amorous and heroic adventures of that famous Fife laird. As for *The Dialog*, it is a sort of portentous application of biblical history to contemporary events, concluding with dissertations on Death, Anti-christ, and the General Judgment.

On the whole, Lyndsay was greater as man than poet. Had opportunity and scope been granted him, he had the makings of a great statesman; and as it is, his influence on the immediate future of Scotland was only second, if second, to that of Knox. His poetic gift was hampered rather than benefited by his absorption in ecclesiastical and social questions; but he was at least a clever, and more than clever, playwright, and, indeed, at a later period his dramatic ability must have won him high distinction.¹

More a
dramatist
than a poet.

¹ Lindsay had at least one poetic disciple in William Lauder (1520?-1573), minister of Forgandenny, etc., whose *Compendious and Breve Tractate*, ed. Hall, was published by the Early English Text Society in 1864, and his *Minor Poems*, ed. Furnivall, by the same Society in 1870; but though displaying much of Lindsay's zeal for political and social reform, they are wellnigh destitute of any qualities entitling them to rank as literature.

VIII

MINOR AND LATER POETS OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

BELLENDEN—INGLIS—KYD—STEWARTE—STEWART OF
LORNE—HENRY STEWART—KING HENRY STEWART
— BALNAVES — FETHY — FLEMING — SIR JOHN
MOFFAT—STEIL, ETC.—ALEXANDER SCOTT—ALEX-
ANDER MONTGOMERIE—SIR RICHARD MAITLAND—
JAMES VI., ETC.—THE WEDDERBURNS AND ‘THE
GUDE AND GODLIE BALLATES’—ROBERT SEMPILL
AND THE REFORMATION SATIRISTS.

AMONG contemporary poets of Douglas and Lyndsay
there are none of peculiarly distinctive merit.

John Bellenden, Archdeacon of Moray, whose
translations of Boece and Livy (see *post*, p. 304) are
among the most characteristic examples
(fl. 1533-1587). of old Scots prose, is, though designated
by Lyndsay ‘ane plant of poetis,’

‘Quhose ornat workis my wyitt can nocht defyne,’

known poetically merely as an exemplary disciple of
Gavin Douglas. To his prose translations he wrote
‘prohemiums,’ mainly devoted to the exposition and

enforcement of excellent moral maxims by means of learned classical allusions; and none other of his verses survive except 'a godly and lernit work callit *The Banner of Pietie*,'¹ and descriptive of the Incarnation.

It may be that Sir James Inglis—on whom Mackenzie in his *Writers of Scotland* fathers, without evidence, that curious prose work *The Complaynt of Scotland*—deserves all the Sir James Inglis (d. 1531). commendation given him by Lyndsay for his 'ballates, farses, and plesand playes,' but none of these have survived—the *General Satyre*, with which he is credited in the Maitland MS., being in the Bannatyne MS. much more credibly assigned to Dunbar. The pieces referred to by Lyndsay were written while he was a hanger-on at the court, where, the Treasurer's Accounts indicate, he was employed in connection with the theatrical and other entertainments; but Lyndsay laments that his promotion to the abbacy of Culross had made impotent his pen.

Of Kyd, described by Lyndsay as 'in cunnyng and practick, rycht prudent,' nothing is known beyond the fact that in the Bannatyne MS. his name is attached to *The Richt Fontane* Kyd. *of hailfull Sapience*, written in the French octave, and intended seemingly for the edification of the young king. Exactly coinciding with Lyndsay's allusion, it is excellent rather as advice than as poetry. Here is a specimen:—

¹ Bannatyne MS.

communing	‘Thy pastyme suld oft be in commonyng
	With profound clerkis of science and prudens ;
are fitting	For cunnyng termes afferis in a king,
Who	Quhilk sald be polyt and of eloquence.
	In hering wysmen men gettis sapience,
which	Without the quhilk is no stabilitie ;
	Thairfoir in tyme thou get intelligence
	Or elles thy wisdome sall in seeking be.’

Of Stewarte, whose personal history is also an absolute blank, except that he is mentioned in

Stewarte. Rolland’s *Seven Sages* as a court poet,
 ‘First Lerges.’ but who, Lyndsay tells us, ‘desyreth
 ane stately style’ and

‘Full ornate workis daylie does compyle,’

we have more various examples than of any other minor bard of the period, some dozen of his productions having been preserved in the Bannatyne MS. He was plainly a disciple of Dunbar rather than Douglas; and a curious ballad on the New Year’s ‘Lerges’ (bounty) indicates that, like Dunbar, he was a not extremely successful ‘solisitar.’ It begins:—

bounty	‘First lerges the king my cheife,
Who	Quhilk come als quiet as a theif,
	And in my hand sled shillingis twa,
	To put his lergnes to preif
	For lerges of this New Yeirday.’

From most of his other possible patrons—the Bishop of Galloway, the Abbot of Holyrood, the secretary, the treasurer—he also got little but fair words, so that he was moved to exclaim:—

'Fowll fall this frost that is so fell,	Foul befall
It hes the wyt, the trewth to tell,	blame
Baith handes and purs it bindis sway	so
Thay may gife ne thing, by thame sell,	of their
For lerges of this New Yeirday.'	freewill

There was but one exception to the general stinginess, 'My Lord of Bothwell,' who gave him

'ane cursour gray,	
Worth all this sort that I with mell,	meddle
For lerges of this New Yeirday.'	

The tailor and shoemaker—those favourite butts of the old 'makaris'—supplied Stewarte with a theme for several pieces, on the whole more ribald than witty. His *Flying* His 'Flying.' Mots on tailors. *betuix the Soutar and the Tailyour* is an average specimen of the orthodox Billingsgate of the period; and he also wrote several *mots* on tailors, of which this one may serve as a characteristic sample of that age's wit:—

'Betuix twa foxis a crawling cok,	
Betuix twa freiris a maid in hir smok,	
Betuix twa cattis a mowis,	
Betuix twa telyeouris a lowiss :	
Schaw me, gud schir, nocht as a stranger,	not
Quhilk of thais four is grittest in danger ?'	Which

Stewarte is further one of the few amatory poets among the old Scots 'makaris,' but he possesses little of the grace and ease of the later school of which Scott is the chief. *For to declare the he (high) Magnificence of Ladies*—in the French

As amatory poet.

octave, with refrain—is an ardent outburst, ending in this effusive fashion :—

earth	‘ War all the erd papir and perchmyne,
	And pennis wer all treis, herbis and flouris,
stars ; sky	And all the sternis in the lift dois schyne,
	War in this erd moist ornat oratouris,
sea	The se were ynk, with fresche fludis and schouris—
a	All wer to small ane buk to edify,
	For to contene of ladeis the honouris,
	And factis that thair fame dois fortefie.’

In the Bannatyne MS. are three other of Stewarte’s amatory pieces.

Lyndsay also makes mention of Stewart of Lorne, who ‘ wyll carp rycht curiously.’ This was most likely W. Stewart, who, in the Maitland MS., is credited with *This hinder Nycht neir by the Hour of Nine*—also in the Bannatyne MS.—giving the revelation of Dame Virtue as to when Scotland, ‘ sin Flowdoun field,’ shall again enjoy ‘ peace and rest and plenty.’ Another Stewart (Henry) appears in the Bannatyne MS. as author of *Be Gouvernour baith Guid and Gratiours*; and there is further a mysterious King Henry Stewart to whom the Bannatyne MS. assigns a love-song in the French octave, somewhat in the manner of Scott. It is scarcely necessary to add that, although James v. enjoyed some repute in his day as a poet, no verses with his colophon survive, and that his title to the authorship of *The Gaberlunzie Man* and *The Jolly Beggar* is based on mere unverified tradition.

Certain other poets, not mentioned by Dunbar or Lyndsay, who figure in the Bannatyne MS., clearly belong to the later school of Scott and Montgomerie. Balnaves—presumably not Henry Balnaves of Halhill (d. 1579), the Scottish Reformer, and author of a *Comfortable Treatise on Justification*—is credited with *O Gallandis all I cry and call*, containing some rather piquant advice to gallants, written in Scott's favourite six-line stave in *rime couée*¹:—

‘Huntarres adew,
Gif ye persew
To hunt at every beist,
Ye will it rew,
Thair is anew :
Thairto haif ye no haist.’

Balnaves.

enough

A certain Fethy² appears as the author of two love-songs—*My Trewth is Plicht*, in *rime royal*, and *Pansing in Hairt*, in the French octave of three accents with a curious double refrain:—

‘Cauld, cauld, culis the lufe
That kendillis our het.’

Fethy.

too hot

To Fleming we are indebted for *Be mirry Bretherne*,

¹ See *ante*, p. 164.

² In all likelihood Sir John Futhy, a priest who, according to the manuscript of Thomas Wode, or Wood, in Dublin University Library, composed a song beginning ‘O God abuse,’ with words and music, and was ‘the first organist that ever brought in Scotland the curious new fingering and playing on organs.’ See David Laing’s Introduction to Stenhouse’s *Notes to Johnson’s Musical Museum*, p. xxxi.

a clever and amusing, indeed quite modern, exposition of the plague of evil wives, which is also of some interest for its stave, the first section being sometimes in the *rime couée* of Scott, but occasionally dropping the internal rhymes, so as to form a quatrain in the old ballad measure; and the last section being a kind of bobwheel, the inner lines of which are occasionally in tumbling metre. Here is an example:—

Then would
money

once
Before
known
neck

‘Than wad scho say, “Allace this day
For him that wan this geir,
Quhen I him had, I skairsly said,
‘My hart ains mak gud cheir.’
Or I had lettin him spend a plak,
I lever haif wittin him brokin his bak,
Or ellis his craig had gottin a crak,
Our the heicht of the stair.”’

Sir John Moffat, who is credited by another than Bannatyne with the classic tale, *The Wyfe of Auchtirmwchty*, is also credited by Bannatyne with a rather sprightly piece, *Brother, Bewar I rede you Now*, in the five-line stave—aab, ab—with refrain; and Steil, known otherwise as the author of a political poem, *The Ryng of the Roy Robert*,¹ has his name attached to two love-poems, *Lanterne of Lufe* and *Absent*, neither of much account, and both rather ‘aureate’ of language.

¹ Maitland MS., reprinted in Watson’s *Choice Collection*, part iii., and in Laing’s *Fugitive Scottish Poetry*, 1823-25, and *Early Metrical Tales*, 1826.

To the same late school belongs the Clapperton who, in the Maitland MS., appears as Clapperton. the author of *Wa Worth Maryage*,¹ beginning:—

' In Bowdoun, on blak Monunday	Monday
Quhen all was gadderit to the Play,	
Bayth men and women semblit thair,	
I hard ane sweit ane sich, and say—	sigh
“Wa worth maryage for evermair.”	Woe befall

Other still more minor names in the Bannatyne MS. are Lichtoun Monicus, Robert Norval, and Henry Scogan.² John Blyth, Allan, and Allan Matson are clearly pseudonyms.³

Minor names.

In Lyndsay we have seen the beginning of that theological absorption which was to infect, and for a time destroy, the nation's poetic sentiment; but at first the infection was only partial, and it was slightly counteracted either by

The later
Scottish
School.

¹ Published in Pinkerton's *Ancient Scottish Poems*, p. 135.

² Henry Scogan, an Englishman, was tutor to the sons of Henry iv. A poem by him is published in Skeat's *Chaucerian and other Poems*, 1897.

³ George Bannatyne (1545-1608), the transcriber of the Bannatyne MS., was the son of James Bannatyne of Kirktown of Newtyle, Forfarshire. He became a merchant in Edinburgh, and during an outbreak of the plague there in 1568 took refuge in his native place, where he amused his enforced leisure by compiling, mostly, he states, from 'copies awld, markit and vitillat,' that treasury of old Scots poetry, the Bannatyne MS., which, with the Maitland MS., was the chief means of preserving the bulk of the work of the old Scots 'makaris' from oblivion. From the Bannatyne MS. Allan Ramsay got the material for his *Evergreen*, 1724, and it was drawn upon by late editors both for general *Collections* and for editions of individual poets; but the whole MS. was first printed *verbatim et literatim* through the enterprise of the Hunterian Club, 1873-1896. Bannatyne prefixed certain poetical introductions to the MS., and also contributed to it a few other pieces of his own, but they are of no poetic merit.

direct contact with the poetic revival in England represented by Tottel's *Miscellany*, 1557, or by contact with influences similar to those which produced that revival. Of this later Scottish school, which tended to become more and more assimilated to that of England, the two chief names are Alexander Scott and Alexander Montgomerie.

Of Alexander Scott—his parentage and personal history—we know no more than of the obscurest of the old Scots 'makaris.' Laing conjectured that he may have been the second of two sons of Alexander Scott of the Chapel Royal, Stirling, who were legitimated on 21st September 1549; but the Scotts are so numerous a clan that the conjecture can scarce rank as even a faint probability. It is as likely that he was the Alexander Scott, burgess of Edinburgh, who in 1581 was joint cautioner with Mungo Scott for George Scott of Synton, and Robert Scott of Hanying, then in ward in Edinburgh Castle, and who in 1584 became caution for the loyalty of James Thomsoun.¹ It is worth noting that this Alexander Scott is designated a burgess merely, not merchant or any kind of tradesman. It is almost certain that Scott was an Edinburgh resident, the whole tone of his poetry, apart from poetical references to Edinburgh and its neighbourhood, being that of a town gallant; and we know from an allusion to him

Alexander
Scott (fl. 1547-
1584).

¹ *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, vol. iii. p. 396; *ib.* vol. iii. p. 696.

in a sonnet of Montgomerie to Hudson that he was alive in 1584:—

‘Yourself and I, old Scott and Robert Sempill,
Quhen we are deid that all our dayis but daffis,
Let Christian Lyndsay write our epitaphs.’ larks

This quotation also, if it does not imply that Scott had no stated employment, is rather inconsistent with the supposition—from his use of two law-terms, ‘*blanche-ferme*’ and ‘*quyt-cleme*’—that he was a lawyer, at least in constant practice.

Scott’s *New Zeir Gift to the Quene Mary* expresses the current anti-Catholic feeling of Edinburgh in 1562; but notwithstanding this piece, and his two translations from the *Psalms*, he represents a mode of sentiment which it need hardly be said is alien to that of the Kirk. Most likely, indeed, the bulk of his verse that now survives was written before the ‘*Evangel*’ was established in Scotland. We possess none of later date than 1568, and it is inferred that *Departe*, written ‘of the Master of Erskine,’ lover of the Queen-Dowager, slain at Pinkie in 1547, dates from shortly after the Master’s death; while that characteristic piece *Of May* celebrates, among other old customs, the representation of Robin Hood and Little John prohibited by Act of Parliament in 1555. But the reference of Montgomerie further shows that the Reformation effected no radical change in Scott’s habits; and the fact that none of his verses are known to survive, except what Bannatyne tran-

Unchanged
by the
Reformation.

scribed, betokens rather that he continued to write in the old vein, than that he either ceased to write or devoted himself specially to serious verse.

The whole of Scott's productions that survive, under his signature, number only thirty-six,¹ and with the exception of the *New Zeir's Gift*, *The A love poet.* *Justing and Debait*, and the translations of the first and fiftieth *Psalms*, they are wholly devoted to love—a subject which seems to have had as much practical interest for him as it had for Burns:—

smiling; eye
made thee
look sillily
and foolishly

'The blenkyne of ane e
Ay gart thé goif and glake';

but while his verses plainly represent his own experience, and are the effluence of a strong lyric impulse, their sentiment and manner has much in common with the English lyrical school represented chiefly by Skelton, Wyatt, and Surrey.

Doubtless Scott knew Skelton's poetry, and made acquaintance with the later school of Wyatt and Surrey in Tottel's *Miscellany*, 1557, if
An accom-
plished met-
rist. Compared
with Surrey.
not before this in MS.; but if influenced by some of the English school in his preference for short-lined staves, he had little to gain from it as regards rhythmical excellence. We have only to compare his finished and musical versification

¹ They are all contained in the Bannatyne MS. A few were published by Ramsay, 1724—very incorrectly—Lord Hailes, 1770, and Sibbald, 1802; but the first complete edition is the somewhat Bowdlerised one by David Laing, 1821. An edition was printed for private circulation at Glasgow, 1882; and one was edited for the Scottish Text Society by Dr. James Cranstoun, 1896.

with the jolting doggerel of even Wyatt, to recognise how far the Scots 'makaris' were in advance of the English, until Surrey; and as regards correctness of accent, management of the pause, and purity and exactness of rhyme, he is hardly to be regarded as Surrey's inferior.

Though addicted to short-lined staves, Scott also used many of Dunbar's, but did not in these confine himself to iambs. He was partial to the French octave, which he wrote not only in its five- and four-, but in its three-accented form, as in *Oppressit Hairt*:—

A disciple of
Dunbar. Use
of the French
octave.

'Oppressit hairt, indure

In dolor and distress,

Wappit without recure

In wo remidiless;

Sen scho is merciless,

And caussis all thy smert,

Quilk suld thy dolor dress,

Indure, oppressit hairt.'

Wrapped
round; cure

Since

Who; redress

For that ecstatic celebration of love, *Vp, Helsum Hairt*, he uses a ten-line stave formed by the addition of a couplet to the French octave:—

Ten-line stave.

'Vp, helsum hairt! thy rutis rais, and lowp;

Exalt and clym within my breist in staige;

Art thow not wantoun, haill, and in gud howp,

Ffermit in grace and free of all thirlaige

Bathing in bliss and sett in hie curaige?

Braisit in joy, no falt may thé affray,

Having thy ladies hart as heretaige

In blenche ferme ffor ane sallat every May:

So neid thow nocht now sussy, sytt, nor sorrow

Sen thow art sure of sollace evin and morrow.'

joyful;
leap

hale
confirmed;
bondage

Enveloped

tenure
not; fret;
grieve
Since

He has also several examples of *rime royal*, including that curious fantasia on the heart beginning:—

Rime royal.

‘Haif hairt in hairt, ze hairt of hairtes hail ;
Trewly, sweit hairt, zour hairt my hairt sal haif,’ etc.

Of the three examples of the five-line stave of equal lines, two, *Of May* and *The Answer to Hairts*, are arranged in the refrain form of the stave, and the third, *To Luve Vnluvit*, has the refrain:—

Five-line
stave.

a

nothing

‘To luve vnluvit it is ane pane :
For scho that is my soverane,
Sum wantoun man so he hes set hir,
That I can get no luf agane,
Bot brek my hairt, and nocht the bettir.’

Only once, in the witty *Of Womenkynd*, does he use a six-line stave with double refrain ; but instead of the Dunbar form built on two rhymes, he borrows from the English lyrists that built on three rhymes, and known as the ‘ballade’ (see *post*, p. 258):—

Six-line stave
with double
refrain.

behaviour
whole

‘I muse and mervellis in my mynd,
Quhat way to wryt, or put in verss,
The quent consaitis of wemenkynd,
Or half thair havingis to reheress :
I fynd thair hail affectioun
So contrair thair complexioun.’

More partial than Dunbar to *rime couée*, he supplies two examples—*A Complaint againis Cupeid* and *On Paciens in Life*—of that six-line form of it which, the troubadours having adapted to it their love-songs, and the monks

Rime couée
in the stave of
the ‘Address to
the Deil.’

their exemplary Latin rhymes, became common, through the early English minstrels, all over England, whence it later found favour with the Scots, but only partially, until, having been revived by Sir Robert Sempill in 'Standard *Habbie*,' it finally obtained a lease of immortality through Robert Burns.¹ Here is a stave of Scott more after the manner of Burns than most of the pinchbeck imitations of the latter bard:—

' Quhat is thy manrent bot mischeif :	homage
Sturt, angir, grunching, yre, and greif,	vexation ;
Evill lyfe, and langour but releif	grumbling
Off woundë wan,	without
Displesour, pane, and he repreif	high
Off God and man ?'	

In *On Paciens* the stave is adapted to a single refrain, 'Bot paciens,' or 'With paciens,' and in that candid exposition of the poet's own love-code, *It cumis zow Luvaris to be Laill*, he introduces with much effect a double refrain of one accent, thus:—

' It cumis zow luvaris to be laill,	becomes ;
Off body, hairt, and mind alhaill ;	loyal
And thoct ze with zour ladyis daill—	entirely
Ressoun ;	though
Bot and zour faith and lawty fail—	loyalty
Tressoun.'	

Scott has also examples—*A Luvaris Complaint* and *Leif, Luve, and Lat me leif Allone*—of a seven-line stave in *rime couée*, of two rhymes, formed from this six-line stave by the addition of a head-line to the last section ;

Seven-line
stave in rime
couée.

¹ For a complete history of this stave, see *The Centenary Burns*, vol. i. pp. 336-42.

but in both cases the last line takes the form of a refrain, and in the latter the tail-lines are of three accents:—

‘Leif, Luve, and lat me leif allone
At libertie, subject to none,
Ffor it may weil be sene vpone
My bludless blaikn’tt ble :
The tormenting in tym bygon,
That skerss hes left bot skin and bon
Throw fremitness of thé.’

complexion

perverseness

But the special stave of Scott in *rime couée* is that fashioned on the imperfect Iambic tetrameter.¹ In his

Rime couée
fashioned on
the imperfect
Iambic
tetrameter.

Translation of the First Psalm, and in
Ladeis Fair, he uses it in its common
six-line form; while in *Quha is Perfyte*,
In June the Jem, and *Quha lykis to*

Luve, he adds a bobwheel:—

‘Quha lykis to luve,
Or that law pruve,
Lat him beleif this lyfe to leid :
His mynd sall moif,
But rest or ruve
With diuerss dolouris to the deid :
He sall tyne appetite
And meit and sleip gife quyte
And want the way perfyte
To find remeid.’

Without;
stay
to death
lose

remedy

Of this six-line stave in *rime couée* he uses in *Favour is Fair* a modification formed by rhyming the first half of the third line with the second, and the first half of the sixth with the fifth, so as to form an eight-line stave:—

¹ See *ante*, p. 164.

‘Favour is fair
 In luvis lair,
 Zit Friendship mair
 Bene to commend ;
 Bot quhair despair
 Bene adversare,
 Nothing is thair
 Bot wofull end.’

learning
 more
 is to be
 commended

Of this stave there are examples in the *Coventry Mysteries*. Scott has also two examples of *rime couée* in eight-line staves—*Departe*, the head-lines of which are of three accents and the tail-lines of two, and *I will be Plane*, the head-lines of which are of two accents, the tail-lines of one three-syllabled accent, assuming the form of a double refrain :—

Eight-line
 stave in
rime couée.

‘I will be plane,
 And lufe affane
 Ffor as I mene
 So take me ;
 Gif I refrane
 For wo or pane,
 Zour lufe certane ;
 Forsaik me.’

sincerely
 mean
 If

The other staves of Scott are (1) the old bobwheel stave of *Christis Kirk* in *The Justing*; (2) in *Langour to Leive*, a four-line stave of alternate rhymes, the rhymes of the second and fourth lines being repeated throughout its thirteen stanzas, with the burden of ‘again’; and (3) a variety of the roundel, *Lo! qhat it is to Luve* (p. 249).

Other staves.

The New Zeir Gift, of small merit poetically, is of some interest as representing the views of a shrewd man of the world on the political problems of Scotland in 1562. But though filled with grave political advice, it begins with a stanza of elaborate compliments after the approved 'aureate' fashion, and the Envoy and Lectori are utilised for a display of those crowning accomplishments of the old 'makar,' internal rhyme and alliteration. Here is the quaint close:—

note
writing
Sent by

'Noblest natour, nurice to nurtour, not
This dull indyte, dulce, double dasy deir,
Send be thy sempill servand Sanderris Scott,
Greting gret God to grant thy Grace gude zeir.'

The Justing and Debait vp at the Drum betuix Wā. Adamsonne and Johne Sym is modelled as to form after *Peblis* and *Christis Kirk*, and as to subject-matter after Dunbar's *Turnament* and Lyndsay's *Justing*. With the former two pieces it cannot compare in realistic vivacity, nor with Dunbar's in breadth—apart from the question of grossness—of humour, but the fun is not so strained as Dunbar's, nor is there any suggestion of burlesque. The incidents are described with quite a naïve simplicity: the ludicrous cowardice of Will, who

stronger;
body
knit

'wichter was of corss
Nor Sym and better knittin,'

in its contrast with the dapper coolness of the pigmy but 'better sittin' Sym, affording opportunity for much slily effective wit.

But the special praise of Scott is that he is the chief lyrist of the old Scots 'makaris'—more essentially a lyrist than Dunbar or Montgomerie, and among English contemporaries the fellow of Surrey. Yet Scott is peculiarly the disciple of Dunbar, and the influence of that master is seen not merely in the artistic finish, but in the succinctness, the aphoristic vigour of his verse.

For all these qualities his supreme example is undoubtedly *The Roundel of Love*:—

The chief old
Scots lyrist—
but the dis-
ciple of
Dunbar.

'The Roundel
Love.'

'Lo! quhat it is to lufe	
Lerne ze, that list to prufe,	
Be me, I say, that no wayis may	By
The grund of greif remvfe,	
Bot still decay, both nycht and day :	
Lo! quhat it is to lufe.	
Lufe is ane fervent fyre,	a
Kendillit without desyre :	
Schort plesour, lang displesour,	
Repentance is the hyre ;	
Ane pure tressour without mesour	poor
Lufe is ane fervent fyre.	
To lufe and to be wyiss,	
To rege with gud adwyiss,	rage at
Now thus, now than, so gois the game,	
Incertane is the dyiss :	
Thair is no man, I say, that can	
Both lufe and to be wyiss.	
Fle always from the snair,	
Lerne at me to be ware :	
It is ane pane and dowbill trane	snare
Of endles wo and cair ;	
For to refrane that danger plane	
Fle always frome the snair.'	

Elsewhere he also manifests some of the coarser aspects of the old Scottish realism, curiously mingled with the graceful amorous frivolity of the school of Surrey. As to his asserted lack of earnestness, lack of earnestness, fervour, passion, surely *Vp, Helsom Hairt*, and its companion piece, *My Hairt is High Above*, the latter unsigned but engraven all over with his subscription, are fervent and passionate enough, though erotic rather than sentimental; and is not this exquisitely simple stanza—as imagined coming from the lips of the dying Master of Erskine—as expressive a symbol of passionate regret as the loudest of protestations?—

own

‘ Adew my awin sueit thing,
 My joy and conforting,
 My mirth and sollesing
 Of erdly gloir ;
 Ffair weill, my lady bricht
 And my remembrance rycht,
 Ffair weill and haif gud nycht :
 I say no moir !’

earthly glory

At the same time Scott is not a poet of the domestic affections, but the poet chiefly of gallantry.

The poet of
 gallantry.

The bulk of his verse that has been preserved is of the light, gay, and even frivolous, rather than serious, order. A wit more than humorist or satirist, his wit plays over all the superficial aspects of love with a certain sparkling, if not dazzling, brilliancy. His maxims and experiences are those of the gallants of his time; but such as they are, they are detailed with much artful cleverness

and vivacity, as also with an ease and elegance unequalled by any of the old Scots 'makaris,' and by none of the earlier English lyrists except Surrey.

Alexander Montgomerie, properly the last of the Scots 'makaris,' was, like Dunbar and Douglas, closely connected with one of the great Scottish families, being the younger son of Hugh Montgomerie of Hazelhead, Ayrshire, descended from a younger branch of the Montgomeries, Earls of Eglinton. By intermarriage the family was also variously related to the poetic Sempills. He himself states that he was born on 'Easter day at morne,' but the year is unknown, though it was probably about 1540. Nor, though he was highly accomplished, do we possess any information about his education; the story of Hume of Polwart in *The Flyting* as to his being sent to Argyle to learn 'leir' being so plainly meant in mere scorn that nothing can be inferred from it. Most likely he visited Argyle in some military capacity, for Dempster states that he was vulgarly called 'the Highland trooper.' That he had some special intercourse with Highlanders, and possessed at least a sprinkling of Gaelic, is clear from his *Answer to ane Helandmanis Invective*; and if he also wrote *How the Helandman was made*¹—which, however, is more like the work of an earlier poet—most likely he had reasons for a special grudge against the Argyle Highlanders.

Alexander
Montgomerie
(1540 ?-1610 ?).
His early life.

¹ Bannatyne ms.

A sonnet by Barclay of Ladyland is addressed to Montgomerie as 'Captain,' but he is not to be confounded with Captain Robert Montgomerie, who was one of the king's bodyguards. Though in some special sense he served the Regent Morton and King James VI., the exact nature of his office is unknown. But, for some years, he was a *persona grata* at the curious court of the young prince, an intimate of some of the more powerful nobles, a friend of many fair dames, an avowed gallant after the manner of his time, and for some time the favourite poet, and it may be the poetic instructor, of his pedantic patron, whose boundless literary vanity he did not scruple to feed with the gross flattery which alone would have satisfied it:—

'So quintessence of Kings, when thou compyle,
Thou stainis my verses with thy stately style.'

In 1583 Montgomerie obtained a pension of 500 merks a year, chargeable on the rents of the Archbishop of Glasgow, but some difficulty as to the payment led to legal proceedings, which apparently terminated in his favour, the grant of the pension being confirmed in 1588. Meanwhile, during a foreign tour, for which he obtained leave of absence in 1586, he is stated to have been sent into a foreign prison; but where, or why he was imprisoned, or even how or when he was set at liberty, is unknown.¹ Be that as it may, he latterly

At the Court of James VI.
His retirement from Court.

¹ Irving, in his *Life* of Montgomerie in Laing's edition, states that 'an authentic document informs us that he was detained in a

so completely lost the favour of the king that he had to retire from the court, and there is no evidence that he was ever again permitted to return. No light on the cause of his disgrace is to be obtained from his poetry, except that he regarded himself as very ill used, but it is sufficiently explained if he be the Alexander Montgomerie, brother of the laird of Hazelhead, who, a neglected entry in the *Register of the Privy Council*¹ informs us, 'having failed to appear to answer for being art and part with the late Hew Barclay of Ladyland in the treasonable enterprise for the taking of Ilisha for the use of the Spanish, is'—14th July 1597—'to be denounced rebel.' This Hew Barclay, who, on being surprised at Ailsa, rushed into the sea and drowned himself, was a poetic acquaintance of Montgomerie's,² and, moreover, the old laird of Hazelhead, the supposed brother of Montgomerie, was still alive, so that the Alexander Montgomerie accused of having been art and part in this foolish enterprise seems to have been none other than the poet. Nothing is known as to his later years. The tradition that he settled at Compstone Castle, Kirkcudbrightshire, near which, at the junction of the Dee and the Taffe, is supposed to be the scene of *The Cherrie and the Slae*, is quite unverified; and

foreign prison,' but he quotes no reference. The poems of Montgomerie usually affirmed by editors to refer to his foreign imprisonment could, from the context, only refer to his imprisonment in this country.

¹ Vol. v. p. 402.

² A sonnet of Ladyland to Montgomerie, Montgomerie's answer, and Ladyland's reply, are included in Montgomerie's *Poems*.

not only was *The Cherrie and the Slae* written before he lost the king's favour, but there is no reason to suppose that he ever acquired means sufficient to enable him to occupy such a residence. Though his sonnets and poems represent a varied love acquaintanceship, he was apparently more a languishing than a successful suitor. It has been taken for granted that the 'maistres' of most of his sonnets and poems was Lady Margaret Montgomerie, to whom, we are told, he 'plied his suit with equal poetic skill and courtier-like grace'; but Lady Margaret, who became the wife of the Master of Seton, afterwards Earl of Winton, must have been over twenty years his junior, and his verses to her are more fatherly than amatory in tone. There is no evidence that he ever married. He was alive in 1605, and died some time before 1615.

A disciple of Scott, Montgomerie was, however, more inventive in his metres and also more akin to the English school in language as well as method.¹ His susceptibility to the new influences is especially seen in his preference for the sonnet, of which he has left no fewer than seventy

The sonnet of
Montgomerie.

¹ Montgomerie's *Cherrie and the Slae*, first printed in 1597, and an edition 'newly altered, perfyted,' etc., by Montgomerie before his death, was published by Andro Hart, 1615. This edition was known to and partly used by Ramsay for his *Evergreen*, but no copy is now known to exist. Various other separate editions have been published. The *Flyting* first appeared in 1621, and *The Mindes Melodie* in 1605. The collected editions of his *Poems* are those of Laing, 1821, and the Scottish Text Society, ed. Cranstoun, 1887. The mss. are the Bannatyne, the Maitland, and the Drummond (University Library, Edinburgh).

examples. To this form of verse he may have been introduced through Tottel's *Miscellany*, 1557, but it is further clear that he was greatly influenced by Ronsard, several of his sonnets being merely translations of those of the French poet.¹ Although (1) he uses the occasional Wyatt (and common Sidney) form—abba, abba, cd, cd (in one instance dd), ee—and (2) the more common Wyatt form—abba, abba, cdd, cee—he never uses the Surrey and Shakespeare form of three alternately rhyming quatrains, but by linking the third quatrain to the second as the second is linked to the first, he introduces (3) a variation—ab, ab, bc, bc, cd, cd, ee²—and (4) he avoids in one or two instances the final couplet by adopting, from Ronsard, the arrangement abba, abba (in one instance abab), ccd, eed, the nearest approach to the Petrarchian before Sidney and Milton. The following example will also show that he understood something of the special poetic use of the sonnet, the change in the tenor of the thought at the ninth line being very clearly marked, while its whole direction is towards the final conclusion:—

‘Bright amorous ee vhare Love in ambush lyes,	eye
Cleir cristal tear distilde at our depairt,	departure
Sueet secreit sigh more peircing nor a dairt,	than
Inchanting voice, beuitcher of the wyse,	

¹ This fact was first pointed out by Dr. Hoffmann in *Studien zu Alexander Montgomerie*; Altenburg, 1894.

² Dr. Hoffmann points out that Spenser, who is the first English poet to use this form, must have got it from the *Essayes of a Prentise*, by James VI., 1584, Montgomerie being the inventor of the form.

which	Quhyt ivory hand, vhill thrust my fingers pryse— I challenge zou, the causers of my smarte, As homiceids, and murtherers of my harte, In Resones Court to suffer ane assyse.
know	Bot oh ! I fear, zea rather wot I weill, To be repledgt ze plainly will appeill To Love, whom Resone never culd command : Bot since I can not better myn estate,
while	Zit vhill I live, at leist I sall regrate
eye	Ane ee, a teir, a sigh, a voce, a hand.'

But the metrical form with which Montgomerie's name is chiefly associated is the quatorzain of *The Bankis of Helicon*, in which he also wrote that very popular piece *The Cherry and the Slae*, as well as the emotional farewell, *Adieu, O Daisy of Delight*. That *The Bankis of Helicon*, preserved in the Maitland MS., is the earliest of the productions in that measure, is proved by the fact that Sir Richard Maitland's *Ballat of the Creatioun of the World*, in the Bannatyne MS., is said to be 'maid to the tone of *The Bankis of Helicon*.' It is also in the Bannatyne MS. that mention is first made of this tune, and Montgomerie's authorship of the words is as clearly proved as, from mere internal evidence, it can be.

Montgomerie's metrical invention consisted in adding to a ten-line stave, very common in England from the beginning of the fourteenth century, a peculiar wheel borrowed from a stave of the old Latin hymns. It may be that the song was written to fit some old sacred tune, or the tune may have been written by some court musician. Its popularity gave the stave

a considerable vogue, other examples besides Montgomerie's and Maitland's being *Ane Ballat of ye Captain of ye Castle*, Burel's *Passage of a Pilgrim*, and *The Dumb Wyff*—none of them, however, of the slightest poetic merit. Revived by Ramsay, the stave became a favourite one of Burns, whose most effective use of it is in the recitatives of *The Jolly Beggars*.

With the exception of the French octave—named by James VI. the *ballat royal*, and recommended by him for 'heich and grave subjects,' especially drawn out of 'learnit autors'—and His use of the old staves. the *rime royal*, Montgomerie shows little partiality for the favourite staves of the old 'makaris.' In *The Flyting* he, however, introduces the old rhymed alliterative stave of the romances, which he also makes use of in *Ane Answer to ane Helandmanis Invective*; and in the introductory verses of *The Flyting* he applies the common rondeau (in triple measure) to Polwart with some effectiveness :—

'Polwart zee peip
Like a mouse amongst thornes,
Na cunning zee keepe.
Polwart zee peip,
Ze look like a sheipe
And zee had twa hornes.
Polwart ze peip
Like a mouse amongst thornes.'

If

Further, in *Ane Example for His Lady*, he uses the sixteen-line stave in *rime couée*, aaab, aaab, aaab, aaab; in *Address to the Sun*, the common six-line stave in

rime couée, aab, ccb; in *Remember Rightly*, the six-line stave, aab, aab, with an additional couplet; and in *Regrate of his Unhappy Luve*, a variation of the six-line stave of *The Address to the Deil* (see *ante*, p. 244), the first head-lines being of five accents, and the second, third, and fourth of four only, while the two tail lines are of only one, the last, 'Bot I' forming a refrain:—

tedious ;
learning
Overcome ;
sighing

'Irk it I am with langsum luvis lair
Oursett with inwart sичing sair ;
For in the presone of despair

every fellow

I ly,
Seeing ilk wicht gettis sum weilfair
Bot I.'

In *Sen Fortun* we have an example of the bobwheel attached to a six-line stave rhyming alternately—
ab, ab, ab,—the bob of one accent being followed by a line rhyming with the sixth line, the final line which rhymes with the bob, constituting a refrain. In *To his Maistres* he uses a five-line stave with internal rhyme, followed by the old bobwheel of the alliterative romances.

Montgomerie had also recourse to old English measures, of which no examples are to be found in the Scottish 'makaris,' and he clearly got some of his staves from the new lyric school of England, as the six-line stave ab, ab, cc, named by Gascoigne the 'ballade,' and used by Wyatt, as well as afterwards by Spenser and Shakespeare. This stave Montgomerie also, like Scott (see *ante*, p. 244), used with a refrain.

English stave.

Of the various forms of ‘cuttit and broken verse’ which Montgomerie affected, it is impossible here to give a minute analysis. In his more elaborate staves he combined interlacing rhyme with couplets, with *rime couée*, and with various forms of the bobwheel. Some were written to music, as that long complex stave into which, in *The Mindes Melodie*, he translated ‘certayne *Psalmes* of the Kinglie Prophete Dauid, applyed to a new pleasant tune, verie comfortable to everie one that is rightlie acquainted therewith.’

But the ingenuity and skill of Montgomerie as a metrist sometimes proved more a snare to him than an advantage. The mere length and complexity of several of his more elaborate staves tended to dissipate metrical as well as poetic unity, and some of them cannot be regarded as anything more than ingenious metrical exercises.

Montgomerie’s poetic fame rests traditionally on *The Cherrie and the Slae*, which, containing some spirited description, especially in the introductory stanzas, as well as much shrewd proverbial philosophy, fails of effectiveness not only from the unsuitability of the stave for consecutive narrative, but from the obscurity of the poet’s intention. Perhaps its merits—in description and philosophy—are nowhere better represented than in the two following stanzas:—

‘The dew as diamondis did hing,
Vpon the tender twistis and zing,
Ouir-twinkling all the treis ;

hang
boughs ;
young

And ay quhair flowris flourischit faire
 Thair suddainly I saw repaire
 In swarmes the sounding beis.
 Sum sweitly hes the hony socht,
 Quhil they war cloggit soir ;
 Sum willingly the waxe hes wrocht,
 To heip it vp in stoir ;
 So heiping, with keiping,
 Into thair hyuis they hyde it,
 Precyselie and wyselie
 For winter they prouyde it.

To pen the pleasures of that park,
 How euery blossome, branche, and bark
 Agaynst the sun did schyne,
 I leif to poetis to compyle
 In stately verse and lofty style :
 It passes my ingyne.
 Bot as I muisit myne allane
 I saw ane river rin
 Out our ane craggie rok of stane,
 Syne lichtit in ane lin
 With tumbling and rumbling
 Amang the rochis round,
 Dewailing and falling
 Into that pit profound.'

But on the whole the *Bankis of Helicon* is the better poem, for even its aureate language and its classical allusions add to the quaint effect of the stave, and to the old-world courtesy of the ceremonial love-song. At the same time, much of it is mere prose, as indeed is the bulk of Montgomerie's verse. Yet in *The Night is Neir Gone* we have one of the classics of the sixteenth century. What it may owe to the old song to which the tune was first set it is impossible to tell, but the

Until

ability

a

Then

'The Night is
 Neir Gone.'

whole picture of the approach of day is a true poetic conception presented with much vivid fidelity. Here are the three first stanzas:—

‘ Hay ! nou the day dauis ;	dawns
The jolie Cok cranis ;	
Nou shroud is the shauis	woods
Throu Natur anone.	
The thissell-cok cryis	
On louers vha lyis.	
Nou skaillis the skyis :	clears
The night is neir gone.	
The feildis ouerflouis	
With gouans that grouis,	daisies
Quhair lilies lyk lous,	flames
Als rid as the rone.	rowanberry
The turtill that treu is,	
With nots that reneuis,	
Her pairtie perseuis :	mate
The night is neir gone.	
Nou Hairtis with Hyndis,	
Conforme to thair kyndis,	
Hie tussis thair tyndis,	tosses ; antlers
On grund vhair they grone.	
Nou Hurchonis, with Hairis,	hedgehogs ; hares
Aye passis in pairis ;	
Quhilk deuly declaris	Which
The night is neir gone.’	

Occasional stanzas of some poetic merit may also be found embedded amongst much that is chiefly trivial or commonplace. But trivial or commonplace very much of his poetry is, and it also suffers from his too frequent peevishness. *The Flyting*¹ is occasionally clever, but its fun

His defects.

¹ Montgomerie’s opponent in *The Flyting* was Sir Patrick Hume of Polwarth, one of the gentlemen of the Bedchamber.

is for the most part mere grossness, the grossness in which James VI. delighted to revel. Montgomerie possessed little of the aphoristic wit, or the light and easy gaiety, of Scott, and, notwithstanding his ingenious cleverness, he very rarely attains to Scott's delicate grace. As for his devotional pieces, they are merely rhyming expressions of Reformation theology, written, most of them for special tunes, and some of them to tunes associated with secular songs.

After Scott and Montgomerie, the only 'makar' of this later period who deserves particular mention is the old Scots judge, Sir Richard Maitland, Lord Lethington, who, born as early as 1496, survived to 1586—politically, religiously, and poetically very much a relic of the first half of the century. Descended from an old Anglo-Norman family who had possessed the old keep of Thirlestane from the time that Sir Richard de Mateland held it (if he did hold it) 'heil and feir' against the army of Edward I., the 'auld laird of Lethington' was essentially feudal in all his opinions, political, social, and religious. Patriot rather than partisan, he regarded political and religious questions mainly from the standpoint of an administrator of the law. Throughout the political and religious commotions of his time, and notwithstanding the political entanglements of his brilliant son, William the Secretary, he kept so aloof from party disputes that he continued in his office of judge whichever party was in power; and having, in the words of

Sir Richard
Maitland (1496-
1586). Feudal
Baron and
Judge.

James VI., served the king's 'grandsire, goodsire, goodame, mother, and himself,' was permitted, when he resigned his judgeship in July 1584, to enjoy, by special favour, its emoluments during the remainder of his life.

When overtaken by blindness sometime before the arrival of Queen Mary from France in 1561, Maitland resolved to devote his leisure to study—in order, as he stated, to 'occupy himself as in time past,' and because he thought it

Historical
interest of his
poetry.

'dangerous to "mell" in matters of great importance'—dividing his attention between genealogy and poetry.¹ Though not strictly poetical, his pieces are, several of them, terse, pointed, and witty, and all, while displaying that shrewd practical wisdom and lofty patriotism by which he guided his own conduct, are of more or less historic interest from their references to the customs and events of the time. His imprecatory poem *On the New Zeir*, written in the lifetime of the Queen-Regent, gives a sort of bird's-eye view of his ideal of a well-governed and

¹ Maitland wrote *A Chronicle and Historie of the House and Sur-name of Seaton*, which was printed by the Maitland Club in 1829 from a ms. in the Advocates' Library; and the same work, under a slightly different title and from a different ms., was published in Edinburgh, 1830. But his chief service to literature was the collection of old mss., including his own poetry. This collection, only second in importance to the Bannatyne ms., is now in the Pepysian Library, Magdalen College, Cambridge. It has never been fully printed—the largest selection from it being that in Pinkerton's *Ancient Scottish Poems*, 1786. Maitland's own *Poems* are, most of them, in the Collections of Pinkerton, 1786, and Sibbald, 1807. They were published separately by the Maitland Club, 1830.

prosperous community. *On the Quenis Maryage*, 1558, shows strong French leanings, as does also *Of the Wynning of Calice*, 1558:—

‘Thairfoir ye all that ar of Scottis blude,
Be blyth, rejois for the recovering
Of that strang toun : and of the fortoun gude
Of your maist tendir freynd that nobil king.’

In *Of the Assemblie of the Congregatioun*, 1559, and *On the New Zeir*, 1560, he indicates, however, that his chief concern is for the reconciliation of the parties whose disputes had plunged the nation in the horrors of civil war:—

‘I cannot sing for the vexatioun
Of Frenchmen, and the Congregatioun,
That hes maid troubil in the natioun,
And monye bair bigging.’

building

In his *Satire on the Age* he discourses with much point on the pride and selfishness of the old ecclesiastics, on the decay of ‘mirrieness’ through the poverty of the people, on the oppression of tenants by spendthrift landlords, and on the feeble influence of law and justice. The amusing *Satire on the Toun Ladyes* touches on a lighter theme, and supplies us with a picturesque and minute sketch of the vagaries of female fashion in the Edinburgh of the ‘Evangel’:—

‘Satire on the
Age.’

under-petti-
coats must
stripes of
lace
inquire into
husbands
such raiment

‘Thair wylecots man weill be hewit,
Broudirit richt braid, with pasmentis sewit :
I trow, quha wald the matter speir,
That thair guidmen had caus to rew it
That evir thair wyfis weir sic geir.

Thair wovin hois of silk ar schawin,
Barrit abone with tasteis drawin ;

striped
above ;
tassels

With garteris of ane new maneir,
To gar thair courtlines be knawin ;
And all for newfangilnes of geir.

make
newfashion-
edness

Sumtyme they will beir up thair gown
To schaw thair wylecot hingeand down,
And sumtyme bayth thai will upbeir
To schaw thair hois of blak or broun,
And all for newfangilnes of geir.

hanging

Thair collars, carcats, and hals beidis !
With velvet hats heicht on thair heidis,
Coirdit with gold lyik ane younkeir,
Broudit about with goldin threidis ;
And all for newfangilnes of geir.

necklaces ;
throat beads
high
young swell

Thair schone of velvet and thair muillis !
In kirk thai ar not content of stuillis,
The sermon quhen thai sit to heir,
But caryis cuschingis, lyik vaine fuillis,
And all for newfangilnes of geir.'

embroidered
slippers

He is equally effective when he takes up his parable against *The Folye of ane Auld Manis Maryand ane Young Woman*, or illustrates that there is now *Na Kyndes* [recognition of kinship] *Without Siller* [money], or tells us of his *Solace in Age*,—

Other Satires.

'Quhan young men cumis fra the grene
(Playand at the fute-ball had bene),
With brokin spald ;
I thank my God I want my ene,
And am sa ald,'—

collar-bone
eyes

or declaims in the bobwheel stanza of Dunbar's *Donald Owre, Aganis the Theivis of Liddisdaill*:—

' They leif not spendill, spone, nor speit,
Bed, boster, blanket, sark, nor scheit :

" Johne of the Parke,"

Rypis kist and ark ;

For all sic wark

He is richt meit.

He is weill kend, " John of the Syide,"

A gretar theif did never ryide :

He never tyris

For to brek byris ;

Our muir and myris

Our gude ane gyide.

Thair is ane, callit " Clement's Hob,"

Fra ilk puir wyfe reiffis the wob,

And all the laif—

Quhatever thay haif :

The deuil resave

Thairfoir his gob !'

Two sons of Maitland, John of Thirlestane, ancestor of the Dukes of Lauderdale, and Thomas, wrote poetry, but the verses of neither are of much account.

Towards the close of the century vernacular poetry of a secular kind was cultivated only by James VI.

and those under his immediate influence.¹

James VI.

Besides his *Essayes of a Prentise*, 1584, containing pieces written before he had passed his eighteenth year, James published in 1591 *Poetical Exercises at Vacant Hours*, also, he states, the work of his 'verie young and tender years.' For so young a man his verses display considerable technical

¹ Rolland's *Court of Venus*, imprinted at Edinburgh by John Ros, 1577, and republished by the Scottish Text Society, 1884, is of no interest except philologically. An edition of the same author's *Seven Sages* is also promised by the Scottish Text Society.

searches ;
chest
such work

known

cowhouses

mosses

Too ; a

every ; steals
the web
everything
else

mouth

accomplishment, but are deformed, the most of them, by the same absurd mixture of familiarity and pomposity which characterised his own address. Yet he does occasionally attain to a certain semblance of dignity and grace, as in this sonnet prefixed to *The Lepanto* :—

‘ The azur’d vaulte, the crystall circles bright,
 The gleaming fyrie torches powdred there,
 The changing round, the shyning beamie light,
 The sad and bearded fyres, the monsters faire,
 The prodiges appearing in the aire,
 The rearding thunders and the blustering winds,
 The foules, in hew, in shape, in nature raire
 The prettie notes that wing’d musiciens finds ;
 In earth the sau’rie floures, the metall’d minds,
 The wholesome hearbes, the hautie pleasant trees,
 The syluer streames, the beasts of sundrie kinds,
 The bounded roares, and fishes of the seas :
 All these for teaching man the Lord did frame,
 To do his will whose glorie shines in thame.’

But the close is mean and tame ; nor has the poem anything of the character of a sonnet. It will also be observed that it is practically in English. Two Englishmen also, Robert and Thomas Hudson, violers to the king, wrote English poetry spelt after a somewhat Scottish fashion. As for William Fowler, who translated *The Triumphs of Petrarch*,¹ and Stewart of Baldiness, who presented to the king *Ane Abbregement of Roland Furrius translatit out of Aroist*,² such specimens of their verse as have been printed do not tend to beget any curiosity as to the bulk of it still only in MS. ; and

The Court
Poets.

¹ MS. in the Edinburgh University Library.

² MS. in the Advocates’ Library, Edinburgh.

the only other name that need be mentioned is John Burel—most probably the John Burel who was master of the king's mint,—who in 1590 wrote *The Description of the Quenis Maiestis maist honorable Entry into the Toon of Edinburgh*, only of antiquarian interest, and *The Passage of the Pilgrim*, a dull allegorical piece in the stave of *The Cherrie and the Slae*.¹

During the sixteenth century Latin poetry was cultivated by a number of Scotsmen, and the influence of

George Buchanan in this regard was felt
Latin poetry.

down to a much later period. With this artificial phase of literature we have here no concern; but the idea may be hazarded that its cultivation was aided by the current notion of the frivolity of the merely vernacular Muse. Except for devotion or religious or politico-religious controversy, vernacular verse was unauthorised by the Kirk. Alexander Arbuthnot,² the Presbyterian Principal of Aberdeen University, who did in secret venture to cultivate the vernacular Muse merely for pleasure or solace, did so in fear and trembling:—

like
assails
if; meddle

jeer at
which
though

‘ In poetrie I preis to pas the tyme
When cairfull thochts with sorrow sailyes me ;
Bot gif I mell with meter or with ryme,
With rascal rymours I sall raknit be ;
They sal me bourdin als with mony lie,
In charging me with that quhilk never I ment :
Quhat marvel is thocht I murne and lament.’

¹ Both poems are printed in Watson's *Collection*, Part II., 1710, and the ‘Description’ is included in Sibbald's *Collection*, 1807.

² Three poems of Arbuthnot are included in Pinkerton's *Ancient Scottish Poems*, 1786.

In addition to the verses of Dunbar, Henryson, and other 'makaris' already mentioned, the Bannatyne MS. contains several innominate specimens of Catholic religious poetry, which, if lacking in emotional fervour and simplicity, are at least melodious, eloquent, and imposing. Scott and Montgomerie also, Catholics by early training, wrote in accordance with the spirit of Protestant theology several religious pieces, mainly of interest as metrical exercises; but the chief representatives of the early religious Muse of the Reformation were the brothers Wedderburn and their coadjutors, whose translation of Lutheran hymns and the Psalms of David, but especially parodies of old secular songs, were perhaps more effective in spreading the Reformation *furor* than even the preaching of Knox. At what time these religious pieces were collected into a volume is uncertain. The earliest dated copy is one of 1578, but there is an undated earlier one, and in all likelihood copies were printed and circulated in secret before the 'Evangel' was established. The full title of the book is '*Ane Compendious Buik of Godlie Psalms and Spirituall Sangs, collectit furthe of sundrie partis of the Scripture, with vtheris Ballates changeit out of prophane Sangis in Godlie sangis, for avoyding of sin and harlotrie.*'¹ The book, which was frequently reprinted, was long known as *The Dundee*

The Wedder-
burns.

¹ A reprint of the 1578 edition was published at Edinburgh by David Laing in 1868; and an edition based on the earlier text by the Scottish Text Society, ed. Professor Mitchell, 1897.

Psalms. Its authorship is assigned by Calderwood to Robert Wedderburn—the youngest of three poetic brothers, sons of James Wedderburn, merchant in Dundee—who, Calderwood states, ‘turned the tunes and tenor of many profane ballads into Godlie songs and hymnes which wer called the Psalmes of Dundie.’¹ Of John, the second brother, Calderwood also says: ‘He translated many of Luther’s dytements into Scottish meeter and the Psalmes of David. He turned manie bawdie songs and rymes in Godlie rymes.’² The eldest brother James was, as we have already seen (p. 217), the author of some plays against the Papists. All three brothers were educated at St. Andrews University. James became a merchant, and John and Robert were priests. James finally took refuge in Dieppe. John, who had taken refuge in Germany, returned to Scotland after the death of James v. in 1542, but had finally to flee to England, where he died in 1556. Robert was vicar of Dundee as late as 13th January 1552-3, when letters of legitimation passed under the Great Seal in favour of his two bastard sons. In the Bannatyne MS. are four poems—one a long historical *Ballat of the Prayis of Women*—by one of the Wedderburns, but which of them there is nothing to show.

The Gude and Godlie Ballates were probably, many of them, used at the earlier services of the Reformers; and it can’t well have been with other than selections from them that Queen Mary was

¹ *History*, viii. 147.

² *Ibid.*, i. 143.

serenaded on her first night at Holyrood Palace—
 ‘tant mal chantez,’ says Brantôme, ‘et si mal accordez
 que rien plus.’ They possess the actuality and earnestness which belong to this period of stern religious conflict, but the main literary interest of the book now lies in its parodies of the old songs, some of them of English origin. If these parodies are merely ridiculous caricatures both of the supposed religious truths they profess to set forth, and of the original sentiments they seek to appropriate for a sacred purpose, they contain at least faint echoes of the old popular lyrics, many of which have wholly perished—perished because of these *Gude and Godlie Ballates*. *Richt soirly musing in my mynde*, in the *rime couée* of Burns’s *Address to the Deil*, is mentioned in *The Complaynt of Scotland* as a song sung by the shepherds. *Allace that same sweet Face*, also mentioned in *The Complaynt*, is found in *The Buik*; but the ‘sweit face,’ ‘onlie to be our remedie,’ is that which ‘deit vpon ane tree.’ ‘To die therefore’ is the refrain of a song beginning, ‘Of mercy zit he passis all.’ *For lufe of One I mak my mone* begins a spiritual lament. *Quho is at my Windo?*—a song of which the air is in Queen Elizabeth’s *Virginal Book*, and echoes of which are found in many lyrics down to the time of Burns, is represented by its chorus:—

‘Quho is at my windo? quho, quho?
 Go from my windo, go, go!
 Quho callis thair, sa lyke a strangair?
 Go from my windo, go!’

‘The Gude
 and Godlie
 Ballates’ and
 the old songs.

but the occupant of the apartment is no less a person than God Almighty. 'In till ane mirthfull Maij morning,' the poet 'is thinkand' not on his mistress but on 'Christ so free,'

Who
suffered ;
pained

'Quhilk meiklie for mankynde
Tholit to be pynde
On croce cruellie. La, La.'

He soliloquises—

not

'My Lufe murnis for me, for me ;
My Lufe that murnis for me ;
I am vnkynde, hes nocht in mynde,
My Lufe that murnis for me' ;

but 'Who is' his 'Lufe bot God abufe?' With the shepherds in *The Complaynt* he sings, 'All my hart, ay this is my sang,' but it is Christ who has his 'hart ay.' If again with the shepherds he weep alone 'in great distress,' it is because he is exiled from, not his mistress, but God's word. In *Grievous is my sorrow*, he appropriates *The Dying Maiden's Complaint*—an old English song—for a wholly spiritual purpose. He supplies the beginning of a very old amatory invitation :—

'Johne, cum kis me now,
Johne, cum kis me now,
Johne, cum kis me by and by
And mak no moir adow' ;

but adds—

'The Lord thy God I am
That John dois the call ;
John represented man,
Be grace celestiall.'

By

The refrain ‘Downe sall cum, downe ay, downe ay,’ he attaches to a lugubrious ditty on human frailty. In *With Huntis Vp*—a song known to Robert Henryson long before the English song written in honour of Henry VIII.—‘The Pope is the fox,’ ‘Rome is the rox,’ the hunter is ‘Jesu our King,’ and ‘the hundis are Peter and Paull.’ *The Wind blawis cauld* is represented by the chorus:—

‘The wind blawis cauld, furious and bauld,
This lang and mony day;
But Christis mercy we man all die
Or keip the cauld wind away.’

Without;
must

That very old song, *Ha now the Day dawis*, which the minstrels sang before Dunbar was born, is not forgotten, but its spirit as well as form is no doubt immeasurably better preserved in Montgomerie’s masterpiece (p. 261). The ‘gude-man’ of a traditional song appears in the old chorus:—

‘Till our gude-man, till our gude-man
Keep faith and lufe till our gude-man’;

To

but ‘our gude-man’ of the ballad ‘in hevin dois ring’ (reign). The chorus,

‘Hay trix, tryme go trix
Vnder the grene wod-tree,’

is attached to a ditty beginning

‘The Paip, that pagane full of pryde,
He hes vs blindit lang,’

Pope

and celebrating the destruction of the monasteries in 1559, after a fashion which retains much of the free

allusion of the original song. Finally, we have more than the outline of a popular song in the ballad beginning

‘ All my Lufe, leif me not,
 Leif me not, leif me not,
 All my Lufe, leif me not
 Thus myne alone :
 With ane burding on my bak,
 I may not beir it I am sa waik :
 Lufe, this burden from me tak
 Or ellis I am gone.’

The Gude and Godlie Ballates are the chief poetic monument of the Scottish Reformation. In Scotland the Reformation—essentially logical and Calvinistic in its teaching—inspired no original religious poetry corresponding to the Lutheran hymns. Alexander Hume, second son of Patrick, fifth Lord Hume, and minister of Logie, Stirlingshire, published in 1599 ‘*Hymnes or Sacred Songs*,¹ wherein the right vse of Poësie may be spied,’ but it can scarce be affirmed that he attains to ‘poesie’ of any sort, although *The Day Estivall*, if absurdly prosaic, is occasionally picturesque.

Lady Colville of Culross—a daughter of Sir James Melville of Halhill—to whom Hume dedicated his *Hymnes*, wrote, shortly before the end of the century, *Ane Godly Dream*,² which may perhaps be best defined as a sort of emotional representation of the extreme Calvinism of the Kirk.

¹ Reprinted by the Bannatyne Club, 1832.

² First published in 1603, and frequently in the seventeenth century. Included in Laing’s *Metrical Tales*, 1826.

But the Protestant verse-writers devoted themselves chiefly to political or ecclesiastical diatribes, such as those reprobated by Sir Richard Maitland in *On the Malice of Poets*:—

‘Sum of the poyets, and makars, that are now,	
Of grit despyte, and malice, ar sa fow	full
That all lesingis, that can be inventit,	lies
Thay put in writ, and garris thame be prentit.’	makes

They were issued chiefly as broadsides from the press of Lekprevick, and nearly all the surviving examples have been published by the Scottish Text Society.¹ The chief laureate of this broadside school was Robert Sempill,² who is mentioned in a sonnet by Montgomerie as still alive in 1584. Nothing is known of his parentage or personal history, the attempts to identify him with members of the noble family of Sempill in the legitimate line being quite unsuccessful. Before he turned political or religious satirist he was known as the author of three ballads, entirely secular, and witty after the coarse fashion of that age: on *Margret Fleming*, on *Grissel Sandelandis*, and on *Jonet Reid*, *Ane Violet* and *Ane Quhyt, being slicht Wemen of Lyf and Conversatioun and Taverneris*. Sempill was a skilful metrist, and his command of virulent abuse was remarkable even for his time, his masterpiece in that line being *The Legend and Discourse of the Life of the Tulchene Bischope of Sanctandrois*. The other poets whose

¹ *Satiric Poems of the Time of the Reformation*, 1889-93.

² *The Sempill Ballates* have been published separately, ed. Stevenson, Edinburgh, 1872.

productions are included in the Scottish Text Society's volume are Sir William Kirkcaldy of Grange, the supposed author of *Ane Ballat of ye Captane of the Castell*, in the stanza of *The Cherrie and the Slae*; Sir John Maitland, Lord Thirlestane, whose political verses can scarce be termed partisan; John Davidson, minister in Dunfermline, whose uncompromising and bitter opposition to the King's ecclesiastical policy got him into serious trouble; and Nicol Burne, who at one time was Professor of Philosophy at St. Andrews, but becoming 'be ane special grace of God ane member of the halie Catholic Church,' published at Paris in 1581 *The Disputation concerning the Controversit Headdis of Religion*, to a few copies of which was appended *Ane Admonition to the Antichristian Ministers of the Reformed Kirk of Scotland*, only remarkable for its weak extravagance. A satirical piece—not included in the Scottish Text Society's volume,—the Earl of Glencairn's *Ane Epistle direct fra the Holye Armit of Allarit to his Brethren the Gray Freiris*,¹ has some ironical vigour; but the main interest in this controversial poetry is historical—the style, the wit, the thought and argument being, almost without exception, hopelessly mediocre.

¹ Knox's *Works*, ed. Laing, vol. i. p. 72.

IX

ANONYMOUS POETRY OF THE FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH CENTURIES

‘THE FREIRIS OF BERWICK’—‘THE THRIE PRIESTIS OF
PEBLIS’—‘SYMMIE AND HIS BRUDER’—‘THE WYFE
OF AUCHTIRMWCHTY’—‘THE WOWING OF JOK AND
JYNNY’—‘IN SOMER’—‘QUHY SOWLD NOCHT ALLANE
HONORIT BE?’—‘THE MURNING MAIDEN’—‘TAYIS
BANK’—‘IN MAY IN A MORNING’—‘O LUSTY MAY’—
‘WELCUM TO MAY’—‘MY HART IS QUHYT’—‘ANE
WELCUM TO EILD’—‘THUS I PROPONE IN MY
CARPING.’

THE present chapter deals with such anonymous poetry of authenticated early date as has not been already noticed in Chapter IV. Two of the best-known poems of a semi-ecclesiastical sort are *The Freiris of Berwick*¹ and *The Thrie Priestis of Peblis*. From a certain similarity in subject and treatment some are disposed

¹ Bannatyne and Maitland mss. At the end of an edition of *The Thrie Priestis*, 1603, it was advertised as printed by Robert Charteris, but no copy of this edition is known to exist. A copy of an edition by Robson, Aberdeen, has, however, been preserved. The piece was included—from the Maitland ms.—in Pinkerton’s *Ancient Scottish Poems*, 1786; and a collated text is in Sibbald’s Collection, 1802, and in Laing’s and the Scottish Text Society’s editions of the *Works of Dunbar*.

to ascribe them to the same author, and *The Freiris of Berwick* has usually been ascribed to Dunbar. The similarity is, however, very partial; and whether or not Dunbar be the author of *The Freiris of Berwick*, he could scarce have been the author of the more didactic *Priestis of Peblis*. Moreover, excellent though in some respects *The Freiris of Berwick* is, it does not seem to be stamped with the impress of Dunbar's peculiar genius. It is too purely and lightly comic, too genial, and even too merely superficial, to be his. The irony possesses little of his subtlety, corrosiveness, or depth. The style, easy, simple, and apt though it be, lacks his peculiar strength and incisiveness. Yet from start to finish the tale is admirably told; the scenes are full of vivacity and movement; the characters of the small comedy—the frail and passive friar Allan, the vigorous, alert, and sportive friar Robert, the luxurious Abbot (friar John), the 'dink' and 'dangerous' gudewife, the open and jolly landlord—are set before us to the life; the situations are cleverly developed, without exaggeration, yet with much humorous discernment; and the *dénouement*—mere piece of horseplay though it is—is narrated with a gusto that is quite contagious.

The story—a landlady's intrigue with an abbot, and its amusing discovery, to the private confusion of

both parties, while the husband is none
 Its theme. the wiser—is no doubt partly borrowed,

as most of the old tales were. A similar theme forms the subject of a French *fabliau* of the twelfth or

thirteenth century,¹ and even the pretended conjuration of the supper has its counterpart in the French story of the *Soldat Magicien*,² of uncertain date. There is in truth nothing remarkable about the plot; the literary value of the poem derives from the art of the narrator, and to recognise its excellence we have but to turn to Ramsay’s vulgarisation of the tale in *The Monk and the Miller’s Wife*.

The poem opens with a description of the noble town of Berwick-on-Tweed, with its walls and ditches, its embattled castle with ‘stately tower and turrets high,’ its hospital, and its convents, the whole

The silly friars
and the land-
lady.

‘Moist fair, most gudly, most plesand to be sene;
The tovene, the wall, the castell and the land.’

Towards this fair town two friars, who had spent the day among the country people, are returning in the evening:—

‘Freir Allane, and Freir Robert the vder,
Thir silly Freiris with wyffis weill cowld gluder;
Rycht wondir weill plesit thai all wyffis,
And tawld thame tailis of haly sanctis lyffis.’

talk scan-
dalously

They were hastening to get home before the convent gates were shut; but Friar Allan could walk but slowly, and though Friar Robert

‘bure both clothes and hude
And all thair geir, for he was strong and wicht,
Be that it drew neir toward the nicht,
As thai wer cumand toward the tovene full neir.’

baggage;
vigorous
By

¹ Le Grand, *Fabliaux ou Contes du XII^e et du XIII^e Siècle*, 1781, vol. ii. part i.

² Quoted by Le Grand.

Being tired and thirsty, they entered ‘ane wonder good hostellar’ without the town, where, having sat down to their ale, they, as friars were wont, called for more; but just as they began to be ‘blythe’

‘thai hard the prayer bell
Off thair awin abbay, and than thai wer agast
Becauss thai knew the zettis wer closit fast.’

On their asking ‘herbery’ at the inn, the gudewife gave answer ‘with grit hicht’ :—

‘Quhat wald Symon say, Ha, Benedicite !
Bot in his absence I abusit his place ?
Our deir Lady Mary keip fra sic cace,
And keip me owt of perrell and of schame.’

If
such

But at last she consented to give them lodging, provided they were content with a loft at the end of the hall, ‘made for corne and hay.’

Her extreme scrupulosity was due to her expectation of an important visitor, none other than Friar John, Abbot of the Black Friars; and no sooner had she got the two ‘silly freiris’ safe in the loft than she hastened to prepare for his reception. Thrusting fat fowls ‘to the speit,’ and rabbits to the fire, she gives orders to her maid

Enter the
Abbot.

‘To flawme and turne and rost thame tenderly’ ;

and going to her chamber

‘Scho cleithis hir in a kirtill of fyne reid,
Ane fair quhyt curch scho puttis vpoun hir heid ;
Her kirtill wes of silk and silwer fyne
Hir vthir garmentis as the reid gold did schyne.’

kerchief

And just as she had covered the board with ‘clath of

costly greyne,’ the abbot, who brings with him wine, white bread, and a pair of partridges, knocks, and is admitted with warm welcome.

Meanwhile, the inquisitive Friar Robert, discerning symptoms of wakefulness and bustle in the hostelry, becomes suspicious, and cuts a small hole in the board with his knife, whereby he both hears and sees all that is going on between the gudewife and her guest:—

‘Quhen scho wes prowde, richt woundir fresche and gay,	
Scho callit him baith hert, lemmane and luv; ;	
Lord God, gif than his curage wes aboif,	if then ; up
So prelat lyk sat he in to the chyre !	
Scho rownis than ane pistill in his eir ;	whispers ;
Thus sportand thame and makand melody :	story
And quhen scho saw the supper wes reddy,	
Scho gois belyfe and cuveris the burde annon,	presently
And syne the pair of bossis hes scho tone,	then ;
And sett thame down vpoun the burde hir by.	bottles ;
And evin with that thai hard the gudman cry,	taken
And knokand at the zett he cryit fast :	
Quhen thai him hard then wer thai both agast.’	

But the gudewife is equal to the occasion. The abbot is hid in the meal-chest, the dainties disappear into the cupboard, the fire is put out, the house is swept clean, and mistress and maid go to bed, allowing the gudeman to knock and shout in vain. At last, however, she pretends to awake from sleep, and having with difficulty been persuaded that it is her husband who calls, she lets him in. Also, she sets before him for supper none of the hidden dainties, but cold meat, cow-heel and

The landlord
comes home.

sheep's-head. To this he sits down well content,
swearing,

‘be All hallow,
I fair richt weill, and I had ane gud fallow.’

Now, Friar Robert, who had witnessed the whole comedy from the loft, had no mind to let slip an opportunity for a jovial night, and therefore intimated his presence by a cough.

Apprised that the friars were in the loft, the landlord sent them an invitation to join him, which they readily accepted. He politely expressed regret that he had no better fare to set before them; but Friar Robert made known that when in Paris he had been instructed in certain magical arts, which, if he would keep his counsel, he was willing to practise for the good of the company:—

if	‘ I tak on hand, and ze will counsale keip,
make	That I sall gar zow se, or ever I sleip,
	Of the best meit that is in this cuntre ;
if	Off Gascone wyne, gif ony in it be ;
	Or, be thair ony within ane hundreth myle,
little	It salbe heir within a bony quhyle.’

The landlord was more than willing to take him at his word; and Friar Robert, after diverse mysterious antics, directed the gudewife to go to the cupboard, where, without doubt, she found all that she had put there:—

started
crossed
herself
before ;
such ;
strange thing

‘Scho stert abak, as scho wer in a fray
And sanyt hir, and smyland cowd scho say,
“Ha, Banedicitie, quhat may this bene ?
Quha ever afoir hes sic a fairly sene ?
Sa grit a mervell as now hes apnit heir
Quhat sall I say ? He is ane haly Freir.”’

All spent a merry night except the misfared
gudewife:—

‘And than annone thai drank evin round abowt Of Gascone wyne ; the Freiris playit cop owt. Thai sportit thame, and makis mirry cheir With sangis lowd, baith Symone and the Freir ; And on thir wyiss the lang nicht thai ourdraif ¹ ; No thing thai want that thai desyrd to haif.’	cup this
--	-------------------------

The gudewife’s feelings may further be imagined when the jocular Friar Robert proceeded to conjure his familiar, who had supplied the dainties, to rise from the meal-chest in the form of a Black Friar. He was mercifully told to pull his cowl over his face and begone to his abode, but he did not escape quite scot free. Simon, the gude-man—who knew nothing of all this by-play,—was directed to put himself behind the door with a stick, and as the abbot passed him Friar Robert called out, ‘Strike, strike hardily.’ This Simon did to such purpose that he himself fell and cut his head on the mortar-stone, while the abbot in his panic fell over the stair into the mire-hole below, whence, however, he got over the wall ; and the tale concludes:—

‘Thus Symonis heid vpoun the stane wes brokin, And our the Freir in myre hes loppin, And tap our taill he fyld wes woundir ill ; And Alesone on na wayiss gat hir will ; This is the story that hapnit of that Freir, No moir thair is, bot Chryst ws help most deir.’	top to toe ; dirtied
---	-------------------------

¹ Compare Burns’s *Tam o’ Shanter*:—

‘The night drave on wi’ sangs and clatter.’

*The thrie Tailles of the thrie Priestis of Peblis*¹ is a more serious performance than *The Freiris*. There is no reason whatever for assigning the work, as seems to be done by Pinkerton, to Dean Steil, and the supposition of Sibbald that it was written by John Rolland, equally unauthorised by evidence, is disposed of by the fact that it was included in the Asloan MS. Although it to some extent anticipates the political zeal of Sir David Lyndsay, it is, like *The Freiris*, the production of a period undisturbed by the faintest foreshadowing of Protestantism. The sketch of the three priests breathes nothing of Puritanic censoriousness. Their joviality, their appreciation of 'good cheir,' their aloofness from 'company,' their love of each other's society and talk,

'Umquhyle saddie ; umquhyle jangle and jak,'
are described with a truly Chaucerian breadth of appreciation. But these priests who thus sat

'full easily and soft,
With monie lowd lauchter upon loft,'

were serious and thoughtful withal, and the tales they recite to each other over their wine deal with high matters of Church and State.

Friar John's
tale. The
answer of the
burgess. The
diligent trader
and his spend-
thrift son.

The first tale, that of the travelled Friar John, relates how a certain king put three questions to the wisest men of his three estates—the burgesses, the nobles, and

¹ Published by Robert Charteris, 1603; and reprinted in Pinkerton's *Scottish Poems from Scarce Editions*, 1792, and Laing's *Early Metrical Tales*, 1826.

the clergy—and how it was answered by each. That put to the burgesses was—

‘Quhy Burges bairns thryves not to the third air?’ heir

and the answer gives occasion for describing the progress of a successful Scottish merchant of the fifteenth century from the time that he began

‘With hap, and halfpenny, and a lamb’s skin ; chance
And purelie ran fra toun to toun on feit poorly
And than richt oft wetshod, werie, and weit,’

until he had a ship of his own—

‘He sailit our the sey sa oft and oft Until ;
Quhil at the last ane semelie ship he coft, bought
And waxe sa ful of warldis welth and win ;
His hands he wish in ane silver basin.
Foroutin gold or silver into hurde, Besides ;
Wirth thrie thousand pund was his copburde. hoard
Riche wes his gounis with uther garmentis gay :
For Sondag silk, for ilk day grene and gray. every
His wyfe was cumlie cled in scarlet reid,
Scho had no doubt of derth of ail nor breid.’ fear

But the son who ‘entered in the wealth’ his father had won, had nothing of his father’s severe apprenticeship, and was expert only in spending. The story of his ruin is simply that of the modern ‘pigeon.’ Pampered from infancy by his mother, who ‘tholit’ not ‘the reik (smoke) on him to blaw’; taught, quite after the modern manner, to despise the trade to which he owed his wealth, and refusing to hear,

‘for very shame and sin,
That ever his father sold ane sheipis skin,’

he spent his time wholly at the court in the company of the young lords,

Until

‘Quhil drink and dyce have pourit him to the pin.’

The answer of the wise lords as to the decay of hardiness among their order reveals the fact that, then as now, many of the nobility from considerations of lucre intermarried with the children of those who, apart from their wealth, were mere churls; and that of the wise clergy as to the cessation of miracles is that bishops were frequently chosen who had no real vocation for the office.

The answers of
the wise lords
and the clergy.

Following Friar John, Friar Archibald relates in most humorous fashion how a king, who loved too well the counsel of his young nobles, and despised that of wise and experienced statesmen, was very wisely instructed by a learned clerk, who for this purpose assumed the guise of a fool; and the allegorical tale of Friar William is meant to show that neither wealth, nor wife and children, nor ‘other frendis all,’ but only alms-deeds and charity, can avail us at the Judgment.

Tales of Friar
Archibald and
Friar William.

Another semi-ecclesiastical story—probably of at least as early date as *The Freiris* or *The Thrie Priestis*, and written in the stanza of ‘Symmie and his Bruder.’ *Christis Kirk*—is that of *Symmie and his Bruder*,¹ two St. Andrews worthies, who assumed the character of begging friars:—

¹ Bannatyne MS. Published in Laing’s *Select Remains*, 1822 and 1885.

‘Peipand peurly with piteous granis
Like fenzeit Symmie and his bruder,’

says the author of *Peder Coffeis*. Piteous they might be in their professional capacity, but in private they lived merrily enough :—

‘I schrew thame that ay leiss
But lauchter,
Quod Sym to his bruder.’

Beshrew
lives
Without

Finding also that his income could afford it, the nameless brother laudably resolved to marry :—

‘Quhen thai wer welthful in thair wyning,
Thai puft thame vp in pryd,
Bot quhair that Symy levit in synning,
His bruder wald haif ane bryd.
Hir wedoheid fra the begynning
Wes neir ane moneth tyd ;
Gif scho was spedy ay in spyning,
Tak witness of thame besyd
Ilk ane,
Baith Sym and his bruder.’

a
month old
If
Every

And the remainder of the piece—which ends with an abruptness suggesting that a great portion is wanting—is occupied with the narrative of some rude proceedings on the marriage-day, which are rather beyond modern comprehension.

Two tales more in ballad form—*The Wyfe of Auchtermwchty*,¹ and *The Wowing of Jok and Jynny*—are of special value for their realistic presentments

¹ Bannatyne MS., and the Skene MS. in the Advocates’ Library. Published, with many alterations, by Allan Ramsay in *The Evergreen*, 1724, and correctly with various readings in Laing’s *Select Remains*, 1822 and 1885.

of rustic life in the olden time. In the Bannatyne MS. *The Wyfe* is attributed to Sir John Moffat, but not by Bannatyne; and without further corroboration it must be regarded as anonymous. 'The Wyfe of Auchtermuchty.' Ritson pointed out that a similar story is found in the *Silva Sermonum jucundissimorum* (Basil, 1568), and the passage is printed by Laing in the Appendix to his *Select Remains*. But while the theme is one which might occur to any one, the stories differ greatly in detail; and even were *The Wyfe* suggested by the Latin story, it is to all intents and purposes an original composition. It relates the mishaps which befell a lazy and effeminate farmer, who, envying the supposed comfortable ease of his wife at home, while he in cold and wet trudged all day behind the plough, proposed an exchange of occupations. Here is a glimpse of the gudeman as housewife:—

churn; stir
until

vexed
heated; too
hot
curdle

into the
house
could
big mouth

caught
a heavy blow

stroke;
brains

'Than to the kyrn that he did stoure,
And jwmlit at it quhill he swatt;
Quhen he had jwmlit a full lang houre
The sorrow crap of butter he gatt.
Albeit na butter he cowl'd gett,
Zit he wes cummerit with the kyrne,
And syne he het the milk our hett,
And sorrow spark of it wald zyrne.

Than ben thair come ane greddy sow,
I trow he cund her littill thank,
And in scho schot hir mekle mow,
And ay scho winkit and scho drank.
He cleikit vp ane crukit club
And thocht to hitt the sow ane rowt,
The twa gaislingis the gled had left
That straik dang baith thair harnis owt.'

The piece is only farce, but of its kind the farce is first-rate—inevitably true to nature, graphically concise, and unfailingly witty, even if the wit be obvious and uproarious, rather than delicate or subtle. The story is emasculated in Allan Cunningham's *John Grumlie*.

*The Wowing of Jok and Jynny*¹ is a somewhat unique relic of ancient rustic marriage diplomacy. The original of many Anglo-Scottish songs on Jock and Jenny in the black-letter broadsides, it also supplied the opening stanza of the old improper song on *Duncan Gray* which Burns modified. The ballad, in the French octave, begins in this quaintly simple style:—

'Robeyns Jok ² come to wow our Jynny,	
On our feist evin quhen we wer fow ;	drunk
Scho brankit fast and maid hir bony,	hurried
And said, "Jok, come ze for to wow ?"	
Scho birneist her, baith breist and brow,	burnished
And maid hir cleir as ony klok ;	beetle
Than spak her deme, and said, "I trow	mother
Ze come to wow our Jynny, Jok."	
Jok said, "Forsuth I zern full fane	fondly
To luk my heid, ³ and sit down by zow."	
Then spak hir modir and said agane,	
"My bairne hes tocher gud anuwch to ge zow."	enough ; give
"Te he," quod Jynny, "keik, keik, I se zow ;	look
Muder, zone man makis zow a mok."	
"I schrow thé, lyar, full leis me zow,	Beshrew
I come to wow your Jynny," quod Jok.'	thee ! ; I love you heartily

¹ Bannatyne ms. Published in Ramsay's *Evergreen*, 1724, and most subsequent *Collections*, but generally with more or less incorrectness.

² Jok, the son of Robert. In old village communities the surname was frequently dropped.

³ Probably to enter the house by bending his head, though some interpret it as looking his head to see that it is clear of vermin.

The 'tocher-gude' (dowry) was, in Jok's view, the most momentous part of the question; and after the mother's honest, if alluring, recital of her daughter's belongings,

by
a
up in the
country

'Jok tuk Jynny be the hand
And cryd ane feist, and slew ane cok,
And maid a brydell vp alland :
"Now haif I gottin your Jynny," quod Jok.'

But though conscious that he had had a good bargain, Jok was also honestly convinced that his bride had been as lucky as himself:—

know
known;
enough

'I lat zow wit schois not miskareit,
It is weill kend I haif anuwch';

and he proceeds to give a recital of his personalty, of which this sample may suffice:—

halter;
manger
basket
heaps;
doublet
pommel;
load saddle
bag; pedlar's
wallet
spinning-
wheel; notch

'I haif ane helter, and eik ane hek,
Ane cord, ane creill, and als ane cradill,
Fyve fiddler of raggis to stuff ane jak,
Ane auld pannell of ane laid sadill,
Ane pepper polk maid of a padill,
Ane spounge, ane spindill wantand ane nok,
Twa lusty lippis to lik ane laiddill.'

Some humorous tales have already been referred to under Chapter III.; others, such as *The Dumb Wyff*,¹ and *The Nyne Ordour of Knavis*,² are merely vulgar or commonplace; while large portions of several are too frank for quotation. Here, however, from *In Somer quhen*

Other
humorous
tales. 'In
Somer.'

¹ Maitland MS. Published in Laing's *Select Remains*, 1822 and 1885.

² Bannatyne MS. Published in Jamieson's *Popular Ballads*, 1806, and Laing's *Select Remains*.

Flouris will smell,¹ is an interesting sketch of the dress of a rustic maid :—

‘Scho had ane hatt vpoun hir heid	
Off claver cleir bayth quhyt and reid	beautiful
With catclukis strynklyt in that steid	trefoil; place
And synkill grene ;	hemlock
Wit ze, weill to weir that weid	know
Wald weill hir seme.	beseem
Ane pair of beedis abowt hir thrott,	
Ane Agnus Day with nobill nott	Agnus Dei
Jyngland weill with mony joitt,	shake
War singand down ;	
It was full ill to fynd ane moit	difficult ;
Vpoun hir gown.’	mote

The ballad *Quhy sowld noch Allane honorit be?*¹—in a five-line stanza, aaa, bb, with refrain—a modification of the kyrielle (see *ante*, p. 157)—deserves mention, not merely as the earliest authenticated, but much the best, of the ballads on Allan-a-Maut, *alias* John Barleycorn. It is initialled ‘Quod Allane Matsonis Suddartis,’ and under the same signature is a curious invective against dishonest or incompetent ale-wives, *Quha hes Gud Malt and makes ill Drink*.¹ The author of both may well have been Dunbar. In the following stanzas of *Allane* we seem to hear the voice of the author of *Sanct Saluator* (p. 177):—

‘My Maister Allane I may sair curss :	
He levis no mony in my purss,	severely
At his command I mon deburss	
Moir nor the twa pairt of my fe :	must
Quhy sowld noch Allane honorit be ?	salary
	not

¹ Bannatyne MS.

And last of Allane to conclude ;
 He is bening, courtuss, and gude,
 And servis ws of our daly fude,
 And that with liberalitie :
 Quhy sowld nocht Allane honorit be ?

Similar jovial sentiments are expressed in a clever ballad, *I mak it kend he that will spend*, signed 'John Blyth,' which somewhat resembles *Back and Side go Bare* in *Gammer Gurtin's Needle* ; but 'women' rather than 'wine' was the chief theme of the old Scots balladists or lyrists.

Among the oldest of the love-ballads that have been preserved is *The Murning Maiden*,¹ mentioned in *The Complaynt of Scotland*. Written 'The Murning Maiden.' in a nine-line stave—ab, ab, cc, bbc, the last five lines forming a bobwheel,—and plainly, like Henryson's *Robene and Makyn*, the work of an accomplished 'makar,' it has much of the naïve simplicity of the old minstrel ballad. A slight allegorical suggestiveness may be suspected in the lady's possession of bows and arrows, but the aureate terms and the imagery of the conventional love allegory are wholly absent. The sentiment also, so far from being affected or overstrained, is really primitive and pagan, though in no proper sense indelicate: nonconventional not unbecoming. It merely records how a forlorn damsel, forsaken by her lover, and living in a forest in hunting dress with bow

¹ Maitland MS. Published in Pinkerton's *Ancient Scottish Poems*, 1786, and in various subsequent *Collections*.

and arrows, was persuaded by the owner of the forest to accept his addresses :—

‘Than knelit I befor that cleir ;	maid
And meikle could hir mercie craif	much
That semelie than, with sobir cheir,	then ; mien
Me of hir gudlines forgaif :	
It wes no neid, I wys	guess
To bid us uther kys ;	
Thair mycht no hairts mair joy resaif	
Nor uther culd of uther haif :	
Thus brocht wer we to blys.’	

The ballad *Quhen Tayis Bank*¹—which may have some connection with the old tune, *Twysbank*, mentioned in *Colkelbie’s Sow*—is more artificial than *The Murning Maiden* ‘*Tayis Bank.*’ alike in language, imagery, and sentiment. It is in the rollicking metre of the old ballads, and the device of alliteration is also employed to excess. There is further a profusion of aureate terms and all the conventional adjuncts of allegorical love poetry: the precious stones, the flowers and foliage of the brightest colours, and the lark, the merle, the nightingale and mavis all in full song. Also the fair damsel is beheld under a tree, and although the poet might have accosted her had she stayed, he was in no wise grieved, because

‘Sone within a wane scho went	dwelling
Most heviny to behold.’	

Sufficient for him to know that so fair a creature lived on Tayside :—

¹ Bannatyne ms. Published in *The British Bibliographer*, vo iv., and in Laing’s *Select Remains*, 1822 and 1885.

under-
growth;
tinkle
arbours
beautiful
wood

‘The reuer throw the ryce cowth rowt
And roseris raissis on raw;
The schene birdis full schill cowth schowt
Into that semly schaw:
Joy wes within and joy without,
Vnder that vlonkest waw,
Quhair Tay ran down with stremis stout
Full strecht vndir Stobschaw.’

fairest bank

straight

There is every reason to suppose that the poem celebrates Margaret Drummond, daughter of John, first Lord Drummond, and the favourite mistress of James IV., who, with her two sisters, died suddenly of poison in 1501. The lady of the poem is described as the ‘myld, meik, mansuete Mergrit,’ and though ‘Mergrit’ means pearl, the poet may have intended a play on the lady’s name; besides which, Stobschaw cannot well refer to aught else than the woods of Stobhall, the seat of the Drummonds.

In the Bannatyne MS. are a number of other anonymous love-ballads, showing considerable expertness after the old artificial manner. *In May in a Morning* deserves mention, if only for its peculiar bobwheel, and the use of the device of iteration as exemplified in *The Awntyrs of Arthur* (p. 36):—

‘In May in a
Morning.’

on
overgrown
with groves
lead
misery
more
heart

one; no
shelter

‘In May in a morning, I movit me one,
Throw a grene garding, with gravis begone,
As leid without lyking, but langour allone,
For misheiss and mourning, makand my mone,
Bot mo.
With hairt als heavy as a stone,
Of covir confoirt had I none,
As wy that wist of na wone,
Bot wandreth in wo.’

The last line of the stanza is repeated in the first line of the next, thus:—

‘For wo and wandreth I waik, I weip and I wring.’

keep awake

A few anonymous lyrics of great excellence also survive. *Quhen Flora had ourfret the Firth*,¹—in the French ballade form, except that the Envoy is awanting, and the consonance throughout the three stanzas of the first rhymes—if too deliberate and artificial, is, at least, a highly polished production:—

‘Strang ar the panis I daylie prufe,
Bot yit with pacience I sustene,
I am so fetterit with the lufe
Onlie of my lady schene,
Quhilk for hir bewty mycht be quene,
Natour sa craftely alwey
Hes done depaint that sweit serene :
Quhome I luf I dar nocht assay.’

bright
Who

prove

Yet in no wise can it compare with the old song,
O Lusty May, with Flora Quene,² every line of which is vocal with the joy of the merry month:—

‘O Lusty May, with Flora quene,
The balmy dropis frome Phebus schene,
Preluciand bemes befor the day,
Be that Diana growis grene
Throwch gladness of this lusty May.’

bright

By which

¹ Bannatyne MS. Published in Ramsay’s *Evergreen*, and in Mr. W. E. Henley’s *English Lyrics*.

² Bannatyne MS. Printed by Chepman and Myllar, 1508, and modernised in Forbes’s *Aberdeen Cantus*. Wrongly included by David Laing in Alexander Scott’s *Poems*.

Another excellent, though also artificial, lyric is *Welcum to May*,¹ beginning:—

‘Be glaid all ze that luvaris bene,
For now hes May depaynt with grene
The hillis, valis and the medis;
And flouris lustely vpspreidis.’

One or two other amorous pieces, as *Quhen I think on my Lady Deir*,² *O Mistress Myn*,² *Baith Gud and Fair and Womanlie*,² *O Mistress myld, haif mind on Me*,² display some individuality in sentiment or method; and a *Song of Absence*,³ which Pinkerton attributes to James I., but which is plainly of much later date, is an elaborate

¹ Bannatyne MS. Published in Laing’s *Select Remains*, 1822 and 1885.

² Bannatyne MS.

³ Maitland MS. and Pinkerton’s *Ancient Scottish Poems*, 1786. The dove, from the time of the Romans, at least, has been regarded by poets as the representative of constancy. Nevertheless, a similarity in the use of the simile in a stanza of this poem and in Letter iv. of the *Casket Letters* is worth noting. Thus writes Mary Stuart or another: ‘Car J’enseray en pein et faites bon guet si l’oiseau sortira de sa cagé ou sens son per comme la tourtre demeurera suelle a se lamenter de l’absence pour court quelle sort-le que Je ne puis faire ma lettre de bon coeur si ce nestoit que je ay peur que soyes endormy.’ And here is the stanza:—

mate
‘Evin as men may the turtill trew persaif,
Once having lost hir feir,
On the dry brainche, ay faithful to the graif,
Bewayling perseveir;
So my desyre,
Kindlit in fyre,
Dois soir lament
My luif absent.
O God, gif amour be ane pane to beir!’

This stanza also resembles the last one in Montgomerie’s *Adieu to His Maistres*.

and skilful production; but the great bulk of the anonymous love lyrics are monotonously doleful.

Although most of the humorous love-songs have perished—except so far as some of them survive in the parodies of the *Gude and Godlie Ballates*—a few are preserved in the Bannatyne or Maitland MSS., as *Thair is nocht ane Winche that I se*,¹ *Sang Againis the Ladeis*,² *Sang upon a Maist Melancolie Aventure*,² *God gif I wer Wedo now*,² and *My Hart is quhyt*,¹ which last is very much in the manner of Scott, and begins:—

‘My hart is quhyt, and no delyte I haif of ladeis fair,	
I wyte, I flyte, all in dispyte, that evir I leird that lair,	blame ;
Yit but respyte, I clene thé quyte, for now and evirmair,	learned that
Thairfoir I dyte this writt perfyte.—Fairweill, now feildis fair ;	knowledge
The suth is so, be God, my jo, I will fenye na mair ;	without
Thocht vmquhile grit wes appetite, thair is wan tyme of wair.’	indite
	truth
	formerly ;
	spending

Among the more seriously humorous is *Ane Welcum to Eild*,² which is graphic and picturesque. Here is the last stanza:—

‘Ane Welcum
to Eild.’

‘My curland hair, my cristel ene,	eyes
Ar beld and bleird, as all may se ;	bald ; dim
My bak, that sumtyme brent has bene,	straight
Now cruikis lyk ane camok tre.	
Be me your sampill ye may se ;	By
For so said wourthy Salomon	
<i>Elding is end of erthlie glie :</i>	
Welcum eild, for youth is gone !’	

¹ Bannatyne MS.

² Maitland MS. Published in Pinkerton’s *Ancient Scottish Poems*, 1786.

In a similar vein is *Thus I propone in my Carping*,¹
 in the stave of the common rondeau
 ‘Thus I propone.’
 (see *ante*, p. 155):—

Whichever

‘Eis or diseis
 Quhilk God sall send,
 Allyk sall pleis,
 Eiss or diseiss ;
 Aye till obeyiss
 Till life mak end,
 Eis or diseis
 Quilk God will send.’

This chapter concludes our survey of what now remains of the poetry of the old Scots ‘makaris’ except that imperfectly preserved by tradition. Its development was irregular, chequered and complex. The old northern romance school left, at least metrical, traces on nearly all the subsequent poetry, modifying in a great variety of ways the Anglo-Norman staves. But it perished otherwise as an important literary influence with the rise of the sun of the new Scottish nationality. For a time patriotic poetry was in the ascendant; and though the original patriotic minstrelsy is now silent and forgotten, much of the patriotic afflatus is still preserved in Barbour’s *Bruce* and Blind Harry’s *Wallace*. Then, with probably the return of James I. to Scotland, came the great wave of Chaucerianism, which almost promised (or should it be threatened?) to anticipate Flodden in

¹ Bannatyne MS., and less complete in Maitland MS., from which it was published in Pinkerton’s *Ancient Scottish Poems*.

revenging Bannockburn by subjecting the national intellect to the dominance of the great English 'makar.' But salutary and stimulating though Chaucerianism was, the traditional influences in many ways asserted their supremacy—asserted it by absorbing and assimilating Chaucerianism. Then towards the close of the fifteenth century there arose in Scotland a poetic school which not only eclipsed the degenerate Chaucerian school of England, but which, distinguished in itself, was more than remarkable as the product of a country so rude and insignificant, and is only to be explained as the result of the engrafting of Chaucerian and French influences on a vigorous native stem. Of this old original poetry—which has all but perished—echoes are to be found in Henryson and the older humorous tales, and it specially triumphs in *Christis Kirk* and *Peblis*. It is only so far as it again became dominant—dominant in a higher, stronger, and more artistic form—that Scotland again attained to an individual national literature. It is specially dominant in Dunbar, admiring disciple of Chaucer though he was; in Douglas, it only manifests its influence brokenly in the *Prologues*; it inspires all that is worth reading in Sir David Lyndsay; it reasserts itself decidedly in Scott, and even in Montgomerie, notwithstanding that its life-blood was then being sucked by Puritanic Calvinism—which had already superseded its popular lyrics by *The Gude and Godlie Ballates*,—and that it was presently to be

reduced to such a state of inanition that its existence became suspended on the fiat of James VI., with whose succession to the English throne it passed out of existence and for a time out of memory.

X

VERNACULAR PROSE

BELLENDEN—‘THE COMPLAYNT OF SCOTLAND’—ROBERT
LYNDSAY OF PITSCOTTIE—GEORGE BUCHANAN—
JOHN KNOX—BISHOP LESLIE—CALDERWOOD—
SPOTTISWOODE—JAMES MELVILLE—SIR JAMES
MELVILLE—JAMES VI.

THE Scottish literature in vernacular prose is of a character so fragmental, intermittent, and merely casual, that it is impossible to trace in it any law of development. The close connection of Scottish scholars with the Continent from the time of the astrologer

General and prolonged use of Latin in Scotland for prose literature.

Michael Scott—their almost constant practice to complete their studies abroad, where many of them remained as lecturers or professors—led both to a more general and prolonged use of Latin prose literature by Scots than by English writers. Vernacular prose received a certain impulse in Scotland from the movement that produced the Reformation, but the impulse was partial and fitful, and became even reactive. Though the mere introduction of printing tended to the substitution of prose for verse, old habit for some time preserved the supremacy of

verse for popular purposes; and as for the more learned or intellectual Scot, he continued long after the Reformation to eschew the vernacular and practise mainly Latin.

In his *Exclamatioun to the Redar, twycheyng the Wrytting of Vulgare and Maternall Language*,

Sir David Lyndsay's preference for the vernacular. prefixed to *The Dialog*, Sir David Lyndsay deemed it advisable to explain why he ventured to write on 'so heych mater' in 'vulgair tounge':—

'Quhowbeit that divers devote cunnyng clerkis
In Latyne tounge hes wryttin syndrie bukis,
Our unlernit knawis lytill of thare werkis,
More than thay do the ravyng of the rukis.
Quharefore to colyearis, cairtaris, and to cukis,
To Jok and Thome, my rhyme shall be directit,
With cunnyng men quhowbeit it wylbe lackit.'

It was not that he deprecated the study of Latin, Greek, and 'Auld Hebrew.' So far from doing so, he greatly 'rewed' his own ignorance of the ancient languages. But he was specially desirous of the spread of intelligence among the people, and he further recognised that a truly national literature was impossible in a foreign tongue. None of the great writers of the olden time, he pertinently points out, used any other than their native language. Still, he had no wish to interfere with the preferences and tastes of the learned—those preferences and tastes which concerned only themselves,—and he puts his case thus:—

'Lat Doctores wrytt thare curious questionis
And argumentis sawin full of sophistrie,

Thare Logick, and thare heych opinionis.	high
Thare dirk jugementis of Astronomye,	dark
Thare Medecyne and thare Philosophie :	
Latt Poetis schaw thare glorious ingyne,	genius
As ever thay pleis, in Greik or in Latyne ;	
Bot lat us haif the Bukis necessare	
To Common weill and our Salvatioun	
Justlye translatit in our tounge Vulgare.'	

But Lyndsay himself wrote only in verse, and verse as of old remained for a considerable time the main literature of the people. The dissemination of the Scriptures in prose, and the spread of education by means of the parish schools, tended to beget a love of prose literature among the people; but (1) that literature was mainly theological, and (2) it became more and more assimilated to English. Nor if the learned Scot had particularly desired to have recourse to the vernacular could he have found in Scotland a fit or sufficient audience. George Buchanan, though an adherent of the Protestant and popular party, disdained, as scholar, historian, or man of culture, to cast his pearls before the mere vernacular Scot. Even his controversial and political writings were mostly addressed rather to Europe than to Scotland; for Scottish politics when he wrote had, through the meteoric career of Mary Stuart, become of European consequence. For a similar reason, his great controversial opponent Bishop Leslie had recourse mainly to Latin; and though he composed a history of Scotland in the Scots vernacular for Mary Stuart's perusal, wrote

Preferences
of the learned
Scot for Latin.
The vernacular also
gradually
superseded
by English.

little else in Scots, and in some cases got his tractates Englished for circulation south of the Tweed. The renewed intercourse between Scotland and England after the Reformation tended also more and more to enforce the desirability of a common language, which common language was bound to be English. John Knox, for example, wrote for England as much as for Scotland. Though as good a Latinist as the older Scottish historians, he did not, like Buchanan, cultivate Latin for its own sake, and was probably conscious that its use would check rather than promote the flow of his eloquence and invective, and dull rather than brighten the scintillations of his wit. Above all, he was, like Lyndsay, specially devoted to the interests of 'Jok and Thome.' Even his *History of the Reformation* was therefore written in the vernacular, but the vernacular he chose was a sort of compromise between Scots and English.

For the reasons now summarised, the bulk of Scottish vernacular prose can scarce be termed literature. Much of it is merely controversial or merely theological; and a still larger portion consists of *Diaries* or *Memoirs*, not even written for publication, but jotted down for the writer's own private edification or pleasure. The earliest vernacular prose work of any importance is John Bellenden's (see *ante*, p. 232) translation of Hector Boece's Latin *History of Scotland*.¹

Bellenden's
translation
of Boece.

¹ Editions were published at Edinburgh, printed by 'Thomas Davidson, printer to the Kyngis noble grace' in 1536, 1541, and in

It was done at the request of James v. for the more immediate delectation of the nobles, and presented to the king in 1533. Boece's lively and interesting, if somewhat imaginative, narrative was modelled, as was his Latin style, on Livy, which probably was the reason why Bellenden was commanded by the king to follow his translation of Boece with a translation of the Roman historian.¹ Bellenden's version of Boece is accurate, but rather free. The language is less artificial than that of *The Complaynt of Scotland*, and the style, of remarkable excellence for the period, is clear, flowing, and vigorous.

But Scottish vernacular prose literature may be said to begin with that curious political manifesto, '*The Complaynt of Scotlande*² vyth ane Exortatione to the Thre Estaitis to be vigilante in the Deffens of their Public veil.' Its authorship, so far as we can now

'The Complaynt
of Scotland.'
Its author.
Claims of Sir
James Inglis.

judge, is mainly a matter of speculation. Dr. George Mackenzie, in his *Lives of Scottish Writers*, attributed it to Sir James Inglis (see *ante*, p. 233), Abbot of Culross, but it is impossible to tell whether he had any reason for doing so other than vague rumour or his own opinion. Anyhow the Abbot, who Mackenzie

another unknown year. It was also reprinted at Edinburgh in 1821, edited by Thomas Maitland, Lord Dundrennan.

¹ First published in 1822 at Edinburgh, edited by Thomas Maitland, Lord Dundrennan.

² Four of the original copies of *The Complaynt* are known to exist, but all want the title-page. Two are in the Library of the British Museum, and one in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh. It was elaborately edited by Dr. Leyden in 1821, and for the English Text Society by Dr. J. A. H. Murray, 1872.

states died in 1554, was assassinated as early as 1st March 1531, whereas *The Complaynt* was at least not completed till 1549. It so happens, however, that another Sir James Inglis was chaplain to the Abbot of Cambuskenneth from 1508 until 1550, and Mackenzie may have merely confounded the two; but while the Culross Inglis was of literary repute, nothing is known of the other except that he was officially in the habit of singing masses for the souls of James III. and Queen Margaret, who were buried at Cambuskenneth.

In the Harleian Catalogue in the British Museum the work is ascribed to Wedderburn, but this again may have been merely the opinion of
 Claims of Robert Wedderburn. James Anderson, author of *Diplomatica et Numismata Scotiae*, who sold his library to Harley, Earl of Oxford. The Wedderburn to whom David Laing was disposed to ascribe it was Robert, vicar of Dundee; but he did so on the supposition that the work was printed at St. Andrews, whereas it was undoubtedly, as Dr. J. A. H. Murray has shown, printed at Paris. For the Wedderburn authorship much stress has been laid on the author's comprehensive knowledge of old ballads and songs; but while the Wedderburns parodied the old songs for godly purposes, the author of *The Complaynt* displays a wholly unregenerate interest in them as well as in music and dancing.

For Sir David Lyndsay's claims a strong superficial case was made out by Leyden from similarities

of method, style, and subject-matter. There is no distinct evidence as to Lyndsay's attitude towards the English invasion, and if in this crisis he indicated strong sympathy with the Queen-Regent in her efforts on behalf of the country's independence, this would go far to explain his freedom from persecution for his pungent attacks on the abuses of the Church. But the work is far too indirect and desultory to have been written by Lyndsay, and not quite incisive enough in its exposure of ecclesiastical abuses.

Claims of
Sir David
Lyndsay.

Dr. J. A. H. Murray argued from the dialect that the writer must have been a native of southern Scotland, which would, of course, dispose of the claims of both Wedderburn and Lyndsay. On the whole, the most probable supposition is that the author was some one more strongly attached to the French interest than either Lyndsay or the Wedderburns; and this theory finds additional support from the fact—unknown to Laing or to Dr. J. A. H. Murray—that the later and allegorical portion of the work was merely an adaptation to the Scottish crisis of Alain Chartier's *Le Quadrilogue Invectif* of more than a century earlier date.

Partly founded
on 'Le
Quadrilogue
Invectif' of
Alain Chartier.

The work was probably begun while Scotland, before the arrival of French help in July 1548, was very much at the mercy of Protector Somerset, and when many of the nation—from their Protestant leanings, from

The aim of
the work.
Introductory
chapters.

interested motives, or from sheer despair—were disposed substantially to agree to the English matrimonial alliance on very much the old conditions proposed by Henry VIII.; and it is mainly against this policy of surrender that the writer takes up his pen. The work opens with a high-flown ‘Epistle to the Qvenis Grace’ (the Queen-Regent), in which the patriotic deeds of her illustrious ancestors are celebrated, and she is declared to have inherited more than their virtues, and in her noble defence of the country against the ‘cruel woffis of ingland,’ to have even surpassed the achievements of all the ancient heroines commemorated by Plutarch or Boccaccio. This is followed by a ‘Prolog to the Reader’ consisting of a philosophical disquisition on work and idleness, illustrated by various classical anecdotes—all this to show that, in taking up his pen in behalf of his country, the author was not acting the part of a mere idler, but using his own special talent with exemplary diligence. Succeeding these preliminaries, we have still a few more introductory chapters dealing with the misfortunes of Scotland in their relation to the judgments of God, and winding up with the exposition and adoption of the views of John Caron as to the near approach of the end of the world.

Having by these ‘solist and attentive labouris’ caused his body to become ‘imbecille and verye’ (weary) and his spirit to be ‘sopit’ (steeped) ‘in sadness,’ the author, before proceeding further with his task, deemed

The Monolog
Recreative. A
night in the
country.

it advisable to recruit him in the country, and was thus led to pen a ‘Monolog Recreative,’ which to us is the most interesting feature of his strange medley. So great was his delight in rural life and scenes, after his close immersion in study, that on the first day of his arrival he remained out of doors, walking in the woods until the dawn. At this point he of course introduces the conventional classical imagery, and for the description of the approach of day and of the different birds and animals with their cries, he has recourse also to alliteration and consonance, essaying a sort of poetic prose, of which this short specimen may serve as a sufficient illustration:—

‘The grene feildis, for grite drought, drank vp the drops of the fresche dew, quilk¹ of before hed maid dikis² & dailis verray done.³ There eftir i herd the rumour of rammusche⁴ foulis and of beystis that maid grite beir,⁵ quhilk past besyde burnis⁶ and boggis⁷ on grene bankis to seik ther sustentatione. Their brutal sound did redound to the hie skyis, quhil⁸ the depe hou⁹ cauernis of cleuchis¹⁰ and rotche¹¹ craggis ansuerit vith ane hie not, of that samyn sound as the beystis had blauen.’

Thereafter he hies him to the sea-shore, where he beholds a galasse accoutred for war and preparing for action. Then follows a minute relation of the handling of a ship, and of the various rhymes and cries of the sailors, and a realistic picture of the two ships in action is also attempted. But so little is he interested in the

A sea-fight.
The shep-
herds’ enter-
tainment.

¹ which. ³ damp. ⁵ noise. ⁷ mosses. ⁹ hollow. ¹¹ rocky.
² ditches. ⁴ in flocks. ⁶ streams. ⁸ until. ¹⁰ dells.

fight that he stays not to witness the result; and returns to the green fields just as the shepherds, having taken out their flocks for pasturage, are sitting down to breakfast. After a meal of all kinds of milk and curds, whey, butter, cream, and cheese, with rye cakes and scones, there follows recreation. The entertainment opens with an oration of the principal shepherd on the 'hie stait and dignitie' of the pastoral life, with of course citation of all the more illustrious men of antiquity who had elected to follow the calling, which is further extolled for its beneficial effects, morally and physically, and the opportunity it affords for the study of natural science; the oration concluding with an exhaustive disquisition on astronomy and physical geography. This most erudite address his spouse, concerned mainly for the amusement of the younger portion of the company, pronounces to be a 'tideous, melancolie oration,' and proposes that they should now recreate themselves with 'joyous comonyng.' The list of the old traditional tales they then told, of the songs and glees they sung, and the tunes to which they danced, though declared by the author to be only a selection, would imply that the entertainment not only lasted, as he states, until evening, but was prolonged for a month or more. But it may be that he here only followed a conventional custom of the old writers, of which we have an example in *Colkelbie's Sow*; and for the list we owe him at least more thanks than blame, for it is invaluable as a record of old literature and

music, regarding which there is in many cases no earlier evidence.

After the rejoicements were over, the author entered a meadow full of all sorts of flowers, grasses, and herbs, of which he gives a list, with a curious account of their special medicinal

The Vision.

virtues. Contented, as he well might be, with his period of recreation, he proposed to set off for town that he might proceed with his book, but was immediately overtaken, as he also well might be, by ‘Morpheus, that slepy gode’; and reclining on the ‘cald eard’ with ‘ane cod (pillow) of ane gray stane,’ he was in the accustomed manner favoured with a vision, which virtually supplied him with all that was required to complete his volume.

As matter of fact, however, the source from which he got the design and much of the method and thought of this latter portion of the book, *The Complaynt* proper, was *Le Quadrilogue Invectif* of Alain Chartier.¹ For Dame France, the Scottish writer substitutes Dame Scotia, and for her ‘enfants’—Le Peuple, Le Chevalier, and Clergie—we are presented with Scotia’s three sons—Labour, the Nobles, and Spiritualitie. Many passages are merely taken from the French work, but the clergy play a less prominent and dominant part in the conference, and Dame

Dame Scotia
and her three
sons. Com-
parison with
‘Le Quadri-
logue Invectif.’

¹ See *Les Oeuvres de Maister Alain Chartier*, ed. Tovrangeav, Paris, 1617, pp. 402-455; and for an extended summary, *Alain Chartier*, par Gabriel Joret-Desclosières, Paris, 1897, pp. 30-55.

Scotia indulges in rather more plain-speaking. It is occupied with (1) Dame Scotia's 'Exhortatione to the thrie Estaitis,' mainly in denunciation of England; (2) the 'Complaynt of Labour,' or the Commons, against the nobles and the clergy—his French brother does not venture a word against the Church—who he declares are more cruel to him than even the English, and by their lack of courage and patriotism leave him no choice but meanwhile to feign allegiance with England; (3) Dame Scotia's reply to this, her younger son, in which the faults of the people—their gullibility, fickleness, intemperance, lust, unruliness—are dilated on in very plain terms, and after a citation of *The Thrie Priestis of Peblis* to show that their elevation only develops their faults, she denies the possibility of any one being truly virtuous who has never had 'educatione, eruditione, nor civilitie'; (4) the address of Dame Scotia to the 'nobles and gentlemen,' which discusses the question of the origin and uses of an aristocracy in a fashion that displays the ecclesiastical jealousy of the period against that order, and concludes with a denunciation of their extravagance, in which it is asserted that the horses and dogs of the nobles are virtually as much engaged in eating the 'pure pepill,' as if they were devouring their bodies; (5) Dame Scotia's address to the Spiritualitie, who are rather more mildly dealt with, and while told that schism will be healed only by reform, not by persecution, are reminded that they have nothing to hope for from England, and such of

them as are able-bodied are therefore exhorted to exchange their cowls and frocks for 'steil jakkis' and 'coites of mailze,' and take the field against the inveterate enemies of their country; and (6) the exhortation of Dame Scotia to her three sons to cease their intestine strife and combine against the common enemy.

The Chronicle of Scotland,¹ by Robert Lyndsay of Pitscottie, is avowedly a continuation of Boece's Latin history, which John Bellenden translated. The author was related to the noble family of Lyndsay, but nothing certain is known of his parentage and practically nothing of his life. The only editions of Lyndsay's portion of the *Chronicle* yet published do not reach later than 1565, but it was continued by another than Lyndsay until August 1604. Lyndsay's own portion must also have been modernised and partly assimilated to English, either by the continuator, or by later copyists, for we cannot believe that as we now have it, it represents the vernacular of Lyndsay's time.

Lyndsay's work is properly neither chronicle nor history. His chronology is vague and frequently erroneous. Many important events are either passed over or treated with the utmost conciseness, and his grasp of his subject is slight and superficial; but he excels as a

Lyndsay's
'Chronicle.'
Its scope.

A master of
picturesque
detail.

¹ Published 1728, 1749, 1778, and 1814, the last edition in two volumes edited by John Graham Dalyell; and a properly edited text is promised by the Scottish Text Society.

story-teller, and may perhaps be best described as a sort of prose minstrel. A master of picturesque detail, he has a keen eye for the exceptional, the striking, the marvellous, and for all kinds of interesting minutiae. He notes, for example, that James II., 'more curious than became a king,' stood too close to his artillery at Roxburgh Castle, and not merely tells you that he was mortally injured, but that by 'ane piece of ane misframed gune, his thigh bone was dung in two'; he is careful to inform you of Cochrane's attempt to foster James III.'s suspicions against his brother by aid of the pretended revelations of a witch; the state kept by Cochrane, his gorgeous apparel and proud bearing, his rude knocking at the kirk door (accompanied by armed attendants in white livery) where the nobles were assembled, his sudden seizure, his contumelious treatment and uncereemonious execution by suspension over the bridge at Lauder, are detailed with graphic particularity; the account of Albany's escape from Edinburgh Castle—the intoxicating of the captain, the sudden attack on him and the guard, the escape over the wall of the Duke and his 'chamber-child' by a 'tow' which was too short for the servant, who fell and broke his thigh bone, and had to be lengthened for the Duke by tearing the 'scheittis aff his bed'—is a masterpiece of minutely vivid narrative; and the hard case of Johnie Armstrang before James V. is a finely dramatic episode, of which the climax is the reiver's speech: 'I am bot ane foole to seik grace at ane graceless face,

but had I known,' etc.; the curious hunting palace built by the Earl of Atholl for the entertainment of James v. is described with a mastery of detail which suggests the modern journalist, who also might well have compiled the record of the items of the banquet, and the results of the day's sport; and in the account of Pinkie Cleugh we have the especially characteristic information that the dust generated by the character of the soil, mostly 'red earth,' so 'great that nevir ane of them might see ane other,' completed the panic among the Highlanders which was aroused by the novel sound of the artillery. These are not exceptional instances, but merely average specimens of his usual method. Curiously enough, his *Chronicle* becomes less detailed and interesting when it deals with the later occurrences of his own time, from which we may infer that, though a Protestant, and writing on behalf of Protestantism, the events of the past were of more interest to him than the politics of the present.

Quite after the modern manner, Lyndsay gives a list of those to whom he was indebted for information. They are Patrick, Lord Lindsay of the Byres—the brother-in-law of Moray, who ^{His authorities.} acquired an unenviable reputation for his stern treatment of Mary Stuart in Lochleven; Sir William Scott of Balwearie; Sir Andrew Wood of Largo, Knight, grandson of Admiral Wood; John Major, whose *History of Greater Britain* was published in 1521, but who survived till 1550, and, being resident at

St. Andrews, must have frequently been in Lyndsay's company; Sir David Lyndsay of the Mount, his relative and near neighbour; Andrew Wood of Largo, son of Admiral Wood, and 'principall and familiar servant' to King James v.; Andrew Fernie of that ilk, 'ane noble man of recent memory'; and Sir William Bruce of Earlshall, Knight, who was one of his Fife neighbours, and who, he says, 'hath written very justly all the deeds since Floudon Field.'

This list is valuable as showing that for many of his quaint and picturesque details he must have had authentic information; and the inference usually drawn from his inaccuracy as to dates and his loose treatment of some important events, that he is untrustworthy in his more interesting portions, seems to require qualification. We cannot doubt, for example, that the presentation by David Lord Lindsay to James III. of the 'gray courser' on which he made his escape from Sauchie would be vouched for by Lord Lindsay's descendants, and the details of the king's death—the shying of the horse at the woman's water-can, and the heavy fall of the king when the horse leapt the burn, etc.—bear on the face of them the stamp of truth. Nor can we go far wrong in assuming that for the particulars of the capture of Stephen Bull's ship by Admiral Wood in the Firth of Forth he was indebted either to the admiral's son or grandson. Similarly, for his capital version of the Linlithgow ghost story he had the voucher of Sir

For many of his details he had authentic information.

David Lyndsay, and for his account of the death of James v. at Falkland—his melancholy reception of the tidings of the birth of his daughter, ‘It came with ane lass, and it will go with ane lass,’ with the story of the manner of the subscription of the will at the instance of Cardinal Beaton—he must have been indebted to Andrew Wood, ‘the familiar servant’ to the king, and one of the few gentlemen present at his deathbed. Again, he had clearly special facilities for obtaining information in regard to all the events which happened at St. Andrews; and the nameless outrage of ‘ane callit Guthrie’ on the dead cardinal must have been a notorious fact. These instances may even suggest that the anecdotal and picturesque portions of Lyndsay’s *Chronicle* may be on the whole the most correct; and if they be, his blunders in mere dates may well be forgiven him. In gauging his general trustworthiness it must also be borne in mind that, Protestant though he was, his partisanship was not so bitter as that of either Buchanan or Knox.

The bulk of Buchanan’s works, including his *History* in Latin, do not come within the scope of our consideration; and of his *History* it may suffice to state that its Latin style secured for it a reputation beyond its historical deserts. Since also his writings in the vernacular were limited to two political tracts, his career calls here for but the briefest notice. Born in February 1506, the son of a small laird in the parish

George
Buchanan
(1506-1582).
His career.

of Killearn, Stirlingshire, he was educated at the Universities of Paris and St. Andrews, and became the most brilliant Latinist of his time. After holding (1529-61) various scholastic appointments in France, Portugal, and Italy, he returned to Scotland, when he became linguistic tutor to Mary Stuart, and was also employed as translator to the Queen and Council; and in 1566 he obtained the principalship of St. Leonard's College, St. Andrews. The following year he accompanied Moray to the York conference regarding Mary Stuart, where he was employed in putting into writing the charges against her which were afterwards embodied in the Latin *Detectio* published in 1572. In 1570 he was named tutor to the young prince James VI., an appointment he held until his death in Edinburgh, 24th September 1582.

The only tractates in Scots known to be Buchanan's are '*Ane Admonitioun direct to the True Lordis main-tenaris of Justice, and obedience to the Kingis Grace*. Imprentit at Striviling be Robert Lekprevik, 1571'; and the *Chamæleon*, completed probably early in 1571, but not published in Buchanan's lifetime, owing to interference with Lekprevik's printing-office while it was passing through the press. Besides this, two of his letters¹ in the vernacular, and his *Opinion anent the Reformatioun of the Universitie of St. Andrews*,¹ also

His works in
the Vernacu-
lar.

¹ These with the two tractates are included in *The Vernacular Writings of George Buchanan*, edited for the Scottish Text Society by P. Hume Brown, 1892.

survive; but internal evidence shows that the Scots version of the *Detectio*, 1572, sometimes attributed to him, was done by another.

The *Admonitioun* is in substance both a general and specific denunciation of the Hamiltons. 'Being by descent a feudal dependant of Lennox, Buchanan shared in the hereditary enmity between that house and the rival claimants to the next heirship of the Scottish throne. By Mary Stuart's marriage to Darnley, the heirship to the throne had been assured to the Stewarts of Lennox; and it was the queen's alliance with Bothwell against Darnley that aroused against her Buchanan's quenchless antipathy. With the murder of Darnley the Hamiltons were closely associated; they also instigated the plot for the murder of the Regent Moray—the assassin, a Hamilton, being probably the mere tool of the forfeited John, Marquis of Hamilton; and Buchanan was convinced that they would not rest until they had removed the young king, now the only obstacle to the realisation of their highest ambition: 'not content wt ane king's blude, they gaip for his sonnis murthour.' Buchanan has been dubbed 'the pen of Moray,' but there is no evidence that he turned against the queen from motives of self-interest. If he adopted wrong or extreme opinions, they seem to have been the opinions of an honest feudal partisan. The too merely denunciatory tone of the *Admonitioun* detracts, however, from its literary merit, though

much of it is cogent, and much of what is not cogent is undoubtedly forcible and clever. Here, for example, is an amusing hit both at the Hamiltons and his old pupil :—

‘Thay wer in hoip yat scho sould mary Johnne Hamiltoun ye Dukis sone quhome wt mery lukis and gentill contenance (as scho could weill do) scho enterit in ye gayme of ye glaiks,¹ and causit ye rest of ye Hamiltonis to fon for faynnes.’²

The Chamæleon, a satire on the Secretary, William Maitland of Lethington, may be regarded as expressive equally of Buchanan’s own private antipathies and of the dead Regent Moray’s inner sentiments towards his old political associate. No one knew better than Buchanan how the policy of Moray had been baffled by the intrigues of Maitland during the York and Westminster conferences, or the depth of Moray’s chagrin at the insubordination of his former lieutenant. It is a more elaborate and effective production than the *Admonitioun*; but it is effective mainly because Maitland’s conduct was quite beyond the comprehension of a mere partisan like Buchanan, as it was beyond the comprehension of an age in which mere partisanship was so rampant. Buchanan’s satire, merciless though it be, is in no sense feigned. A sincere indignation and hatred, blended with a sort of contemptuous amazement, animates his pen as he proceeds to ‘set furth schortlie ye description of

¹ Coquetry.

² Play the fool for eagerness.

sic ane¹ monsture not lang ago engendrit in Scotland in ye cuntre of Lowthiane not far from Hadingtoun, to yat effect yat ye forme knawin, the moist pestiferus nature of ye said monsture may be moir easelie evitit.²

As to Buchanan's vernacular style, it is something too artificial and rhetorical, both the structure of the sentences and the general manner being affected by his constant addiction to His style. Latin, but withal it is clear and precise, and frequently full of force and fire. Here is an example in the effective conclusion of *The Chamaleon*:—

'Now I pray zow espy out quhat proffeit ye quene, our kingis moder, sall gadder of him yat hes bene (as scho knawis) sa oftentymes traitour to hir moder, to hir selfe, to hir sone, to hir brother, and to hir cuntre. Scho will be exemplis³ consider yat how mony colouris yat euir yis Chamaleon change, yat it can neuir aganis ye nature of it, turne perfytelie quhyte.'

As partisan Knox has much in common with Buchanan, both in the virulence of his partisanship and its special direction, but it was of John Knox
(1505-1572).
Sketch of his
life. different origin and of much wider scope. Not feudal, nor even political, but wholly religious and rooted in his deepest convictions, it coloured his whole life and became interwoven with the future history of his country. Born in 1505, in Haddington or its near neighbourhood, of peasant parents who were feudal dependants of the Earl of Bothwell, he was educated at Haddington

¹ such a.² evaded.³ by examples.

Grammar School and the Universities of Glasgow and St. Andrews, but owing, it may be, to poverty did not, as was then very customary, continue his studies abroad. About his earlier life, after he left the University, we have little information. Though at some unknown date he took priest's orders, he never held a cure, and supported himself partly as notary, partly as tutor. While acting as tutor to the sons of Douglas of Longniddry, and Cockburn of Ormistone, he came in contact with the Protestant evangelist George Wishart, whom he accompanied in his preaching tour in Lothian, characteristically acting as his guard with the two-handed sword which it was customary to carry beside him. His public life from the time that in 1547 he made 'his first public sermon' to the assassins of Cardinal Beaton and their friends in the parish church of St. Andrews, until, worn out with the labours which established the Reformed Kirk in Scotland, he, with the words 'Now it is come,' quietly breathed his last in his own house in the Netherbow, Edinburgh, 24th November 1572, was, whether at home or in exile, one continuous conflict against a religious system which in his view was not so much erroneous and corrupt, as antichristian and devilish.

His *History of the Reformation*¹ is the record of

¹ The only complete edition of the *Works* of Knox is that of the Wodrow Society, edited by David Laing, six vols. 1846-64. The *History* occupies vols. i. and ii. A shortened edition of the *History*, edited by C. J. Guthrie, appeared in 1898.

that conflict, a record so sincere, thorough, and complete, that it is one of the most interesting human documents in literature. Knox was not an accomplished scholar like Buchanan, nor a 'fell' theologian like Calvin, nor, if a more eloquent and a cleverer, a more satisfactory religious controversialist than the Tyries, the Winzets, the Kennedys of that age, none of whose tractates are now of any interest except to the philologist or the religious antiquary. He had much of the intellectual narrowness and rough simplicity of the peasant; he shared in some, though not in all, of the superstitions of the mediæval ecclesiastic, and if he had escaped from the mere formal professionalism of the clerics of his time, he substituted for this an intense conviction of his own personal infallibility as a divinely illuminated prophet of the Most High. Like all the Reformers, he was steeped in the supernaturalism of the Scriptures, particularly of the Old Testament, and, endowed with strong emotional susceptibility, great moral sincerity, an overmastering will, and a lofty ideality (in no degree impaired by his practical common-sense), he bent his energies towards the establishment in Scotland of a sort of Christianised Jewish theocracy. The Church, as reorganised by him, was, as of old, only more so, to be palpably and directly the supreme power in the state and in society. His ideal, no doubt, differed somewhat from the reality which was so soon to become an intolerable tyranny; but even his ideal was but a one-

His characteristics.

sided solution of the great problem of human life and conduct, for, man of genius though he was, he was by intellectual training the mere product of mediævalism. He was successful mainly as iconoclast; his courage, enthusiasm, eloquence, wit, satire, and dynamic energy were irresistible, not so much in reforming abuses and removing corruptions as in annihilating root and branch the imposing ceremonial and the potent organisation of the Scottish Catholic Church. From many directions, and from a variety of causes, a tempest of wrath had been gathering against its ambition, greed, tyranny, and corruption, but it was Knox who rode 'on the whirlwind directing the storm,' and it was because of his conduct of it that the storm proved so destructive.

In *The History of the Reformation* Knox details the events of this stirring period mainly in their relation to his own personality, and to the work to which he had devoted his life. His laudation or condemnation of his contemporaries is determined very much by their attitude towards his own aims. He hardly even pretends to impartiality, but says as much evil and as little good of his opponents as he possibly can, while he overlooks many patent faults, and even wickednesses, in those who, from whatever motive, have the saving grace to co-operate with him in his great crusade. This, of course, means that he was a bitter partisan; but, in excuse, it must be remembered that in that age the lines of antagonism were

His 'History
of the Re-
formation.'
His partisan-
ship.

much more sharply drawn than in this age of compromise. Knox was absolutely convinced that his cause was wholly the cause of God, and that his opponents were merely the allies of the Devil. His instinct for character was also so remarkably keen, and his intentions so sincere, that, if due allowance be made for his standpoint, it is comparatively easy for one, otherwise acquainted with the persons and events of the period, to read between the lines of his approval or disapproval. But, agree or disagree with him as we may, he rarely fails to interest. The narrative part of the book is alive from beginning to end. The stir and movement and excitement of the times, as mirrored in his own strong personality, are transferred to his pages; and his literary art, if less elaborately rhetorical than that of Buchanan, is more direct, graphic, and irresistible.

The work includes an account of the early Scottish Reformers—their labours, persecutions, and martyrdoms, from the death of Paul Craw in 1431,—and a narrative of the events of his own time down to September 1564, the remainder of the *History*, down to 1567, being in all likelihood partly derived from his papers. The narrative, abounding in ‘merrie bourds’ and graphic anecdotes, is coloured by a strain of bitter and contemptuous vituperation against the opponents of the Reformation. Much of the vituperation is mere gross, though picturesque and

Scope of the work. Its strong and weak points, and its literary excellence.

effective, abuse;¹ but it is redolent of a hatred that, at least, proved contagious. His effectiveness both as reformer and historian is, in truth, largely due to his personalities. In discussing the abstractions and subtleties of theology he is a mere school-man: he displays his genius only when he deals with events and facts and concrete human nature. Like the much less ardent Lyndsay of Pitscottie, he has a keen eye for graphic details, and he is often vividly dramatic. The incidents, conversations, anecdotes, and personal allusions of which his *History* is brimful, lend to it a never-failing animation, and in some of his stories and narratives the wit, the humour, or the satire is elaborated with much careful art, among his masterpieces being—in addition, of course, to the immortal interviews with Queen Mary—the Cardinal's assassination, the struggle for precedence between the followers of the two rival archbishops at the door of Glasgow Cathedral, and the destruction of the image of St. Gile by the Edinburgh mob.

When the mob seized and threw down the image of St. Gile, 'the Preastis and Freiris,' he tells us, 'fled faster than thei did at Pynckey Clewcht';² the ridiculous figure cut by the retreating fathers

¹ The monastery of the Grey Friars is, for example, described as the 'den of those murtharis the Grey Friaris'; and the same Grey Friars, we are told, 'routed as thai had been ravens, yea rather they yelled and rored, as devills in hell, "Heresy, heresy,"' etc.

² The battle of Pinkie, 10th September 1547, at which a regiment of priests and monks fought—or rather fled—for Scotland and the Church, under a sacred white banner.

is also exactly realised to us—‘the Gray Freiris gapped, the Blak Frearis blew, the Preastis panted and fled’; and the finishing touch to the picture of this comical street scene is given by the introduction of ‘a meary Englissman,’ who ‘by chance lay upoun a stare,’ and ‘seing the discomfiture to be without blood, thought he wold add some mearynes to the mater, and so cryed he ower a stayr, and said, “Fy upoun yow, hoorsones, why have ye brockin ordour! Doun the streat ye passed in array and with great myrth. Why flie ye, vilanes, now, without ordour? Turne and stryk everie one a strok for the honour of his god. Fy, cowardes, fy, ye shall never be judged worthy of your wages agane.”’ As a *raconteur* Knox must have been unsurpassed among his contemporaries; and various allusions also show that his literary art owed something to his acquaintanceship with the works of the old ‘makaris.’

The destruction of the image of St. Gile.

Of the numerous tractates of Knox—in the various forms of Admonitions, Answers, Apologies, Blasts, Declarations, Epistles, Exhortations, Expositions, Letters, Narratives, Sermons, Summaries, and Vindications—the most

Tractates, etc., of Knox. ‘The First Blast.’

noted, and the only one that need here be referred to, is *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstruous Regiment* [Sovereignty] of Women, published anonymously in 1558, and (being intended for England) written virtually in English, or, perhaps, rather Englished by Knox’s colleague at Geneva,

Goodman, who also himself blew a similar blast in *How Supreme Powers ought to be obey'd by their Subjects*, Geneva, 1558. In 1557 Knox had asked Calvin his opinion about the 'Regiment' of women, who gravely replied: 'That as it was a deviation from the original and proper order of nature, it was to be ranked, no less than slavery, among the punishments consequent upon the fall of man'; but admitted that occasionally good female sovereigns 'were raised up by Divine authority.' Now, Knox was, of course, convinced that neither Mary of England, nor Mary of Guise, the Queen-Regent of Scotland, belonged to the latter class of sovereigns, and recognising that there was no hope for the Reformation so long as they remained in power, he resolved, as was his custom, to 'strike at the root.' It is customary to regard the pamphlet as violent and imprudent, but it became only imprudent when Elizabeth ascended the throne and resolved to support Protestantism. Had she not supported Protestantism, Knox would have been at liberty to proceed with further blasts against female sovereignty, whose effectiveness against the Queen-Dowager of Scotland and Mary Stuart might have greatly added to, instead of detracting from, his reputation as a practical politician. The pamphlet is a characteristic example of the scholastic methods of the period; and the solemn citations of classical and scriptural authorities in support of Knox's strong and graphic verdicts render it—from the peculiarly unscholastic nature of the theme—very piquant reading.

Bishop John Leslie, the chief Catholic historian of Scotland, was the illegitimate son of Gavin Leslie, rector of Kingussie, Inverness-shire. After completing his education at King's College, Aberdeen, he studied civil law on

Bishop Leslie
(1527-1596).
His career.

the Continent; and he was regarded as the most able and learned of the Scottish Catholic ecclesiastics of his time. His residence in the Catholic regions of the North, as pastor of Oyne, Aberdeen-shire, also led to his becoming the chief political adviser of the Catholic nobles. In 1562 he was made Professor of Canon Law in Aberdeen, and, after the Darnley marriage, he was appointed in 1566 to the bishopric of Ross. Continuing devoted to the Queen of Scots throughout all her difficulties and disasters, he became her legal adviser and representative at the York and Westminster conferences, and from October 1569 until November 1573 was detained a prisoner in England for his connection with the Norfolk intrigues. On obtaining his liberty he went to the Continent, where he devoted himself, as before, to the cause of the imprisoned queen, being her chief political confidant and agent, and the inspirer of most of the plots on her behalf. About 1580 he was appointed suffragan and vicar-general of the diocese of Rouen, and in 1591 he obtained the bishopric of Constance in Normandy, but was unable, on account of the distracted state of the country, to take up his residence in his diocese. He died in the Augustinian

monastery of Guirtenburg, near Brussels, 30th May 1596.

Leslie wrote his latest *History of Scotland* in Latin,¹ and the most interesting portion of this *History* —the description of the counties and islands, containing much varied information on the social condition of Scotland not to be found elsewhere—is not included in the vernacular *History*, written in 1568-70² for the perusal of Mary Stuart while in prison. This *History* includes the period from the death of James I. to 1561. A very careful and judicious historian, Leslie is minute in his chronology, and must have been well supplied with original material; but his record is little more than a mere chronicle, and is wholly lacking in the vivid picturesqueness of Lyndsay's or Knox's narratives, its manner being very much that of a formal state document.

Such registers as *The Diurnal of Occurrents*,³ the *Diary* of Robert Birrel,³ and even *The Historie of James Sext*,³ can scarce be ranked as literature; and the one other prominent historical work that need here be mentioned is *The History of the Kirk of Scotland* (1514-1625)⁴ by the Scottish clergyman, David Calderwood

Other historical
works in the
Vernacular.

¹ An old Scots translation of the Latin *History*, by Father James Dalrymple, has been published by the Scottish Text Society, ed. Cody, 1884-1889.

² Printed by the Bannatyne Club, 1830.

³ Printed by the Bannatyne Club.

⁴ Published by the Wodrow Society, 8 vols., 1842-49.

(1575-1650), which, though mainly a mere compilation from Knox's *History*, the *Diary* of James Melville, *The Historie of James Sext*, and other works, and rather a collection of rough materials for history than a properly condensed and continuous narrative, is of interest as an example of the later Anglo-Scots on the eve of the complete extrusion of the vernacular from the prose literature of Scottish authors. John Spottiswoode (1566-1639), Archbishop of St. Andrews, the contemporary of Calderwood, wrote in English his *History of the Church and State in Scotland*, undertaken at the instance of James VI. to represent the Episcopal standpoint; and although a mild form of the vernacular lingered long in private diaries and letters, the educated classes, including the clergy, from the time of the Union of the Crowns aspired in formal compositions to express themselves in English.

Among the many *Diaries*, *Journals*, *Memoirs*, and *Memorials* which have been printed by Scottish clubs and other learned societies, only two are of such literary merit as to demand a passing reference—*The Autobiography* and *Diary* of Mr. James Melville, minister of Kilrenny; and *The Memoirs of His Own Life*, by Sir James Melville of Halhill. The *Diary* of the Kilrenny minister, nephew of the better-known ecclesiastic Andrew Melville, is a valuable example of the earlier Anglo-Scots—not Scots intentionally Anglified, as was Knox's *History*, but a curious inartificial mixture of Scots and English. Its main literary

'Diary' of
James Melville
(1556-1614).

merit is its graphic garrulosity. The author is a sort of old Presbyterian Pepys, or rather, perhaps, Boswell, the facts of his own life and the events of his own time being his Johnson; and his phrases and comparisons have frequently much naïve vividness and force. His portrait of Knox in the pulpit about the time when Knox, as Knox himself expressed it, had 'one foot in the grave,' is almost startlingly graphic:—

Bot or he had done with his sermont, he was sae active and vigorous that he was lyk to ding that pulpit in blads and fly out of it.' Companion pictures are those of the young King James VI. in 1574, when only eight years of age, 'walking up and down in the auld Lady Marr's hand,' and 'discoursing of knowledge and ignorance'; and that of George Buchanan, after sending his *History* to press, 'sitting in his chair and teatching his young man that servit him in his chalmer to spell a-b, ab, e-b, eb,' etc.; but indeed it is difficult to open a page of the narrative portion of the *Diary* without chancing on some anecdote, or reminiscence, or description that illuminates the past as with a flash of sunlight.

The *Memoirs* of Sir James Melville, the great Scottish diplomat of Mary Stuart, are by no means

so minute and confidential as the *Diary*
 of his inimitable namesake, the reserve
 and propriety of the courtier having be-
 come engrained in his nature, and affecting, we may
 well believe, even his private thoughts; but he had seen

'Memoirs' of Sir
 James Melville
 (1535-1617).

'cities of men,
 And manners, climates, councils, governments,'

and few had been more behind the scenes of his eventful times. His interviews with Queen Elizabeth are as diverting as they are instructive; and his comments on the characters and motives of his contemporaries, and on the incidents and events of this complicated period of Scottish history, are, though qualified by much diplomatic caution, shrewd and honest, and frequently racy and picturesque.

Apart from *History* and *Memoirs*, etc., Scottish vernacular prose literature, during the short half-century or so that filled up its allotted span, is mainly confined to controversial theology, but nothing of any literary value is to be gained by embarking on this troubled and tempestuous ocean.

Scottish vernacular prose, as well as poetry, virtually terminates with James VI. That versatile and all-wise monarch also intermeddled with theology, publishing in Scots *Ane Frrvit-ful Meditatiovn* (founded on some verses of the 20th chapter of the Revelation), at Edinburgh, 1588; and another *Meditatiovn* (founded on certain verses of the 15th chapter of 1st Chronicles), at Edinburgh in 1589. But his main works in prose before he ascended the English throne are his *Ane Schort Treatise conteining some Revlis and Cautelis to be obseruit and eschewit in Scottis Poesie*,¹ 1584, and *Demonologie*, 1587. The former is very much the work of a mere schoolboy, and though of some interest from its subject, is remarkably trite in its

Theological
literature.

James VI.
(1566-1625).

¹ Included in the Arber Reprints.

treatment of it. Here, for example, is his Majesty's recipe for originality :—

'Ze man¹ also bewarre with composing onything in the same manner as hes been ower oft vsit of before. As in speciall, gif² ze speik of loue, be warre ze descryue your Loues makdome³ or her fairness. And siclyke⁴ that ze descryue not the morning, and rysing of the Sunne in the Preface of zour verse ; for thir thingis are sa oft, and dyuerslie writtin vpoun be Poetis already, that gif ze do the lyke, it will appeare, ze bot imitate, and that it cummis not of zour awin *Inventioun*, quhilk is ane of the chief properteis of ane Poete. Thairfore gif zour subject be to prayse zour *Loue*, ze sall rather praise hir vther qualiteis nor her fairnes, or her shaip ; or ellis ze sall speik some lytill thing of it and syne⁵ say, that zour wittis are sa smal, and zour vtterance sa barren, that ze can not discryue any part of hir worthelie : remitting alwayis to the Reider, to judge of hir in respect sho matches, or rather excellis Venus, or any woman, quhome to it sall please zow to compaire hir. Bot gif zour subject be sic, as ze man⁶ speik something of the morning or sunne rysing, tak heid, that quhat name ze giue to the sunne, the mone, or vther starris, the ane tyme, gif ze happin to wryte thair of another tyme, to change thair names. As gife ze calle the sunne Titan, at a tyme, to call him Phœbus or Apollo the vther tyme, and siclyke the mone, and vther Planettis.'

A good idea of the change effected on the monarch's language, after his accession to the English throne, may be got by comparing the above passage with a short extract from *The Counterblast to Tobacco*, 1604 :—

'That the manifold abuses of this vile custome of Tobacco taking may the better be espied it is fit that first you enter into consideration both of the first original thereof, and likewise of the reasons of the first entry thereof into this countrey.'

¹ must.

⁴ such like.

² if.

⁵ then.

³ shape.

⁶ must.

XI

TRADITIONAL BALLADS AND SONGS

THE subject of Scottish traditional ballads and songs is so comprehensive and complicated, and in some respects so shadowy, that it is possible here to touch on only its more general features; and since also the various details of the subject have, up to the present, been dealt with in a comparatively fragmentary and tentative fashion, one is inclined to indulge rather in queries than in positive assertions. It is hardly necessary to premise that this traditional poetry is not an isolated literature, that it has intimate relations with other forms of literature, some of which have now perished, and that the older popular poetry of Scotland has also a very close connection with that of England. The labours, for example, of the late Mr. Chappell, and of Dr. Furnivall, and Mr. Ebsworth, mainly directed to the critical examination of the old English ballads and songs, have incidentally shed a good deal of light, or have supplied the means of shedding light, on the ballads and songs of Scotland; and in the vast accumulation of MS. poetry and of old song-book,

Complexity of
the subject.
Labours of
Chappell,
Dr. Furnivall,
Mr. Ebsworth,
and Professor
Child.

broadside, and chapbook literature, most of which is now of comparatively easy access, there is the possibility of greater illumination than has yet been made manifest. It would also be merely superfluous to insist on the invaluable character of the work performed by the late Professor Child, whose *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*¹ is a sort of library of the different versions—good, indifferent, bad, and worse than bad—of English and Scottish traditional poetry of, or allied to, the ballad form, with very full references to similarities, whether accidental or not, in the older literature of the Continental nations. But this critical attitude towards the traditional ballads and songs is of comparatively recent origin, and thus falsehood, fallacy, and delusion have had an exceptionally long start. Professor Child's great work supplies in an accessible form much raw material for a critical history of popular poetry, but a good deal of the material it supplies is inevitably, and from no fault of the editor, in a sense worse than useless. The chaff is out of all proportion to the wheat; and, alas! chaff and wheat have in many instances become almost inseparably welded together.

The attitude of the earlier collectors and editors of traditional poetry was frequently merely credulous, and when it was not absolutely so, it hardly occurred to them that not merely an exact statement of sources, but a careful inquiry into their trustworthi-

¹ Five volumes, Boston, 1882-1898.

ness, was their first and not their last obligation. Allan Ramsay's faults of omission and commission—excusable because he knew no better, but none the less, many of them, irremediable—are too notorious to require more than this mere allusion. But what seem now sadly careless things have been done also in the green tree as well as in the dry. The modern inquirer can, for example, regard with only amazement the passive content with which Bishop Percy accepted from Lord Hailes most of the Scottish ballads included in his *Ancient Reliques*,¹ as well as 'the many curious and elegant remarks with which they are illustrated,' when, seemingly, not one of these remarks conveyed the smallest tittle of real information regarding Lord Hailes' sources. Among the ballads which thus first saw the light were, to name only two of the most notable, *Sir Patrick Spens* and *Edward*. Editors from the time of Scott have been accustomed to regard *Sir Patrick Spens* (see *post*, p. 350) as the oldest specimen of the historical ballad now existing; but the Bishop tells you nothing more of his authority for it than that it is given from two MS. copies 'transmitted from Scotland.' Sir Walter Scott was also content to remark that he got his version from 'two MSS. collated with several verses recited by the

Credulity and
carelessness
of the earlier
editors.
Ramsay and
Bishop Percy.
'Sir Patrick
Spens' and
'Edward.'

¹ This remark does not, of course, touch the unquestioned authenticity of the Percy folio MS. of the seventeenth century, which has been published by the Ballad Society.

editor's friend, Robert Hamilton, Esq.—recited long years after the ballad had been published by Percy. As for *Edward*, which Professor Child affirms is 'not only unimpeachable, but has ever been regarded as one of the noblest and most sterling specimens of the popular ballad,' we are left utterly in the dark as to how Lord Hailes came to be possessed of it, and virtually it is unknown apart from Lord Hailes. True, Motherwell, who recognised that the 'unimpeachable' ballad had, at least to some extent, been doctored, came forward with another version got 'from the recitation of an old woman,' and on this old woman's solitary authority calmly asserted that it might be looked upon as the 'genuine traditionary version,' as if there could be a one and only 'genuine traditionary version'! But this supposed 'genuine traditionary version' may, for anything we know to the contrary, simply derive from the version in the *Reliques*, which, though shamly archaic in spelling, may not have been vouched for as a Scottish traditional ballad, and may even have been derived directly from foreign sources.

One of the most trustworthy of the old collectors was David Herd, and this because (1) he was himself almost incapable not merely of writing
 David Herd. but of altering or amending verse; (2) he loved collecting for its own, not for vanity's, sake; and (3) a large number of his versions were got before they could have been suggested by published copies. His *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs*

appeared anonymously in 1769, and an enlarged edition, with his name attached, in two volumes, 1776. His ms. collections, now in the British Museum, contain also a good number of songs and fragments yet unpublished. But while Herd stated that many of his ballads had 'been recovered from tradition, or old mss., and never before printed,' he, like Bishop Percy, neglected to give a circumstantial account of how he obtained them.

Other collections published towards the close of the eighteenth century are—Pinkerton's *Select Scottish Ballads*, 1783, which deserves a passing reference, mainly from the attempt of the editor to palm off as old certain productions of his own¹; Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum*, 1787-1803, which was in great part edited by Burns, and contains, with a few versions obtained by Burns, a miscellaneous assortment of songs, many of which preserve ancient fragments more or less metamorphosed; and Ritson's *Ancient Songs*, 1790, and *Scottish Songs*, 1794, edited with a scrupulous conscientiousness and learning, which, had they been more generally in evidence amongst his predecessors and successors, would have done much to prevent the accumulation of dubiety with which the subject is now enveloped.

Pinkerton,
Johnson,
and Ritson.

It would be hard to exaggerate the services

¹ Pinkerton is sometimes credited with being the first to publish the ballad of Sir John the Ross, but it first appeared in Herd's *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs*, 1776.

rendered to Scottish ballad literature by Sir Walter Scott, whose *Border Minstrelsy*, which appeared first in 1802, and was afterwards enlarged, aroused a more general interest in the subject than any previous publication; but Sir Walter's attitude towards the older minstrelsy was a good deal that of enthusiastic and unsuspecting admiration; and since also in many instances (see *post*, pp. 362, 366) his own published copies were cooked from different recited versions, they occasionally owe more than a little of their vividness and magic to the great magician himself.

Next in importance to Sir Walter's *Minstrelsy* must be placed *Popular Ballads and Songs from Tradition*, 'with Translations of similar Pieces from the ancient Danish Language and a few originals by the editor, Robert Jamieson, A.M. and F.A.S.' (1806), which seemed to mark an epoch in the study of the subject, because, to use the words of Sir Walter, 'Mr. Jamieson's extensive acquaintance with Scandinavian literature enabled him to detect not only a general similarity betwixt these and the Danish ballads preserved in the "Kiempe Viser," an early collection of heroic ballads in that language, but to demonstrate that, in many cases, the stories and songs were distinctly the same, a circumstance which no antiquary had hitherto so much as suspected.' Jamieson's discovery was further emphasised by the publication in 1814 of *Illustrations of Northern Antiquities*, under the joint-editorship

of Jamieson, Henry Weber, and Sir Walter Scott; but while the discovery was no doubt important, its importance was not of the peculiar and supreme character which many vaguely suppose. In view also of the peculiar importance that has been attached to it, it is to be regretted that every Scottish version of a ballad supplied by Jamieson himself, which manifested this connection, should not have been authenticated beyond the possibility of suspicion. Yet, so far from taking this precaution, it was Jamieson's habit to construct versions of his own from those got from recitation; and while, for example, his version of *Clerk Saunders* is the only one which connects it with a Scandinavian ballad, he withheld the originals on which his version is founded. 'We may suppose,' says Professor Child, 'that all the three versions combined contain the passage which formed the link; but it would be much more satisfactory if Jamieson had given us all three as he received them'; and to this verdict one can only add an unavailing Amen.

Among other partly original ballad collections it may suffice to mention Finlay's *Scottish Historical and Romantic Ballads, chiefly Ancient*, 1808; Cromeek's *Remains of Nithsdale* and *Galloway Song*, 1810 (mainly the manufacture of Allan Cunningham); C. K. Sharpe's *Ballad Book*, 1824 (containing various interesting scraps); Allan Cunningham's *Songs of Scotland, Ancient and Modern*, 4 vols., 1825 (hopelessly unreliable); Robert

Other ballad
collections.

Chambers's *Popular Rhymes of Scotland*, 1826; Motherwell's *Minstrelsy, Ancient and Modern*, 1827 (prefaced by an interesting, and, in some respects, valuable introduction); Kinloch's *Ancient Scottish Ballads*, 1827; Peter Buchan's *Ancient Ballads and Songs of the North of Scotland*, 1828 (much of it a mere farrago of unauthentic doggerel¹); Robert Chambers's *Scottish Ballads and Songs*, 1829 (containing several songs—some old, some partly fabricated—published for the first time from sources which Chambers, for publisher's reasons, failed even to indicate in such a fashion as to guarantee sufficiently either their genuine antiquity or the purity of his text); and Maidment's *Scottish Ballads and Songs*, 1859, and *Scottish Pasquils*, 1868. In all these later collections the ballads and songs obtained from tradition necessarily suffer more from corruption than those in the earlier collections, and some of the new versions are mere corruptions of versions previously published.²

¹ Many of the numbers were supplied by James Rankine, a blind beggar, whom Buchan in his ms. states he kept, 'at great expense,' travelling in Scotland collecting ballads for him. Professor Child remarks that many of Buchan's ballads bear this minstrel's 'mint mark,' and places 'no confidence' in any of his readings. But as little confidence can be placed in Buchan, who, it is evident, was quite inclined to become the dupe of any ballad impostor. In the 'extreme simplicity' of Buchan's ballads, Scott found 'the most distinct assurance that he has delivered the latter to the public in the shape in which he found them.' But Scott was ignorant that the 'extreme simplicity' was conferred on them by this 'wight of Homer's craft.'

² A very full bibliography of ballad literature will be found in Child's *Ballads*, vol. v., 1898. That work is the only standard

One result of Jamieson's discovery of certain similarities between British and Danish ballads was to deepen the impression (1) that many ballads were of immemorial antiquity, and (2) that this form of literature was in some peculiar sense the special literature of the people. This twofold impression more or less influenced—if only in a vague fashion—the methods of subsequent collectors and editors, and it appeared to gain confirmation and solidity from the isolated results—results in many other ways very valuable and interesting—of the study of folklore. Such supremacy, such decisiveness, was claimed by Mr. Andrew Lang for these results in determining the character and origin of ballad literature, that, in the article 'Ballad' contributed to the ninth edition of *The Encyclopædia Britannica*, he categorically denied, from the very nature of the case, that ballad—and more particularly Scottish ballad—literature could be the product of a special literary class, and more particularly of a class of professional minstrels. 'These minstrels,' he wrote, 'are a stumbling-block in the way of the growth of ballads. The domestic annals of Scotland show that her kings used to keep court bards, and also that strollers, jongleurs as they were called, went about

Influence of
Jamieson's
theory. The
theory of Mr.
Andrew Lang.

Collection of British ballads. Ayton's *Ballads of Scotland*, 2 vols., 1858 (and frequently republished), gives a sort of eclectic text of the best standard ballads; and in Mr. Eyre-Todd's *Scottish Ballad Poetry*, 1893 (in the Abbotsford Series), will be found a selection of original versions of some sixty Scottish ballads.

singing at the doors of farm-houses and the streets of towns. Here were two sets of minstrels, who had apparently left no poetry; and on the other side, there were a number of ballads that claimed no author. It was the easiest and most satisfactory inference that the courtly minstrels made the verses, which the wandering crowdiers imitated or corrupted.' This account of the old minstrels must have been meant as jocular rather than precise; for, being antecedently convinced that, like Topsy, ballads merely 'grewed,' it was needless for Mr. Lang to devote particular attention to a perfectly superfluous fraternity. Without entering greatly into details, he deemed it sufficient to affirm that the minstrel theory—or any theory of individual authorship—'failed to account for the universal sameness of tone, of incident, of legend, of primitive poetical formulæ, which the Scottish ballad possesses in common with the ballads of Greece, of France, of Provence, of Portugal, of Denmark, and of Italy.' 'Ballads,' he finally declared, 'spring from the very heart of the people, and flit from age to age, from life to life, of shepherds, peasants, nurses, of all the class that continues nearest to the natural state of man'; and they 'make music with the flash of the fisherman's oar, with the hum of the spinning-wheel, and keep time with the step of the ploughman as he drives his team,' etc. It is not with Mr. Lang, be it observed, a mere question of transmission, but of authorship, and on this point he does his utmost to

be clear and decided. No hint is given of any possible modification of his theory in particular cases, nor does he indicate that he so much as dreams of any possible exception to the general rule. Moreover, all classes of ballads, historical as well as romantic, are included in his dictum; and as for the Border ballads, he finds their parallel in those of Greece: the ballads of 'Klephitic exploits in Greece match,' he affirms, 'the exploits of Dick of the Law and Kinmont Willie'—all alike 'springing,' not from the heart of any particular individual, but from 'the heart of the people.'

Within the last twenty years Mr. Lang's views may have undergone some modification, but hardly any essential change, for in a paper on 'The Mystery of the Queen's Marie,' published as recently as 1895,¹ he mentions that he would 'fain break a lance with Mr. Courthope on his general doctrine of the popular ballad and its indebtedness to literary poetry and romance.'² A writer in *The Quarterly Review* for July 1898 also finds support in the authority of Mr. Lang as well as Professor Gummere,³ for inclining

'The Quarterly
Review'
(July 1898).
Professor
Gummere.

¹ *Blackwood's Magazine*, vol. clviii. pp. 381-90.

² Must not the lance be broken first with Sir Walter? In *The Minstrelsy* (Introduction to *Lord Thomas and Fair Annie*) he wrote: 'The tale is much the same with the Breton romance called *Lay le Fraîn* (*sic*), or *The Song of the Ash*. Indeed, the Editor is convinced that the further our researches are extended, the more we shall see ground to believe that the romantic ballads of later times are, for the most part, abridgments of the ancient metrical romances, narrated in a smoother stanza and a more modern language.'

³ *Old English Ballads*, Boston, 1894.

strongly to the conclusion that 'the ballad belonged to the people, and was the exclusive property of the minstrel as little in the making as in the singing.' He ascribes them to 'an age when poetry was a common possession,' and he explains that probably 'solitary composition would have been as difficult for primitive man to understand as communal authorship is hard for us'; or, in other terms, the ballad—the ballad as it has actually descended to us—is the communal literature of primitive man, or, as Mr. Lang expresses it, of 'the classes nearest to the natural state of man.'

Besides this extreme theory of Mr. Lang, Professor Gummere, and (tentatively) of the Quarterly Reviewer, we have, of course, only the choice of some form of the minstrel theory or some modification of it. And, as regards the minstrel theory, pure and simple, we have the choice of two forms: (1) that of Motherwell, and (vaguely) of most editors from the time of Jamieson, that many at least of the ballads which now survive derive from a period anterior to the romance of chivalry; and (2) that of Professor Courthope,¹ and (incidentally) of Sir Walter Scott, that they are solely the production of minstrels who were the degenerate successors of the ancient bards, and who, when they did not select a traditionary feat of arms, or an historic legend, for their theme, adapted it from some older form of literature—

The Minstrel
theory.
Motherwell
and Professor
Courthope.

¹ *History of English Poetry*, vol. i. pp. 445-468.

‘the romance, lay, or fabliau.’ While, for example, Motherwell, and (vaguely) most editors would assume that *Fair Annie* and the Danish *Skiaen Anna* were originally the work of the same old bard, Professor Courthope would hold that they were fabricated at some later period by two separate degenerate minstrels, who made use of the same or a similar original—some romance or story.

If the theory of a communal authorship is in itself, as the Quarterly Reviewer admits, hard to understand, it must be specially difficult of comprehension in the case of such excellent specimens of literature as are many of the ballads; but the explanation of Mr. Lang and the Quarterly Reviewer is that it was done during the excitement of saltation. Ballads, in the Quarterly Reviewer’s opinion, were probably the production of a ‘chorus at a village festival,’ each, or a number, of the singers and dancers adding his or her contribution; and after ‘the ballads’ had been ‘evolved rather than composed’ by the combined genius of the village communities, the minstrel calmly appropriated them as his own, and chanted them to the great delight and edification of the same community who were their real authors. Mr. Lang, on the other hand, ignores the minstrel altogether as a ‘mere stumbling-block in the way of the student of the growth of ballads’; but apart from this his position is identical with that of the Quarterly Reviewer, for he holds that they are

The theory of communal authorship as expounded by Mr. Andrew Lang and the Quarterly Reviewer.

all 'popular and primitive in the same sense as *märchen*,' and that they 'all spring from the same primitive custom of dance, accompanied by improvised song, which still exists in Greece and Russia, and even the valley of the Pyrenees.' Again, it is necessary to emphasise the fact that Mr. Lang does not allude—as Ten Brink and others do—to the evolution of poetry in remote or prehistoric times, but to the authorship of actually existing ballads, Scots or English—*Chevy Chace*, *Sir Patrick Spens*, *Child Waters*, *Kinmont Willie*, or, in short, any other standard ballad you like to name. The only historical evidence adduced for this sweeping conclusion is (1) that in a few instances—there are four in all, viz. *Robene hude*, *Thom of lyn*, *Lewis grene* (*The Murning Maiden*), and *Ihonne ermistrangis dance*—the names of the dances in *The Complaynt of Scotland* are identical with the names of certain surviving ballads, and (2) that the song after the victory of Bannockburn was 'sungyn in dances, in carolles of ye maidens and mynstrellys of Scotland.' But (1) in the same *Complaynt of Scotland* the names of many more ballads occur as merely tales and songs; (2) there is no evidence that these dances—even if they were ballad dances, dances accompanied by song—were improvised by the dancers; (3) even the dance song of Bannockburn may have been, and probably was, the work of professional dancers and minstrels (for whom Mr. Lang can find no use), and the work of the chief minstrel, but in any case it is very rude and

simple; and (4) it is beyond belief that any of those four ballads whose names occur in *The Complaynt* as dances could have been essentially created either by such artistes as those who celebrated Bannockburn, or even by the most primitive of village communities. Further, whatever connection the ballad may, in primitive times, have had with the dance, something called 'balat-making' was, as we learn from Dunbar's *Lament*—to name merely this solitary evidence—accomplished before Dunbar's day by individual 'makaris.' Thus the theory of absolute communal authorship—whatever it may have to commend it as an explanation of the origin of poetry—is, as regards the ballad poetry we actually possess, founded rather on general *a priori* considerations than on minute inquiry into facts; and the more one seeks to have recourse to it for an explanation of individual examples of the literature for which it professes to account, the more unmistakably does it approve itself a mere 'broken reed.'

We come, then, to the minstrel theory of Motherwell and others, derived from the notion that some of the ballads transmitted to us are of immemorial antiquity, and that we still have historical ballads closely related to very remote historical events. The theory of the very great age of certain historical ballads has been accepted unquestioningly by certain editors owing to the notion that other non-historical ballads are of immemorial antiquity; while the supposition that

Are there any
ballads of
immemorial
antiquity?

we possess certain ballads relating to very remote historical events tends, of course, to foster the belief in the immemorial antiquity of the other classes of ballads.

The few simple and rude rhymes relating to the death of Alexander III. (1285), the siege of Berwick (1296), the battle of Bannockburn (1314), and the character of the English (1328), are the earliest extant specimens of Scottish popular historic poetry, the authenticity of which may be said to be fairly well established; but an antiquity as remote as the earliest of these has been claimed for what Coleridge has termed the 'grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spens.' In publishing it for the first time, Bishop Percy remarked that he had not been able to ascertain when the 'fatal expedition happened which proved so destructive'; but Sir Walter Scott, while observing that 'the introduction of the king into the ballad seems a deviation from history,' affirmed that the cause of Sir Patrick Spens's voyage, which 'is pointed out distinctly,' shows that 'the song has claims to high antiquity, as referring to a very remote period in Scottish history,' and broached the theory that it referred to an unrecorded and disastrous expedition of Sir Patrick Spens to bring Margaret, the Maid of Norway, to Scotland after the death of her grandfather Alexander III.

It so happened, however, that—as Fordun records—the ambassadors who in 1281 conveyed Margaret,

Historical
ballads. 'Sir
Patrick Spens'
—general belief
in its great
antiquity.
Views of Sir
Walter Scott.

the daughter of Alexander, to be married to Eric of Norway were wrecked on their return, and although none of the names of the ambassadors resembled in the remotest degree that of Sir Patrick Spens, Motherwell, after fortifying himself by calculating that the 12th of August,¹ on which, according to Wyntoun, the ambassadors set sail for Norway, fell in 1281 on, as stated in the ballad, a Monday, proposed, in contradiction to this same ballad (which was so accurate in regard to the day of the week, but so inaccurate as to the 'time of the year'), to make the ballad refer to this later event—the sending away, not the bringing home, of a king's daughter. Hardly had he promulgated his theory when, of course, Peter Buchan, with the aid of his 'wight of Homer's craft,' discovered the following doggerel stanza which editor after editor has been accustomed gravely to appeal to in corroboration of the Motherwell conclusion:—

'But I man sail the seas the morn,
And likewise sae man you,
To Norroway wi' our King's daughter,
A chosen Queen she's now.'

must
so

And since the Buchan corroboration, the Motherwell theory has practically held the field. Robert Chambers ventured to include *Sir Patrick Spens* in the list of ballads which he attributed to the fabrication of Lady Wardlaw, but outwardly did not per-

¹ It was really in summer, not in winter, be it observed, that, according to Wyntoun, the ship set sail for Norway.

severe in maintaining his theory against the adverse criticism to which it was subjected; and the final stage in the corroboration of the Motherwell-Buchan theory was the discovery by Maidment in Papa, Orkney, of a tumulus reputed by the natives—instructed it may be by Buchan, or some Buchan enthusiast—to be the grave of Sir Patrick Spens. True, the ballad states that Sir Patrick and his followers lie ‘fifty fathom deep’ in the ocean, but, as has been pointed out, Papa is about ‘half way’ between Norway and Aberdour—not, be it observed, the merely Fife Aberdour on the Firth of Forth, but the vastly more probable Aberdour on the Aberdeenshire coast!

Down, therefore, to the publication of Professor Child’s second volume (1886), the Motherwell theory was that generally accepted; and it is so still,¹ though it was not accepted by Professor Child. Mr. Lang, who in the *Blackwood* paper refers to the ballad as perhaps the ‘most antique ballad of all,’ states that the ‘historical event which may have suggested it is “plausibly” fixed, says Mr. Child, in 1281’; but though Professor Child did politely refer to the ‘plausibility’ of the Motherwell theory, and, with his usual anxiety to tell all that was to be known, even informed his readers that Mr. MacMath of Edinburgh

¹ Thus Professor Walker, in *Three Centuries of Scottish Literature*, 1893, vol. i. p. 167, writes: ‘It seems as fully established as it could well be on any but ancient documentary evidence, that *Sir Patrick Spens* carries us back to the year 1281.’

had found the name Spens in 'five charters of David II. between 1329 and 1370,' his own exact position was that 'this ballad may be historical or it may not,' and he even speculated that Sir Patrick might be 'only a shipmaster of purely local fame who was lost off Aberdeen a couple of hundred years ago.' This, it may be said, is a very improbable hypothesis, but so much the more does it indicate the puzzlement of Professor Child as to the origin of the ballad, and how slight was his faith in the theory of its unique antiquity. Nor is such lack of faith surprising. For, apart from insuperable difficulties of metre and even language, there is the important obstacle not only that no name resembling that of Sir Patrick Spens is known to have been associated with the early embassies to Norway, but that neither the disastrous occurrence to which the ballad professes to refer, nor the remarkable ballad itself, is mentioned by any of the old writers, and that the earliest known publication of the ballad was that in Percy's *Reliques*, 1765.

But for the fact, however, of a preconceived notion of the ballad's great antiquity, a solution of the problem would probably have been looked for in connection with the voyage of James VI. in 1589 to bring home his bride from Denmark. The bride, expected in Scotland in September, had not arrived on the day fixed for the marriage, and all sorts of rumour of disaster

were in circulation, until a message arrived that having twice been driven back by contrary winds, she had taken refuge on the coasts of Norway, and that the Scots and Danes were in disagreement as to whether she should be brought over at once, or the voyage be deferred till the spring. Then it was that the king resolved, as narrated in the ballad, to send out a ship to fetch her 'at this time of the year,' 'be it wind, be it weat, be it hail, be it sleet'; and among the 'new commissioners directed to the Queen' was, not indeed Sir Patrick Spens, but Sir Patrick Vans of Barnbarroch, a name which might easily, in the popular mind, get changed into the more Scottish name Spens. Further, the same Sir Patrick Vans was also the original ambassador chosen to negotiate the marriage in 1587; and when the king, after appointing the 'new commission' in October 1589, finally resolved secretly to embark himself, Sir Patrick Vans was chosen to accompany him, and remained in Denmark until the marriage, when he returned in December to Scotland to report the king's safe arrival and the conclusion of the ceremony. The resolve of the king to fetch the queen 'at this time of the year' greatly perturbed the nation, the more especially that the weather continued very tempestuous. A great storm delayed the ships from sailing, and when they at last ventured on their voyage, and got beyond the Forth and out of sight of land, they were driven back twenty or thirty miles by a renewal of the blast, and rode for a time opposite

St. Monans.¹ May not the ballad, therefore, have been suggested by a rumour of disaster to this adventurous expedition? And is it not as likely, at least, that Sir Patrick Vans was its hero, as a quite unknown Sir Patrick Spens of the thirteenth century, or an equally unknown skipper of some two hundred years ago? That is, supposing the ballad is not a mere forgery, which is less likely than the supposition that, as we now have it, it is an improvement by some one—Lady Wardlaw or another—of a minstrel ballad of the late sixteenth century.

Next to *Sir Patrick Spens*, the historical ballad which claims the greatest antiquity is a long recitation, *Auld Maitland*, first published by Scott in 1802, who got it from Hogg as recited by his mother, and the date of which Scott placed ‘about the reign of David II. or his successor.’ But though Sir Richard and his ‘auld

‘Auld Maitland.’

¹ ‘His Majestie with the rest sould maid saile vpone Sondag at efternounge, the xix day of October instant, at quhilk tyme theare come on sick a deadlie storme, that the schipis lyand all in Leith read were schakin loose, and driven all vp to St. Margarets houe, and sua the jorney stayed for that nicht. Vpone the xxij day of October, about tuelff houris at evin, his Majestie maid saile to Norroway with fyve schippis in company: his Majestie wes driven back xx or xxx myles with great storme, and read foranent St. Monanis’ (Moysie’s *Memoirs*, p. 80). Two women burned for sorcery at Edinburgh in 1590-91 asserted that Bothwell had bribed them to make storms during the king’s voyage. See also, in connection with the Bass, a reference in R. L. Stevenson’s *Catriona*. It is worth noting that the earliest version of the ballad represents the disaster as occurring on the outward voyage.

grey beard' are referred to in Gavin Douglas's *Palice of Honour*, and we also learn from a poem in the Maitland ms. that his exploits had been the subject of song and story, it is impossible to resist the conclusion of Ayton and Maidment that the ballad is a modern composition; and it has not been included in Professor Child's volumes.¹

If, then, we reject *Sir Patrick Spens* and *Auld Maitland* as thirteenth or fourteenth century productions, the most ancient Scottish incident known to have been commemorated in a ballad, of which any fragment remains, is the murder of the Lord of Liddesdale by the Earl of Douglas in the forest of Ettrick, in 1353, as narrated by Hume of Godscroft (1560-1630), who gives the beginning of the old song:—

‘The Countesse of Douglass, out of her bower she came
And loudly there that she did call,
“It is for the Lord of Liddesdale
That I let all these tears doune fall.”’

But the ballad itself has not been preserved.

The murder of the Lord of Liddesdale took place thirty-five years before the battle of Otterburn, celebrated in the ballad of which the earliest Scottish

¹ On the line, ‘And fired the Merse and Teviotdale,’ the late Professor Veitch commented: ‘That word *fired*, not burned, speaks of the glow of the flame as present to the very eye of the minstrel’ (*Poetry of the Scottish Border*, 1893, vol. ii. p. 130). But this use of ‘fire’ is not peculiar to the minstrel, nor uniquely Scottish, nor in any sense exceptional, but quite common and modern, and it may even have been an emendation of Scott.

version is that preserved by Herd (1776). It contains the line, 'The Percy and Montgomerie met,' quoted in *The Complaynt of Scotland* as the name of a song, but it is impossible to tell whether or not the stanza has been interpolated at a later date, especially as it is but a repetition—with the substitution of Montgomerie for Douglas—of a stanza common to both the Scots and English versions of the ballad. The oldest extant version is the English one (c. 1550) in the Cottonian MSS., but this, of course, is no proof that the Scottish version was borrowed from the English one; and something may even be said for Professor Veitch's theory, that both versions, as well as the ballad of *Chevy Chase*, which so much moved the heart of Sir Philip Sidney when he heard it sung by 'some blind crowder,' and which is also mentioned in *The Complaynt*, may derive from some 'original ballad of Otterbourne which we have lost.'

After Otterburn, the next earliest event commemorated in a ballad, which has been claimed as ancient, is that of Harlaw, 1411. The *battel of harylaw* is the title of one of the songs in *The Complaynt*; and a copy of a ballad of that name, dated 1688, was at one time in the library of Robert Milne. No doubt it was from some such broadside that Allan Ramsay got the *Evergreen* version of the ballad; and though we can scarce believe that he refrained from altering it, it may be substantially the song referred to in *The Complaynt*.

'Chevy Chase,'
and the 'Battle
of Otter-
bourne.'

The 'Battle of
Harlaw.'

Since, however, it is written in the French octave, it was most likely composed long after the battle, for there is no evidence that the Chaucerian influence reached Scotland until the reign of James I.

None of the surviving examples of the historical ballad thus date earlier than about the beginning of the fifteenth century, and in view of the fact that nearly all even of the rudest examples of minstrelsy referring to earlier events have perished, is it possible to accept the theory that, in the case of the other ballads, we actually possess examples of the older minstrelsy anterior to the romance of chivalry? As matter of fact, the oldest authenticated specimen of the romantic ballad we possess is that forming part of the romance detailing the confabulations of Thomas of Erceldoune with the Elf Queen, but, as has been already stated (*ante*, p. 23), that romance itself is founded on the older one of *Ogier le Danois*. Thus a conclusion of Professor Walker,¹ that 'the earliest assignable date for the ballads of superstition does lead us into a remoter past than the historical ballads,' wholly loses the significance he attaches to it.²

¹ *Three Centuries of Scottish Literature*, vol. i. p. 171.

² A traditional copy of this ballad was obtained by Jamieson from Mrs. Brown of Falkland. Its close resemblance to the old ms. copy has been cited as a proof of the remarkable fidelity with which old ballads may be preserved by tradition from even the time of the Rhymer. But is it not, as Dr. J. A. H. Murray opined, rather an indication that the traditional copy has a comparatively recent connection with the ms.? Similarly, can we now believe, with Sir Walter Scott, that any special virtue attaches to a copy 'obtained from a lady residing not far from Erceldoune'?

Antecedent probability, therefore, favours some form of the theory of Professor Courthope: that the traditional ballad is the work of later minstrels than the ancient bard, and that those ballads which do not form a later variety of the *chanson de geste* are adapted from older forms of literature—the romance, the lay, or the fabliau. Moreover, the theory—as even a cursory examination of Professor Child’s volume might at least suggest, and a detailed study cannot but confirm—is very strongly countenanced by apparent facts; and any modification of it can be justified, it would seem, only (1) by the discovery of a few apparent exceptions in the case of individual ballads; or (2) by proof that later minstrels were not, as Professor Courthope predicates, ‘degenerate’;¹ or (3) by the consideration that some of the Scots traditional ballads were originally the work of poets other than minstrels.

Professor
Courthope’s
theory
favoured by
antecedent
probability.
How far
should it be
modified?

Professor Courthope’s general theory that the ballads were the work of later minstrels does not, of course, depend on the justness of his verdict that the later minstrels were universally an inferior class of poets to the ancient bards;² but is not the question

¹ This question is closely associated with that of how far individual ballads are either corrupted or cooked.

² Mr. Lang had no difficulty (*Blackwood*, vol. clviii. pp. 381-90) in exposing the mistaken character of Professor Courthope’s theory of degeneracy as applied to the ballad of *Mary Hamilton*, but that exposure left the question as to whether ballads are the work of minstrels exactly where it was.

as to their inferiority a more comprehensive and complex one—especially as regards the Scottish ballads—than he seems to realise? He compares *Complexity of the question.* *Otterbourne* and *The Hunting of the Cheviot* with the Anglo-Saxon *Death of Byrhtnoth*, much to their disadvantage as *Deteriorating influence of tradition.* regards especially circumstantiality and truthfulness; but the fact that *'Chevy Chace' and 'Otterbourne.'* *The Hunting of the Cheviot* was in great part fiction had been noticed by Hume of Godscroft, who makes mention of a *Scots song made of Otterbourne*, which 'tellethe the time, about Lammas; and also the occasion to take frays out of England; also the dividing armies betwixt the Earls of Fife and Douglas, and their several journeys almost as in authentic history.'¹ But even this ballad, as known to Hume, probably differed greatly from the original one. We must make allowance for the deterioration effected by possibly some centuries of mangling by reciters; for tradition, contact with the natural man, contagion from the 'heart of the people'—which heart, however sincere and strong in its emotions, is now, and probably ever was, wholly untrained in the art of poetic expression—does not tend as some, not including Professor Courthope, assume, towards the elaboration of the consummate qualities of the ballad, but rather, as hundreds of instances could be adduced to prove, towards their

¹ *House of Douglas*, vol. i. p. 195.

obscuration, defilement, and final effacement.¹ Many of the traditional ballads are strangely unequal, and at a later period they tended to become a kind of patchwork in which stanzas of startling poetic beauty are occasionally to be found side by side with mere tawdry vulgarity or hopeless bathos; but we may surely believe that the qualities of *Chevy Chace*, which stirred the heart of Sir Philip Sidney as with 'the sound of a trumpet,' were echoes from the heart of a true minstrel, who, like the author of the *Death of Byrhtnoth*, must have felt the reality of the conflict of which he sang. Much of the original beauty and accuracy of the alliteration and rhythm of *Chevy Chace* has plainly been lost, and it may therefore be inferred that both in it and in the English and

¹ Assonance, for example, is frequently assumed to be a distinctive and original characteristic of the ballad. Mr. Lang lays much stress on 'the use of assonance in place of rhyme,' as an indication of the ballad's absolute folkness; and the Quarterly Reviewer, though he states that 'rhyme is the basis of the whole musical scheme of the ballad,' affirms that 'alliteration and assonance have their place in it.' But though assonance—that is, mere vowel rhyme—had its place in the poetry of the Romance and other dialects, where it was governed by strict laws, it is not a general characteristic of old poetry. It has no proper place in English verse, and its furtive and haphazard presence in the ballad is evidence only of a dulled and defective ear, or an imperfect command of the resources of common rhyme. Again, while ballads deteriorate by tradition, they also deteriorate still more vilely by being passed through the crucible of the hack balladist, whence they are issued as broadsides, or in chap-books; but by all in town or country, nearest to 'the natural state of man,' these mere abortions of the old ballad were and are received with acclamation. So much for the 'natural man' as the vein in which is to be found the pure deposit of the primæval ballad!

Scottish versions of *Otterbourne* alteration and interpolation have wrought sad havoc on the unity and force of the original recital.¹

¹ Could we accept Scott's version of *Otterbourne* in *The Minstrelsy* as bearing throughout anything like a close resemblance to the original ballad, it would be impossible to regard it as the work of a minstrel in any sense degenerate; but the original material at Abbotsford shows that the ballad owes much of its special excellence to Scott himself. Indeed, the most vivid and touching stanzas in the whole ballad—those describing the death of Douglas—stanzas 'which,' in the opinion of Professor Veitch, 'for power and simple pathos are unsurpassed in ballad literature,' are little more than Scott's improvement of what was very much the mere concoction of Hogg. Here are the four, it is to be feared, guilty stanzas :—

"My nephew good," the Douglas said,

"What recks the death of ane?

Last night I dream'd a dreary dream,

And I ken the day's thy ain.

My wound is deep; I fain would sleep;

Take thou the vanguard of the three,

And hide me by the braken bush,

That grows on yonder lilye lea.

O bury me by the braken bush,

Beneath the blooming brier,

Let never living mortal ken

That ere a kindly Scot lies here."

He lifted up that noble lord,

Wi' the saut tear in his e'e,

He hid him in the braken bush,

That his merrie men might not see.'

Now here is all that we have in Herd for the above stanzas :—

'The boy's taen out his little penknife,

That hanget low down by his gare,

And he gae Earl Douglas a deadly wound,

Alack! a deep wound and a sare.

Earl Douglas said to Sir Hugh Montgomery,

"Tak' thou the vanguard o' the three,

And bury me at yon braken bush

That stands upon yon lilly lec."

matters

know

fern

gave

Again, Professor Courthope observes, justly enough as regards England, that towards the close of the

The stanzas in the Sharpe ms., though they agree with the Herd ms. in attributing the death of Douglas to the boy, more nearly resemble the stanzas in *The Minstrelsy*, but it is merely as moonlight resembles sunlight :—

“ ‘ Sir Hugh Montgomery, my sister’s son,
 I give you the vanguard over all ;
 Let it ne’er be said unto Old England,
 That so little made a true Scot fall.
 O lay me downen by yon brecken bush
 That grows upon yon lilly lea ;
 Let it ne’er be said unto Old England
 That so little made a true Scot die.’ ”

Now here is what Hogg sent to Scott :—

“ ‘ My wound is deep, I fain would sleep,
 Nae mair I’ll fighting see.

Gae lay me in the bracken bush
 That grows on yonder lee.

Go

But tell na ane of my brave men
 That I lye bleeding wan,
 But let the name of Douglas still
 Be shouted in the van.

not one

And bury me here on this lee,
 Beneath the blooming brier,
 And never let a mortal ken
 A kindly Scot lyes here.”

know

He liftet up that noble lord,
 Wi’ the saut tear in his e’e,
 And hid him in the bracken bush
 On yonder lily lee.’

But where did Hogg get this version, which is, besides, much inferior to the Scott? The whole of the ballad, he told Scott, he got from ‘a crazy old man, and a woman deranged in her mind’; but he candidly admitted that for this, the ‘most interesting’ portion of it, they had both failed him, and he had been obliged to ‘take much of it in plain prose.’ This ‘plain prose’ Hogg put into verse, and Scott improving on it, created the ‘unsurpassed’ stanzas !

fourteenth century the attention of the better classes was 'occupied either with prose romances, or with allegorical and other purely literary forms of poetry, while the lower classes, who chiefly cared for minstrelsy, had long been accustomed to the forms of settled government'; but this by no means holds true of Border England or of Scotland generally, as regards either (1) its absorption in other forms of literature, or (2) its accustomedness to settled forms of government.

As for Scotland's absorption in prose romances or in allegory, there was, so far as is known, no such absorption. The Chaucerian influence probably did not reach Scotland until the return of James I.; and before this there was, as the whole after-development of Scots poetry bears witness, a vigorous poetic school of native growth.¹ Henryson's *Robene and Makyne* owes nothing to Chaucer, and Henryson's use of the common ballad measure in other pieces is clear evidence of the cultivation of the ballad, not merely by inferior minstrels, but by a class of poets worthy to be designated 'makaris.' Similarly, *Christis Kirk* or *Peblis* did not inaugurate a vernacular poetry called into sudden existence by

¹ No doubt there was a decay in minstrelsy before the time of Blind Harry. He himself refers to a time—

'Quhen gud makaris rang weill in to Scotland,'
but that was subsequent to Wallace.

Does Professor
Courthope's
statement of
the causes
of degeneracy
apply to
Scotland?

Scotland not
absorbed in
prose romances
or allegory.
The traditional
Scottish
School.

the poetic sceptre of a merely Chaucerian James I., but bear upon even their structure and metre the impress of connection with a poetry having an unbroken national tradition. In *The Murning Maiden* (see *ante*, p. 292) we have also an example of the primitive pagan simplicity of sentiment characteristic of the old ballads, expressed with a poetic art which is far, indeed, from being 'degenerate'; and it is further scarcely necessary to mention that the use, even by the later Scottish 'makaris,' of the rhymed alliterative measures, and the general predominance of the bobwheel in Scottish verse, are a clear proof of the survival of the old traditional influences down to the very last.

It is not improbable, therefore, that a good deal of the best traditional poetry in the special ballad form, which now survives, was originally the work of 'makaris' other than the wandering minstrels who may have appropriated it to their own use. Moreover, many numbers included in Professor Child's and other collections, as *The Gaberlunzie Man*, *Hame cam our Gude Man*, *Lizie Baillie*, etc., are not in the ballad form, and have little or no connection with minstrels or old romance. Nor can we believe that such remarkable sets of verses as *The Twa Corbies*, or *O Waly, Waly*,¹ derive either from degenerate minstrels or

Some of the surviving ballads probably by other 'makaris' than wandering minstrels. Other so-called 'ballads' not in the ballad form.

¹ There can scarce be any doubt that *O Waly, Waly* is related to *Willow, Willow, Willow*, the song which is introduced into

the 'natural man,' though the former and its English analogue, *The Two Ravens*, may be founded on an incident in some forgotten romance.

Then, as to accustomedness to settled forms of government, was not Scotland in a state of chronic anarchy until even after the manhood of James VI.? And, more specially, did they genuine transcripts? there not exist in southern Scotland, until the first half of the sixteenth century, a condition of society which fostered a variety of the *chanson de geste* quite as circumstantial and faithful to fact as the Anglo-Saxon *Death of Byrhtnoth*? The very spirit of the reiver breathes in the rudest version of these old ballads, and how much more might be said in their praise could we be certain that such ballads in *The Minstrelsy* as *Kinmont Willie* or *Jamie Telfer* were nearly genuine transcripts of the versions obtained by Scott! 'Rude and raploch' in measure though they be, their swiftness and fire, and passion and imaginative truth create for us again the whole moral atmosphere of those feats of wild adventure; but, alas! as in *Otterbourne* (see *ante*, p. 362), the magic touch, it is to be feared, is mainly that of Scott, or Scott and Hogg.

Shakespeare's *Othello*, Act iv. Sc. 3, which is also included in Percy's *Reliques*, and of which there are black-letter copies in the Pepys and Roxburghe collections. Stenhouse (*Notes to Johnson's Museum*, p. 147) gives a parody of *O Waly* from a humorous Yule medley in 'Mr. Blackwood's mss., which were transcribed by Thomas Wode in 1566'; but David Laing states that the medley was inserted in the volume by a later possessor, 'evidently not earlier than 1620.'

Here, for example, is the wonderful picture of the fight in *Jamie Telfer*:—

‘*Jamie Telfer.*
Scott’s ver-
sion.

“Set on them, lads!” quo Willie than;
“Fye, lads, set on them cruellie!
For ere they win to the Ritterford
Mony a toom saddle there sall be.”

then

empty

Then til’t they gaed, wi’ heart and hand,
The blows fell thick as bickering hail;
And mony a horse ran masterless,
And mony a comely cheek was pale.

to it they
went

But Willie was stricken ower the head,
And thro’ the knapsap the sword has gane;
And Harden grat for very rage,
Whan Willie on the grund lay slain.

But he’s ta’en aff his gude steel cap
And thrice he’s waved it in the air.
The Dinlay snaw was ne’er mair white
Nor the lyart locks of Harden’s hair.

faded

“Revenge! revenge!” auld Wat gan cry;
“Fye, lads, lay on them cruellie!
We’ll ne’er see Teviotside again,
Or Willie’s death revenged sall be.”

Scott, who is the only authority for this version, mentions that there is another ballad under the same title, ‘in which nearly the same incidents are narrated with little difference, except that the honour of rescuing the cattle is attributed to the Liddesdale Elliots, headed by a chief, there called Martin Elliot of the Preakin Tower, whose son, Simon, is said to have fallen in

The Sharpe
version.

the action.' But here is how the fight reads in the latter version:¹—

Fall "Fa' on them, lads!" can Simmy say,
 "Fy, fa' on them cruelly!
 empty For or they win to the Ritterford
 Mony toom saddle there shall be."

But Simmy was stricken o'er the head,
 And thro' the napskape it is gane.
 And Moscrop made a dolefull rage
 When Simmy on the ground lay slain.

"Fy, lay on them!" co Martin Elliot,
 "Fy, lay on them cruelly!
 For ere they win to the Kerthop ford
 Mony toom saddle there shall be."

And yet Scott never gives the slightest hint that this version is in any way inferior to that in *The Minstrelsy*!

But those examples from *The Minstrelsy*, since they indicate that many old Border ballads have been partly transformed, necessarily give additional point to the doubts that were cast by Chambers on the genuine antiquity of many ballads which he attributed to Lady Wardlaw. That Lady Wardlaw, as Chambers surmised, was the sole fabricator of those ballads, is hardly possible; but she or another may have improved the old versions, just as Scott improved the Border ballads. And if she did even this, she must

How far are
 the old ballads
 cooked? 'Edom
 o' Gordon.'

¹ Recovered from the Sharpe papers by Mr. MacMath, Edinburgh, and printed for the first time in Child's *Ballads*, 1898, vol. v. pp. 249-251.

have possessed poetic gifts of rare delicacy. The version of *Edom o' Gordon*, for instance, published in 1755 from a copy furnished by Lord Hailes, is no whit inferior (to say the least) to either *Kinmont Willie* or *Jamie Telfer*. The scene of the maiden's death, whoever — man or woman — conceived or realised it, is a primitive and pagan masterpiece. She is beheld as these savage clansmen beheld her: the pitiless simplicity and truthfulness and reserve of the balladist are, after their own fashion, matchless:—

<p>' They row'd her in a pair of sheets And tow'd her owre the wa', But on the point of Edom's spear She gat a deadly fa'.</p>	<p>wrapped wall</p>
---	----------------------------------

O, bonnie, bonnie was her mouth,
 And cherry were her cheeks !
 And clear, clear was her yellow hair,
 Whereon the red bluid dreeps !

Then wi' his spear he turned her ower,
 O, gin her face was wan !
 He said, " You are the first that e'er
 I wished alive again."

He turned her ower and ower again,
 O, gin her skin was white !
 He said, " I might hae spared thy life
 To hae been some man's delight.

Busk and boun, my merry men all !
 For ill dooms I do guess :
 I canna look on that bonnie face
 As it lies on the grass."

Ready and
 away !
 bad luck

This, certainly, was not altogether the work of a 'degenerate minstrel.' And as we now have them, and however acquired, many of those ballads possess a fascination which is not to be found in more elaborate verse.

The old
ballads as
revelations of
the past.

Though solemnly serious and devoid of wit and humour, they are utterly true, so far as they go, to human nature, and quite stripped of false sentiment and affectation. In many ways—which there is no space here further to illustrate—they bring us into immediate contact with the antique, pagan, savage, superstitious, elemental characteristics of our race. They have to some extent embalmed for us the essence of old forgotten romances, and the essence of what the old romances embalmed—the sentiments, passions, beliefs, forms of thought, and imaginative wonder and dread of our pagan ancestors. Now little more than a merely imperfect echo of perished literatures, of extinct superstitions, of generations whose codes of honour and conduct were perhaps both better and worse than our own, or of feats and adventures which were, many of them, of merely tribal or local interest; mangled also in form, and distorted as to fact though they often are—the voice of the past speaks in them more authentically than it often does in the most elaborate of histories.

The late Mr. Chappell, in his *Popular Music of the Olden Time*, has successfully enough demonstrated the close connection between English and Scottish popular music from the fifteenth century, but the

inference that the connection was mainly of a one-sided character is not such an absolute certainty as he very much takes for granted; for it rests mainly on negative evidence, on the scarcity, namely, of early music preserved in old Scottish MSS. and attached to Scottish words; and this negative evidence is vitiated by the fact that such MSS. must at one time have existed. There is abundant proof of the cultivation of music, both secular and sacred, in Scotland down until towards the close of the sixteenth century. Moreover, a large number of the tunes mentioned in *Colkelbie's Sow*, in *The Complaynt of Scotland*, and in various poems of the old Scottish 'makaris,' as well as of the songs parodied in *The Gude and Godlie Ballates*, are not, as matter of fact, known to be of English origin; and there is in reality no proof that in early times the influence of the two countries, as regards music and song, was not entirely reciprocal.

Reciprocal
connection of
England and
Scotland as
regards music
and song.

The Huntis Up, for example, is mentioned in *The Complaynt of Scotland*; and on this fact Dr. Furnivall¹ comments: 'This is a lively English tune well fitted for dancers, printed in Mr. Chappell's *Popular Music*, i. 60,' and he further states that the first mention of the tune is in 1537. Chappell also, on the authority of Puttenham (1587)—who mentioned that one Gray made such a

'The Huntis
Up.' Is it Scots
or English?

¹ Notes to the *Complaynt of Scotland* (Early English Text Society's ed.), p. lxxxvii, and in *Captain Cox* (Ballad Society), p. clxiii.

ballad in the time of Henry VIII.—supposes that Gray is the original author of the song parodied by John Thorne, and in *The Gude and Godlie Ballates*; but the mere statement of Puttenham is in itself very flimsy evidence, especially when the much earlier existence of the song in Scotland is clearly proved by a line in Robert Henryson's fable of *The Wolf, the Foxe, and the Cadzeare*:—

‘The Cadzeare sang Hunts up, up on hie.’

These *Fables* were probably all written before 1480, by which date, therefore, *The Hunts Up* was already in Scotland what would now be called a folk-song! Since, moreover, it was known as a dance tune among the country people of Scotland before 1549, and is parodied in *The Gude and Godlie Ballates*, which were, many of them, of as early a date as this, is it not as likely to have been of Scottish as of English origin, and all the more that, as we learn from *Habbie Simson*, *Hunts Up* was a favourite tune of the Scottish pipers? The truth is, that of the popular songs and music of the earlier centuries our knowledge is so fragmentary that definite and decided conclusions as to origin are very apt to be delusive.

Dealing with a later period, Chappell also (very justly) regretted the confusion between English and Scottish popular tunes and songs, caused by the methods of Ramsay in *The Tea Table Miscellany*, 1724, etc., of Thomson in *Orpheus Caledonius*, 1725, and Oswald in *Scots Airs*, 1740, and other musical

publications—a confusion which was further aggravated by the comments and assertions of many subsequent editors, including especially Stenhouse,¹ whose many sins of omission and commission were only partly rectified by David Laing;² but did English broadside and chapbook literature owe practically nothing, as Chappell asserted, to old Scottish tunes and songs? Chappell scouted the very notion that any Anglo-Scottish ballad or song could derive in any way from a Scots original. He referred to them as ‘that numerous class of songs and ballads which before the Union of the Crowns had been called “Northern”—a polite substitute for “rustic”—and which under Scottish kings were gradually denominated “Scotch.”’ ‘The change,’ he further added, ‘may be said to have commenced after Charles II. had been crowned King of Scots.’³ Of course it was only by such a theory that he could eliminate Scottish songs and tunes from Anglo-Scottish broadsides. Still, though dictated by antecedent conviction rather than derived from an exhaustive preliminary study of the facts, the explanation may be partly true; but (1) a tune may be termed ‘Northern’ from mere carelessness; (2) tunes are generally termed ‘Northern’ when the subject of the ballad is not merely ‘rustic,’ but ‘Northern’; (3) ‘Northern’ is the

The Anglo-
Scottish
ballad. Its
origin.
Chappell's
theory.

¹ *Notes to Johnson's Musical Museum*, 1853.

² *Supplementary Notes*.

³ *Roxburghe Ballads*, iii. 433.

proper designation of tunes common to the North of England and the Lowlands of Scotland ;¹ (4) there is no evidence of any change in the method of naming the tunes of individual ballads ; and (5) broadsides printed at a much earlier date than the Restoration were written to 'pleasant Scotch tunes,' as *The Northern Lasse*, of which a copy in the Euing Collection was printed before 1629.

This very ballad set to a pleasant Scotch tune called *The Broom of Cowden Knowes*, was, with strange maladroitness, selected by Chappell² to illustrate his theory that so-called 'Scotch tunes' are merely English rustic tunes. 'The evidence that the tune is "Scotch" rests,' he said, on this ballad, 'for in other ballads to the same air it is not so described ; and Burton, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, quotes "O the broom, the bony, bony broom" as a country tune' [as no doubt it was, whether Scotch or English]. And Chappell further adds : '*The Broom of Cowden Knowes* is in the metre of, and evidently suggested by, the older ballad of *New Broom on Hill*.³ A copy of the original *Broom on Hill* may even yet be discovered, or at least an earlier copy of the tune,

¹ Chappell, in *Popular Music* (p. 613), objected to the possibility of *Brome on Hill* being Scots for the reason that it is 'not on the incomplete scale which is commonly called Scotch' ; but only a small percentage of Scots tunes are on this scale, and indeed tunes common to the North of England and Scotland have no peculiarities to distinguish them from Southern tunes.

² *Popular Music*, p. 613.

³ Black-letter in the Pepys Collection.

and thus set the question at rest.' But (1) though *Broom, broom on hill*, is mentioned by Laneham¹ (1575) as an ancient song in the possession of Captain Cox, it is also mentioned in *The Complaynt of Scotland* (1549) as a well-known Scottish dance; and it is therefore by no means evident that the discovery of an ancient copy of the tune—which may have been long common to both countries—would set the question at rest; (2) even were the tune originally English, it plainly was well known long before 1549 in Scotland, and most likely had been set to Scots words, which, though not known to Ramsay²—who allowed a vamp of *The Northern Lasse* to appear in *The Tea Table Miscellany*,—may have been brought to England shortly after the Union of the Crowns; (3) the title '*Northern Lasse*,' cannot mean merely '*Rustic Lasse*,' any more than the phrase '*north countrie*' can mean '*rustic countrie*'; (4) not only is the ballad set 'to a pleasant Scotch tune called *The Broome of Cowden Knowes*,' but it introduces '*Cowden Knowes*,' of the '*North Countrie*,' into the chorus:—

'With O, the broome, the bony broome,
The broome of Cowden Knowes,
Fain would I be in the North Countrie,
To milk my dady's ewes';

¹ See *Captain Cox*, ed. Furnivall (Ballad Society), pp. cxxviii-ix.

² There is a traditional ballad *The Broom o' the Cowden Knowes*, but its origin is involved in dubiety, the earliest printed fragments—*Bonny May*, in Herd's Collection, 1769—making no reference to Cowden Knowes.

and (5) the ballad actually begins,

‘Through Liddersdale as lately I went.’

Yet Chappell—who apparently had never heard of the Homes ‘who dwelt on “Leader side,”’ nor of ‘Leader haughs and Yarrow,’ nor of Colden Knowes, the old keep of the Homes on the broom-covered braes (or ‘knowes,’ that is, knolls) of the Leader—had little difficulty in concluding that both Liddersdale and Cowden Knowes—about the meaning of which he showed no curiosity—were somehow the invention solely of the balladist, and that the ballad—tune, chorus, first line and everything—was wholly English!

Similarly, it is a mere assumption that the black-letter *Jockey’s Escape from Bony Dundee*,¹ is wholly

¹ The tune *Adew Dundee* is in the Skene ms., which does not of course prove it to be Scottish, though the Scottish title is all in favour of this conclusion. As to the lateness of the Skene ms., Chappell failed to prove that the fifth and sixth parts of the Skene ms. are later than D’Urfey. That the tune *Adew Dundee* did not appear in *The Dancing Master* until 1688 proves nothing, and that *The Three Sheep-Skins*, ‘an English Country Dance,’ did not appear in the same work until 1697 proves as little, for it might take some time to be known if of Northern origin. But Chappell brought forward, in addition, an objection which he regarded as absolutely fatal: that the Skene ms. contained *Peggy is over the Sea with the Soldier*, which ‘derives its name,’ he said, ‘from a common Aldermay Churchyard ballad, to which no earlier date than 1710 can reasonably be assigned.’ Certainly this would have been fatal—only it was not true, and this Chappell himself proved, though he failed to note its bearing on the antiquity of the Skene ms.—by discovering the unique and much earlier black-letter *Constant, Faire, and Fine Betty*, ‘to the tune of *Peggy went over Sea with a Soldiour*’ (*Roxburghe Ballads*, i. 207), and a little later he edited the ballad of ‘*The Soldiour and Peggy* to a new Northern

the creation of D'Urfey, who never elsewhere did anything like the chorus 'Come fill up my cup,' etc., which Scott borrowed. Nor though the only known Scottish version of *'Twas within a mile o' Edinburgh Toon*¹ is modern, can we believe that D'Urfey had no original Scots model for *'Twas within a Furlong of Edinburgh Town*, any more than we can believe that the tune of *The Liggan Waters*, to which the black-letter ballad of *The Bonny Scottish Lad and the Yielding Lass* is set, has somehow, as Chappell² deemed it necessary for his theory's sake to suggest, reference to the Irish not to the Scottish Logan Water; or that D'Urfey's *Scotch Wedding* is the original of *The Blythesome Bridal*; or that

Other Anglo-
Scottish
ballads
founded on
Scottish
tavern ditties.

tune,' which ballad, he said, 'may be dated as within the first half of the seventeenth century' (*Roxburghe Ballads*, ii. 475). Further, he mentioned in his introduction to this last ballad that 'the only known copy of the tune is in the form of an arrangement for the lute; it is included among the Skene manuscripts.' So that the only copy of this English tune is that preserved in a Scots ms.!

¹ Chappell, to prove that the 'Scotch tunes,' that 'were popular in England, were mostly spurious,' and the words 'invariably so,' quotes from *A Second Tale of a Tub*: 'Each party call for particular tunes . . . the blue bonnets' [i.e. Scotch], 'had very good voices, but, being at the further end of the room, were not distinctly heard. Yet they split their throats in hollowing out *Bonny Dundee*, *Valiant Jockey*, *Sawny was a dawdy Lad*, and *'Twas within a furlong of Edinburgh town*'; but can we believe that the Scots would 'hollow out' the Anglo-Scots rubbish of the broad-sidists in ridicule of themselves? And does the quotation not rather prove that the Scots tunes and songs became known in London by the custom of the Scots to 'hollow' them out in taverns and elsewhere?

² *Roxburghe Ballads*, iii. 475.

the various versions of the *Jock and Jenny* broadsides have no connection with the old Scots song in the Bannatyne ms.¹ The truth, on the contrary, is that the broadsidists, being by no means inventive in their themes, were glad to borrow whenever they had opportunity; while it is also very plain that they were much amused, not merely by certain specimens of the Scot they met in taverns, but by the peculiar ditties which those 'bluecaps' were accustomed to 'hollow out.'

Of the transformation of a Scottish song into an Anglo-Scottish one, Mr. Ebsworth has unwittingly supplied a very striking example—an example which sheds a flood of light on the subject. In *The Roxburghe Ballads*² he printed from Monmouth's *Manuscript Note Book*³ what he termed 'A Scotch Song, 1679,' remarking that it was 'probably a distinct Scotch song, learned orally in 1679 and written down then or afterwards; not yet found elsewhere, or in print.'⁴ But in the course of editing the Roxburghe

Mr. Ebsworth's
inadvertent
example of an
Anglicised
Scottish song.

¹ See *ante*, p. 289.

² Vol. iv. p. 544.

³ Now No. 1527 of the Egerton ms. in the British Museum.

⁴ Part of it was, however, in print, the last stanza forming the first of a version of *Wallifou fa' the Cat*, in Herd's *Songs*, ii. 139:—

'There was a bonnie wi' laddie
Was keeping a bonny whine sheep;
There was a bonnie wee lassie
Was wading the water sae deep.
Was wading the water sae deep,
And a little above her knee;
The laddie cries unto the lassie,
Come down Tweedside to me.'

ballads, Mr. Ebsworth discovered the Anglo-Scots transmogrification of the ditty in *A New Song of Moggie's Jealousie or Jockie's Vindication*,¹ and in the introduction to it he remarked: 'We have shown that the Duke of Monmouth had been impressed with this song either in 1679, when he was in Scotland, or at least early in 1685, when he was in Holland, thus he jotted down several of the stanzas from memory. Compare the true text now given with the memoranda of vol. iv. p. 544.' Now (1) the black-letter song *Moggie* was only registered 1st June 1684, so that Monmouth could certainly not have jotted it down in 1679, nor, probably, even in Holland in 1685; (2) the song jotted down by Monmouth—three stanzas only in all—contains two stanzas not to be found in *Moggie*, and Mr. Ebsworth's second thoughts,² when first confronted with the Anglo-Scottish *Moggie*, that the Monmouth piece is 'three verses of two Scottish songs intermixed,' cannot be regarded as 'happy,' not only because all three stanzas are in the same measure, but because the first stanza—which, with the second stanza, he now regards as belonging to a different song from the third, and having nothing whatever to do with *Moggie*—begins 'Wilt thou be wilful still?' which is actually the alternative designation of the tune appended to *Moggie*! (3) the third stanza, which he finally regards as an 'imperfect copy' from *Moggie*, could not

¹ *Roxburghe Ballads*, vi. 170.

² *Ibid.*, v. 393.

have been copied from that Anglo-Scottish version, for the very sufficient reason that *Moggie* contains no reference to the Tweed as in the Monmouth stanza; a fact which further shows that the Herd version could not have been got from *Moggie*, but that, on the contrary, the Herd and Monmouth stanzas derive from a common Scottish original; (4) notwithstanding imperfections in spelling, and mistakes in regard to words, the Monmouth song is clearly not an Anglo-Scottish, but a purely Scottish version; and (5) it is impossible to believe that the ballad hack could have written *Moggie*, such as it is, without the aid of some Scots original.

It would therefore seem that their startling discoveries of the methods of Ramsay and his successors, and of the unfounded nature of many of Stenhouse's statements, tended to produce in the minds of Chappell, Mr. Ebsworth, and Dr. Furnivall, a reaction towards the other extreme. They have thus committed themselves to opinions which are confuted by their own subsequent researches; and Mr. Ebsworth's inadvertent illustration of the fallacious character of their general inferences renders great caution necessary in accepting conclusions against the Scottish origin of songs on mere negative evidence.

Great caution necessary in accepting conclusions against the Scottish origin of songs on mere negative evidence.

committed themselves to opinions which are confuted by their own subsequent researches; and Mr. Ebsworth's inadvertent illustration of the fallacious character of their general inferences renders great caution necessary in accepting conclusions against the Scottish origin of songs and tunes, even when such evidence as we possess may seem to render their spuriousness almost certain. It is, for example, more than likely, on the evidence, that *My Jo Janet* in *The Orpheus Caledonius* and *The Tea Table Mis-*

cellany was vamped from the black-letter broadside *Jenny, Jenny*,¹ but even if it was, the black-letter was in all likelihood itself vamped from a Scots original, for not only has the chorus a very Scottish jingle, but the tune to which it is set in *The Orpheus* is found in the Straloch MS. (1627-29). Moreover, the Scots word 'Keek'—'Keek in the well'—is actually printed 'Kit,' which raises the suspicion that the broadside hack himself, the author of the ballad, did not understand the meaning of the word.²

The significance of these illustrations—which might easily be multiplied—from the black-letter broadsides is that they indicate (1) the existence in Scotland, in the seventeenth century or earlier, of a great variety of now forgotten native lyrics, most of them coloured with the ingenuous indelicacy which, more or less, tinges all our early literature, and some of them very much akin to the ditties collected by Burns, and partly preserved in the volume known as *The Merry Muses*; and (2) that while Ramsay, Thomson, Oswald, and others borrowed much from English sources, it is (a) by no means certain that they always borrow when they seem to borrow, and

Anglo-Scottish ballads in the broadsides, evidence of the existence at one time of many Scottish lyrics now forgotten. But later Scottish song greatly influenced by broadside literature.

¹ Printed in *The Roxburghe Ballads*, ed. Ebsworth, vol. vii. p. 350.

² Similarly, in *Moggie* we have 'a win sheep,' for 'a when [*i.e.* a number of] sheep,' showing that the balladist did not understand the meaning of the words he borrowed—borrowed, undoubtedly, from a Scottish ditty.

(b) it is perfectly certain that they often merely borrowed what had previously been pilfered. That they did borrow a great deal is, however, beyond doubt; and, indeed, from the time of Ramsay down to and including Burns, the stream of Scottish popular song—whether as regards words or music—ceased to be of purely Scottish origin, and in many ways—ways that are as yet but imperfectly and confusedly disclosed—is intermingled with the stream of broadside and chapbook literature which reached its highest water-mark in the eighteenth century.

This is especially true of the Jacobite songs—even of those of Burns, Hogg, and others, whose interest

in Jacobitism was distant and mainly sentimental. As for the contemporary Jacobite songs chiefly parodies.

Jacobite songs, they owe the most of what excellence they possess—and poetically it is very little—to other lyrics. Of that marvellous patchwork, Hogg's *Jacobite Relics*, Chappell remarked that half of the songs in the first volume were derived from 'English printed collections,'¹ and that 'if the modern were taken away, and only the old suffered to remain, the proportion would be much greater.' Many Jacobite songs, also, which Hogg got from MSS. and greatly improved, as well as many Jacobite songs still in MS., were originally, of course, of English origin. But whether the product of Englishman or Scot, the bulk of contemporary Jacobite minstrelsy is merely parody—parody sometimes of older political or

¹ *Popular Music*, p. 611.

cavalier songs which themselves were parodies, parody even of older Jacobite songs, and parody of very old improper lyrics, Scottish or English;¹ and in their turn these Jacobite parodies, only a few of them in the Scots vernacular, have had no inconsiderable influence on the non-Jacobite vernacular songs of Scotland.

Of the older lyrics of Scotland only a few survive in their entirety. Several have been referred to under ANONYMOUS POETRY (see *ante*, pp. 289-98), and in connection with *The Gude and Godlie Ballates* (see *ante*, pp. 270-74). Others are included in *The Tea Table Miscellany* and Thomson's *Orpheus Caledonius*, very much, perhaps, as they existed before the days of Ramsay and Thomson. Regarding the date of the older lyrics in those publications it would be rash to hazard an opinion, though the humorous *Cock Laird*—which Ramsay slightly altered,—the still more amusing *Maggie's Tocher*, the picturesque *Muirland Willie*, *My Jocky Blyth*, *The Fumbler's Rant*, *What Jocky said to Jenny*, *John Ochiltree*, *Andro and his Cutty Gun*, *The Auld Goodman*, *The Auld Wife beyond the Fire*, *Auld Rob Morris*, and that inimitable lay of the sodden tippler, *Toddlin But and Toddlin Ben*—to name the more notable only,—were probably written long before the days of

¹ Such, for example, was undoubtedly *O'er the Water to Charlie*, an old blackguard London song being probably its ultimate source. Jacobite versions of it, and other interesting examples of unimproved Jacobite songs, will be found in *Loyal Songs*, 1750, and *The True Loyalist* (rare), 1779.

Ramsay. Again, the delightful *Ewe Buchts, Marion*, since it assumes some amount of prosperity at the ports of Leith and the 'Broomielaw,' was probably written after the Union; while that most animated of lyrics, *Maggie Lauder*, can scarce be earlier than the first half of the eighteenth century. As for *The Gaberlunzie Man* and *The Jolly Beggar*, the former from its rhythm cannot be so old as the days of James v., while the latter, first printed in Herd's *Songs* (1769), seems to have been unknown as a Scottish song to Ramsay, and has some connection with an English broadside in the Pepys Collection: ¹—

‘There was a jovial beggar man,
A-begging he was bound,
And he did seek his living
In country and in town,’ etc.

Several of the older Scottish lyrics were also amended, and in various ways utilised, by Ramsay (see under RAMSAY, *post*, p. 405), but many, very many, of the older lyrics have either wholly perished, or survive only as catchwords, or first lines, or isolated stanzas, or choruses, or refrains.²

Yet notwithstanding this seeming break in the tradition of the older songs, they, rather than either the national lyrics of England or the broadside literature of the English taverns, have been the formative in-

¹ This fact was first pointed out by Mr. Ebsworth in *Bagford Ballads*, i. 216.

² See especially ‘Fragments of Comic and Humorous Songs,’ in Herd’s *Songs*, vol. ii. pp. 200-239; and also for unpublished ones, the Herd ms. in the British Museum.

fluence of not all, but decidedly all that is best, in later Scottish song. Compared with the many waters of English lyricism, Scottish vernacular song is the mere tinkling of a mountain rivulet; but as popular song it is in a manner unrivalled—unrivalled partly, it is true, because of Burns, but by no means on this account alone, for Burns himself stole

The excellency
of Scottish
popular song
—its causes.

‘fire
From the fountains of the past
To glorify the present.’

The old ‘makaris’ of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and bards and minstrels whose very names have perished: these were its original creators and fashioners, and it was dowered with much of its rare excellency by inheritance from a poetry which was not popular in the merely vulgar sense, but the work of artists of special training and accomplishment. For many generations the influence of the old poetic school seemed to be dormant, but its very suppression, and the denial by the Kirk of the liberty of new poetic utterance, tended to preserve the old poetic tradition as it was when the voices of those old ‘makaris’ became silent. Thus Scottish vernacular song is more closely linked to the past than the popular ‘minstrelsie’ of England; and while it represents more fully the national sentiments, associations, and memories, it includes many numbers which, homely, simple, and popular though they be, bear the hall-mark of an ancient and noble descent.

XII

BEFORE RAMSAY

‘POLEMO-MIDDINIA’—THE SEMPILLS—‘TWEEDSIDE’—
LADY GRIZEL BAILLIE—LADY WARDLAW—WILLIAM
HAMILTON OF GILBERTFIELD—WATSON’S ‘CHOICE
COLLECTION.’

DURING the seventeenth century the fortunes of Scottish vernacular literature had reached their lowest ebb. It was primarily an age of religious conflict, the old contest between Kirk and King for supremacy culminating, after the Cromwellian episode and the Stuart restoration, in the Covenanting persecution, which was again followed, after the Revolution, by what, though ostensibly a victory for the Kirk, was in reality a compromise—a compromise which inflicted a mortal wound on the Kirk’s pretensions, and inaugurated an era marked by its gradually decaying authority in the sphere of general politics, and its diminishing interference with the intellectual and moral independence of the individual. Up to and even beyond the Revolution, the Kirk—whether struggling desperately to make

Vernacular
literature
of the seven-
teenth century.
Repressive
influences of
the Kirk.

the Scottish Solomon its mere tool, or triumphant at last over Charles I., or subdued and then patronised by Cromwell, or harried and afflicted by Charles II. and James II., or nominally restored to power at the Revolution—remained the supreme social and intellectual guide of almost the whole community, and its influence was inimical to every form of secular literature. As regards the vernacular literature, its repressive tendencies were also accidentally aided by the accession of James VI. to the English throne in 1603. In the later years of the sixteenth century vernacular poetry owed its production mainly to the fostering care of the king; but even before his departure for England James had himself almost escaped from his Scottish chrysalis. The old Scottish vernacular poetry was not eclipsed by the Elizabethan poetry of England simply because (1) in Scotland the succession of vernacular poets and interest in vernacular poetry had all but ceased, and (2) English poetry was not generally read in Scotland.

The chief Scottish poets of the early seventeenth century were Sir Robert Ayton, Sir William Alexander, Earl of Stirling, Sir David Murray of Garthly, Sir Robert Kerr, Earl of Ancrum, and William Drummond of Hawthornden. They all wrote in English; and since, with the exception of Drummond, they had all gone south with James I., their aim, like that of their royal master, was to be as English as possible. Of them only Ayton and Drummond rise above a

The chief Scottish poets of the early seventeenth century wrote in English. 'Polemio-Middinia.'

very verbose mediocrity; but Ayton certainly does, if he wrote *I do confess thou'rt smooth and fair*, and Drummond (1585-1649) was one of the most accomplished, if not one of the most inspired, poets of his time. He is, however, outside our present consideration, except as the possible author¹ of the macaronic poem, *Polemo-Middinia* [Midden-Fight] *inter Vitarvam* [Scot of Scotstarvet and his followers] *et Nibernam*² [Cunningham of Newbarns]. It describes how the Scotstarvet people, who claimed a right-of-way past the mansion-house of Newbarns, endeavoured to assert it by setting out with a procession of dung-carts, headed by a piper and banners, and how they were dispersed and routed by the valiancy of the Newbarns women. The rustic battle is described in a dog-Latin—the dog being cross-bred, that is, half Scots and half English—which partly obscures the occasionally very plain language of the piece. The defiance of Niberna (the

¹ It might—only he is not known to have had connection with Fife—have been written by Sir William Scott of Thirlestane (1670?-1725), who specially practised macaronic verse. Some of those pieces are still in ms., but one is included in his *Selecta Poemata*, published with some Latin poems by Dr. Archibald Pitcairne in 1727. It is entitled *Ad E—M E—M Equitem, M.D., Villadelphinus Frater*, and begins—

‘Qualis in terris fabulatur Orpheus
Natus Irlandis, ubi nulla vivat
Spidera telam, neque foeda spouttat
Toedda venenum.’

Scott has also been credited with the authorship both of *Maggie Lauder* and *The Blythesome Bridal*.

² Printed at Edinburgh, 1684, and reprinted along with *Christis Kirk*, ed. Gibson, 1691. Usually included in Drummond's *Works*.

mistress of Newbarns) is, however, though pithy, quite quotable:—

‘Ite ait, uglaei felloes ; si quis modo post hac
Muckifer has nostras tentet crossare fenestras,
Juro ego quod ejus longum extrahabo thropellum,
Et totum rivabo faciem luggasque gulaeo hoc,
Ex capite cuttabo, ferox, totumque videbo
Heartbloodum fluere in terram.’

From the mere fact that the Scottish vernacular is now the language of the common people, a vague impression prevails that the vernacular poetry has some special connection with the mere peasantry; but though latterly this was partly the case, the old poetry, on which the later vernacular poetry is almost entirely modelled, was rather the creation of the aristocracy and the clergy. Barbour was archdeacon of Aberdeen; Henryson, a learned educationist, was probably in holy orders; Dunbar was a secular priest, and Douglas a bishop, and both they and Kennedy were of noble descent; Sir David Lyndsay was a Fife laird; Montgomerie was a cadet of the Eglinton family; and Scott, whose descent is unknown, was a town gallant and courtier. Most or all of these poets were specially patronised by royalty, and they wrote for the delectation of the better classes. So must have done the innominate authors of many of the older songs. Most of those preserved in *The Tea Table Miscellany*, such as *Maggie's Tocher*, *The Cock Laird*, *Jocky said to Jenny*, *Toddlin But and Toddlin Ben*, and *The Blythesome*

Vernacular
poetry not
specially con-
nected with
the peasantry
until after
Ramsay.

Bridal, depict the humours of rustic life from the standpoint of the upper and educated classes, not of the peasant. The simplicity and realism of the old vernacular poetry belonged to the olden time; it is in no sense a vulgarised literature, but merely a literature which, by its antique sincerity and lack of convention, can be appreciated even by the peasants of later generations.

But the old race of poet-ecclesiastics having become extinct at the Reformation, it was mainly among the aristocracy and gentry that the traditions of the old vernacular poetry could linger; and although, as we have seen, with the accession of James VI. to the English throne there was a tendency among the Scottish courtier poets to cultivate exclusively English poetry, many of the gentry retained an acquaintanceship with the poetry of the older 'makaris.' They were not so much as the other classes under the domination of Puritanism; and thus the poetry of the vernacular revival, up to the time of Ramsay, owes its existence mainly to them.

Whether, during the first half of the seventeenth century, the vernacular muse was wholly silent or not, there is no authentic record of its voice until we hear it in *The Life and Death of Habbie Simson, the Piper of Kilbarchan*. The poet who thus broke the long silence was Robert Sempill, son of Sir James Sempill of Beltrees, author of *The Packman's Pater-*

The poetry of
the revival, be-
fore Ramsay,
owes its
existence to
the gentry.

Robert
Sempill
(1595?-1660?),
author of
'Habbie
Simson.'

noster (not in the vernacular, and therefore outside our consideration), and grandson of 'John Sempill [son of the great Lord Sempill] the dancer' of Knox's *History*, who married Marie Livingstone, one of the Queen's Maries, and, according to Knox, 'surnamed the Lusty.' Born about 1595, he was educated at the University of Glasgow, where he matriculated in 1613. As *Habbie* might suggest, he sided with Charles I. against the Kirk, serving as a cavalier officer, and he was afterwards active in promoting the Revolution. *Habbie* is supposed to date about 1640, and its author died between 1660 and 1669.

That Sempill was well read in the old vernacular poetry—of which he must have possessed specimens in MS.—is very evident from the stanza he selected for *Habbie*, a stanza of which 'Habbie Simson.' Its influence on later verse. so few examples in the older vernacular are now preserved (see *ante*, p. 244), that, not perhaps Ramsay (who knew the Bannatyne MS.), though he named the poem 'Standard *Habbie*,' but most other editors, until quite recently, have been in the habit of crediting Sempill with its invention. The poem, as poetry, is in no way remarkable, but it affords us a curious glimpse of old village amusements and customs; and the description of *Habbie* and his doings is in a way quite admirable, genial appreciation being finely tempered with pawky humour. Here in three stanzas are three separate glimpses of the piper in his pride:—

clad;
accoutre-
ments

war-
since

made

'At fairs he play'd before the spear-men,
All gaily graithed in their gear man :
Steel bonnets, jacks, and swords so clear then
Like ony bead :
Now wha will play before such weir-men,
Sen Habbie's dead.

At clark-plays when he wont to come,
His pipe played trimly to the drum ;
Like bikes of bees he gart it hum,
And tun'd his reed :
Now all our pipers may sing dumb,
Sen Habbie's dead.

And at Horse Races many a day,
Before the black, the brown, the gray,
He gart his pipe, when he did play,
Baith skirl and skreed :
Now all such pastime's quite away,
Sen Habbie's dead.'

The *Epitaph on Sanny Briggs*, who was Habbie's nephew, and butler to the Sempills, is usually attributed to the same author, and was, no doubt, either his or his son's. *Habbie* became the model for humorous elegy in the vernacular: being widely circulated in broadsides towards the close of the century, it was imitated by many poetasters, as well as by Hamilton of Bangour, Ramsay, Fergusson, and Burns; and since, in addition, it reintroduced the most characteristic stanza of later vernacular poetry, the stanza which was the vehicle for much of the best verse of the three latter poets, it has some claims to rank as one of the 'epoch-making' productions of poetic literature.

The poetic tradition of the Sempills was continued by Sir Robert's son Francis, whose longest poem is *The Banishment of Povertie*, narrating his hard shifts as debtor until relieved by the Duke of Albany shortly after he had taken refuge in the debtors' retreat at Holyrood. Written in the French octave, it is correct in rhythm and rhyme, but its wit is not very sprightly; and one can scarce credit that the same author wrote either *The Blythesome Bridal* (which may, however, have been written by the father), or the very much cleverer *Maggie Lauder*. His claims to the authorship of *She rose and let me in*, published by D'Urfey, will not bear examination; and if he has any connection with the oldest known version of *Auld Lang Syne*, it was probably merely as the refurbisher of an older song, for the original broadside bears the title 'An excellent proper ballad, entitled *Old Long Syne*. Newly corrected and amended, with a large and new addition of several excellent love lines.'¹

Francis
Sempill
(d. 1785).

Before Ramsay we have various other indications either of a revived interest in vernacular poetry, or that it had all along been cultivated and appreciated by many in private, but the principal names associated with it previous to him are Lady Grizel Baillie, Lady Wardlaw, and William

'Tweedside.'

¹ This broadside, published anonymously, contains what was, no doubt, the burden of the old song; and this burden, together with the first line of the broadside, is the main germ of Burns's song.

Hamilton of Gilbertfield. The song *Tweedside*, Burns mentions, is 'said to have been written by Lord Yester,' and Robert Chambers¹ affirms that this must have 'been John, eventually second Marquis of Tweeddale' (1615-1713), because Scott of Satchells, in his *History of the House of Scott*, compliments the Marquis on 'his poetical abilities'; but Herd, who first published the song, and is the only authority for the text, knew apparently nothing of its author, and merely termed it *The Original Tweedside*. But whoever wrote it seems almost to smirk while expressing doleful despair, and, where he is not inapt, he is woefully commonplace.

This certainly cannot be said of *Werena my Heart Licht I wad Dee*² by Lady Grizel Baillie. Lady

Ladie Grizel
Baillie (1665-
1746).

Grizel, born in 1665, was the eldest daughter of Patrick Hume, afterwards Earl of Marchmont; and when her father had, in 1684, to go into hiding under the family vault in Polwarth Church on account of his suspected connection with the Rye-House Plot, she secretly supplied him with food. From 1686 until the Revolution the family were in exile in Holland. After her return she married, in 1692, George Baillie of Jerviswood, son of Robert Baillie, who, being suspected like her father of conspiring against the Government, was, in 1684, caught and executed. Lady Grizel died in 1746. Lady Murray

¹ *Scottish Songs*, iii. 311.

² First published in *The Tea Table Miscellany*.

of Stanhope, Lady Grizel's daughter, in her *Memoirs*¹ stated that she possessed a MS. volume of her mother's containing various of her songs and poetic fragments; but the volume has not been recovered, and she is known only as the authoress of *Werena my Heart Licht*, and a fragment, *The Ewe-Buchtin's Bonnie*.² The mournful romance and inimitable simplicity of the former song indicate the inspiration and art of true genius; and *The Ewe-Buchtin's Bonnie* is very much in the same manner, and possesses the same delicate charm:—

'The Ewe-buchtin's bonnie, baith e'enin' and morn,
When our blithe shepherds play on the bag-reed and horn;
While we're milking, they're lilting, baith pleasant and clear,
But my heart's like to break when I think on my dear.'

Lady Elizabeth Halkett, daughter of Sir Charles Halkett of Pitferran, and married, in 1696, to Henry Wardlaw of Pitreavie, is now regarded as the author of the ballad *Hardyknute*.
First published by James Watson, in 1719,
as a genuine old ballad, it was included in Percy's *Reliques*, 1767. The story circulated by her brother-in-law, Sir John Hope Bruce of Kinross, was that it had been got from an old manuscript in a vault in Dunfermline; but its antiquity being questioned after its appearance in the *Reliques*, Lord Hailes

Lady
Wardlaw
(1677-1727).

¹ Published in 1822.

² First published on a broadsheet by C. K. Sharpe. The original consists of only two stanzas, the others being additions by another author.

informed Percy that Lady Wardlaw had confessed to being the authoress of it. The ballad is certainly a very clever imitation of the older minstrelsy. It is plain that Lady Wardlaw had a wide acquaintance with the old ballads, and it is thus not improbable that she improved a good many of them. That *Hardyknute* is not by any means equal to many of those with which she may have tampered may be explained by the fact that it was wholly invention, and also by the probability that she endeavoured, in this case, to imitate the old simplicity, while in other cases her main endeavour may have been to improve the poetical defects of the versions she got from recitation. Here, for example, is a quatrain from *Hardyknute* :—

‘ On Norway’s coast the widowed dame
 May wash the rocks with tears—
 May lang look o’er the shipless seas
 Before her mate appears.’

It cannot compare with the following stanza from *Sir Patrick Spens* :—

‘ O lang, lang may the ladies stand
 Wi’ their gold kems in their hair,
 Waiting for their ain deir lords,
 For they’ll se thame na mair’ ;

but then we cannot tell what original suggestion Lady Wardlaw—if she improved *Sir Patrick Spens*—may have had for the stanza.

But the main link in the succession between the Sempills and Ramsay is William Hamilton of Gil-

bertfield, whose *Last Dying Words of Bonnie Heck* (a famous Fife greyhound) first appeared in Watson's *Choice Collection*, 1706. This piece (whose chief merit is its sportsmanly sympathy with the greyhound), a variation on Sempill's *Habbie*, became, in turn, the special model of Burns's *Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie*, as before Burns it had been of Ramsay's *Last Speech of a Dying Miser* and *Luckie Spence's Last Advice*. Hamilton, a retired lieutenant in the army, afterwards made the acquaintance of Ramsay, with whom he corresponded in that series of rather clever rhyming epistles (included in Ramsay's *Works*) in the same stanza which Burns, in his 'emulating' fashion, also adopted for his poetic epistles, even parodying, occasionally, Hamilton's phrases and sentiments.¹

In his first epistle Hamilton signed himself 'Wanton

¹ Compare the first stanza of Hamilton's *Epistle II.* :—

'When I received thy kind epistle
It made me dance, and sing, and whistle;
O sic a fike and sic a fistle
I had about it!
That e'er was knight of the Scots thistle
Sae fain I doubted'—

compare the above with the last stanza of Burns's *First Epistle to Lapraik* :—

'And to conclude my lang epistle,
As my auld pen's worn to the grissle,
Twa lines frae you wad gar me fistle,
Who am most fervent,
While I can either sing or whistle,
'Your humble servant.'

And many similar comparisons might be made.

Willy,' and under the signature 'W. W.' he contributed to *The Tea Table Miscellany* the song *Willy was a Wanton Wag*, suggested and more by the English *O Willy was so blythe a Lad* (in Playford's *Choice Ayres*, 1650), but full of humorous *abandon*, as for instance :—

gold

'And was not Willy well worth gowd ?

He wan the love of great and sma' ;

For after he the bride had kiss'd

He kiss'd the lasses hale-sale a'.

Sae merrily round the ring they row'd,

When be the hand he led them a',

And smack on smack on them bestow'd

By virtue of a standing law.'

whole-
rolled
by

But the greatest, if not the best, achievement of Hamilton was his abridgment and paraphrase of Blind Harry's *Wallace*, which, however lacking in poetic qualities, commended itself by its subject to the patriotic Scot, and achieved an instant and lasting popularity. It was in it that Burns read the 'story of Wallace' which poured the 'tide of Scottish prejudice' into his veins; and it is largely responsible for Burns's *Scots Wha Hae*, and for many much less admirable manifestations of patriotic fervour.

Hamilton's paraphrase of *Wallace* appeared in 1722, but a good many years before this symptoms of awakening interest in Scottish vernacular verse had begun to manifest themselves—the most remarkable and decided being the publication of Watson's *Choice Collection of Scottish Poems*, 1706-1711. The mere

Abridgment
of 'Wallace.'

Watson's
'Choice
Collection.'

issue of such a work in Scotland was a certain sign that narrow Biblicalism was no longer the power in the land it had been, and that the icy winter, which so long had frozen the springs of natural human feeling, was gradually breaking up. Watson's *Collection* is rather miscellaneous: old and new pieces, and of the new some in the vernacular, others 'quite English,' jostle one another in admired disorder. Some of those in the modern vernacular had already appeared in broadsides, and the broadside was really the chief means of reawakening the love of vernacular poetry and song among the people. The modern vernacular pieces include *The Blythesome Bridal*, *The Banishment of Povertie*, *The Speech of a Fife Laird*, *Habbie Simson*, a clever piece, *The Mare of Collingtoun*, in *rime couée*—aaab, cccb,—*Bonnie Heck*, and an epitaph in the *Habbie* form on *William Lithgow*. Among the English specimens are Drummond's *Forth Feasting*, Linton's *Address to the Prince of Orange*, by Alexander Pennecuick, *Coelia's Country House and Closet*, by Sir George Mackenzie, *Poems on the King and Queen of Fairy*, by Archibald Pitcairne, and *In Praise of Women*, by Montrose. Lastly, the old vernacular pieces include *Christis Kirk*, *The Cherry and the Slae*, Burel's *Passage of a Pilgrim*, and Montgomerie's *Flyting*. A rather various, and not particularly happy or representative selection, but sufficiently noteworthy as the first important symptoms of the dawn of a great vernacular revival.

XIII

RAMSAY TO BURNS

RAMSAY—ALEXANDER BANNATYNE—ALEXANDER ROSS
—THE SONG-WRITERS—FERGUSSON.

THE main agent in the vernacular revival was Allan Ramsay. Descended from the Ramsays of Cockpen, a younger branch of the Ramsays of Dalhousie, he was the son of Robert Ramsay, superintendent of Lord Hope-toun's lead-mines at Leadhills, Lanarkshire, by Alice Bower, a native of Derbyshire. He was born in the village of Leadhills, 15th October 1686, and received all his education at the parish school. Having had the misfortune, while still in infancy, to lose his father, he was, after the death in 1700 of his mother, who had married a small neighbouring proprietor, sent to Edinburgh to be apprenticed to a wigmaker. In 1707 he opened a wigmaker's shop of his own in the Grassmarket, which he conducted successfully until 1719, when his special tastes and his literary success induced him to adopt the business of bookseller opposite Niddry's Wind.

Allan Ramsay
(1686-1758),
Wigmaker.

Though keenly intent on his business, Ramsay found time for both conviviality and study. From an early period he developed a strong love of poetry, and besides perusing the older English classics, including Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, the Fletchers, Drummond, Milton, Cowley, and Dryden, he was well read in the verse of the day from Pope down to his friend Tom D'Urfey, with the latter of whom he had much in common. In the clubs and taverns he also got to know many of the old racy vernacular ditties; but few of the older vernacular classics, with the exception of the works of Sir David Lyndsay, being in circulation, he had already himself acquired some fame as a verse-writer before he accidentally got access to them in the Bannatyne MS. A Jacobite in politics, and of genial and epicurean habit, he represents the commencement of the literary reaction among the middle and lower classes against the repressive tendencies of the Kirk. He was especially the poet of the jovial burgher, and of the taverns and clubs which were the centre of this reaction; and much of his verse reeks of their peculiar atmosphere. Among his earlier pieces was his *Elegy on Maggy Johnstone*, the ale-wife of Bruntfield Links, who died in 1711, modelled on 'Standard *Habbie*.' Its success when issued as a penny broadside induced him to venture similar essays in verse, including elegies on *Lucky Wood*, *John Cowper*, and *Pat Birnie*, *Lucky Simson's Last Advice*, and various others, some of them

Poet and
Publisher.

now lost, in a still grosser comic vein. For some years he was the recognised laureate of the streets, his satires on street incidents, as *The Flytin' of Lucky Duff and Lucky Brown*, or mock elegies, or sketches of well-known city characters, or rhymes on passing events, being, it is said, the favourite reading of the common gossips over their teacups. His admission to the Easy Club also stimulated him to the production of English verse, which, mediocre and wholly artificial though it was, secured him much approbation from the members, some of whom—such as Hepburn of Keith, Dr. Pitcairne, Dr. Patrick Abercrombie, and Dr. Thomas Ruddiman—were amongst the most intellectually emancipated of the Edinburgh citizens. His reputation was still further enhanced by the publication in 1716 of *Christis Kirk*, with an additional canto of his own composition; and in 1718 appeared a second edition of the poem with an additional canto. The same year he brought out an edition of *Scots Songs*; and in 1721 he published by subscription a volume of his own poems. Then followed in 1724 the first volume of '*The Tea Table Miscellany*, a collection of choice songs Scots and English,' a good many of them partly or wholly his own; and in the same year, *The Evergreen*, a selection of old Scots poetry obtained chiefly from the Bannatyne ms. A second volume of *The Tea Table Miscellany* appeared in 1725, a third in 1727, and a fourth in 1732. In 1725 he also published the most popular of all his pieces, *The Gentle Shepherd*, part of it in the

form of an eclogue, under the title *Patie and Roger*, having appeared in 1721, with a sequel in 1723, entitled *Jynny and Maggie*. Prosperous in business and famed as a poet, he in 1726 removed to the Luckenbooths, where he adopted as his sign the heads of Ben Jonson and Drummond of Hawthornden. From his new shop he issued in 1728 a new edition of his poems, and in 1730 *Thirty Fables* in verse. In 1731 he was honoured by the publication of an edition of his poems in London, Dublin following suit in 1733. In 1736 he brought out a volume of *Scots Proverbs*; but from this time he wholly ceased to intermeddle with literature, except as bookseller, the only remaining incident in his life that calls for notice being a spirited though vain contest with the bigotry of the period, in an attempt to establish a theatre in Edinburgh, which at the instance of the clergy was closed by order of the Magistrates. He died, 7th January 1758, in the picturesque mansion which he had erected for himself on the Castle Hill, Edinburgh, and was buried in Greyfriars Churchyard.¹

If not the victim of the contradictory poetic models, English and Scots, which he sought combinedly to imitate, Ramsay, except in the case of *The Gentle Shepherd*, was nothing advantaged, either as Scots or English versi-

His popularity.

¹ The best edition of Ramsay's *Works* is that ed. Chalmers, with essay by Lord Woodhouselee (frequently reprinted), but a critical edition is still a desideratum.

fier, by any compensating result of the twofold influence. His familiarity with the vernacular song and some of the verse of the old Scots 'makaris,' in no wise tended to modify the pompous commonplace of his more ambitious essays in English verse, while his acquaintance with the English classics exercised little truly educative influence on his vernacular method. But this twofold acquaintanceship assisted him to construct a species of Scoto-English song which was rampantly popular both in Scotland and England. While his vernacular pieces won him universal fame among the lower classes of his native land, and his English verse was read with something resembling admiration by the more enlightened classes of both countries, his songs—as is abundantly testified by the song-books and sheet music of the period—were warbled, to rapturous applause, by the favourite vocalists at the London 'gardens,' and other places of popular resort. Familiar with the old popular songs of both countries, he utilised them for his own purposes with much superficial cleverness. His manner was exactly that which the masses could thoroughly appreciate, and the Scottish flavour, comparatively mild as it was, conferred on them a piquancy which in England greatly aided their popularity.

Some of them—as *Nanny, O, Bony Jean, I'll never leave Thee, Clout the Caldron, and Through the Wood, Laddie*—were reminiscent of old English broadsides. A great many more, usually

Character of
his songs.

published as his own, are founded on older Scottish songs, some of them poetically much superior, and all of them at least equal to Ramsay's versions. They include *Bessy Bell and Mary Gray*, *Auld Lang Syne*, *The Bob of Dunblane*, *The Collier's Bonnie Lassie*, *For the Sake of Somebody*, *The Highland Laddie*, *My Daddy Forbad*, *O Mither Dear I Gin to Fear*, *Jenny Nettles*, *Steer her Up and Haud her Gaun*, and *This is no my Ain House*, in addition to many old songs which he merely amended. Indeed, Ramsay can claim comparatively few songs as wholly his own. Among his best are *The Lass of Patie's Mill*—which some assert is not wholly his—and *Lochaber No More*, and both are marred by solecisms. Yet he has written one admirable lyric, perfectly faultless in its simplicity, *My Peggy is a Young Thing*. His worst defect is his *penchant* for the grovelling, and when not grovelling, he is too apt to be stalely commonplace.

The Soger Laddie, for example, which used to create a *furor* at Mary'bone Gardens, and other popular London resorts of the eighteenth century, but expresses the unadorned sentiments of Mary Jane, in language even more prosaic and banal than many a Mary Jane would employ:—

'My soger laddie is over the sea
And he will bring gold and money to me ;
And when he comes hame, he'll make me a lady ;
My blessing gang with my soger laddie.

My doughty laddie is handsome and brave,
 And can as a soger and lover behave ;
 True to his country, to love he is steady,
 There's few to compare with my soger laddie.

Shield him, ye angels, frae death in alarms,
 Return him with laurels to my langing arms ;
 Syne frae all my care he'll pleasantly free me,
 When back to my wishes my soger ye gie me.

O soon may his honours bloom fair on his brow,
 As quickly they must, if he get his due :
 For in noble actions his courage is ready,
 Which makes me delight in my soger laddie.'

Nor even in the best of his convivial songs does he embody the true rapture of good fellowship. *Up in the Air* begins fairly well, and stanza ii. contains a rather picturesque allusion to a snowy night; but the piece is wholly lacking in poetic glamour, while the last stanza is but stiffly wooden:—

Convivial
 songs. 'Up in
 the Air.'

Shut
 give us
 have
 with it
 Do not

'Steek the doors, keep out the frost ;
 Come, Willy, gie's about ye'r toast,
 Fill it lads, and lilt it out,
 And let us hae a blithsome bout.
 Up wi't there, there,
 Dinna cheat, but drink fair ;
 Huza, huza, and huza, lads, yet,
 Up wi't there.'

But as the comic satirist of low life Ramsay evidenced the possession of a strong vein of clever clownish humour. The *Elegy on John Cowper* and *Lucky Spence's Last Advice*, are caustic and graphic enough after their own rancid fashion; and the elegies on *Maggy Johnstone*

As comic
 satirist.

and *Lucky Wood* supply us with a curious photographic picture of the tavern life of Old Edinburgh. The portrait of Lucky Wood, the pattern ale-wife of the Canongate, is indeed quite admirable:—

‘She ne’er gae in a lawin fause, Nor stoups a’ froath aboon the hause, Nor kept dow’d tip within her waws But reaming swats ; She ne’er ran sour jute, because It gees the batts.	gave ; reckoning neck stale tippie ; walls new ale gives ; colic
She had the gate sae well to please, With gratis beef, dry fish, or cheese, Which kept our purses ay at ease, And health in tift ; And lent her fresh nine gallon trees A hearty lift.	method order
She gae us oft hail legs o’ lamb, And did nae hain her mutton-ham ; Then aye at Yule whene’er we cam, A braw goose-pye ; And was na that good belly-baum ? Nane dare deny.	whole spare fine
The writer-lads fow well may mind her ; Fruthy was she, her luck design’d her Their common mither ; sure nane kinder Ever brake bread ! She has na left her mak behind her, But now she’s dead.’	full Pleasant peer

But the most elaborate effort of Ramsay’s in expounding the humours of common life is his two additional cantos to *Christis Kirk*, which, while lacking the vivid conciseness of the earlier piece, and indeed little better than a mere vulgar parody of its method, depict realistically

‘Christis
Kirk.’

enough the more sordid aspects of Scottish mirth. The first canto of Ramsay describes a wedding-feast, ending with the bedding ceremony; and in the second the rejoicings are renewed on the morrow until all the men reach the becoming condition of brutal intoxication. It is all true to nature and all most grotesquely comic, but not all quite quotable. Here, however, are some quaint stanzas depicting the arrival of the gossips on the morning after the marriage:—

By ;
daylight
full ; pack

higgledy-
piggedy
clothes

Each

ram-
big-mouthed

broth

fetched

If ;
husband

Threatening ;
drunk

Those
head

then ; boast

fine
grandchild

mumping
wrinkled
frightened
the young
women
went ; was a
witch
drunk ;
brandy
many more

‘ Be that time it was fair four days,
As fou’s the house could pang,
To see the young fouk ere they raise,
Gossips came in ding-dang.
And wi a sos aboon the claiths
Ilk ane their gifts down flang :
Twa toop-horn-spoons down Maggy lays,
Baith muckle-mow’d and lang
For kale or whey.

Her aunt a pair of tangs fush in,
Right bauld she spake and spruce :
“ Gin your goodman shall make a din,
And gabble like a goose,
Shorin whan fou to skelp ye’re skin,
Thir tangs may be of use ;
Lay them enlang his pow or shin,
Wha wins syn may make roose
Between you twa.”

Auld Bessie, in her red coat braw,
Came wi her ain oe Nanny,
An odd-like wife, they said, that saw
A moupin’ runckled granny ;
She fley’d the kimmers ane and a’,
Word gae’d she was na kanny ;
Nor wad they let Lucky awa,
’Till she was fou wi’ branny,
Like mony mae.’

Ramsay's *Tales and Fables* call for little comment. A good many are in English or in Scoto-English, and the majority in the octo-syllabic couplet. ‘Tales and Fables.’ Some, he states, were ‘taken from Messieurs la Fontaine and la Motte,’ and those which are his ‘own invention with respect to the plot as well as the numbers’ he leaves the reader ‘to find out,’ or if any one thought ‘it worth his while to ask’ him, he professed his willingness to tell him. Ramsay is now beyond interrogation; but one may venture to affirm that *The Monk and the Miller's Wife*, which was long credited to him, was neither his own invention nor ‘taken from Messieurs la Fontaine and la Motte,’ but is merely a modernised and vulgarised reading of *The Freiris of Berwick*; and that his most elaborate tale, *The Three Bonnets*, a long-winded, complicated, and occasionally gross satire on the Union, is most probably all his own.

Ramsay's satires entitle him to rank as at least a cleverly comic vernacular Zola, but for the author of *The Gentle Shepherd* something more ‘The Gentle Shepherd.’ than this may be claimed. If not quite poetry, it is at least admirable ‘kailyaird.’ A most pleasing because a quite unaffectedly homely and simple sketch of rustic courtship—somewhat idealised—it almost by mere accident reveals a literary talent which had been partly smothered by his imperfect training and untoward circumstances. Here his twofold course of poetic study stood him in much better stead than usual. The English pastorals,

which he so far made his model, exercised a certain restraining influence on his rather too realistic Scottish method, while by electing to write in the vernacular he avoided the worst pitfalls of artificiality. It has given him a certain acknowledged position in literature, and not undeservedly; but though also as a vernacular satirist his strenuity and wit—often too much tinged with squalidity—are undeniable, and though he contrived one excellent and one or two passably good lyrics, it is rather as editor than author

that he occupies his peculiar place in the
 As Editor. vernacular revival. The results of his editorial enterprise were twofold: (1) *The Tea Table Miscellany*—dedicated gallantly (and pawkily)

‘To ilka lovely British lass,
 Frae Ladies Charlotte, Anne, and Jean,
 Down to ilk bony singing Bess,
 Wha dances barefoot on the green’—

in conjunction with Thomson’s *Orpheus* aroused—curious patchwork of old and new, of Scots, English, Scoto-English, and Anglo-Scots, though it be—in a new fashion the old interest in popular song among the bulk of the Scottish people; and (2) by *The Evergreen*—which he described as ‘a Collection of Scots Poems wrote by the Ingenious before 1600,’ and which included, besides a few ballads such as *Hardyknute*, *Johnie Armstrang*, and *The Battle of Harlaw*, and *The Vision* (which may be wholly or partly his own), and one or two of *The Gude and Godlie Ballates*, a large number of the best productions (often very freely altered) of the old ‘makaris’

preserved in the Bannatyne MS.—he was the first to rescue from oblivion the old vernacular poetry of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which, thus resurgent after a trance of some century and a half, was found to have lost comparatively little of its ancient vitality, and by its vivifying effects partly rekindled in the eighteenth century the old vernacular poetic flame.

A sort of double of Ramsay was Alexander Pennecuik (d. 1730), an obscure Edinburgh citizen of whom scarce anything is known except that, having died in extreme destitution, he was buried in Greyfriars Churchyard,

Alexander
Pennecuik
(d. 1730).

30th November 1730, but who is sometimes confounded with Dr. Alexander Pennecuik (1652-1722), author of a *Description of Tweeddale*, which, with various poems in English, appeared at Leith in 1815. Some of his poems had previously appeared in a *Collection of Curious Scots Poems*, Edinburgh, 1762. They include *Truth's Travels*, a long, semi-vernacular piece written in the French octave. The more vernacular Pennecuik published *Streams from Helicon*, 1720, and *Flowers from Parnassus*, 1726; but many of his effusions were also issued as penny broadsides, and in 1756 there appeared at Edinburgh 'A *Collection of Scots Poems on Several Occasions*, by the late Alexander Pennecuik and others,' the others including Ramsay. He was very partial to Ramsay's themes. Like Ramsay he commemorated the dowager Anne, Duchess of Hamilton, in an ode; while Ramsay wrote a masque on the marriage of

the fifth duke to Lady Anne Cochrane in 1723, Pennecuick celebrated the same event in a pastoral; he also constituted himself a sort of laureate of the Royal Archers, and he disputed the laurels of Ramsay as the bard of the streets, as he certainly rivalled him in the indelicacy of his squalid humour: his *Elegy on Robert Forbes*, Kirk Treasurer's man, and also his *Presbyterian Pope*—in which he presents us with a dialogue between the Kirk Treasurer's man and one of his female informants—being quite as unvarnished in their allusions as the *Elegy on John Cowper*. He is also credited with *The Elegy on William Lithgow*, published in Watson's *Choice Collection*, 1706, but his longest piece, if not his *chef d'œuvre*—interesting as an accurate presentment of the sentiments, ideas, and vernacular of the lower-class women of that period—is *The Mery Wives of Musleburgh, at their meeting together to welcome Meg Dickson after her Loup from the Ladder*, 1724, of which there is an anonymous broadside in the British Museum, and which is included in Pennecuick's *Collection*, 1756. Meg was a fishwife who by an accident escaped death by hanging; and in the poem she details her experiences to the assembled gossips. It begins:—

‘That day, when Meg fair taste got
 Wi’ Hangie’s beads about her throat,
 Three claverin carlings o’er the pot,
 A’ spewing fou,
 Whinge’d when they thought on Maggie’s trot
 Doon the West-bow.’¹

gossips
 All; drunk
 Wept

¹ From the prison to the place of execution.

Among contemporaries and friends of Ramsay were—in addition to William Hamilton of Gilbertfield—Sir John Clerk of Penicuik (1684-1755), the accomplished lawyer and antiquary, who erected at his country seat an obelisk to Ramsay's memory, and is the reputed author of *O merry may the Maid be that Marries the Miller*, published in *The Charmer*, 1751, and founded on an old improper song,¹ partly preserved in the first stanza; Robert Crawford (d. 1730), son of the laird of Drumsoy, Renfrewshire, whose pleasant, if slightly artificial, lyrics *Tweedside*, *Leader Haughs and Yarrow*, *The Bush Aboon Traquair*, etc., mostly contributed to *The Tea Table Miscellany*, are almost wholly English in manner, and only faintly Scots in language; William Hamilton of Bangour (1704-1754), an accomplished versifier in English, and the author of the archaic and finely symphonious ballad, *The Braes of Yarrow*; and David Mallet or Malloch (1700?-1765), who, though he indicated his desire for Anglification to the extent of changing his surname, and, in the words of Samuel Johnson, 'cleared his tongue from his native pronunciation so as to be no longer distinguishable as a Scot,' perhaps deserves mention here for his somewhat frigidly tragic ballad of *William and Margaret*. Mallet has also rival claims

Ramsay's contemporaries and friends.

¹ Maids and millers were a favourite theme of the old vernacular bards, and they also figure prominently in the black-letter broadsides.

with James Thomson to the authorship of *Rule Britannia*, which appeared in 1740 in their joint masque of *Alfred*.

The most prominent of Ramsay's early disciples was Alexander Ross, who, the son of an Aberdeenshire farmer, after graduating M.A. at Marischal College, Aberdeen, became a teacher, and finally settled as parish schoolmaster at Lochlea, Forfarshire. In 1768 Ross, who was then in his seventieth year, published a pastoral entitled *Helonore the Fortunate Shepherdess*. Written in the quaint and pithy Aberdeenshire dialect, it achieved some popularity in the north of Scotland, but notwithstanding some happy descriptions of natural scenery, and the help of a raid of Highland caterans, it is on the whole a rather dull, and even dreary, performance. This, however, cannot be said of his songs, their witty expositions of the humours of domestic life being, indeed, almost overwhelmingly vivacious. Among the best known are *The Rock and the Wee Pickle Tow*, *Wooded and Married and A'*, and *The Bridal O't*. Here is the first stanza of *The Rock*:—

Alexander
Ross (1699-
1784).

very little
go
bent;
distaff;
caught fire
wept;
scolded

become
frantic

'There was an auld wife had a wee pickle tow,
And she wad gae try the spinning o't;
She louted her down, and her rock took a low,
And that was a bad beginning o't.
She sat and she grat, and she flet and she flang,
And she flew and she blew, and she wriggled and wrang,
And she choked and boaked and cried like to mang,
Alas for the dreary spinning o't.'

With the exception of Fergusson, most of the vernacular bards before Burns are each mainly associated with only one or two songs. John Skinner (1721-1807).
 The *Tullochgorum* of John Skinner, Episcopal minister of Longside, Aberdeenshire, written to the old tune of that name, and in a form of *rime couée*—twelve lines divided into three equal sections, three head lines and one tail line each, with a curious iterative refrain in the middle section,—was pronounced by Burns, in his enthusiastic way, to ‘be the best Scots song Scotland ever saw,’ and is at least a most jovial, genial, and inspiring production. Somewhat similar in style but less individual in character is *Tune your Fiddles*, while *The Ewie wi’ the Crookit Horn* possesses much of the quaintly pathetic humour of Burns’s own *Poor Mailie*. But Skinner’s *Christmas Ba’ing*, in the stanza of *Christis Kirk*, must be classed with the less successful imitations of that original.

Alexander Geddes, an accomplished and learned Catholic priest, and the author of a great variety of works in prose and verse including two clever macaronic pieces, is credited with Alexander Geddes (1737-1802). the capital Jacobite song, *O Send Lewie Gordon Hame*, and also with *The Wee Wifukie*, which, however, has also been claimed for Alexander Watson, Lord Byron’s Aberdeen tailor (who is said also to be the author of the much inferior *Kail Brose o’ Scotland*), and may have been written by neither. Written by Geddes or Watson or another, it is a

masterpiece of its kind: the bewildered case of the 'wifukie' (who, having got 'a wee bit drapukie,' had, while taking a nap on the roadside 'coming frae the fair,' been by a packman not merely robbed of her money and purse, but shorn of her golden locks), being set forth with a droll verisimilitude that could scarce be outdone:—

not
killing

"'This is nae me," quo' she, "this is nae me,
Somebody has been felling me, and this is nae me.'"

To three ladies—Mrs. Cockburn, a relative of Sir Walter Scott's, and one of the sprightliest and most charming of Edinburgh hostesses; Jane Elliot, third daughter of Sir Gilbert Elliot, Baronet, of Minto, himself a poet, and the author of the pastoral song *Amynta*; and Lady Anne Barnard, of the Balcarres Lindsays—we are indebted for three lyrics, each after its own fashion mournfully beautiful, and all suggested by older originals. If Mrs. Cockburn's and Miss Elliot's versions of the *Flowers of the Forest* were written independently of each other, they must have been founded on the same original, for both have the refrain 'The flowers of the forest are a' wede away.' Mrs. Cockburn's version appeared in *The Lark*, 1765; and Stenhouse avers that Miss Elliot's ballad was published anonymously about 1755, but he states not where. It was known to Herd, who included it in what he termed 'a version made up from various copies of the old ballad collated'; but Scott got for *The Minstrelsy* an authorised copy

Mrs. Cockburn
(1712-1794), Jane
Elliot (1727-
1805), and Lady
Anne Barnard
(1750-1825).

from Dr. Somerville, who told him that the first and last lines of the first stanza were

‘I’ve heard them liting at the ewes milking,’
and

‘The flowers of the forest are a’ wede away.’

It is to be regretted that Scott either displayed no further curiosity about the old ballad, or was unable to obtain further information about it. As for Lady Anne Barnard’s song, *Auld Robin Gray*, she told Scott that it was suggested by an older Scottish melody, *The Bridegroom Greets when the Sun gae’s doon*, sung at Balcarres by an old lady—who lived before your day’—who ‘did not object to its having improper words,’ though Lady Anne¹ did.

Other bards whose vernacular fame rests mainly on a single song are William Julius Mickle (1734-1788), a miscellaneous verse-writer of some note, Other song-writers. who translated Camoen’s *Luciad*, was the author of the rather stately *Cumnor Hall*, and may possibly have written (as Jean Adams, the piously metaphysical Greenock poetess, certainly did not) *There’s nae Luck aboot the Hoose*, which as matter of fact was claimed by neither, and which Burns (who, less flatteringly than usual, declared it to be ‘one of the most beautiful songs in the Scots or any other language’) states ‘came first on the streets as a ballad,’ about 1771 or 1772;² Dougal Graham (1724-

¹ See Lockhart’s *Life of Scott*, and also Lady Anne Barnard’s revised version of the ballad, with continuation, edited by Sir Walter Scott for the Bannatyne Club, 1824.

² The song may be a relic of Jacobitism.

1779), the Glasgow bellman, whose *Metrical History of the Rebellion* and numerous penny vernacular chap-books, which he both wrote and printed, are now forgotten except by collectors, but whose *Turnimspike* (Turnpike) is a most realistically witty sketch of the language and thoughts of the unsophisticated Gael, when he first beheld the roads of General Wade, and was actually asked to pay toll in the neighbourhood of his native heath:—

‘But I’ll awa’ to the Hielan’ hills,
Where te’il a ane dare turn her,
And no come near to your Turnimspike
Unless it pe to purn her’;

John Ewen (1741-1821), an Aberdeen merchant, to whom Burns attributed *O weel may the Boatie Row*, which is no doubt founded on an older song; George Halket (d. 1756), on whom Peter Buchan fathered *Logie o’ Buchan*, and *Whirry Whigs awa’*, the former of which he could not have written if the evidence of his own published *Poems* is to be credited, and the latter of which is a traditionary Jacobite ballad whose current version is an amalgam by Hogg; the Rev. Murdoch M’Lennan (1701-1783), minister of Crathie, Aberdeenshire, who celebrated the battle of Sheriffmuir in the rather clever *Race of Sheriffmuir*, with the refrain:—

‘And we ran and they ran,
And they ran and we ran,
And we ran and they ran awa’, man’;

Rev. John Barclay (1734-1798), Berean minister of

Edinburgh, who wrote the picturesque *Dialogue betwixt William Lickladle and Thomas Cleancogue*, modelled after the older ballad of *Killycrankie* (1689), and altered by Burns for Johnson's *Musical Museum*; and Adam Skirving (1719-1803), a gentleman farmer of Haddington, to whom is attributed the ballad of *Tranent Muir* (Prestonpans), made on the same models, and also the much wittier *Johnie Cope*.

Thus for some half-century after Ramsay the vernacular revival was evidenced mainly in the production of occasional songs, many of them suggested by, and others mere adaptations of, older ditties. Apart from songs, the main link between Ramsay and Burns is Robert Fergusson. The second son of William Fergusson, who came from Aberdeen to be accountant in the British Linen Company's Bank, Edinburgh, and of Margaret Forbes, also of Aberdeenshire descent, he was born, 5th September 1750, in the Cap-and-Feather Close, a lane the site of which is now partly occupied by the present North Bridge Street. By the aid of a Fergusson bursary he was able to prosecute his studies at the University of St. Andrews, where he matriculated in February 1765 with the view—according to the parental ambition—of studying for the Kirk. At the University he manifested a certain scientific bent, but distinguished himself chiefly by his frolics and his poetry. Among the few pieces of his University days which survive

Robert
Fergusson
(1750-1774). His
student days.

is his rather irreverent elegy—modelled inevitably after ‘Standard *Habbie*’—on Professor David Gregory, who died 13th August 1765:—

long ago
moving

‘He could, by Euclid, prove lang syne
A ganging point composed a line ;
By numbers, too, he could divine,
Whan he did read,
That three times three just made up nine,
But now he’s dead !’

Reminiscent of these years is also his *Elegy on John Hogg, late Porter to the University of St. Andrews*:—

comfortable ;
full early

‘Ah, Johnie ! Often did I grumble
Frae cozie bed, fu’ ear’ to tumble,
When art and part I’d been in some ill

loth
penetrated ;
gimlet

Troth I was sweer :
His word then brodit like a wumel
Frae ear to ear.’

The truth was that his mercurial and frolicsome temper and extreme sociability were a surer passport to popularity with his fellows than to professorial approval, although Professor Wilkie of the absurd *Epigoniad* seems to have recognised his mental attractiveness, and to have treated him very much as a personal friend.

The death of Fergusson’s father in 1767 deprived him—nothing to his regret—of the wherewithal to persevere in his studies for the Kirk, and after an unsuccessful attempt by the aid of his maternal uncle to secure a better start in life, he was fain to content himself with the situation of copying clerk in the office of the commissary clerk of Edinburgh. For one of his temperament and

In ‘Auld
Reekie.’

talents the occupation was one of mere drudgery. From the beginning it exercised a depressing influence, from which he vainly sought relief in the convivial clubs which were then a social feature of 'Auld Reekie.'¹ Some fleeting glimpses of satisfaction he no doubt gained through his increasing local fame as versifier, but his poetic repute also widened the circle of his convivial companions, and introduced him more fully to the alluring attractions of pleasure. His contributions to Ruddiman's *Weekly Magazine* began, in February 1771, with pastorals and various other stilted pieces in English; and in the following year he commenced, with *The Daft Days*, the series of contributions to vernacular verse which, to use the words of R. L. Stevenson, were to be 'the models of great things to come'²—to 'come,' however, by Burns, not by Fergusson. A small volume of verse which appeared in 1773 added to his fame, and supplied him with some much-needed ready money; but it did little to remove the cloud of depression that had begun to settle on him. With his high-strung nervous system and lack of physical stamina, he could not, living as he did, long escape the inevitable tragedy. By the close of the year his health had become palpably wrecked, and he began to exhibit symptoms of mental instability—the

¹ 'Auld Reekie' (i.e. Old Smoky) was Fergusson's pet name for 'Edina, Scotia's darling seat.'

² Letter in Dr. A. B. Grosart's *Robert Fergusson* (Famous Scots Series).

malady, by virtue of what R. L. Stevenson has termed his 'damnatory creed,' assuming the form of religious mania. The shock of a fall down a stair, when returning from a convivial party, completed the catastrophe, and he died in the city madhouse, 16th October 1774.

In comparing the poetic achievement of Fergusson¹ with that of Ramsay or Burns, it is but fair to consider that he died, as Stevenson puts it, in his 'acute painful youth'—before he had 'outlived his green sickness,' and when he had merely begun to 'imp his wing' for greater flights. At the age when Fergusson had ceased to write verse, Ramsay was known only as a rising wigmaker, and Burns had done nothing of merit except *Poor Mailie*, and one or two songs. Fergusson's English verses do not here concern us, but they may be left out of account even in a general estimation of his position as poet, for the reason that, though equal in bulk to his vernacular pieces, they display little or no indication of emancipation from the stilted methods of the time. That emancipation might have come to him through his vernacular verse, but he did not live to realise it; and even in the vernacular his work was scarce more than tentative and experimental.

As to form, Fergusson's favourite staves were those

¹ The earlier editions of Fergusson's *Poems* were superseded by that edited by A. B. G., 1851, and frequently republished. A shilling edition of his *Poems* appeared in 1898.

of *Habbie Simson* ('Standard *Habbie*') and *Christis Kirk*, although he made frequent and clever use both of the octo-syllabic and His staves. heroic couplets. In *The Farmer's Ingle*, also, he adopted the nine-line stave formed by adding a line to the old alternately rhyming octave—the arrangement being ab, ab, cd, cdd; while *Hallow Fair* (not *The Hallow Fair*), modelled on *The Blythesome Bridal*, is in the old ballad stave. In the 'Standard *Habbie*' stave we have, of course, various Elegies, as well as Epistles, modelled after those of Ramsay and Hamilton of Gilbertfield; but Fergusson showed also a much more comprehensive partiality for the stave than Ramsay—a partiality which was to infect Burns,—and demonstrated something of its capabilities for picturesque narrative and description, for which it had certain aptitudes that were wanting in the less flexible and more mannered stave of *Christis Kirk*.

Though the verse of Fergusson is apt to manifest imperfect fusion of thought and emotion, as well as a lack of 'body' and fulness, its quality Characteristics. is much finer than that of Ramsay, and it is plainly the product of a much more highly disciplined intelligence. He rarely or never lapses into the utterly vulgar or squalid, nor does he display any of Ramsay's partiality for time-hallowed commonplace. His humour is seldom broad or boisterous, but like that of Stevenson—who recognised a mental kinship with him—quiet, dry, and

insinulative, and part and parcel of himself. Moreover, like Stevenson, he had a cunning sense of style,¹ and here his influence is very manifest on Burns, who time and again echoes not merely his sentiments but his phraseology. A characteristic example of his insinulative humour, and his terse and picturesque vernacular, is the following extract from the 'Bill of Fare,' which, had he been master of the ceremonies, he would have prepared for the regalement of Dr. Samuel Johnson when banqueted by the St. Andrews professors:—

boiled onions ; mixed taste ; man's mouth fellow's staring eyes sing'd ; flayed move down with difficulty inabundance cry out for thirst gripe ; pant cup oatcake belly	<p><i>'Imprimis</i>, then, a haggis fat, Weel tottled in a seything pat, Wi' spice and ingans weel ca'd thro' Had help'd to gust the stirrah's mow, And plac'd itsel in truncher clean Before the gilpy's glowrin een.</p> <p><i>Secundo</i>, then, a gude sheep's head Whase hide was singit, never flead, And four black trotters cled wi' girsle, Bedown his throat had learn'd to hirsle. What think ye, neist, o' gude fat brose To clag his ribs ? a dainty dose ! And white and bloody puddins routh To gar the Doctor skirl o' drouth ; Whan he cou'd never houp to merit A cordial glass o' reaming claret, But thraw his nose, and brize and pegh O'er the contents o' sma' ale quegh : Then let his wisdom girn and snarl O'er a weel-tostit girdle farl, An' learn, that, maugre o' his wame, Ill bairns are aye best heard at hame.'</p>
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¹ Fergusson had a subtler knowledge of vernacular Scots than Burns—or rather his Scots was the Scots not of the rustic but of the educated classes, who made daily use of it in Edinburgh at even a later date.

But Fergusson was more than a clever wit or humourist. None but a true poet could have written the first stanzas of *Daft Days*—

More than
a clever
humourist.

‘ Now mirk December’s dowie face
Glowrs owre the rigs wi’ sour grimace,
While, thro’ his *minimum* of space,
The bleer-ey’d sun,
Wi’ blinkin’ light and stealing pace,
His race doth run,’ etc. ;

dark ;
drooping
over the
ridges

glimmering

or the eerie Old Greyfriars Kirkyard scene in *The Ghaists*, or *The Lea Rig*, or the opening stanzas of *The Farmer’s Ingle*, or the opening stanzas of *Leith Races*.

And granted that his work is fuller of promise than performance, the promise for one of his years is remarkably full, and the actual achievement is so considerable as at least to render his individuality recognisable, and to furnish a living record of himself and his Edinburgh environment. The

The bard of
‘ Auld Reekie.’

‘ Auld Reekie ! wale o’ ilka town
That Scotland kens beneath the moon ;
Whare couthy chiels at e’ning meet
Their bizzing craigs and mou’s to weet :
And blythly gar auld Care gae bye
Wi’ blinkin’ and wi’ bleering eye,’

best of all
towns

social
fellows
buzzing
throats
make ; go
smiling ;
blearing

or Auld Reekie in the oyster-shops of Musselburgh or Newhaven, or assembling or assembled at Leith Races, or

‘ At Hallowfair, where browsters rare
Keep gude ale on the gantries,’

barrel stands

or deafened—in the person of the poet—by the

jangling *Tron Kirk Bell*, or expounded in the midnight dialogue of *Planestanes and Causey* 'in their mither tongue,' or simmering in the bustle and revelry of an *Election*,—all this very human, if not highly proper, aspect of the old burghal life is delineated with a sprightly wit and discernment which perhaps have never met with due recognition, especially from the generations of Fergusson's own fellow-citizens.

XIV

BURNS AND AFTERWARDS

ROBERT BURNS—JOHN MAYNE—JAMES TYTLER—
HECTOR MACNEILL—SUSANNA BLAMIRE—ELIZA-
BETH HAMILTON—MRS. GRANT OF CARRON—MRS.
GRANT OF LAGGAN—JOANNA BAILLIE—BARONESS
NAIRNE—JAMES HOGG—SIR WALTER SCOTT—SIR
ALEXANDER BOSWELL—ROBERT TANNAHILL—
ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM.

ROBERT BURNS has, especially in Scotland, been the theme of such universal and perpetual allusion, and his qualities, real or imaginary, both as man and poet, have been expounded in such a variety of methods, from the blind encomium by the village enthusiast, up to the critical and splendid eulogy by Mr. Henley,¹ that even in an account of Scottish Vernacular Literature there is scarce occasion for more than a mere indication of his unique place in the succession of Scottish bards.

His birth on the windy morning of 25th January 1759, in the 'auld clay biggin' at Alloway, Ayrshire ;

¹ *Burns—Life, Genius, and Achievement*, by W. E. Henley, reprinted from *The Centenary Burns*, Edinburgh, 1898.

Robert Burns
(1759-1796)
and Scotland.

the noble and intelligent efforts of his struggling peasant father to procure him a good education; his own high enthusiasm for learning, and Burns's career. for such limited literature as was within his reach; the not wholly scatheless triumph of his ardent genius and splendid physique over circumstances that would have overwhelmed or suppressed all but the strongest; his early initiation into the 'sublime notions and high mysteries' of love and poetry; the turbulent years of his early manhood; his adventurous quests and chequered fortunes as an amorist; his complex encounters with desperate circumstances and Calvinistic Puritanism, and the Kirk and himself; the sudden gleam of success and hope that followed the appearance of the *Kilmarnock* volume in 1786; the animating episode of *Edinburgh*, intermingled with its varied experiences and the *Clarinda* sensibilities and raptures; his practical farewell to brilliant hopes, and new half-formed ambitions, and the great world—to the spell of whose influence he was by no means insensitive,—and his return, impelled less by free choice than by what he deemed stern necessity, to his own people and his old mode of life; the final absorption of his great gifts mainly in the routine duties of exciseman, which duties, it has been triumphantly demonstrated, he performed 'pretty well'; the half-unconscious but utter revolt of his nature against his lot; the insufficient, or rather fatally perilous, character of his safety-valves, and the solution of a problem—which was ever becoming other-

wise more difficult of explication—by his premature death, 21st July 1796;—all this, it may be taken for granted, the reader is already pretty well acquainted with.

In his career—his endeavour, achievement, and tragedy—the attribute which seems to have been determinative both for good and evil was his exuberant vitality. Physically he ^{His exuberant vitality.} was gifted, as only the elect favourites of Nature are, with strength and beauty, and his physical endowments were but the reflex of a rarely dowered intelligence. As to the dominance of his personal charm, testimony is unanimous. Thus the Duchess of Gordon confesses that he was the only man who ‘carried her off her feet’; his friend Syme compares his eyes to ‘coals of living fire’; Maria Riddell expresses the conviction that Poetry was ‘actually not his forte,’ that none ever outshone him ‘in the charms—the sorcery I might almost call it—of fascinating conversation,’ and ‘that no man was ever gifted with a larger portion of the *vivida vis animi*’; and such was his magnetism over even the average stolid Scot, that ‘if he entered an inn at midnight, after all the inmates were in bed, the news of his arrival circulated from cellar to garret, and ere ten minutes had elapsed the landlord and all his guests had assembled.’ But this noble faculty, this exuberant physical and mental vitality, was to spend itself very largely in beating against the walls of its prison-house. At the outset it was to be all but

fatally injured by the iron drudgery of Mount Oliphant—a drudgery which, as he said, combined the ‘cheerless gloom of a hermit with the ceaseless toil of a galley slave’; and which left behind debilities and tendencies that were bound to evince themselves in some form, and do much to explain his restless craving for excitement, and for those ‘violent delights’ which

‘have violent ends,
And in their triumph die.’

Nor, apart from its undue straining in his earlier years, was he ever in circumstances where it did not suffer, more or less, from the tedium and harm of repression; and thus it acted too much as a mere fever in the blood, and never became the fully beneficent influence either to himself or the world that it might have been amid more congenial surroundings, and with free scope for its employment and full expansion.

But our concern, here and now, is less with what Burns might have been than with what he was, and less with that aspect of his life which was mistaken, ineffective, and calamitous, than with that which, after all, was its right aspect—the aspect which was fortunate and successful as it is given to few lives to be; for in his case, more than that of most, the maxim of Mark Antony has been reversed—the good that he has done has lived after him, and the evil has been interred with his bones. One beneficent result that

Burns and
Calvinistic
Puritanism.

has accrued specially to many of Burns's own countrymen from Burns's exuberant vitality was deliverance from the nightmare of Calvinistic Puritanism, that bastard form of scholastic monasticism under whose spell the bulk of the Scottish community had been tossing in 'unquiet slumbers' from the time of the Reformation. With Burns came the glimmerings of dawn and the dispersal of many clouds and shadows. No one ever asserted more convincingly man's inherent right to the fulness of his humanity, or more vehemently denied the innate accursedness of present happiness and joy. Not only did he war directly with the results of Calvinistic Puritanism in numerous incidental skirmishes and in such satirical attacks as *The Unco Guid*, *The Holy Fair*, *The Epistle to MacMath*, and the matchless *Holy Willie's Prayer*, but by the consummate utterance of natural human feeling throughout the whole gamut of emotion—love, passion, desire, sympathy, humour, joy, sorrow, and regret—he charmed from the nation—as David by his playing did from Saul—the 'evil spirit' that so long had 'vexed' it, and it was 'refreshed and was well.'

For his exuberant vitality Burns found one of his main outlets in poetry. As Maria Riddell conjectured, poetry may actually not have been his forte. He was perhaps more especially gifted for practical ascendancy over his fellows. With his strong and broad human sympathy, his piercing intelligence, his eloquent speech, his magnetic

Becomes a
poet.

personality, he possessed most of the qualities which go to fashion a great statesman, a statesman who is able so to identify his personality with the personality of a nation that he dominates, or seems to dominate, its will, and at least interprets, if he does not in a measure shape, its destiny. But poetry it was destined to be; and this, for one thing, because whether by natural endowment, or as the result of repression or of overstrain, he felt within him the workings of a strong artistic impulse, the need of fit expression for emotion; and for another, because it was difficult, if not impossible for him, situated as he was, to find otherwise an outlet for his mental vitality; and lastly, and perhaps chiefly, because he discovered in the poetry with which in his youth he was mainly charmed—the vernacular poetry of Ramsay and Fergusson, and the song-books which he pored over driving his cart or going to labour, and of such of the old ‘makaris’ as he knew—the needed antithesis to, and counteractive of, Calvinistic Puritanism: what represented in the language of his daily life (1) the old primitive non-conventional aspect of things which appealed directly to the peasant, and (2) the repressed poetry and the repressed life of himself and of the nation—the poetry which the Kirk had forbidden, and which the nation in its blindness had departed from, and the life of unrestrained intelligence and natural human joy, and art and music and the beautiful, which was, as yet, all but denied to Scotland, but for which he felt ‘immortal longings.’

The early poetic models of Burns were thus primarily the old 'makaris' and the modern vernacular bards, represented by Sempill, Ramsay, and Fergusson. The old 'mak-
His early poetic models. The old 'makaris,' etc.
 aris' he knew mainly as they were to be studied in *The Evergreen*, and possibly in Lord Hailes' *Ancient Scottish Poems*, 1770. No doubt he was also well read in 'Davie Lyndsay,' and he knew Blind Harry's *Wallace*, as represented in the version of Hamilton of Gilbertfield. Before he wrote *Tam o' Shanter*, he must, at least, have glanced at Gavin Douglas; and he further got to be acquainted with Barbour's *Bruce*, as he no doubt did with Pinkerton's *Ancient Scottish Poems*, 1786, and with various later collections edited by Pinkerton and others. Of still more importance was the fact that he had conceived a very special affection for the old songs, and that, besides minutely conning over those in the collections verse by verse, and 'carefully noting the tender and sublime from affectation and fustian,' he latterly came to possess—through opportunities afforded him during his wanderings as exciseman, as well as by means of correspondence—a very varied knowledge of the old traditional songs, and indeed a quite unique assortment of the old vernacular lyrics which, except surreptitiously, have never appeared in print.

At school he had read Gray's *Elegy*, and various scraps from other English poets, especially those of the eighteenth century, and by and by he began to study more systematically, and to admire and

intermittently to copy and imitate, Gray and Thomson, and that 'celebrated poet' Shenstone,

His English
models.

whose 'divine Elegies do honour to our language, our nation, and our species.'

At a very early period he had also chanced on the *Works* of Pope, from whom his style may have gained something in point and polish; but towards Milton his attitude was if anything equivocal, and while he was also accustomed to peruse the plays of Shakespeare, he was, like all the strange English generation of his time—indeed, the English generations from the time of Shakespeare's dethronement by the Puritan reaction, for even after the Restoration Shakespeare lay partly *perdu* as a literary influence until the nineteenth century—almost insensate to the spell of Shakespeare's enchantment, and, it may be, did not rate him quite so highly as 'the celebrated poet' above mentioned. His English models were thus mainly the later eighteenth-century poets; and partly from the unaffected modesty which was one of his most engaging traits, partly from the consciousness of his own hap-hazard and unsystematic mental training, he was disposed to adopt towards them too much the attitude of mere admiration. Neither with Thomson, nor Gray, nor the 'celebrated' Shenstone, had he almost anything in common, and so far as he attempted to tutor himself to the assumption of their particular modes of 'sensibility'—to indulge in the contemplative raptures of Thomson, or the cloistered enthusiasm of Gray, or the refined

sentimentalism of Shenstone—he was merely forging chains to curb and fetter his own strong vitality. No doubt they were his masters in the technique of English verse, but only for the reason that in the higher and more elaborate forms of English verse he never advanced beyond the stage of pupilage.

Carlyle has asserted that had Burns been ‘a regular, well-trained, intellectual workman,’ he might ‘have changed the whole course of British literature’; but this of course Burns was

His poetic possibilities.

very far from being. Time, opportunity, and environment were alike wanting for it; his poetry was the product of moments of leisure snatched from hours of grinding toil amid the companionship of simple rustics. Moreover, at a very early period he had got mentally habituated to the old Scots vernacular staves, especially those which had been revived by Ramsay and Fergusson; and this early bias was not helpful, but the opposite, to success in English verse. These metrical forms had become effete in England—effete because of changes in the idiosyncrasy of the language, and advancement in the art of poetical expression since the days of the old vernacular ‘makaris.’ For Scottish vernacular they were still the most suitable, if not the only possible, forms; but the constant practice of them tended, if anything, to dull the ear for the appreciation of the fuller and richer and more subtle and varied melody of modern English verse, or at least introduced a disturbing

influence which embarrassed endeavours after accomplishment in its special achievements.

Moreover—it may be deemed rank blasphemy and worse, indeed has already been so deemed, to put the question, but—was Burns specially gifted to excel in the higher and purer forms of poetic expression? Carlyle—who, however, was not partial to poetry for its own sake—plainly doubted if he was, at least he expresses the opinion that the bulk of Burns's verse was merely rhymed eloquence rather than poetry, and under the shadow of this great Scottish rock one feels a certain security against the charge of presumption for daring to have at least an open mind on the question. But at any rate, circumstanced as he was—toiling as an Ayrshire peasant-farmer, or perambulating as a Dumfries exciseman—it would have been the miracle of miracles, which it isn't, had he become the equal of Shakespeare, or Milton, or Shelley, or Tennyson, as a master of English verse.

We are thus left a good deal in the dark as to the actual possibilities of Burns as a poet—the only outstanding fact being that they were never fully manifested. Clearly he had much in common with Byron, both being endowed with the same exuberant vitality, the vitality which made Byron the great European personality of his time, while Burns, if less passionate and petulant in his sincerity, had the same uncompromising regard for reality which underlay all Byron's masquerading, and while naturally the finer artist of the two, had a much

Burns and
Byron.

greater capacity for taking pains. But then the stage of Byron was primarily Europe, and the stage of Burns was primarily only Mauchline and Dumfries; and the great things that were possible for Burns on the wider stage are, after all, a matter of conjecture.

Some of these great things were perhaps possible for him even so late as Edinburgh—possible had he not been fatally entangled with the past, both by circumstances and habit; but knowing himself—his needs, obligations, and capacities—better than we can know them, he decided to renounce the rose-coloured future that may for a brief period have pictured itself on the horizon of his hopes, and to return to his old, narrow, rustic environment as peasant-farmer. Had he even succeeded as farmer, some of the poetic ambitions which he still continued to cherish might have been realised; but misfortunes and monotonous toil and care, and latterly the exacting duties of exciseman, more and more lowered ‘the pitch of his resolution.’ He made various desultory efforts to perfect his poetic training by wider reading in French as well as English, and momentarily entertained strong hopes of inaugurating a new form of Scottish drama; but even so much as an attempt to realise them was meanwhile an impossibility, and the very burden of his poetic impossibility drove him more and more to seek his chief consolation in conviviality. Thus, apart from songs—his addiction to which in his later years meant that if he had not been ‘made weak by time

His partial renunciation of a poetic career.

and fate,' he had meanwhile ceased either to 'seek' or 'find' a fuller poetic utterance—his career as poet, which had really extended over little more than a short two years, virtually terminated with the publication of the first Edinburgh Edition in 1787, the only great poem of the last nine years of his life being *Tam o' Shanter*, which he was led to undertake very much by accident.

The vernacular staves of Burns were mainly those which had already been revived by his predecessors of the eighteenth century — Sempill, Hamilton of Gilbertfield, Ramsay, and Burns. 'Standard Habbie.' Fergusson. The 'Standard Habbie' stave of Sempill (see *ante*, p. 391) suggested the Elegies on *Poor Mailie*, *Tam Samson*, and *Captain Matthew Henderson*, but besides adopting it, after Hamilton of Gilbertfield, Ramsay, and Fergusson, for his epistolary verse, he made it the vehicle for such a variety of sentiments and emotions that it virtually became part and parcel of his poetic individuality.

Its only rival is the *Christis Kirk* stave, which in *The Dream* and *The Ordination* he wrote in the exact Ramsay form, building the octave 'Christis Kirk.' —derived from the original ballad stave Its modification. —on two rhymes, as in the original *Christis Kirk* and in Ramsay's cantos, and, like Ramsay, contracting the old bobwheel of two lines into a refrain of one line ending with 'day.' In *The Holy Fair* and *Halloween* and *The Mauchline Wedding*,¹ he, however, adopted the modification of

¹ Published for the first time in *The Centenary Burns*, ii. 42-44.

the ballad octave used by Fergusson in *Leith Races* and *The Hallow Fair*, building it usually on four and occasionally on three rhymes. In *Halloween* he also, of course, substituted 'night' for 'day' in the refrain. Further, occasionally, and especially in *Halloween*, he introduced internal rhymes, thus virtually transforming either the first quatrain of the stave into the six-line stave in *rime couée*, fashioned on the imperfect iambic tetrameter (see *ante*, p. 164), or the whole into one of twelve lines:—

‘Upon that night,
When fairies light
On Cassilis Downans dance;
Or o’er the lays,
In splendid blaze,
On sprightly coursers prance,’ etc.

This ballad stave, in its four-rhyme form, he also employed without the refrain in the *Address to the Unco Guid* and *Epistle to a Young Friend*, but modified it throughout by the use of double rhymes in the second, fourth, sixth, and eighth lines:—

‘O ye, wha are sae guid yoursel,
Sae pious and sae holy,
Ye’ve nought to do but mark and tell
Your neebours’ fauts and folly.
Whase life is like a weel-gaun mill,
Supplied wi’ store o’ water;
The heapet happer’s ebbing still,
An’ still the clap plays clatter.’

Ballad Stave.

well-going

hopper
clapper

Further, in *Guildford Good* he adopted the modified form of the ballad stave—which, on account of the use of internal rhymes throughout, virtually assumes

the *rime couée* form—derived from the old ballad *Killychrankie*, the last word of the double rhyme, ‘man,’ forming practically a kind of refrain.

The next most characteristic stave of Burns is that of *The Cherry and the Slae*. This piece as well as *The Vision*—usually attributed to Ramsay himself, who, at any rate, made use of the stave in other pieces, as *The Petition to the Whinbush Club* and *The Address to the Town Council*—Burns had read in *The Evergreen*, and he also got to know *The Bankis of Helicon*, which was published in Pinkerton’s *Ancient Scottish Poems*, 1786. In *The Epistle to Davie*, and one or two other pieces, the stave is employed in a somewhat mechanical fashion, without any realisation even of the picturesque effects attained by Montgomerie; but this cannot be said of the recitativos in *The Jolly Beggars*, where its capabilities are first fully made manifest:—

next

whisky
leered
flushed with
drink
other
sounding
mouth
alms
each
hawker’s

‘First, niest the fire, in auld red rags,
Ane sat, weel brac’d wi’ mealy bags,
And knapsack a’ in order;
His doxy lay within his arm,
Wi’ usquebae an’ blankets warm,
She blinket on her sodger.
An’ aye he gies the tozie drab
The tither skelpin kiss,
While she held up her greedy gab
Just like an aumous dish:
Ilk smack still, did crack still,
Like onie cadger’s whup;
Then swaggering and staggering,
He roar’d this ditty up.’

Other poetic forms of the old ‘makaris’ used by Burns, under sanction of Ramsay and Fergusson, were the octo-syllabic and heroic couplets, and, like them, he used those forms chiefly for tales or narratives; but those simplest of rhyme-forms had, of course, also survived in English verse.

The octo-syllabic and heroic couplets.

But a stave which neither Ramsay nor Fergusson had ventured to attempt, and which Burns got from *The Evergreen*, was the French octave. Obtaining it directly from the old ‘makaris,’ he wrote it with much more punctilious correctness, as regards both rhythm and rhyme, than was his custom, and while using it with discretion for such ‘heich and grave subjects’ as *The Lament* and *The Address to Edinburgh*, he applied it to a subject that was neither ‘heich’ nor ‘grave’ in one of the recitativos of *The Jolly Beggars*, where its ancient gravity is at least admirably burlesqued:—

The French octave.

‘Poor Merry-Andrew in the neuk
 Sat guzzling wi’ a tinkler-hizzie ;
 They mind’t na wha the chorus teuk,
 Between themselves they were sae busy.
 At length, wi’ drink an’ courting dizzy,
 He stoiter’d up an’ made a face ;
 Then turn’d an’ laid a smack on Grizzie,
 Syne tun’d his pipes wi’ grave grimace.’

corner
 tinkler-
 wench
 cared not

struggled

then

The only other stave in *rime couée*, in addition to ‘Standard *Habbie*,’ used by Burns is—in *Epistle to Lord Daer* and *Fintry My Stay*—the six-line stave divided into two equal

‘Sir Thopas’
 staves.

sections, of which the simplest form is that of Chaucer's *Sir Thopas* (see *ante*, p. 162), which is built on two rhymes. There are no examples in *The Evergreen*, though it is common in later English verse, and Burns, who employs the form built on three rhymes, probably got it from Ramsay's *Address of Thanks*.

Examples of various other staves of the old 'makaris' Burns, of course, saw in *The Evergreen*,

Limited range
of Burns's
accomplish-
ment in the
old vernacular
staves, and in
English verse.

but he made no attempt to utilise them, and, it may be, wisely, so far at least as his popularity with the masses was concerned, for the eighteenth-century Scot had already become thoroughly enamoured of the two main verse-forms which Burns elected to make his own. Nor must we forget that *The Evergreen* did not bring home to him the poetic individualities of Henryson, or Dunbar, or Scott, or even Montgomerie, as it is now possible to recognise them.¹ But whatever variety of reasons may account for it, the fact remains that, compared with the old 'makaris,' the range of his accomplishment in the old vernacular metres was extremely limited; nor within his limited range is he the equal of any of those four 'makaris' in faultlessness of art, much of his work, especially as regards rhyme, being lawless and irregular. It is in the very simple stave of 'Standard *Habbie*' (a stave which almost writes

¹ Burns never seems to have recognised the strong individuality of Dunbar, which is the more remarkable that he had so much in common with him; but then to him, as to Ramsay, Dunbar was a mere name.

itself), that he is most effective; and when he attempts the more complex, or more nobly and variedly musical, forms of English verse, he is merely a blind Samson 'grinding in fetters,' with his 'heaven-gifted strength.' As a vernacular lyrist he is often altogether magical and irresistible, but the strain of his enchantment is simple in the extreme, none of the more exquisite rhymal and rhythmical effects of English lyrisms being so much as attempted.

We thus reach the inevitable conclusion that Burns triumphs neither by virtue nor by aid of supreme technical accomplishment, but in spite of an almost merely elementary knowledge of the metrical art. It is the marvellous success achieved by simple means that renders him, within his own sphere, the rare and peerless poetic artist that he is. Take for example *The Jolly Beggars*. Metrically it is a mere disordered and incongruous medley of scraps from the old vernacular 'makaris' and the innominate rhymers of tradition, and the broadsides and the penny chap-books. It is resonant of the echoes and refrains and sentiments of a miscellaneous crowd of preceding bards, celebrated and obscure. It is wholly lacking not merely in artistic originality, but almost in individuality of metrical achievement, and never was a literary victory so renowned gained by methods so wholly unauthorised by the higher conventions, and in fact so unpretentious almost to contemptibility. But the victory is none the less complete and none

His successes
achieved by
simple means.
'The Jolly
Beggars.'

the less intrinsically great. Out of what seems poetic chaos he creates a nobly harmonious poetic unity, and in the realisation of his purpose he is so brilliantly, even radiantly, successful that this blackguard carousal in the squalid Ayrshire doss-house becomes instinct with a human interest so genuine and alluring that only the very dullest or morosest can resist its spell.

But what, then, is the outstanding quality of this singularly anomalous classic? Is it not its exuberant vitality? the *verve*, the *élan*, the abounding and 'unremitting energy,' which

Exuberant
vitality in the
form of
humorous
sympathy.

'pervades,
Adjusts, sustains, and agitates the whole'?

The vitality is as all-pervading as it is ardent, being rooted in his own deep and full humanity, and expressing itself in the only form in which it could, in the circumstances, be adequately effective—the form of humorous sympathy. Had he been merely witty he would have ceased to be in any sense sympathetic: the humanism of the scene would have vanished, or become merely secondary, and we should have been treated to a merely cleverer repetition of the Zolaesque squalidity of Ramsay's *Christis Kirk*. Nor, except in the form chiefly of humour, could he have denoted his sympathy without revolting the finer susceptibilities—without, that is, degrading himself entirely to the level of his company, and thus practically ceasing to be poetical.

It is the abundance and depth of his humorous sympathy which is Burns's most idiomatic characteristic, as it is certainly the secret of his unique hold over the affections of the great mass of his countrymen, who are necessarily as blind to his inevitable limitations as they are to the higher beauties and refinements of his art. Few poets, even, have ever been so immediately and fully responsive to external impressions. Thus Gilbert says that in his youth 'he was constantly the victim of some fair enslaver,' and that in this condition 'the agitation of his mind and body exceeded anything I know in real life.' This same exceptional responsiveness may be discovered even in his correspondence, so that merely from his letters it would be rash to assert anything very decisive as to his individual opinions on many important matters of life and conduct. He was 'Hail, fellow! well met!' with almost every son or daughter of Adam or Eve who manifested any smallest tincture of genial humanity, from 'that part of mankind commonly known by the ordinary phrase of "blackguards,"' up to professors of Moral Philosophy like Professor Dugald Stewart, or staid and worthy matrons like Mrs. Dunlop. In any company where he found himself, whether that of the revellers in some village tavern, or that of the wits and beauties of elegant Edinburgh *salons*, he was 'the soul of all the rest,' and this by virtue of the subtle responsiveness by which he adapted himself to its atmosphere, and

reflected in a glorified form its special mood. To use his own phrase, he was like the 'Æolian harp passive,' and gave forth music as the chords of his nature were moved by the varying influences of the moment.

With this abundance and depth of humorous sympathy, Burns could scarce have been aught else than eloquent, and perhaps, as Carlyle opined, he is rather eloquent than strictly poetical; but after all, poetry is only a higher form of eloquence, and it is difficult to define where the one merges in the other. If Burns was in no degree a poet in the almost disembodied sense that Shelley sometimes was, he was at least a sufficiently poetic realist; and if he never attained to a thorough mastery of the more elaborate technique of poetry, he did succeed in enveloping himself and all that concerned him in a glamour which has been poetical enough to bewitch the mass of his fellow-countrymen, and to fascinate a very large proportion of the educated outside world. His art is at least wholly admirable of its kind and within its own range. If lacking in rhythmical variety and subtlety and in the more refined forms of poetic beauty,¹ no poetry was ever more genuinely and inevitably true to nature, or more exactly and delicately expressive of the poet's intention. 'All my poetry,' he told Mrs. Dunlop, 'is the result of easy composition but of

¹ See especially on this subject a note in Mr. Henley's *Essay* in the *Centenary Burns*, vol. iv. p. 275.

laborious correction,' which is simply to say that it combined genuine inspiration, as all true poetry must, with painstaking art; and by virtue of the results of his laborious correction—that is, as he also expresses it, of his 'finishing polish'—Burns ranks with the greater poetic artists.

Burns has been measured and equalled in all sorts of ways with the great English poets; by one critic or another he has been endowed with what the particular critic deemed the most admirable qualities of Chaucer, or Shakespeare, or Milton, or Thomson, or Wordsworth, or Shelley, while some scarce scruple to affirm that he con-

Cannot properly be measured with English poets. Mainly fashioned by the old Vernacular tradition.

centrates in himself the most shining excellences of the whole galaxy. If in such predicamental circumstances one might venture a comparison at all, it would be in the direction of suggesting that he is a sort of rustic Shakespeare; though there are of course whole regions of thought and emotion and poetic accomplishment in Shakespeare that Burns leaves untouched—untouched because they were outside his purview, and so wholly outside of it that he scarce even dreamed of their existence. But in the case of Burns comparison with Shakespeare or any other English poet is almost wholly futile, for the reason that among modern British poets he is, at his best, entirely *sui generis*. What connection he had with the modern English school was comparatively superficial. He obtained from it neither

the inspiration nor discipline correspondent to his finer issues. His true poetic ancestors were the old Scots 'makaris,' and in a measure—that is, so far as they were the interpreters of the old 'makaris'—Ramsay and Fergusson, and the 'glorious old Bards' of the 'Ancient Fragments,'—glorious old bards, whose 'very names are buried amongst the wreck of things that were.'

More especially was Burns beholden to the 'Ancient Fragments.' As we have seen, before the coming of

His indebted-
ness to the
'Ancient Frag-
ments' and the
old tradition.

Burns, and through the offices of Ramsay and others, a modern lyric school had arisen in Scotland of somewhat miscellaneous nationality, but so far as it got its inspiration from the old vernacular tradition representing an art which had its beginnings in the far past, and bore unmistakable impress of the varied skill of a considerable succession of poetic artists. Several successors of Ramsay were more faithful to the old vernacular tradition than Ramsay, and manifested in isolated songs a much truer inspiration. Burns, on the whole, was also faithful to the old tradition, and unmistakably faithful to it in vernacular song. He did write a variety of Scoto-English song, but it was not the amorphous variety of Ramsay; and he also wrote—mainly at the instance of Thomson of the *Scottish Airs*, and out of the abundance of his own good nature—a number of songs in English after the inflatedly sentimental fashion of his time. Even in these

stray gleams of genius may be discerned, and they nearly all display something of his 'finishing polish,' but he probably set little store by the most of them. And whether or not, it is only so far as he has been faithful to the old vernacular tradition—as he has caught its tone, and adopted, while glorifying, its methods—that he has earned for himself a place amongst the greatest of British lyrists. Indeed, it may even be affirmed that he triumphs more especially when the strain of his song is very much the echo of an 'ancient fragment,' an echo which he merely enriches and prolongs; and that if we subtract from his lyrical achievement the songs not so derived, we rob him of a good deal more than half his claim to be regarded as the supreme lyrist of his country.¹

Burns, then, owes his peculiar place apart among great poets very much to an exceptional conjuncture of circumstances reaching back to the period when the old school of Scots 'makaris' became not merely extinct, but whelmed in temporary oblivion. He thus, in a sort of vicarious sense, represents the nation's poetic past, and he was enabled to do so very much by virtue of his peasanthood. Had he been the fully equipped intellectual workman of which Carlyle dreamed, and which some suppose him

Advantages of his peasanthood. More than a peasant poet, and exceptionally the national poet of Scotland.

¹ For Burns's relation to the 'Ancient Fragments,' see *The Centenary Burns*, vol. iii., and Mr. Henley's *Essay*, vol. iv. pp. 321-334.

to have been, his poetic achievement would doubtless have been even greater than it is, but it could not have been so peculiarly Scottish. A great vernacular poet on the old lines—as a fully equipped intellectual workman, and representing the blossom of the nation's contemporary culture—was no longer possible in Scotland. He could represent little more than its past, and could sway it mainly by reviving its old forgotten memories; and so to represent and sway it, it was necessary that he should, in a measure, be detached from artificial modern influences, so that nothing should intervene between him and the ancient tradition. Thus his peasant upbringing and surroundings were almost an essential part of Burns's training; and yet he is much more than a mere peasant poet, and this because he had, by virtue of the enforced silence of the Scottish muse for several generations, fallen heir to the old poetic tradition—a far higher poetic tradition than could derive from even an ideal peasantry, and a much nobler poetic heritage than any other peasantry ever possessed. Though he came in the guise of a peasant, and as the glorifier of common things, he came therefore as the Scottish national poet in a sense unexampled and unique. By virtue of his instant and universal responsiveness he was able almost to identify his personality with the personality of the nation, and especially to create a form of lyric which, while exactly expressive of his own rare individualism, is diversified and enriched, and, so to say, nationalised, by the combined experience,

emotion, and lyric art of many generations of poetic predecessors.¹

The fame and personality of Burns naturally tend to dwarf those of contemporaries and successors; and while they helped to prolong the old vernacular tradition, with him that tradition necessarily reached the climax of its influence. By the very nature of the case a repetition of his achievements as vernacular poet was impossible, and we need not here follow this decaying tradition beyond the more prominent of his immediate successors.

In Burns the revived vernacular poetry attains its climax.

Among his contemporaries was John Mayne, who, though born in the same year as Burns, won quicker fame as a verse writer. As early as 1775 he had published a portion of his lively and picturesque, if not quite poetic, *Siller Gun*, and to his *Halloween*, which first appeared in *Ruddiman's Magazine* in 1780, Burns was indebted for something more than the mere name of his poem on the same subject; while Mayne's *Logan Braes*—founded on an older ditty—is an admirably simple expression of true love sentiment, and indeed superior to Burns's semi-political and wholly artificial *Logan Water*.

John Mayne
(1759-1836).

A collaborateur with Burns on Johnson's *Museum*

¹ Much of the sentiment and emotion expressed in Burns's lyrics lies outside his own personal experience. Nor could any single poetic individuality have invented such varied forms of lyrical expression. Their charm derives largely from their relation to generations long anterior to ours; and it is Burns's chief praise to have embalmed this ancient charm in a modern lyric.

was James Tytler, a gentleman of good education and varied accomplishments, and who, besides editing and in great part writing the second edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, engaged in numerous literary ventures, but so unsuccessfully that Burns describes him as dangling 'about Edinburgh as a common printer, with leaky shoes, a sky-lighted hat, and knee-buckles, as unlike George-by-the-Grace-of-God, as Solomon the Son of David.' Tytler, like Burns, had clearly access to the Herd ms., and mainly devoted himself to the adaptation of old songs. Burns specially praises his *Bonnie Brucket Lassie* for its original ending.

Though older in years than Burns, Hector MacNeill achieved his earliest success as a vernacular poet with *Scotland's Skaith*, 1795, and *The Woes o' War*, 1796, intended to illustrate the insidious evils of the drinking customs of the time, which they do with some pathetic power; but he is now mainly remembered for his lyrics, which are at least perfectly sincere and natural, while their somewhat commonplace emotion is frequently expressed with much humorous vivacity. Among the best are *Mary of Castlecary*, *My Boy Tammie*,¹ *I Lo'ed ne'er a Laddie but Ane*, and *Come under my Plaidie*.

¹ *My Boy Tammie* preserves echoes of an older song, as the following fragment from the Herd ms. witnesses:—

'I am to court a wife,
And I'll love her a' my life;
But she is a young thing,
And new come frae her mamie,' etc.

Several ladies, contemporaries of Burns, have been more or less successful in vernacular lyrics. Susanna Blamire (1747-1794), the 'Muse of Cumberland,' achieved in *The Nabob* a not unsuccessful variation on *Auld Lang Syne*, and in *And ye shall Walk in Silk Attire*, and *What Ails this Heart of Mine?* found graceful expression for somewhat hackneyed sentimentalism. A vein of true poetry is, however, revealed in Elizabeth Hamilton's (1758-1816) *My Ain Fireside*, which must ever remain the classic utterance on the subject; while Mrs. Grant of Carron (1745-1814) in *Roy's Wife* expresses with humorous felicity the light-hearted regrets of a jilted swain, and Mrs. Grant of Laggan (1755-1838), in *O Where, tell me Where*, is, after the Jacobite manner, though not on a Jacobite theme, sentimentally martial.

Lady contemporaries of Burns.

The reputation of Joanna Baillie is assured apart from her Scottish lyrics, some of which are very much in the English manner; but *Saw Ye Johnie Comin'?* is so radically vernacular that Burns—who affirmed that 'for genuine humour in the verses and lively originality in the air' it was 'unparalleled'—took it 'to be very old.' Among other successes of Miss Baillie is a version of *Woo'd and Married and A'*; and she was also not unsuccessful in humorous narrative, as in *Tam o' the Lin* and *It was on a Morning*.

Joanna Baillie
(1762-1851).

But the laureate among Scottish poetesses is Carolina Oliphant, Baroness Nairne, on whom some have

almost ventured to affirm the lyric mantle of Burns has descended, though she is, of course, wholly lacking in Burns's depth and passion. With her and her house Jacobitism was almost a religion, and her Jacobite lyrics are on the whole her best. Nowhere is the pure romantic devotion of Jacobitism more finely and ardently expressed than in *Will ye no Come back again?* or in *He's Ower the Hills that I Lo'e Weel*; and in *The Hundred Pipers* its martial sentiment is conveyed with an admirable blending of humour, pathos, and defiance. Her love lyrics, as *Huntingtower* and *The Lass o' Gowrie*, are in sentiment a little hackneyed and superficial; but pathos, homely yet tender and strong, is manifested in *The Rowan Tree*, *The Auld Hoose*, *The Land o' the Leal*, and even in *Caller Herrin'*; and the old-world episode of *The Laird o' Cockpen* is narrated with delightfully graceful naïveté and humour.

The only rival of the Baroness Nairne among the lyric successors of Burns is James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, whose *Jacobite Relics* generally owe most of their finest poetic qualities to Hogg himself, and whose own original Jacobite lyrics, as *Rise, rise, Cam' ye by Athol*, and *Maclean's Welcome*, have at least a fine rhythmical ease and swing, and display a truly martial *verve*. But Hogg has little or no connection with the wider Scottish vernacular tradition. The bulk of his verse, and even of his lyrics, is in English, and some only

Carolina,
Baroness
Nairne
(1766-1845).

James Hogg
(1770-1835).

partially in English might as well have been wholly so. He did cherish the ambition to become Burns's successor; and perhaps he possessed a more purely poetic temperament, but he was essentially a Border reiver. His tradition was that of the old Border minstrels; and his poetry represents especially the old Border spirit of adventure and romance, blended with a superstitious mysticism closely allied to that of the Highland Celt. His worst and damning fault is his diffuseness, and, notwithstanding many fine poetic touches, his long-drawn sweetness tends to pall upon the reader. Still, the mystic charm of *Kilmeny* is undeniable, and not less the weird *diablerie* of *The Witch of Fife*; while in *The Mountain Bard* the wild, adventurous, lawless, superstitious reiver lives again. Hogg's facility in versification was apt to prove a snare to him, but he is always graceful and musical; and nowhere has the charm of the peaceful aspects of Nature—the charm peculiar to the haughs and valleys of southern Scotland—been more delightfully and delicately set forth than in such lyrics as *The Skylark* and *The Kye comes Hame*.

Hogg as a poet was very much a rustic Sir Walter Scott,¹ who was, besides, the founder of a vernacular school of his own, that of the vernacular novel—a subject too vast for our present consideration,—but who very seldom in his poetry drops into the vernacular, and makes very chary

Sir Walter
Scott (1771-1832).

¹ For Scott's relation to the Traditional Ballad, see *ante*, pp. 362-3, 366-8.

use of it even in his lyrics, the only almost pure examples being the spirited *Jock o' Hazeldean*—founded on an old ballad,—the witty character sketch of *Donald Caird*, and his new version of *Carle, now the King's Come*; but *March, march, Ettrick and Teviotdale*—derived from the old *General Leslie's March*—contains at least one vernacular exclamation; and the vernacular slightly tinges his re-reading of D'Urfey's *Bonnie Dundee*. Moreover, if neither the wild *Macgregor's Gathering*, nor the stirring *Pibroch of Donald Dhu*, nor the wailing *Mackrimmon's Lament* can be strictly termed Scots, neither are they quite English.

A contemporary of Hogg and Scott was Sir Alexander Boswell, the eldest son of Johnson's 'Bozzie.' An Ayrshire squire, he was an ardent admirer of Robert Burns, and the originator of the movement for the erection of a monument to him at the Tam o' Shanter bridge over the Doon. He wrote occasional verse, both in English and the vernacular, for recital at county banquets and other functions. His humorous lyrics, *Jenny's Bawbee* and *Jenny Dang the Weaver*, are, however, much above the 'occasional' level; and his *East Neuk o' Fife* is a drolly realistic sketch of a matrimonial duel, which, on the wife's part, begins in this promising fashion:—

Sir Alexander
Boswell
(1775-1822).

'Auld gudeman, ye're a drucken carle, drucken carle;
A' the lang day ye're winkin', drinkin', gapin', gauntin';
O' sottish loons, ye're the pink and pearl, pink and pearl,
Ill-far'd, doited ne'er-do-weel.'

But the battle in the end remains drawn.

old fellow
yawning
varlets
ugly, stupid

Robert Tannahill (1774-1810), chief of the many Paisley poets, is little more than sweetly sentimental; but his *Jessie, the Flower o' Dunblane*, *The Braes of Balquhither*, *The Bonnie Wood o' Craigie-Lea*, and many more, all in the same gently amorous, or gently musing vein, have found a permanent place in Scottish song-books.

Robert
Tannahill
(1774-1810).

Among somewhat later bards, Allan Cunningham has the most assured position. He had a knowledge of old traditional song similar to that of Burns, and though Cromek's *Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song*, 1810, was largely his concoction, it embodies some 'remains' of older lyrics. *Bonnie Lady Ann* is a clever amalgam of the homely, the ornamental, and the romantic; and *Hame, Hame, Hame* is prettily, if merely artificially, Jacobite; and if *John Grumlie* echoes only very faintly the admirable humour of *The Wyfe of Auchtermuchty*, *My Nanie, O* is quite equal to Burns's song of that title, and *The Wee, Wee German Lairdie* is at least boisterously funny; but his best song, *A Wet Sheet*, is wholly English.

Allan
Cunningham
(1784-1842).

With Allan Cunningham our record of Scottish Vernacular Literature must close. Various later song-writers have achieved isolated successes, as William Laidlaw (1780-1845) in *Lucy's Flittin'*; William Thom (1789-1848) in *The Mitherless Bairn*; William Watt (1793-1859) in *The Tinkler's Waddin'*, and the

The deepening
twilight and
the night.

comic masterpiece *Kate Dalrymple*; Robert Gilfillan (1798-1850) in *O, Why Left I my Hame?* and William Nicholson (d. 1849) in the eerie ballad of *Aiken Drum*. The antecedence of Burns may also be discerned in the work of all the more characteristically Scottish writers from Sir Walter Scott to R. L. Stevenson and Mr. J. M. Barrie; but as regards vernacular poetry, his death was really the setting of the sun; the twilight deepened very quickly; and such twinkling lights as from time to time appear only serve to disclose the darkness of the all-encompassing night.

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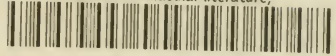
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