

CHAPTER IV.

NIEL GOW AND MRS. LYON.

*“Farewell to Whisky.”*

“What needs there be sae great a fraise  
Wi’ dringin’, dull, Italian lays?  
I wadna gie our ain Strathspeys  
For half-a-hunder score o’ them.”

REV. J. SKINNER.

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“Is NIEL Gow also among the poets?” is a question that will suggest itself to many of my readers; and although I cannot claim for him any very conclusive title to be placed there, yet he was so highly accomplished in the sister art

of music, and so thoroughly proficient as a violinist, and withal so admirable as a man, though not strictly an Arcadian, that we may allow him a corner within the Peloponnesus.

The era of the Gows extended over one hundred years. Niel was born in 1727, and John died in 1827, Nathaniel in 1831. During that long period they were quite as successful in giving character to our national music as Robert Burns was during his short career in giving vitality to our national lyrics. Niel, the father, first became known as a violinist in the year of the Great Rebellion, 1745, when he played in competition with nine others, amongst whom were his own tutor, John Cameron, and James Dow, the latter of whom afterwards became celebrated not only as a violin-player, but as a composer of dance music. In order to avoid any favouritism, they appointed John M'Crow, a blind musician, as the judge, who at once declared in favour of young Gow, saying with emphasis, "I would ken his bow-hand among a hunder players," thus defeating entirely the object they had in view when they appointed him judge. I once heard an intelligent old gentleman of the name of Cameron, from Stix, by Kenmore, describe Niel Gow's violin-playing, as the most wonderful of all human performances. "Some men," he said, "try to give spirit to dance-music by short jerking strokes, with a strong descending bow and a weak ascending, but his was a continuous stream of gorgeous sounds, *like an organ at full gallop.*"

Music was the current coin of the Gows; they had recourse to it in all emergencies—in joy, in sorrow, in prosperity, and in trouble. The methods adopted by the different orders of society for expressing their estimation of departed worth are—

Various as the roads they take  
In journeying through life,

the clergy by funeral orations and records of Synods and Assemblies; the poets by elegies, epitaphs, and epics "in memoriam;" but the Gow family, when a death occurred in their connection, flew to music; and if they wished to express their sense of gratitude or affection, they invariably had recourse to the fiddle. Rather singular certainly, but not quite so grotesque as the habit of the bass-singer whom Charles Matthews met in Ireland, who resisted all calamity by sounding his low G. If it was right, nothing was

wrong. On a certain dark night the coach on which they were travelling was upset, and the passengers scattered about. They all turned up not much worse, except the musician, who could nowhere be found. Eventually, however, he was discovered at the bottom of a ditch, sounding his low G!

Amongst the finest of our very fine Scottish elegiac airs are the "Lamentations" by the Gows—Niel's, for his brother Donald, for auld Abercairney, and for his second wife; Nathaniel's, for his brother John, and for Mrs. Oswald of Auchincruive. Nathaniel was his father's youngest child, and being kindly treated by Margaret Urquhart, his father's second wife, he showed his gratitude by composing a charming air, which he named "Long Life to Stepmothers." The popular air, "Bonnie Prince Charlie," was composed by Niel the grandson, who died young. The well-known strathspey, "Lady Mary Ramsay," was composed by Nathaniel Gow; "The Braes of Tullymet," by John; "Miss Græme of Inchbrakie's Reel," by William; but the unequalled "Delvin-side," by the unequalled father.

I lived many years on terms of close intimacy with a near relation of Niel Gow's, from whom I got his five books of Scottish music, bearing Nathaniel's signature, and accompanied with a special injunction, that if it should ever come in my way, I would attempt to put the family right, both with Robert Burns and the author of "Farewell to Whisky." I rejoice in this opportunity of redeeming my promise, more especially as the task is not very herculean, and the sphere of action sufficiently wide to begin a tale that needs only to be told in order that it may be understood and believed.

The notes on Scottish song consigned by Robert Burns to the hands of his friend, Captain Riddel of Glenriddel, and exhumed by Cromek, are no doubt most interesting, and show great research; but they never received the poet's finishing touch, or he certainly would have purged them of error, more especially in a case where their authenticity was likely to be impugned; and it is flattering to the memory of the Gows, and creditable to the gentlemen themselves, that the disagreeable passages have been omitted in the collected editions of Burns' works, both by Allan Cunningham and Robert Chambers. The poet himself thought the notes unimportant, for they had been repeatedly asked from him by George Thomson; and, although in existence for some years, Thomson regrets, in

the preface to his second volume, that the poet's death precluded all chance of their coming into his possession.

At page 274 of "Cromek's Reliques," this note occurs:—

"There's a youth in this city."

This air is claimed by Niel Gow, who calls it his lament for his brother.

Niel Gow was dead a year before the appearance of Cromek's book, and his son did not think it necessary to take any notice of the above, because Burns does not say that Niel Gow was really not the composer; but other two passages were not so easily got over, and Nathaniel Gow, on the title-page of his fifth collection, gives the following lengthy explanation:—

#### NOTE.

In the reliques of Robert Burns, published by R. H. Cromek, in the year 1808, speaking of "Macpherson's Farewell," pp. 235 and 236, it is said, "Gow has published a variation of this fine tune as his own composition, which he calls 'The Princess Augusta.'"

Again, in the same book, "My tocher's the jewel," p. 291, it is said, "This tune is claimed by Nathaniel Gow. It is notoriously taken from 'The Muckin' o' Geordie's Byre.'" It is also to be found long prior to Nathaniel Gow's era in Aird's selection of airs and marches, the first edition, under the name of "The Highway to Edinburgh."

#### TO THE PUBLIC.

Nathaniel Gow cannot for a moment suppose that Mr. Burns meant anything injurious to him or any of his father's family. The bard evidently laboured under some mistake, which, owing to his death, cannot now be accounted for; suffice it to say, that both assertions in the reliques are false. Upon turning up Niel Gow's Third Book, p. 32 and 33, it will be seen that the tune named "Princess Augusta" is unclaimed by him or any of his family; and, with respect to the other tune, "My Tocher's the jewel," by looking into Niel Gow and son's Second Book, p. 18, it will be seen that it is also unclaimed by Nath. Gow or any of his family. Nath. Gow found the tune in Oswald's "Caledonian Pocket Companion," Book 3, page 28th, as a quick jig. It struck him it would be pretty if slow; and, it being without a name, he called it "Lord Elcho's Favourite." Mr. Oswald's book was published as long prior to Aird's era as Aird's was to that of Nathaniel Gow.

There can be no doubt that Gow is right in this, because in all the cases he refers to, the airs are inserted exactly as he states, and these were published, as already stated, before the "Reliques of Burns" by Cromek.

The last sentence is sufficiently caustic and severe on our great national bard, but Nathaniel Gow was certainly quite as well entitled to call *his set* of the last-named air

“Lord Elcho’s Favourite” as Aird was to call *his* “The Highway to Edinburgh.” Errors of this description were so repugnant to the nature of Robert Burns that his admirers will have difficulty in accounting for them. They will all agree with Nathaniel Gow, “that he meant nothing injurious;” and with me, that the crude “Notes on Scottish Song” were not intended for publication until further corrected.

Some years ago, Dr. Rogers published “The Modern Scottish Minstrel,” at p. 119 of which he states that Mrs. Lyon, of Glammis, had left to a cousin of his her manuscript poems, amongst which appears “Niel Gow’s Farewell to Whisky,” which she states was “written at his request to a lamentation he had made.” The following is Dr. Roger’s set of the words, copied by him, together with the foot-note, from Mrs. Lyon’s manuscript:—

NEIL GOW’S FAREWELL TO WHISKY.\*

TUNE—“*Farewell to Whisky.*”

You’ve surely heard of famous Neil,  
The man who played the fiddle weel;  
He was a heartsome, merry chiel’,

And weel he lo’ed the whisky, O!  
For e’er since he wore the tartan hose  
He dearly liket Athole brose!

And grievèd was, you may suppose,  
To bid “Farewell to whisky,” O!

“Alas!” says Neil, “I’m frail and auld,  
And whiles my hame is unco cauld;  
I think it makes me blythe and bauld.

A wee drap Highland whisky, O!  
But a’ the doctors do agree  
That whisky’s no the drink for me;  
I’m fley’d they’ll gar me tyne my glee,  
By parting me and whisky, O!

“But I should mind on ‘Auld Langsyne,’  
How paradise our friends did tyne,  
Because something ran in their mind,  
Forbid—like Highland whisky, O!

Whilst I can get good wine and ale,  
And find my heart and fingers hale,  
I’ll be content, though legs should fail,  
And though forbidden whisky, O!

\* In the author’s MS. the following sentences occur prefatory to this song. “Everybody knows Neil Gow. When he was poorly, the physicians forbade him to drink his favourite liquor. The words following were composed, at his particular desire, to a lamentation he had just made.”

" I'll tak' my fiddle in my hand,  
 And screw its strings whilst they can stand,  
 And mak' a lamentation grand  
     For gude auld Highland whisky, O!  
 Oh! all ye powers of Music, come,  
 For 'deed, I think I'm mighty glum,  
 My fiddle-strings will hardly bum,  
     To say 'Farewell to whisky,' O!"

I am very reluctant to write anything in contradiction of such an amiable and clever woman as Mrs. Lyon; but, in justice to the memory of Niel Gow, I am bound to say that the narratives contained in the second and third verses of the song and in the elaborate footnote are entirely fabulous. To represent him as a retributive abstainer at the instance of a conclave of doctors, while he was in good health and living a comparatively sober life, was not only cruel in itself, but the publication of it has mainly led to the popular falsehood that Niel Gow was a drunken man. It were matter of regret if the memory of a man—who for half a century was the delight and admiration of the nobles and educated people of Scotland, from the Tweed to the Spey—should, by the indiscretion of an individual who knew so little of him that she could not even spell his name, go down to future generations tainted by the unmerited blemish that he was a devout worshipper of Bacchus. No doubt Niel liked a wee drap Highland whisky, and took occasionalsprees. But this by no means involves the question of debauchery and abstaining. The song itself is utterly devoid of merit; and had it not been accompanied by the most exquisite music, the present generation would never have heard of it. Robert Burns, who met Niel in his sixtieth year, says that he had "an interesting, honest face, marking strong sense, kind open-heartedness, mixed with un mistrusting simplicity;" and this is the man into whose mouth Mrs. Lyon has put the following piece of vulgarity:—

For, 'deed, I think I'm mighty glum.

The public quickly detected it, and substituted the line:—

I find my heart grows unco glum,

which, although neither elegant nor truthful, is a decided improvement on the original.

If Mrs. Lyon really composed the verses at the request of Niel Gow, she was bound to study her subject better.

Is it possible to come to a more thoughtless conclusion than this?—Because a piece of music is headed “Farewell to Whisky, by Niel Gow,” that it was necessarily written in the first person. This is the confounding theory adopted by Mrs. Beecher-Stowe, and writers of her unscrupulous class. If Niel Gow had asked Mrs. Lyon to write verses to a tune he had composed, called, “The Highlandman kissed his Mother,” would she have represented him falling back on second childhood, and performing this truly filial duty by the nurse’s orders?

The circumstances which led to the composition of “Farewell to Whisky” are shortly and simply these. At the conclusion of the harvest of 1799 the crop was found so deficient that, by an Order in Council, the distillation of whisky from malt was prohibited throughout the United Kingdom. The harvest of 1800 proved more abundant, and the prohibition was removed. There are, no doubt, men living in Perthshire who will remember that 1800 was, in Scotland, called “The year of the dearth.”

A second edition of “Niel Gow’s First Book of Scottish Music” is dated at Invar, near Dunkeld, September 21st, 1801, and is subscribed by Nathaniel Gow for his father. On the first page appears “Farewell to Whisky, composed for this edition by Niel Gow.” No explanation accompanied this first appearance of the air; but in 1809, shortly after his father’s death, Nathaniel Gow published the fifth and last volume of Gow’s music, by which time the song now attributed to Mrs. Lyon had found its way into print. At page 46, “Farewell to Whisky” is reprinted, with this explanation between the bars:—

This tune alludes to the prohibiting the making of whisky in 1799. It is expressive of a Highlander’s sorrow on being deprived of his favourite beverage.

Then below, on the same page, appears, “Whisky, welcome back again! a strathspey, by Niel Gow,” with this explanation between the bars:—

Alluding to permitting whisky to be distilled in 1801. It is a merry dancing tune.

It is obvious from all this, that Mrs. Lyon’s verses, instead of being characteristic of Niel Gow, are mere caricature; and to complete the foolish picture, she says, in the first

verse, "He dearly liket Athole brose," because she found, at page 22 of Gow's Third Book, a strathspey entitled, "Athole Brose; or, Niel Gow's Favourite," thus concluding, with womanly simplicity, that the brose, and not the strathspey, was Niel's favourite!

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CHAPTER V.

NIEL GOW AND ROBERT BURNS.

*"O Stay, Sweet Warbling Woodlark, Stay."*

"Time and Gow are even now.  
Gow beat Time, and Time beat Gow."  
EPIGRAM ON NIEL GOW.

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THROUGHOUT the whole category of authors, poets, and musicians, I know of no two men resembling each other so much, both in character and fortune, as Niel Gow and James Hogg. Both rose from the ranks; each achieved fame, but neither achieved fortune. As a song-writer, James Hogg had few competitors; as a musician, Niel Gow had none. Both were highly gifted, and both highly conceited—honest, sturdy, unbending Scotsmen, peaceable as a rule, but "sudden and quick in quarrel." John Gibson Lockhart tells us that when he sang "Donald Macdonald" at the Edinburgh Burns' Club Dinner, in presence of Hogg without knowing that he was the author, Hogg wept like a child; and when Niel Gow first heard James Dow play "Farewell to Whisky," he pulled his bonnet over his eyes, and rushed to the door. Had Gow done nothing but compose that air, and Hogg done no more than write the song beginning, "Far over yon hills of the heather so green," each had done enough to keep his name alive until the day when Scottish music and song are forgotten. The parallel did not hold to the end, however, for poor Hogg's faculties gave way to some extent before he was fifty-five, and he died at sixty-four; while Niel Gow had all his faculties



in vigorous retention till his death at eighty-four, having composed his last air, "Dunkeld Bridge," the year immediately preceding.

Any man who has formed his opinion of Niel Gow's character from the thousand and one stories that have been told of him, has gone very wide of the mark. Instead of the swaggering, drunken, boon companion they have been led to think him, he was exemplary, temperate, and straightforward; equally estimable as a man as he was proficient as a musician—an obliging neighbour, a kind husband, and an indulgent father. The mistaken estimate of his character arose mainly from the terms which his wit and talents obtained for him amongst the nobility and gentry of his day. The violin-player who walked arm-in-arm through the streets of Edinburgh with the Duke of Athole, and in familiar chat with Lord Melville and Lord Lynedoch, was no ordinary man; and he would be imperceptibly led to use liberties and crack jokes at which a less privileged person would be amazed. In after times the jokes were remembered, while the situation was forgot; and it became a vulgar fashion to father every rude saying or doing on Niel Gow.

Let a man be grave as a death's head, if his calling leads him to spend one half of his time amongst the gay and giddy throng, he will be occasionally led away from that sombre deportment imperatively demanded out of doors. He is the creature of impulse, and is naturally disposed to do as he sees others do around him.

In narrating a few characteristic stories of Niel, I shall adhere strictly to those which I have reason to know are true, discarding everything that would tend to exhibit him as other than what he really was.

On the 31st of August, 1787, a message came early to Niel Gow's cottage, requesting him to breakfast at Dr. Stewart's, along with Burns, the poet. The summons was promptly obeyed, and after breakfast the fiddle was called for. Niel played a number of airs of his own composition; and when he struck up "Locherroch-side," the poet expressed his delight, and a wish to possess the air, that he might write verses to it. His desire was complied with, and the verses written; but whether at the time or afterwards does not appear. Eight years thereafter they were sent to George Thomson, and the great poet certainly did not make light of our country-

man's air, his verses and it being of corresponding excellence.

## ADDRESS TO THE WOODLARK.

TUNE—"Locherroch-side.

O stay, sweet warbling woodlark, stay !  
 Nor quit for me the trembling spray ;  
 A hapless lover courts thy lay,  
 Thy soothing, fond complaining.

Again, again that tender part,  
 That I may catch thy melting art ;  
 For surely that would touch her heart  
 Wha kills me wi' disdainin'.

Say, was thy little mate unkind,  
 And heard thee as the careless wind ?  
 Oh ! nought but love and sorrow joined  
 Sic notes o' woe could wauken.

Thou tells o' never-ending care ;  
 O' speechless grief and dark despair,  
 For pity's sake, sweet bird, nae mair,  
 Or my poor heart is broken.

At most of the country mansions Niel Gow was an occasional guest, but at no one of them was his presence more cherished than at Abercairney. The old laird was in his glory when he got Niel and Mr. Graham of Orchill started to the fiddle; and when the evening dance came on, it never gained proper spirit until, when changing from a strathspey to a reel, Niel gave a shout that made them bound like grasshoppers. In these old times Caroline Oliphant danced like Fanny Elssler, and Pensey Macdonald with the grace of Taglioni. On one occasion Niel paid a professional visit to Abercairney, where he remained some days. The house was full of company, dancing at night and occasionally listening to Niel's fascinating strains during the day. One very wet morning, in passing through the servants' apartments in search of an umbrella, he observed in a corner the bones of one of these useful travelling companions without a shred of cloth on it. His jocular mind suggested to him what he concluded would dispel a little of the depression incident to such a morning; so, pushing up the skeleton to its full pitch, he sallied out amidst the pouring rain, and, purposely passing the windows of the breakfast-room, where he knew the company were all assembled, he held the skeleton umbrella stiffly to the same angle as he would have done had it been covered,

and seemed unconscious of the flood that was rising off his bonnet and shoulders like reek. A shout of laughter came from the company inside, and Abercairney, lifting one of the windows, cried, "Hillo! Niel; what is wrong?" "Nothing wrong, Abercairney; but I am so glad I brought my umbrella, for that's an awfu' mornin'."

On the same occasion Niel was one evening sent for after supper to play a solo, and, when the ladies had retired, Abercairney teased him severely about certain recent proceedings of his at Gordon Castle, where Marshall, his eminent coadjutor, was butler, and where they were alleged to have imbibed a little more than enough of the Duchess's Athole-brose. On retiring to the dancing-room, which was a good way off, Abercairney suggested that they should walk in couples along the lobby as far as the drawing-room door, with Niel at their head playing a quick-march. After they were all arranged, Niel resolved to have his revenge on Abercairney, and, running the thumb of his left hand two or three times across the strings of his fiddle at the finger-board, as a warning, he leaped in before them, and struck up "Bab at the bowster," dancing as he went, and singing loudly and well,—

We'll a' go to Katie Reid's house,  
 To Katie Reid's house, to Katie Reid's house ;  
 We'll a' go to Katie Reid's house,  
 To Katie Reid's house of the green, jo.

Abercairney he was there,  
 At Katie Reid's house, at Katie Reid's house ;  
 Abercairney he was there,  
 At Katie Reid's house of the green, jo.

The Laird of Monzie he rode on a tree  
 To Katie Reid's house, to Katie Reid's house ;  
 The Laird of Monzie he rode on a tree  
 To Katie Reid's house of the green, jo.

We'll a' go to Katie Reid's house,  
 To Katie Reid's house, to Katie Reid's house ;  
 We'll a' go to Katie Reid's house,  
 To Katie Reid's house of the green, jo.

By the time Niel reached the drawing-room door, his company had one by one fallen from the ranks disabled by fatigue and convulsions of laughter; but he capered, and footed, and fiddled, till he had finished his ditty, and reached the end of his journey.

When the ponds at Abercairney House were cut, a grand-uncle of mine named Cock was contractor at so much per cubic yard. Little knolls of the original soil, called "pirracks," were left with the green turf at the top, to mark the depth of the cut. One morning some wag among the workmen placed a piece of turf on the top of one of the "pirracks." Presently Abercairney, accompanied by Inchbraikie and Niel Gow, came round to look at the work. Niel quickly noticed the apparent artifice, and, drawing Abercairney's attention to it, the laird walked up to the "pirrack," and giving the piece of turf a kick that sent it spinning among the men, exclaimed, "None of your cursed fusileering, Cock!" The laird meant veneering, but in his passion he forgot the word. When Niel was leaving at this time he hinted to the laird that he was a little short of ready money. "I will lend you five pounds," said Abercairney, "but you must repay me when you get more flush." "To be shoore," said Niel. A year or two thereafter, when Niel was again at Abercairney, the laird thought he would try the effect of a crave on him—not expecting the money, but to see how Niel would take it. So, when they were just ready to start "Ghillie Callum," and the bow was bent, Abercairney walked up to him, and in loud tones cried, "Niel! when are you going to pay me the five pounds you owe me?" "I would be the last man in the world to mention it," said Niel, and away went the dance, "Malcolm Rossie o'er the Tay." Niel's fiddle would have drowned the hardest crave that ever was uttered.

In 1793 Niel went over to Edinburgh to play at the Caledonian Hunt Ball, and next morning he marched, with firm but heavy step, along Princes Street to the shop of Penson, Robertson and Co., and, hammering in, asked for a sight of some fiddle-bows. The party in charge first took a look at Niel in order to guess, if possible, the price which he would be disposed to give; then selecting one at 2s. 6d., he handed it to him. It was pushed back with contempt. A second shared the same fate, which rather ruffled the shopkeeper; and, to test his customer, he handed him one of the best bows in the shop, the price of which was twenty-five shillings. Niel looked at it, and requested a fiddle and some rosin. To this the shopkeeper demurred, saying, "We never allow our new bows to be rosined;" but, handing him a fiddle, he said, "That fiddle has just been played on, and there is sufficient rosin on the

strings to enable you to judge of the bow." Niel took the fiddle in his hand, and casting his keen musical eye along the counter, he observed a copy of "Peas and Beans"—a tune he had just published—and asked the shopkeeper to hand it to him, which was done. These confident movements began to amuse the latter gentleman, and feeling certain that his customer could not possibly have seen this, the newest piece out, he said, rather sneeringly, "If you play that over without a pause or a mistake, I will make you a present of the bow." "Done!" said Neil, and played the tune in such a way that his friend was astonished, and in his astonishment forgot his bargain; but Niel reminded him by handing him over the bow, saying, curtly, "Put it in a piece of paper." The shopkeeper hesitated, saying, "You must have seen that piece before." "To be shoore," said Niel; "I saw it fifty times when I was making it;" and taking the bow in his hand, he walked out of the shop with the tails of his coat sailing behind him like the loose bunting of a first-rate man-of-war,

Armed with his new bow, Niel went direct to Hamilton, to play at a military ball. Next day two amateur violinists, named respectively Morton and Tennant, belonging to Strathaven, walked into Hamilton to have a *bout* with the famous Niel; and as they approached the inn, they met him walking along the street, with a step that made the pavement shake. Feeling that this could be no other than their man, one of them accosted him, and asked, in rather an off-handed way, if he was Niel Gow. On being answered in the affirmative, he exclaimed, "You are the very man we have walked all the way from Str'aven to see." "Am I?" said Niel. "The mair fules are ye, for I wadna walk half as far to see baith o' ye."

The popularity of this eminent Scotsman is demonstrated by the fact, that no less than four portraits of him were painted by Sir Henry Raeburn, for the nobility and gentry of the county of Perth. The one in the County Rooms is said to be the original; but I have doubts on that point, having always considered Lord Gray's superior. Those in the possession of the Duke of Athole and the Earl of Dalhousie, I have not seen. They were understood to be all painted by Raeburn's own hand; but, of course, the farther he went from the life, the spirit of the portrait would weaken, and it cannot be supposed that Niel would sit for them all. He certainly sat for the

Duke of Athole's, and that nobleman accompanied him to each sitting. Copies of the fine old brown mezzotint, by Say, are still to be met with; and I have often heard it characterised, by those who knew him, as "the perfection of a likeness."

Towards the close of the last century visitors to Dunkeld considered it their duty to see Niel Gow and hear his fiddle, and if he found any of them failing in their allegiance to him, he did not hesitate to make them aware of their mistake. Dr. Garnet tells us that, during his stay in Dunkeld in 1798, Niel found his way frequently into his company; and, although he was in his seventy-second year, he was fleet and fond of company and his fiddle.

The following highly characteristic story the writer had from the lips of the late Dr. Muir, for many years minister of Lecropt, and more recently the esteemed incumbent of St. James's, Glasgow. Mr. Muir, on obtaining license, made a tour of the Highlands as far as Blair Athole; and, having arranged to remain over the Sunday at Dunkeld, he went to the parish church in the forenoon. During the service he observed an old Highlander, with a broad forehead and thin hair, staring at him harder than might be thought well bred. On coming out he felt his elbow touched, and, on looking round, here was his old friend, who, without hesitation, addressed him thus—"I think ye're a stranger here, sir." "Indeed, I am," said the young divine; "I never was here before." "Where do you come from?" quoth his interlocutor. "I come from Glasgow," said the open-hearted young priest; "I was born in the Bridgewater of Glasgow." "Will ye tak' a bottle o' ale," said the old gentleman. "Oh no," was the reply; "I am a young probationer, and I do not approve of going to public-houses on the Sabbath-day." The old Highlander looked much perplexed; and, as the stranger began to move off, he drew himself up, and giving his plaid a hitch, said, "Ye come fra Glasco', d'ye?" "Yes" was the curt reply. "Then I'm the famous Niel Gow, well known in all these parts!" The reverend gentleman added, "Language could not describe the look of importance put on by Niel after he had made this announcement."

Niel Gow was considered the *beau ideal* of a Highlander. He was nearly six feet in height—erect, firm, and square-built and lithe and active in his movements. He was ever

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ready with his tongue and hands to speak or work for his friend ; and when he died he left behind him considerable means for his family. Dr. M'Knight, his personal friend, thus concludes a short memorial of him, sent to the *Scots Magazine* in 1800: "His moral and religious principles were originally correct, rational, and heartfelt, and they were never corrupted. His duty in the domestic relations of life he uniformly fulfilled with exemplary fidelity, generosity, and kindness. In short, by the general integrity, prudence, and propriety of his conduct, he deserved, and he lived and died possessing, as large a portion of respect from his equals, and of goodwill from his superiors, as has ever fallen to the lot of any man of his rank."