

JUVENILE ENTERTAINER.

"Torquet ab obscenis jam nunc sermonibus aurem."

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THE JUVENILE ENTERTAINER
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BIOGRAPHY.

ROBERT POLLOK.

Is one of those who, by the mere efforts of his
talent, burst forth all at once, from an obscure
situation into the highest eminence. His name
was not known, as an author, till it was rendered
famous by the publication of his poem. This
work on which his well earned reputation almost
entirely rests, furnishes the best elements
of an instructive and useful biography. The
history of the infancy, growth, and maturity of
genius, is to be gathered from his poem.
And whoever will present the world with a skil-
ful development of his intellectual career down
to this source, will probably give the most in-
teresting account of his life. This however,
would be too laborious a task for us to undertake
at present. And all that we shall attempt is to
give a passing record of the few particulars of
his life that are known to us.

The poet was born at North Muirhouse, in
the parish of Eaglesham, about eleven miles
to the east from Glasgow, in October 1798. He
is the youngest son of an intelligent farmer,
and still resides in the same place. By the care
of his parents, he received such an education as
is common in that part of Scotland among per-
sons of their station in life. After this, he was
employed to give what assistance he could in the
affairs of his father's farm, till his fourteenth
year, when he was sent to the village of Eagle-
ston to learn the business of a cartwright. It is
highly probable that the exertions necessary to
his employment, accorded but ill with the views
of a youth of his imagination, although it is not
known that he estimated his talents at a higher
value than became his humble hopes. But it is
understood that he was induced by the advice and
example of an elder brother, who was pursuing
his studies with a view to the holy ministry, to
andon all thoughts of following up his mechan-
ical profession, and to prepare for the same
noble vocation.

His parents, with that fondness for the minis-
terial office, so congenial to the middle and low-
orders of the Scottish people, warmly seconded
his views, and put him in the way of realis-

ing them by sending him to a school in the
parish of Fenwick, to gain a knowledge of the
Latin language. This was done in the year
1813.

In 1816, he entered the university of Glasgow,
where, after attending the several classes dur-
ing five successive Sessions, he obtained the
degree of A. M.

On leaving the University he prosecuted his
Theological studies at the Divinity Hall for the
same number of Sessions, and was licensed to
preach the gospel in connexion with the United
Associate Synod about the beginning of May
1827. His first sermon was preached in Edin-
burgh nearly at the same time that his Poem
was published, in preparing which, for the press
he had been much engaged during the two pre-
vious years.

But his career which commenced with so much
lustre, was soon to terminate. It is said that he
was in the pulpit only three times afterwards.
A tendency to consumption lurked in his consti-
tution, and being aggravated by the sedentary
habits of so devoted a student, soon became pal-
pable to all, but its victim. In a letter to a friend
written in April 1827, he describes with the de-
ceptive feelings so common to those who suffer
from that disease, the buoyancy of his spirits
arising from renovated health. But these delu-
sions were soon clouded. His frame continued
to wax feeble, and some eminent Practitioners,
recommending a softer climate than Scotland, it
was determined that he should go to Italy for the
benefit of his health. He accordingly com-
menced his journey attended by his sister. But
after proceeding as far as Devonshire place
Shirley common, near Southampton, his strength
failed him. He now felt that the hand of death
was upon him. He then wrote to his brother
an account of his situation, and observed to his
sister, that had he been aware of the extent of
his illness he would have remained under the
paternal roof.

Domestic affections had always been strong
within him; and the thoughts of his kindred and
his home pressed strongly on his heart in the
solitude of a death bed, and in the midst of
strangers. He struggled with his distemper
only for a few days. On the 13th September
1827, he breathed his last, before he crossed the
borders of his own loved country. Although
his brother travelled with the greatest expedition
he had not the melancholy satisfaction of attend-
ing his remains to the grave. Before his arrival
Robert was buried, and his sister was on her
way back to Scotland. Thus early and suddenly
was he cut off from "glory's course" which had
just opened so brilliantly before him. "Man that
is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trou-
ble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut
down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth
not."

The path of glory leads but to the grave.

It is said that four posthumous volumes, con-
sisting of sermons, letters, essays, and poems

from the pen of the poet, are to be published un-
der the superintendency of his brother. These
with the "Course of Time," which has already
passed through several editions, with three Sab-
bath School stories, written while he was a
student of divinity, are the whole of his works.
These stories are entitled, "Helen of the Glen,"
"Ralph Gemmule," and "The Persecuted
Family." It is believed the pecuniary diffi-
culties, or rather an honest desire not to press
too heavily on the family resources, drew from
him these juvenile productions.

It is not our intention to enter on a critical
examination of the merits of this Poem, which is
pronounced by all, to be a high achievement of
original genius. The idea of the poem was con-
ceived fourteen years before its publication.
And its original title, "The Day of Judgment"
was judiciously altered to "The Course of
Time" at the suggestion of the Rev. John
Ritchie, D. D. of Edinburgh. The tone and
aim are truly religious, and, with one or two
exceptions, the sentiment is strictly orthodox.
The metrical arrangement of his verses is un-
fettered by rhyme and extremely unartificial.
His pictures of character are evidently drawn
from observation, and by some of them the origi-
nal may be known from the painting. The
whole experience of his life is converted into
materials for his muse, and in his sketches of in-
animate nature, he often returns to the scenery
of his much loved home.

"Among hills and streams
And melancholy deserts, where the sun
Saw, as he passed, a shepherd only here
And there watching his little flock, or heard
The ploughman talking to his steers."

Few have drawn more upon real life than our
author; or delighted more to clothe favourite
images with lofty attributes of beauty. Litera-
ry industry, and solitary musing were not deem-
ed the most important avocations in his father's
house, and intrusions on his meditations at home
often induced him to go elsewhere to muse. On
these occasions he often retreated to a neigh-
bouring farm, where a beautiful clump of fir
trees relieved the nakedness of a spot naturally
uninviting. There seated under the fairest of
these stately trees, he composed a considerable
part of his poem. At a little distance in front,
though entirely out of sight, a crystal stream of
water gushed from a rustic spout into a pleasant
well, and thence pursued its course without a
murmur through the low-lying meadows. The
simple music of this little waterfall, mingled at
times with the voice of the wind, as it rose or
fell among the branches of the fir trees, awak-
ened emotions in the poet, to which may be as-
cribed a portion of that enthusiasm which infused
wildness and animation into his habitual and
cherished melancholy. From this seclusion he
had a full view of,

"Scotia's northern battlement of hills,"

formed by the lofty "Ben Lomond" and other
mountains stretching beyond Dumbarton.

Remainder in our next Number.