

THE CHRONICLES OF DREEPDAILY
No. XIV.

WHEREIN THE READER IS MADE MORE INTIMATELY ACQUAINTED WITH BAILIE ANDREW BALLINGALL OF PETERHEAD.

It may be in the remembrance of the attentive peruser of these famous Chronicles, that I promised to indoctrinate the civilized world with certain notable personages in the life of my nephew-in-law Andrew Ballingall. This paction I now proceed to implement and perform, not merely that I may keep myself skaitless from the disgrace of being a covenant breaker, but because the narration is well worthy of being recorded in the pages of history.

And here I would observe in passing, that the word history has been most unjustifiably monopolized by the vast majority of the writers thereof. These gentry seem to consider that with the exception of the quirks and quibbles of politicians, and the wholesale threat-cuttings and assaults which go to make up war, there is comparatively little of the great stage play of life which is worth the trouble of registration. From this doctrine I deem it my duty most entirely to dissent! Mankind care very little about such high sounding qualities, and eagerly turn from them to contemplate some matter of detail. Let a lover of flowers step into a well-stocked garden—like that of your humble servant in Dreepdaily, for instance—and what is the upshot? You may discourse to him for hours, touching the toils and devices, and outlay of lucre which it had cost you in order to produce the fragrant result, but unless you are clean blinded by self-conceit, you will discover ere long that your hearer is a hearer only in appearance. Civility constrains him to play the part of a listener—and exclaim “dear me!” and “can it be possible?” at the end of your long-winded sentences, that his attention is engrossed by widely different things! His eye has singled out some graceful moss rose, or a tulip of peculiar richness of hues, and about your garden, as a whole, he cares or thinks as little, as he does touching the market price of pickled salmon in the Moon—or the lowest figure at which cracklings are vended in the Dog Star!

In like manner does it eventuate with the

historian. Alison spends pages upon pages in telling all the outs and ins of that never-to-be-forgotten bickering which took place at Waterloo, but, let me ask, wha’ cares one bawbee about the movement of this column, or the disposition of that brigade? Here and there you may meet wi’ some timber-limbed Uncle Toby, who chanced to be in the scrape, to whom the details may be productive of interest,—and who will spend days and weeks in poring over the catalogue of manœuvres as if he were expiscating a complicated game of chess. Such cases, however, are the sparse exceptions to the general rule. Ninety-nine, out of every hundred readers, will skip over the wersh and flavourless narrations of marchings and counter-marchings, and concentrate their attention and sympathy upon some individual incidents of the combat, such as the magnificent pluck of Sergeant Shaw, or the indomitable bottom of the Highland Piper, who after his legs had been shot away continued to sound the pibroch, as the gallant Forty-second bore down upon the staggering foe!

But it is high time that I return to the subject more particularly in hand! If I continue to moralize and manœuvre at this rate the censorious will have cause to insinuate that the fumes of Saunders Skates usquebaugh are still haunting my noddle!

Anent the early history of my connection Mr. Ballingall, I was profoundly ignorant prior to my visit to Peterhead. All that I knew was that in early life he had not ranked amongst the Diveses of creation, and that he had attained a competence in riper years through some out-of-the-way turn of Dame Fortune’s capricious wheel. In these circumstances it was but natural that I should experience a longing to have the thirst of my curiosity quenched at the fountain head of information. Accordingly I broke the matter to Andrew, the evening after my return from Boddam, and in the frankest manner he professed his willingness to grant the boon which I craved. When night set in, and the bairns had been deposited in bed, Barbara was instructed to provide a supply of pipes and boiling water, together with some other trifling items which it is not essential to specify, especially in this slanderous and backbiting epoch of the world’s annals. Which requisitions having been dutifully complied with, the