

THE OWL.

VOL. V.

OTTAWA UNIVERSITY, FEBRUARY, 1892.

No. 7

BURNS A TRAVELLER.

By Very Rev. *Æneas McDonell Dawson, LL. D.; &c.*



BURNS, having realized a considerable sum of money by the publication of his poems at Edinburgh, resolved to travel through Scotland visiting as many as possible of the numerous places of interest in his native land. Before setting out on his travels he gave £300 to his brother Gilbert, for the improvement of his farm in Ayrshire.

His first visits were in the south of Scotland. There was much in that portion of the country to interest and delight our traveller. The history of Berwick, now an English city, arose to his mind. It had been long Scotch. This was enough for Burns. But its most interesting history is that of the period when it was an independent town. It was then rich and prosperous. Its trade was so great that its customs duties amounted to one-fourth of the entire customs of all England. One of its citizens, "Knut the opulent," was so rich as to be able to send a squadron, equipped at his own expense, in pursuit of pirate vessels that had robbed him. He overtook and punished them. So completely was Berwick recognized as an independent town that in the general Parliament laws were enacted for England, Scotland and Berwick on Tweed. Passing from this unique city, Burns stepped across the Tweed into England. No sooner had he arrived on English ground, than turning towards Scotland, he knelt down and prayed for his beloved country in the language of one of his finest poems:

O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!

For whom my warmest wish to heaven is sent,
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil

Be blest with health and peace and sweet
content!

And oh, may Heaven their simple lives prevent

From luxury's contagion, weak and vile,
Then, how'er crowns and coronets be rent,

A virtuous populace may rise the while
And stand a wall of fire around their much-loved
isle.

O thou who poured the patriotic tide

That streamed through Wallace's undaunted
heart;

Who dared to nobly stem tyrannic pride,

Or nobly die, the second glorious part.

(The patriot's god peculiarly thou art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian and reward!)

O never, never, Scotia's realm desert;

But still the patriot and the patriot hard

In bright succession raise, her ornament and
guard!

Passing along the border lands, Burns could not but be deeply moved by the thought of those border wars which caused so much misery to both English and Scotch. It cheered him, on the other hand, to think of the chivalry which the borderers not unfrequently displayed. One who sympathised sincerely, as Burns did, with unfortunate Queen Mary, felt the glow of admiration when he called to mind the noble spirit of the border clans who, without the aid of Mary's pusillanimous son, made war on Elizabeth's mighty kingdom in order to avenge the cruel murder of their beloved Queen. Unfortunately this bright example was lost in the presence of cold, calculating policy.

The many religious establishments, founded and assisted by King David and other pious kings of Scotland, could not fail to attract the attention of the inquir-