

PREFACE.

This publication is not so complete as could have been desired in consequence of the loss of a large number of Mr. Pirie's poetical writings. This may have been partly due to the fact that the idea of their publication in this form was never contemplated until sometime after Mr. Pirie's death.

The following sketch of Mr. Pirie's life is taken from the *Scottish American Journal*:

"John Ramsay and George Pirie were both Aberdonians,* although the former happened to draw his first breath in the city of London. Both were born in the last year of the last century, and both died in the present year—the one closing his eyes in his own, although not his native city, on the 4th of June; the other, who first saw light there, sinking to rest in his adopted land on the 23rd of July.

Both were journalists. Mr. Ramsay, however, terminated his connection with the press the very year Mr. Pirie commenced his. Both were vigorous writers and independent thinkers; both were possessed of no despicable poetical talent; both were in some measure like others of their kind—disappointed men. The one, however, from the necessities of a large family and other causes, never succumbed to the tortures of bodily weakness, but worked heroically, almost to the very last, at his ordinary vocation; and in it occasionally rose out of and above such hindrances, and stirred up others by his words. The other, without family ties, never having formed any, was obliged by failing health (and was able at the same time) to quit active work at a comparatively early date, although had encouragement smiled on his aspirations, he might have worked on in a sphere in which a peculiar talent seemed to promise success. It was otherwise ordained.

Mr. Ramsay appears to have been in figure and appearance a singular contrast to Mr. Pirie. The former, a short, stout, determined individual, bearing, as he fondly imagined, a striking resemblance to the first Napoleon—fitted to command, indispensed to yield; the latter, as we recollect him for so many years, attenuated to a remarkable degree, with a shrill, weak voice, and all the appearance of one between whom and death there was but a step.

Activity and change characterized the career of the one as well as of the other, but the contrast here, too, was great, though not inexplicable. Literary pursuits from the first engrossed Mr. Ramsay's attention. Originally occupying the place of tutor in different families; then holding the position of a master in Gordon's Hospital, Aberdeen; twice contesting the head-mastership of that institution; conducting in succession two local periodicals of some temporary celebrity, and for the last fourteen years of his public life acting as sub-editor of the *Aberdeen Journal*, the oldest newspaper in the north of Scotland, only appearing again as a candidate for office on the occurrence of a vacancy in the Mathematical Chair in Marischal College and University.

Mr. Pirie, on the other hand, without thoughts of literary labor, started early in life for himself; got some acquaintance with business in London; came to Canada in the same connection; caught there the weary asthma which thereafter became his life-long companion; returned to his native city; made an almost boyish marriage; carried on business there for some years with no great success; finally returned to Canada; settled and worked on a bush farm for ten years; then gave it up; married a second time; and for the last twenty-two years of his life conducted the *Quebec Herald* as editor and proprietor.

Both were social men. Mr. Ramsay, however, would not appear to have had much sympathy with temperance views, which were for many years exemplified and advocated by Mr. Pirie. Both were benevolent, but with their different opportunities giving effect to this trait diverse ways. It could not be otherwise. Mr. Pirie was not in circumstances to amass a fortune, or secure even an independence that would sanction retirement. He had to keep at his work, and did keep at it as long as he could. What he could do in a beneficent way he had to do in life.