

Settledown Frae Scotland.

(Continued.)

HOUSE OF SCOTCH POETS.

A young lawyer who happened to be present in company along with Burns when the conversation turned on "Tam o' Shanter," and stung, perhaps, with the sarcastic touch on the legal fraternity—

"Three lawyers' tongues turned inside out, WI' less seemed like a beggar's clout," remarked that he thought the witches' orgies obscure. "Obscure, Sir," exclaimed the poet. "Ye know not the language of the master of your own art, the devil! If you get a witch for your client, you will not be able to manage her defence." Burns lived for months in a house which was occupied by an old man named David Cully, or Kelly. The poet sometimes read books not usually seen in people's hands on the Sabbath. His landlord checked him for this, when the bard laughingly replied:—

"You'll not think me so good a man as Nancy Kelly is a woman, I suppose?" "Indeed no," replied the poet. "Then I'll tell you what happened this morning. When I took a walk by the banks of the Nith I heard Nancy Kelly praying long before I came to her. I walked on, and before I returned I saw her helping herself to an armful of my ditches." The parties kept a cow.

On one occasion Nance and the bard were sitting in the "apence," when the former turned the conversation on her favourite topic—religion. Burns sympathized with the matron, and quoted so much scripture that she was fairly astonished. By and by she said to her husband: "Oh, Davie, how they have wrangled that man, for I think he has mair o' the Bible on his tongue than Mr. Inglis himself." Mr. Inglis was the Anti-burgher minister. Burns enjoyed that compliment, and almost the first thing he communicated to his wife on her arrival was the lift he had got from old Nance.

Than "the glorious ploughman," no one was kinder to such helpless creatures as were weak in mind, and who scoutered harmlessly about. A poor half-witted creature—the Madge Wildfire, it is said, of Scott—always found a mouthful ready for her at Burns' fireside. He was equally kind, Allan Cunningham tells, to a crazy and tipsy prodigal named Quin.

"Jamie," said the poet one day, as he gave this character a penny, "you should pray to be turned from the evil of your ways; you are ready now to melt that penny into whisky." "Turn!" exclaimed Jamie, who was a wit to his way. "I wish some one would turn me into the worm o' Willie Hyslop's whisky-still, that the drink might dribble through me for ever." "Well said, Jamie," responded the poet. "You shall have a glass of whisky once a week for that if you will come sober for it."

A friend rallied Burns for indulging such creatures.

"You don't understand the matter," said he, "they are poets, they have the madness of the muse, and all they want is the inspiration—a mere trifle!"

Sir Walter Scott, his rich, racy humour in telling stories and giving anecdotes, always on the spur of the moment, was delightful. He had an anecdote really, a story to match, or "cap," as he used to call it, everyone he heard, and with most perfect ease and hearty good humour. His first publisher, says one Robert Millar, gave anecdotes very pleasantly, and one day, after dinner, he was telling the company that he, or some friend, had been present at a "to do" Court in Jedburgh, when a far servant had summoned his master for non-payment of wages, which he, the ser-

vant, had justly forfeited through some misconduct. After a great deal of cross-questioning—

"I'm sure, my Lord," said the pursuer, "I'm seeking now but I've rove far."

"Ay, my man," responded the judge, "but I'm thinking ye'll hae to rove a wee langer afore ye get it, though," and remitted him.

Scott, with the others, was well pleased with this dialogue, and, in his easy, unaffected manner, said: "Well, something of a similar nature occurred when a friend of his was present at the justice court at Jedburgh. Two fellows had been taken up for sheep-stealing; there was a dense court and were listening with breathless attention to the evidence when, for some reason there was a dead pause, during which the judge, observed a rosy-cheeked, chubby-faced country boy, who seemed to pay the utmost attention to what was going on, and continued to fix his eyes on his Lordship's countenance, cried out to the clerk:—

"Well, my man, what do you say to the Cause?"

"Eh, gosh," answered the boy, "but that's a gude ane! What did I say? Whiles say, Pul hup! and whiles I say Pul-he, to the Caws, meaning of course, the calves."

But the business was quickly decided, for the whole court, Judge and Jury, were thrown into convulsions of laughter that nothing more could be said or done.

"It is interesting to observe," says Gillilan, "how not a few of the familiar names known to Scott in his youth or boyhood have been preserved on his written pages and are now classical. Thus Meg Dods was the real name of a woman or Luckie, in Howgate, who brewed good ale for gentlemen. In the account of a Galloway trial, in which Scott was counsel, occurs the name "MacGuffog," afterwards that of the famous turnkey in Guy Mannering. The name "Dunward" may still be seen on the stings of Arbroath and Forgar, and Scott had doubtless met it there, as well as that of "Frudite," or "Frudfoot," in or near Perth; "Morton" in the lists of the Western Whigs, and Gillilan, in Dunnottar Castle. Nothing, in fact, that ever flashed on the eye or vibrated on the ear of this extraordinary man but was in some form or other reproduced in his writings."

In a remarkable sense here the child was father of the man.

Tom Purdie, Sir Walter Scott's favorite servant, appeared before the Sheriff first as a poacher, when Sir Walter became interested in his story, which he told with a mixture of pathos, simplicity, and piquant humour, that he granted him forgiveness, and ultimately engaged him as a sort of factotum at Abbotsford. Tom served him long and faithful, only "jeopardy whiles he took a bicker" towards the dram. Scott is said to have proposed for Tom's epitaph the words:—

"Here lies one who might have been trusted with a purse of untold gold, but not with a barrel of unmeasured whisky." But more pungent than this

How humour will serve one in circumstances where "silver eloquence might fail is well illustrated by an important incident in the life of Scott. When George IV. visited Scotland in 1815, Sir Walter Scott was largely "in evidence" in Edinburgh, eager to greet his sovereign and afford him a royal welcome. Elaborate preparations had been made in the capital in order that the reception might be worthy of the illustrious visitor, but when the royal yacht arrived in the Forth, the rain poured down in torrents. Sir Walter accordingly visited the King on board, and in asking him to defer his landing on account of the inclemency of the weather, made one of the happiest speeches of his life—a speech which we may be sure delighted no one more than the King himself.

"Impatient, Sir," said he, "as your loyal subjects are to see you plant your foot upon their soil, they hope you will consent to postpone your public entry until to-morrow. I am seeing the state of the weather. I am myself forcibly reminded of a circumstance which once occurred to me. I was about to make a tour through the Western Highlands with part of my family. I wrote to the innkeeper of a certain hostelry, where I meant to halt a day or two, to have rooms pre-

pared for me. On the day appointed it rained, as it does to-day, ceaselessly. As we drew near our quarters, we were met on the hill over his house by our Boniface, with bare head, and backing every yard as I advanced, who thus addressed me:—

"Guid guid ye, Sir Walter! This is just awfu! Siccan a downpour! Was ever the like? I really beg your pardon! I'm sure it's nae fault of mine. I canna think how it should happen to rain this way, just as ye, o' a' men in the world, should come to see us. It looks awfu! personal. I can only say for my part, I'm just ashamed of the weather!"

"And so, Sir, I do not know that I can improve upon the language of the honest innkeeper. I cannot think it should rain this way, just as your Majesty, of all men in the world, should have condescended to come and see us. I can only say in the name of my countrymen I'm just ashamed of the weather!"

Sir Walter welcomed his Majesty, not only in person, but also in song, by writing a long ballad in two parts, to the old tune of "Cafie, and the King Come." Simultaneously with this local piece there, however, appeared in the London Examiner a satirical effusion, entitled, "Sewery." Now, the King's Come," which caused some stir, and greatly annoyed the sensitive loyalty of the author of Waverley.

The writer was Alexander Rodger, of Glasgow, the well-known author of "Robin Tamson's Smiddy," "Behave Yourselves Before Folk," and other popular humorous songs; and the ultra-radical opinions for which he had already languished in "Bridewell," it cannot be denied, rendered the humour of this counterblast rather too broad for general circulation. As

even was his remark at the funeral ceremony at the eccentric Earl of Buchan. In accordance with the Christian mode of burial, the body should have been carried into the Chapel, where it was to be interred, feet first. Sir David Brewster was one of the mourners, and was the first to observe that the head of the coffin was first in. He said:—

"We have brought the Earl's head in the wrong way."

"Never mind," replied Scott, "his Lordship's head was turned when he was alive, and it is not worth our while to shift it now." Long before the secret of the Waverley novels had been blown about, the Ettrick shepherd divined it, and as the novels appeared he had them rebound and lettered "Scott's Novels." While visiting Hogg at Altrive, the author turned to remark in a dry humorous tone: "Jamie, your book seller must be a stupid fellow to spell Scott's with two t's."

Hogg replied: "Ah, Watty, I am ower auid a cat to draw that strae before."

Mrs. John Ballantyne tells a story of Scott and Hogg not to be found in Lockhart. At her dinner table in Hanover Street, Edinburgh, she says, the shepherd was present, and was amusing the company very much by his attempts to dissect "two tough and chuckles," and was making the legs and wings and gravy fly in every direction, to the annoyance of everyone in his neighbourhood. Suddenly he stopped, dipped a napkin in the finger-glass, and began to mop his face, which was "a jappit wi' the juice." Sir Walter saw his friend's dilemma, and out of the goodness of his heart determined to create a diversion in his favour. Addressing Mrs. Ballantyne, he asked this question:—

"Mrs. John, once on a time all the letters of the alphabet were invited out to their dinner—they all came but U. Why did not U come?"

On giving it up, Scott said, "Why, then, the reason why U did not come to dinner is very clear—because U never comes till after (T)."

Sometimes a very trifling joke adds to the gaiety of a company. It was so in this case, the story passed round but Hogg could not understand it, and he asked what they were all laughing at. "It's about U (You)," Mrs. Ballantyne, and this made Hogg quite indignant. He rose and brandished his knife, and inquired in a blood-thirsty sort of way what they could possibly see about him to speak and laugh about, this made the joke tell all the better, when it was explained to him.

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searched for seditious publications (terrible hubbub at that time to the local authorities of Glasgow). Sandy handed the Family Bible to the Sheriff's office, with the remark that that was the only treasonable book in his possession, and for proof he referred the aghast official to the chapter on Kings, in the first Book of Samuel. Rodger's contributions to the Whistle-Kinkie form perhaps the most delightful items of that perennial collection of Scottish lyrics, none of them being a whitless felicitation than his lyrical address to Peter McKay. "Ane shrewd advice to ane drunken souter in Perth"—of which the following forms the first verse:—

"O, Peter McKay, O, Peter McKay! Gin ye'd do like the brutes, only drink when ye're dry. Ye might gather cash yet, grow saucy and gash yet. And carry your soddie Perth-Provost pow-high; But poor drunken devil, ye're wed to the evil. See closely, that naething can sever the tie. Wi' boring and boozing, and snoring and snooting, Ye emulate him that inhabits the sty."

George Outram, another Glasgow poet, claims particular attention when and over humour of Scottish poetry is the subject of conversation. Such of his pieces as the "Anniversary," "Drinking Drama," and "Squint and Rounin" are amongst the most humorous effusions in the native tongue. The temperance cause has made great progress since the beechanalian heroics above named were penned, and it is now the teetotalers who laugh most over the ironical humour expressed in the lines. His "Anniversary" is familiar to everybody, and the same may be said of "Rounin" and "Rounin."

The following illustration of his wit in the shape of an epigram, which he composed on hearing a lady praise a certain reverend Doctor's eyes, is, however, not so well known as it deserves:—

"I cannot praise the Doctor's eyes I never saw his glance divine; He always shuts them when he prays, And when he preaches he shuts mine."

And the whimsical humour contained in the subjoined little sketch will warrant its quotation:—

"My twa awins on the midden, Wi' very fat their eels are hidden; There nae names are swell'd beyond dimension. Their shapes—ye hae nae comprehension. Sic a sight! their tails are curly. Their houghs sae round their necks sae burly; In the warld there's naething bigger Than the t'— except the tither."

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