

SCOTTISH LITERATURE.

From the Civil War On.



AT page 305 and elsewhere it has been sufficiently insisted on that alike in volume and in quality Scottish literary production had declined to a low ebb during the troublous seventeenth century, when Scotland was truly a most distressful country, rent by factions and antipathies, tyranny and persecution, intrigue and war. Most of what came from the printing-presses, and what chiefly absorbed the interest of the nation, was not literature in the stricter sense at all, but theology, mainly polemical, and controversial politics. Yet of the small number of the second series of Scottish seventeenth century writers it may at least be said that they are wonderfully representative of the most opposite tempers and parties: the royalist Montrose who made so much of the Highlanders, the Cameronian colonel who jeered at them in verse and foiled them in the field; Rabekian Unquhart and ultra Puritan Gillespie; the sainted Archbishop Leighton and the irreconcilable Presbyterian mystic Rutherford face to face with the Sempills, delineators of rade and vulgar merriment, the persecutor of the heroes of the Covenant and their panegyrist; and Fletcher, a whole party in himself. Some wrote in English almost as Englishmen understood it, some in the broadest west-country vernacular, some in parti-coloured transition between the two, while one at times wielded a language known to himself alone. Most were men of mark in their time, but none of them great men of letters. Meanwhile home-keeping Scotsmen were becoming more and more familiar with that larger literature—now no longer foreign—to which their own was contributory; English books of all kinds, religious as well as secular, were standard reading in Scotland, where *Paradise Lost* and the *Pilgrim's Progress* were not read as the work of aliens.

The Marquis of Montrose JAMES GRAHAM; 1612-50, the brilliant royalist soldier, whose loyalty, after six meteoric victories, brought him disastrous defeat and death on the scaffold, was an apt scholar of St Andrews University, an accomplished man of the world, and the author of a few passionately loyal poems. Unhappily, by far the most memorable containing two thrice-famous verses—was not definitely ascribed to him till 1711, when it was printed in Watson's *Collection of Scots Poems*, and cannot be proved his. At most it is an adaptation of an old English song.

Napier, Montrose's biographer, interpreted it as seems to be a spirited love-poem as a political allegory, in which King Charles I. is the lover and the kingdom the mistress.

I'll Never Love Thee More

My dear and only love, I pray
That little world of thee
Be governed by no other sway
Than purest monarchy:
For if confusion have a part
Which virtuous souls abhor,
And hold a synod in thine heart,
I'll never love thee more.

As Alexander I will reign,
And I will reign alone;
My thoughts did ever more disdain
A rival on my throne.
He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
That dares not put it to the touch
To gain or lose it all.

But I will reign and govern still,
And always give the law,
And have each subject at my will,
And all to stand in awe:
But 'gainst my battens if I find
Thou kick, or vex me sore,
As that thou set me up a blind,
I'll never love thee more.

And in the empire of thine heart,
Where I should solely be,
If others do pretend a part,
Or dare to vie with me:
Or committees if thou erect,
And go on such a score,
I'll laugh and sing at thy neglect,
And never love thee more.

But if thou wilt prove faithful, then,
And constant of thy word,
I'll make thee glorious by my pen,
And famous by my sword;
I'll serve thee in such noble ways
Was never heard before:
I'll crown and deck thee all with bays,
And love thee more and more.

Lines written after Sentence of Death.

Let them bestow on every air a limb, a quarter of heaven
Then open all my veins, that I may swim
To Thee, my Maker, in that crimson lake:
Then place my par-boded head upon a stake,
Scatter my ashes, strew them in the air:
Lord! since Thou know'st where all those atoms are,
I'm hopeful Thou'lt recover once my dust,
And confident Thou'lt raise me with the just!