

Scotch Column.

Conducted by Rev. W. Wye Smith,

Scottish Expert on Standard Dictionary and Translator of New Testament in "Braid Scots," etc.

Oh, little did my mother think
The day she cradled me,
O' the lands I was to travel in,
O' the death I was to dee!
Last night there were four Maries,
This night will be but three;
There was Mary Beaton, and Mary
Seaton,
And Mary Carmichael and me!

I have sometimes seen
Scottish Poets. the assertion that
"where England has
one poet among her peasantry, Scot-
land has a hundred." And it is meas-
urably true. Think of James Hogg, or
James Hislop, herding their sheep, with
an ink-bottle dangling from a button-

hole! Ready to write their inspira-
tion, as well as to "read" for inspira-
tion! Pencils ("keelie-vines") were
poor things then—scarce, and dear, and
brittle—and a "gray-goose-quill" could
always be picked up! And there is
another item in the count. Every
Scotsman who writes, wants people to
read his writings. And there are, at
this present moment, somewhere near
one thousand living Scotsmen who
have published volumes of verse.

It comes about in this way: A young
fellow develops a faculty of stringing
up things in rhyme—a faculty which
increases with practice—and he is re-
cognized in the neighborhood as a
"poet." Soon he has a hundred repre-

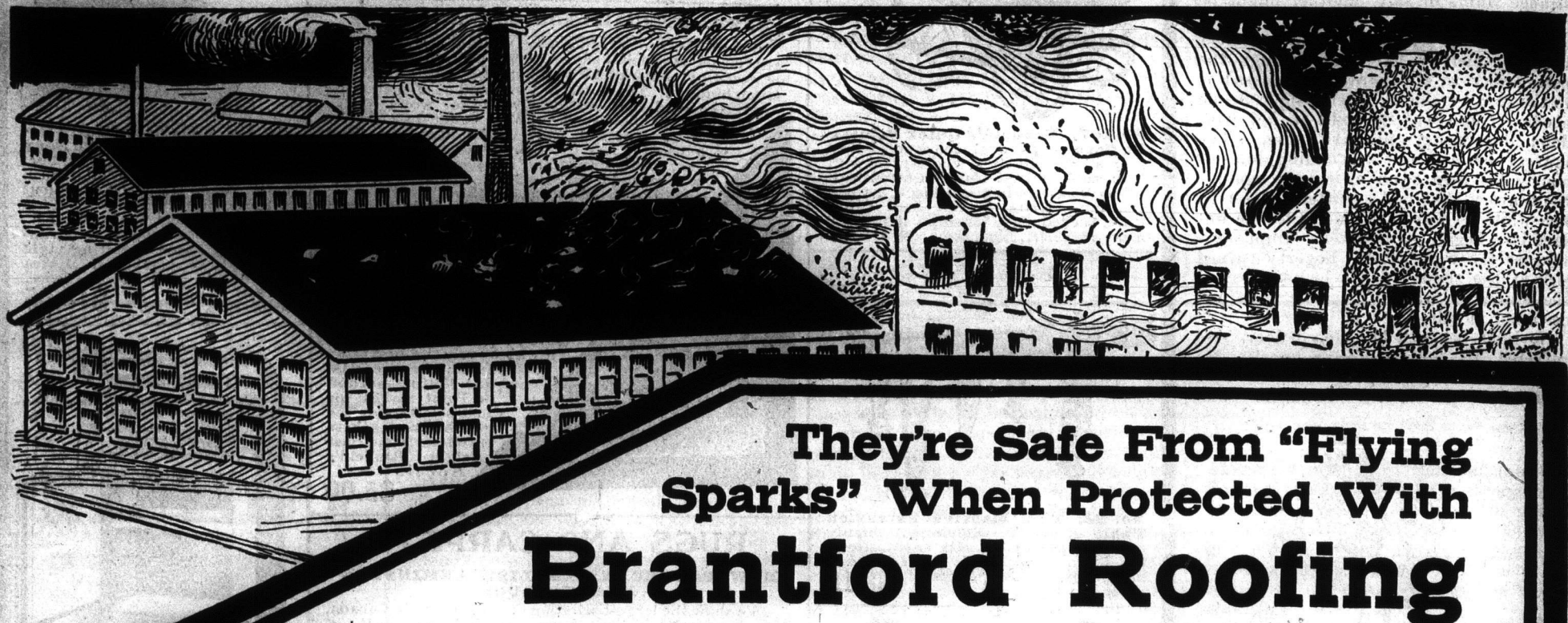
sentative pieces on hand, and consults
a local "publisher." "Well," says the
cautious man of business, "it will cost
£40 to get out the book, and I sup-
pose you have not £40 on hand. But
you can do this: get me a bona fide
list of 400 subscribers, at two shillings
each, and I will run the risk of the
publication—600 or 800 copies; good
paper-boards." The neighbors' and
townsmen subscribe and the rhymster
becomes a poet.

I have read scores and scores of these
ephemeral volumes, and often there is
"nothing in them," with occasionally a
notable exception.

In 1880 or 1881, Mr. D. H. Edwards,
of Brechin—in the Aberdeen country—
got out a three-and-six pence volume,
which he called "The Modern Poets of
Scotland." His idea was to present
(in a short sketch of each, and two or
three representative poems) "one hun-
dred living Scottish poets." This he
did, but before he had the first volume
out he had enough material on hand
for a second. He gives me a few pages

in his "second." And so he went on
till the series reached fifteen volumes.
I have nearly all of them—some I
could not get. I have just pulled one
out of my library shelves and find it
has 86 names. So that there are some-
thing like 1,200 poets thus brought
forward. No other country could
produce such a list.

O mountain-crested Scotland!
I marvel not thou art
Dear as a gracious mother
Unto they children's heart!
I marvel not they love thee,
Thou land of rock and glen—
Of lake, and strath, and mountain—
And more, of gifted men!
Land of the social virtues!
Where the tiller of the sod
Saith to his lowly household,
"Come, let us worship God."
Where the humble shepherd readeth
His book within the glen—
And the meanest dwellers of the hills
Respect themselves as men!
—Mary Howitt.



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