

Reminiscences of the Calton, Glasgow

BY LACHLAN M'GOWN, NAPANEE, ONT.
XVIII.

We called the place Partick Castle, and though we knew it not at that time, might have quoted good authority for the assumption; for about the beginning of this century, a nameless bard refers to it in a poem of uncommon vigor and beauty, and not deserving of the oblivion it has received. I heard it but once, from the lips of an old Calton boy, (now dead many years ago)—dear delightful Hugh Macdonald. I remember a few lines, and they not consecutive, three were—

"Lo Partick Castle drear and lone,
Stands like a silent looker-on,
Where Clyde and Kelvin meet."

We loved to visit the old ruin, for in some way, as usual, we identified it with the name of Wallace, and though it must be admitted we had very slight foundation for our belief, as blind Harry or the later historians say nothing, it had a degree of probability in it more reasonable than much of that comingling of fact and fiction found in the "Scottish Chiefs," and it seems strange that that amiable authoress, Miss Jane Porter, should have been apparently ignorant of the existence of Partick Castle. The close proximity of Partick and Elderslie—the birthplace and home of the hero—would have furnished her with ample scope for rapid and miraculous movements, far more consistent with fact than many of the transformations of time and place she has so ingeniously interwoven in her fascinating and romantic recital of his sad and glorious career.

Were the evidence conclusive as to the existence of a religious establishment in Partick during that eventful period in Scottish history, it is probable that Wallace was no stranger to the hospitality and kindly intervention of the patriotic monks,—at that time the churchmen generally were true Scotchmen,—and we might imagine them in their country's darkest hour daring to shelter the hero, and at the risk of their lives hiding him from cruel foe and favouring friend, and when the bright dawn came, we can imagine how they watched and listened when the trumpet call tuned the echoes in Kelvingrove, and Wallace led to victory.

"At Wallace name, what Scottish blood,
But boils up in a springtide flood;
Oft have our fearless fathers strode
By Wallace side,
Still pressing onward, red wat-shod,
Or glorious died."

It might prove no futile or ignoble exercise for some local whim-led antiquarian with a modicum of the faith and perceptibility of our boys fifty years ago, if he were to try and find a reason for the evident close sympathy of that time with the distant past, and why men as well as boys took such pleasure in trying to fit every romantic scene and endearing fancy, with a place in some bright page of old Scotland's grandest record, and should his investigations seem satisfactory, it is possible he might find among the dust and entanglement of a musty sentiment, shadowed outlines of old Partick Castle sufficiently broad and deep to rear a fabric with materials more lasting than that with which dreams are built.

In the days of boyhood, to fully enjoy a ramble, much depended on the distance and the amount of risk and toil incurred. Unconsciously we agreed with Campbell

"'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view
And robs the mountain of its azure hue."

Someone has said that "the man who has never seen a large river thinks every little stream the ocean." And it may be added that often when the man has seen a large river, it suffers in his estimation, if the little stream has been one of his boyhood's illusions.

(To be continued.)

The poets sing, in dainty rhymes
Of summer days and sunny climes,
Of beauteous maidens, passing fair,
With witching eyes and waving hair,
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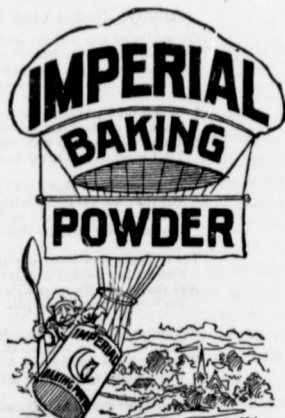
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