

THE POETRY AND HUMOUR OF THE SCOTTISH LANGUAGE.

(From Blackwood's Magazine.)

Continued from No. 25.

Skaith, danger, mischief, harm :-

"I rede ye weel, take care o' skaith," Burns: Death and Dr. Hornbook.

Slogan, the war-cry of a clan :-

"When the streets of high Dunedin, Saw lances gleam and falchions redded, And heard the slogan's deadly yell." Scott: Lay of the Last Minstrel.

Snell, sharp, biting, keen, lively.—Johnson, in his Dictionary, says this is an obsolete word in England, though it is commonly used to the north of the Humber :-

"(Sir Madoo) was a handy man, and snell In tournament, and eke in fight." Morte Arthur.

"Shivering from cold, the season was so snell." Douglas: Eneid. "The winds blew snell." Allan Ramsay.

"And bleak December's winds ensuin, Baith snell and keen." Burns: To a Mouse.

Snool, to flatter abjectly, to cringe, to crawl :-

"Is there a whim-inspired fool, Ow're blate to seek, ow're proud to snool." Burns: A Bard's Epitaph.

Snurl, to ruffle the surface of the waters with a wind; metaphorically applied to the temper of man or woman :-

"Northern blasts the ocean snurl." Allan Ramsay.

Sonsie, from the Gaelic sonas, good-fortune; good-humoured, comely, likely to be fortunate :-

"His honest sonsie face, Got him good friends in ilka place." Burns: The Twa Dogs.

"He's tall and sonsie, frank and free, He's lo'd by a', and dear to me; Wi' him I'd live, wi' him I'd die, Because my Robin lo'es me." Chambers's Scottish Songs, vol. ii.

Sugh, or sough, a sigh; more particularly the mournful sigh or sound of the wind among the trees or tall sedge-grass or rushes. This beautiful and expressive word is evidently from the same root as the Greek Psyche, the soul; though Richardson, in his Dictionary, derives it from "suck"—the sucking or drawing in of the breath, previous to the emission. Burns uses both sugh and sough :-

"When lo, on either hand! The clanging sugh of whistling wings is heard." The Brigs of Ayr.

"November chill blows loud wi' angry sough." Cottar's Saturday Night.

"The wavy swell of the soughing reeds." Tennyson: The Dying Swan.

"A minister in his Sabbath services expressed the wishes of his congregation in prayer as follows:—'O Lord, we pray Thee to send us wind: no a rantin', tantin', tearin' wind; but a noughin', soughin', winnin' wind.'" Dean Ramsay.

Spate, a flood or freshet, from the overflow of a river or lake; also metaphorically an overflow of idle talk :-

"The water was great and mickle of spate." Kinmont Willie.

"Even like a mighty river that runs down in spate to the sea." W. E. Aytoun: Blackwood's Magazine.

"The Laird of Balnemon was a truly eccentric character. He joined with his drinking propensities a great zeal for the Episcopal Church. One Sunday, having visitors, he read the services and prayers with great solemnity and earnestness. After dinner, he, with the true Scotch hospitality of the time, set to, to make his guests as drunk as possible. Next day, when they took their departure, one of the visitors asked another what he thought of the laird. 'Why, really,' he replied, 'sic a spate o' praying, and sic a spate o' drinking, I never knew in all the course of my life.'" Dean Ramsay's Reminiscences.

Stance, situation, standing-place or foundation :-

"No! sooner may the Saxon lance, Unfix Benledi from his stance!" Scott: Lady of the Lake.

"He never advanced From the place he was stanced Till was no more to do there at a' man." The Battle of Sheriff-Muir.

"We would recommend any Yankee believer in England's decay to take his stance in Fleet Street or any of our great thoroughfares, and ask himself whether it would be wise to meddle with any member of that busy and strenuous crowd." Blackwood's Magazine, June, 1869.

Sturt, trouble, sorrow, vexation, strife; to vex, disturb, annoy :-

"And aye the less they hae to sturt 'em, In less proportion less will hurt 'em." Burns: The Twa Dogs.

"I've lived a life of sturt and strife." Macpherson's Farewell.

Swirl, to turn rapidly, to eddy, to curl :-

"His tail Hung o'er his hurdies wi' a swirl." Burns: The Twa Dogs.

"The mill-wheel spun and swirl'd, And the mill-stream danced in the morning light, And all its eddies curl'd." Mackay: The Lump of Gold.

Thack, to thatch :-

"Oh, Bessy Bell and Mary Gray, They were twa bonnie lassies, They biggit a bower by yon burn brae, And thackit it o'er wi' rushes." Old Ballad.

Thirl, to strike a string of an instrument so as to make it tremble and quiver :-

"There was ae sang That some kind husband had addressed To some sweet wife, It thirl'd the heart-strings through the breast, A' to the life." Burns: Epistle to Lapraik.

Thole, to endure, to suffer. This word was once common all over England, and occurs in Chaucer, Gower and Piers Ploughman :-

"All that Christ tholed." Piers Ploughman.

"So muckle wo as I with you have tholed." Chaucer.

"He who tholes conquers." "He that has a good crop ought to thole a few thistles."

"Better thole a grumph than a sump," (i. e., better endure an uncourteous man than a blockhead.) Allan Ramsay's Scots Proverbs.

Throve, a bunch, a lot, a company, an assembly.—"A thrave of corn," says Blount's Glossographia, 1681, "is two stooks of six, or rather twelve sheaves apiece. The word comes from the British threva, twenty-four. In most counties of England twenty-four sheaves do now go to a thrave. Twelve sheaves make a stook, and two stooks make a thrave."—

"And after cometh a knave, The worst of the thrave." Landsdowne MS.: quoted in Halliwell's Archaic Dictionary. "He sends forth thraves of ballads." Bishop Hall.

"A daimen icker in a thrave 'Sa sma' request; I'll get a blessing wi' the lave, And never miss't." Burns: To a Mouse.

Thud, a dull, heavy blow.—No English Dictionary, from Johnson to Worcester, contains this expressive word :-

"The fearful thuds of the tempestuous tide." Gavin Douglas: Translation of the Eneid.

"The air grew rough with boisterous thuds." Allan Ramsay: The Vision.

Tine, to lose; tint, lost :-

"What was tint through tree, Tree shall it win." Piers Ploughman.

"He never tint a cow that grat for a needle." "Where there is nothing, the king tines his right," "All's not tint that's in danger."

"Better spoil your joke than tine your friend." "Tine heart—all's gone." Allan Ramsay's Scots Proverbs.

"Next my heart I'll wear her For fear my jewel tine." Burns.

Tirl, to strive to turn the knob, the pin, or other fastening of a door.—This word is of constant occurrence in the ballad-poetry of Scotland :-

"Oh, he's gone round and round about, And tirl'd at the pin." Willie and May Margaret.

Tirl, to spin round as in a whirl-wind, to unroof with a high wind :-

"Whyles on the strong-winged tempest flying, Tirling the kirks." Burns: Address to the Deil.

Tron.—There is a Tron Church in Edinburgh and another in Glasgow; but the Scottish glossaries and Jamieson's Scottish Dictionary make no mention of the word. It would appear from a passage in Hone's 'Every-day Book' that "Tron" signified a public weighing-machine or scale in a market-place, where purchasers of commodities might without fee satisfy themselves that the weight of the purchase was correct according to the charge. Hence a "Tron Church" was a church in the market-place near which the public weighing-machine was established.

Tryste, an appointed place of meeting, a rendezvous.—This word occurs in Chaucer, and in several old English MSS. of his period, but is not used by later writers. "To bide tryste," to be true to time and place of meeting :-

"You walk late, sir," said I. "I bide tryste," was the reply, and so I think do you, Mr. Osbaldistone." Sir Walter Scott: Rob Roy.

"The tenderest-hearted maid That ever bided tryste at village stile." Tennyson.

"By the Nine Gods he swore it, And nam'd the trysting day." Lord Macaulay.

"No maidens with blue eyes Dream of the trysting hour Or bridal's happier time." Mackay: Under Green Leaves.

"When I came to Ardour I wrote to Lochiel to tryste me where to meet him." Letter from Rob Roy to General Gordon: Hogg's Jacobite Relics.

Twine, to rob, to deprive :-

"Brandy \* \* \* Twines many a poor, doylt, drucken hash Of half his days." Burns: Scotch Drink.

Tyke, a mongrel, a stray dog, a rough dog :-

"Base tyke, call'st thou me lost?" Shakespeare: Henry V.

"Nae tawted (uncombed) tyke." Burns: The Twa Dogs.

"He was a gash and faithful tyke." Idem.

"I'm as tired of it as a tyke of lang kail." "You have lost your own stomach and a tyke's." Allan Ramsay's Scots Proverbs.

Wanchancie, unlucky :-

"Wae worth the man wha first did shape That vile wanchancie thing—a rape." Burns: Poor Mailie's Elegy.

Wanrestful, restless, unruly, uneasy :-

"An' may they never learn the gaets Of ither vile wanrestful pets." Burns: Poor Mailie.

Wean, a little child; a weanie, a very little child—from "we ane," little one.

Wee, little, diminutive, very little.—This word, apparently from the Saxon weeny, small, occurs in Shakespeare, and is common in colloquial and familiar English, though not in literary composition. It is sometimes used as an intensification of littleness, as "a little wee child," "a little wee bit" :-

"A wee house well filled, A wee farm well tilled, A wee wife well will'd, Mak' a happy man."

"A wee mouse can creep under a great haystack." Allan Ramsay's Scots Proverbs.

Weird, or wierd.—Most English dictionaries misdefine this word, which has two different significations; one as a noun, the other as an adjective. In English literature, from Shakespeare's time downwards, it exists as an adjective only, and is held to mean unearthly, ghastly, or witchlike. Before Shakespeare's time, and in Scottish poetry and parlance to the present day, the word is a noun, and signifies "fate" or "destiny"—derived from the Teutonic warden, to become, or that which shall be. Chaucer, in 'Troilus and Creseida,' has the line—

"O Fortune! execrable of wierdes!"

and Gower, in a manuscript in the possession of the Society of Antiquaries, says,—

"It were a wondrous weirde, To see a king become a herde."

In this sense the word continues to be used in Scotland :-

"A man may woo where he will, but he maun where his wierd is." "She is a wise wife that kens her ain wierd." Allan Ramsay's Scots Proverbs.

"The wierd her dearest bairn befel By the bonnie mill-dams o' Binnorie." Scott's Minstrelsy of the Border.

Shakespeare seems to have been the first to employ the word as an adjective, and to have given it the meaning of unearthly, though pertaining to the idea of the Fates :-

"The wierd sisters, hand in hand, Posters of the sea and land." Macbeth.

"Thane of Cawdor! by which title these wierd sisters saluted me." Idem.

"When we sat by her flickering fire at night she was most wierd." Charles Dickens: Great Expectations.

"No spot more fit than wierd, lawless Winchelsea, for a plot such as he had conceived." All the Year Round, Apr 2, 1870.

"Jasper surveyed his companion as though he were getting imbued with a romantic interest in his wierd life." Charles Dickens: The Mystery of Edwin Drood.

"She turned to make her way from the wierd spot as fast as her feeble limbs would let (permit) her." The Dream Numbers, by T. A. Trollope, ii. 271.

Wimple, to flow gently like a brook, to meander, to purr :-

"Among the bonny winding banks, Where Doon rins, wimplin', clear." Burns: Halloween.

Wrath, an apparition in his own likeness that becomes visible to a person about to die, a water-spirit :-

"He held him for some fleeting wrath, And not a man of blood or breath." Sir Walter Scott.

"By this the storm grew loud apace, The water-wrath was shrieking, And in the scowl of heaven each face Grew dark as they were speaking." Thomas Campbell.

Wyte, to blame, reproach :-

"Alas! that every man has reason To wyte his countrymen wi' treason!" Burns: Scotch Drink.

Youthy, having the false and affected appearance of youthfulness; applied to an old person of either sex who dresses in the style, or talks and otherwise behaves as if they are still young.

We are told that the feeling against England in Prussia is increasing, and we have no doubt it is. There is a capital story told on this subject on Tyneside just now. Two Prussians were talking together and taking a long look ahead, and in their conceit they thought they could "whip creation." One of them said they had polished off France, and they would do the same for England next. A "porter pokoman" standing by overheard the remark, and asked the man to repeat it. The Prussian, thinking the porter had not quite heard or understood what he said, did repeat the boast, but the next moment he was sprawling on the deck, and the porter, turning to his companion, asked, in tones about which there could be no mistake, "Are them sentiments your sentiments, sur?" The Prussian, with a glance at the prostrate form of his friend, meekly replied they were not, and the victorious Englishman went away congratulating himself upon upholding the honour of the nation, and upon an Englishman being able any day to polish off two Prussians.

Some time back Lieutenant Hoffmann, 12th company Royal Prussian Grenadier Regiment, being at the Crown Prince's, happened to speak of what went on at the outposts, what houses were in front, and of the people they saw, whereupon His Royal Highness, in a laughing way, observed, "I wish you would bring me a late Paris newspaper out of one of them." The young officer said nothing, but when next he was on duty he went out in advance of the sentries, and in the dusk he managed to enter a house within a few hundred yards of Valerien, which was occupied by an Englishman. The apparition of a Prussian officer, revolver in hand, was startling, and the demand for the last Paris paper equally astonishing in its way. "Needs must," &c. The paper was produced, and carried off with an addition, for the master of the house entreated the officer to receive some wine, in order that he might say to the French that the foray had been made for the sake of the drinkables. I tell the tale, says a correspondent, as it was told to me. It is an illustration of coolness, tact, and daring, and of a desire to serve his prince, on the part of the Prussian officer, which will, no doubt, be appreciated duly.

Temperature in the shade, and Barometer indications for the week ending Monday, Dec. 26, 1870, observed by John Underhill, Optician to the Medical Faculty of McGill University, 299 Notre Dame Street.

Table with 3 columns: Day, 9 A. M., 1 P. M., 6 P. M. Rows for Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday.

Table with 3 columns: Day, Max., Min., Mean. Rows for Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday.

Aneroid Barometer compensated and corrected.

Table with 3 columns: Day, 9 A. M., 1 P. M., 6 P. M. Rows for Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday.