

THE LAIRD.—I shall let Chambers himself answer your question. He says in his business-like, and modestly-written preface:—

"The writings of Burns—his poems, songs, and letters—are most of them so expressly the coinage of his immediate experiences and feelings, that his life might be read in them alone. As hitherto arranged, each series might be likened to a fragmentary view of the poet's life, supplementary to the meagre memoir usually prefixed. So arranged, the biographic effect of the whole is either imperfectly developed, or lost by dissipation. It occurred to me,—and I find that the same idea had latterly occurred to Allan Cunningham, and even been proceeded with to some length by the late Mr. Alexander Peterkin—that if the various compositions were strung in strict chronological order upon the memoir, they might be made to render up the whole light which they are qualified to throw upon the history of the life and mental progress of Burns, at the same time that a new significance was given to them by their being read in connection with the current of events and emotions which led to their production. Such is the plan here adopted, and the result is not merely a great amount of new biographical detail, but a new sense, efficacy, and feeling, in what many would perhaps describe as hackneyed, the writings of the poet himself."

THE SQUIREX.—And has Chambers executed his task in a satisfactory manner?

THE LAIRD.—Sae far as he has gane, entirely sae! Sma' as my library is, it contains every life, o' moment, o' the "Ayrshire Bard," and I would-na gie the present biography for the whole lot o' them! I see, Major, that your attention is arrested by something which you see in the fir' t volume o' the work;—read it oot, if you please.

THE MAJOR.—It is a lit' notice of the poet's mother, which I have now perused for the first time. I have done so with the greater interest, believing, as I do, that, in general, men take their characteristics from their mothers, rather than from their sires. Here is the passage:—

"Mrs. Burness had a fine complexion, with pale red hair, and beautiful dark eyes. She was a neat small figure, extremely active and industrious—naturally cheerful, but in latter life possessed by anxieties, no doubt a consequence of the life of hardships and difficulties through which it had been her lot to pass. She sang very well, and had a never-failing store of old ballads and songs, on which her poetical son must have fed in his boyhood. As a trait of the life of Mrs. Burness in the days of sadness which preceded her husband's death, Mrs. Beggs remembers the old man coming in one day from sowing, very weary. He had used all the thrashed-up grain, and was now desirous of preparing some for dinner to the horses; but his worthy helpmate, on seeing his fatigued state, insisted that he should refresh himself by a rest, while she herself would see that the beasts were duly cared for. The heroic little woman then went to the barn with her servant Lizzy Paton, and the two soon had the necessary

corn for the horses both thrashed and winnowed. Such was the household of the youthful Burns. Who can but regret that the lot of such a family was not from the first a kindlier one!"

THE LAIRD.—I hae twa or three things to say, touching Burns, but shall reserve them till I hae received and read—(read, mind ye, Crabtree!)—the remaining volumes o' the series.

THE LAIRD.—Hae ye ony mair buiks to talk aboot? or aibins ye wad prefer to follow the auld-farran doctor's example and tak a snoozle!

THE DOCTOR.—Pardon me laird and friends if I have been apparently absent, but this little pamphlet has thoroughly engrossed my attention.

THE SQUIREX.—Is it the life of Molly Carew, or does it contain unadulterated poesy from the pen of Adela Nambina Pamby?

THE DOCTOR.—Nay, it cannot claim for itself such qualities as entitle it to be classed in the same category with those most captivating productions, but nevertheless it is worthy of perusal by all who honour genius and can appreciate well bestowed homage.

THE MAJOR.—I am glad you have introduced the book to our attention. I read it last evening with great interest. It is a fitting tribute to a man of peculiar merit, to a —

THE LAIRD.—Hoot man! tell us the name o' the subject o' this commendation.

THE MAJOR.—It is styled a "Memorial of Cooper," and is really a pleasingly compiled record of certain proceedings which have recently taken place in New York, with the view of giving expression to the public sentiment on the death of that illustrious novelist. It contains also an eloquent discourse on the life, character and genius of Cooper, by one who apparently knew him well and has shown himself capable for the task he has undertaken, W. C. Bryant.

THE DOCTOR.—I have been much struck with the candour and fairness of Mr. Bryant's criticisms. It is well to make much of Cooper, for he certainly possessed a great quality of authorship—originality. His "Leather Stocking" is a *chef d'œuvre*, and the great feature of his writings. It was the character of the day, unequalled and not to be surpassed. It grew out of the circumstances, scenery and people by whom he was surrounded. It was the off-spring of associations which could have been awakened by no other less peculiar or less forcible influences—awakened in a mind whose qualities were singularly well-balanced—where imagination seems to rove freely over the wild field of nature—kept constantly in check by sound discriminating judgment.

THE LAIRD.—I like his writings weel eneuch, but ah! man, he's no to compare wi' Walter Scott.

THE DOCTOR.—"Comparisons are odorous,"