

Reminiscences of a Scottish Country Parish.

BY AN OCTAGENARIAN.

II. — THE KIRK AND ITS SURROUNDINGS.

For the Review

The parish church was a large one, but not by any means too large for the numerous congregation which filled it from Sabbath to Sabbath and crowded it on the Communion day, when the pulpit stairs had to be utilized for some of the aged and deaf communicants. It had been erected at the beginning of the century, and as several of the larger heritors were favorable to the establishment, it was very much in advance of the churches in the surrounding parishes. The usual *barn* style with a small belfrey on one gable was superseded by a really fine edifice with a bell tower and clock, marking and telling out the hours and setting the time for the whole district around. In the belfrey were two fine toned bells, one very old, and which in all probability had tolled the Angelus in pre-reformation times.

The church occupied the site of an older building, which had been the place of worship for the people for 630 years. The old church had been dedicated to St. Peter, and a holy well, named after him, was in the vicinity, supplying the manse and several of the cottars with its sweet and clear water. Within the walls of the old church not a few remarkable scenes had been witnessed. They had seen the change from the old to the new faith of the first reformation, and the subscribing and swearing of the National Covenant of the second, when, as the Session Record testifies, all the communicants in the parish had subscribed with the exception of one of the lairds. He afterwards did public penance for his opposition to the Covenant before his restoration to the privileges of the Church. A succession of able ministers seems to have served the cure; as their names occur from time to time in the proceedings of the General Assembly, on Commissions, when important work had to be done.

The interior of the Kirk was marked by great simplicity; and by the absence of all ornament except a few coats-of-arms of the leading proprietors in the parish and several panels of carved work from the interior of the former church. The pulpit stood at the east end, "high and lifted up," surmounted by a large canopy or sounding board over it as was the fashion of the times. The aisles were paved with stone flags, and the floor was of clay, with boards for the feet to rest upon. The pews were of pine, untouched by paint or varnish, the windows filled with clear glass, without shade or colour. Galleries went round the walls with the exception of the end wall where the pulpit stood. There was no organ loft or choir seat in the early days; but a high Lectern from which the preacher with two assistants led the Psalmody and made the proclamation of the marriage banns. No vestry or Session room was provided for many years, and the minister had to put on his gown and hands in the manse, from which place also the Bible and Psalm Book had to be carried by the Beadle before he rang the last bell.

The graveyard around the church had been the place of burial for the parish for many generations and had to be enlarged more than once to supply ground for all who had a claim to be buried there. In that graveyard there were not many ancient tomb stones, scarcely any beyond 200 years. One dating from 1673 was of special interest as marking the last resting place of the heroine of a pathetic ballad familiar to the old and young. Lying flat on the ground the inscription had become illegible. This was in due time replaced by a facsimile of the original, which has in turn been supplanted by a beautiful cross of white marble, at the expense of the women of the parish.

Near to the church was the site of an ancient Priory founded in 1179 and dedicated to the Virgin Mary with its holy well near by and its St. Mary's pool in the adjoining river. The purpose of its erection as set forth in the deed of its foundation was "that there might be a chaplain there for ever, who should be ready by night and by day to go among the parishioners

when necessary and administer to them the consolations of religion." A heap of stones is all that remains to indicate where it once stood.

According to Thomas the Rhymer, a *weird* was to follow the family of a neighboring proprietor for taking some of the stones of the Priory when building his castle, and that as a consequence

"Hapless would their men James be,
So long as were within their walls
From barried kirk lands a stone three."

The prophecy was alleged to have been fulfilled in the fact that no hen was born in the house for many generations. The weird has long since been *dreed* and the ban removed. The entail was broken and the lands were sold years ago. A new race has come into possession of the castle and estates which so long lay under the effect of the sacrilege committed by one of their ancient owners.

The Evening of a Great Life.

BY REV. MARCUS SCOTT, B.A., DETROIT.

For the Review

"Mr. Gladstone is dying, and cannot last much longer," was the paragraph which caught our eye as we scanned our paper this morning. At once our interest was transferred from Washington to England, and from the President's office to the sick-chamber, where silently and slowly a great life is ebbing away. How pathetic, and yet inevitable, the fact.

Lately we heard Gladstone described by an American minister of world-wide fame as "the greatest man that treads our Globe." A few years ago Stead, in the *Review of Reviews*, said that the three greatest living men were the Pope, Bismark, and Gladstone—all old men, and the greatest of the three is going first. Fifty years ago Macaulay stiled him "the rising hope of those stern and unbending Tories, who follow reluctantly and mutinously, a leader, whose experience and eloquence are indispensable to them, but whose cautious temper and moderate opinions they abhor." What changes have those fifty years brought. From being the rising hope of the Tories Gladstone has been the doughty leader of the Liberals, and was, until yesterday almost, the greatest political power in Britain. What a wonderful career has he had. He is a scholar of the front rank, and he is, on almost any subject, a recognized authority. It is safe, however, to say that his greatest work has been done, and his greatest victories achieved, in the House of Commons.

A Scotchman, though born in England, Gladstone entered Parliament when a young man and attached himself to Sir Robert Peel. His first great speech was delivered on the death of Peel, and was pronounced a masterpiece. Perhaps the most brilliant speech he ever made was when at 2 o'clock on a December morning in 1852, he leapt to his feet to answer Disraeli. Old Parliamentary veterans said it was the grandest effort ever made in the House.

It was an event in our student life in Edinburgh when in 1880 Gladstone came to Scotland on a great political campaign. It was a general election, and he came North to contest Midlothian, for years a political preserve for the ducal house of Buccleuch. During this campaign Gladstone delivered some of his greatest speeches, which roused the whole country, and made him once more Premier of Britain. Only one of these speeches we heard, and what a treat that was to be sure! It was in the Music Hall, George street. We leaped the barricade—and at least two Canadian ministers were in our company—dodged the policeman, and gained entrance to the hall just as Gladstone was being escorted to the platform. And such an ovation he got from that surging crowd! Tell it to the winds that Scotchmen are undemonstrative. Those wild cheers, again and again renewed, give the lie to such an insinuation. The speech lasted by the clock two hours and three quarters. We have heard a few really great speeches, but we give the palm to that one. Some one said that Gladstone was the only one in his day in the House of Commons who could speak in italics. That speech was all in italics. How pure, clear, and resonant was the voice, never exactly loud, but strong and vibrating, and heard