

CHAPTER IV

THE SCOT IN JOURNALISM

WE have it on the word of Dr. Robertson Nicoll that once upon a time it was the ambition of every Scotch youth to become a professor. Once upon a time, too, and one does not need to quote authority for it, every second child in kilts was devoted by his parents to the ministry, and did no doubt sooner or later attain that admirable office. But latterly the supply of Scotch professors has been a good deal bigger than the demand, and it has dawned upon the slow Scottish intellect that £70 a year and a manse is after all not exactly one of the prizes of life. Therefore your stern calculating Scotch peasant has during late years dedicated his son to the practice and service of journalism. Now journalism, though the Fourth estate, is the last of the professions. The journalist who is making £500 a year, at any rate the

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Scotch journalist who is making £500 a year, is the exception and not the rule. Still £500 a year, or for that matter £250 a year, is wealth to your average Scot who, nine times out of ten, comes hitherward from a district where the person who once had a sovereign in his possession is looked upon with awe and reverence. Furthermore journalism suits the Scot because it is a profession into which you can crawl without inquiry as to your qualifications, and because it is a profession in which the most middling talents will take you a long way. The reporting staffs and sub-editorial staffs of both the London and provincial journals can, I think, boast a decidedly decent leaven of Scotchmen. In Fleet Street, if you do not happen to possess a little of the Doric, you are at some disadvantage in comprehending the persons with whom you are compelled to talk. "Hoo arre ye the noo," is the conventional greeting in most newspaper offices. Also a large proportion of the persons who come up the stair on personal business, which usually turns out to be the personal business of the persons and resolves itself into a request for reviewing or an offer to do another man's work at a cheap rate,

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are very Scotch indeed, and while they drop the Doric word with fair success, they cannot for the life of them get out of the Doric idiom and the Doric accent. Armed with a letter of introduction from Professor McMoss, whom you do not know, and with a sheaf of dog's-eared certificates picked up at Scotch Universities, they descend upon you with the air of men who know for a surety that you are dying for their services, and when they go out after wasting an altogether unnecessary amount of your time and temper, it is with black looks and a burning conviction that you refused to employ them because you know them to be so clever that they might supplant you in your own chair.

Ten years ago it was the man from Oxford or Cambridge that was considered the essential thing in journalism. Nowadays the attitude of newspaper proprietors in want of a smart man amounts to "No University man need apply." I do not think that we are very far from the day when the tune will be changed to "No Scotchman need apply." Numerically the Scotch journalist is unquestionably strong. He possesses, too, certain solid qualities

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which are undoubtedly desirable in a journalist. For example, he is punctual, careful, dogged, unoriginal and a born galley-slave. You can knock an awful lot of work out of him, and no matter how little you pay him, he may be depended upon to sustain "the dignity of the office" in the matter of clothes, external habits of life, and a dog-like devotion to the hand that feeds him and the foot that kicks him. In short, he is a capital routine man, and if you have a journal which you wish to maintain on the ancient lines of stodge and flat-footedness, the Scotchman does you admirably. But it is impossible to get away from the fact that the vogue of the stolid, arid, stereotyped, sleepy sort of journalism which satisfied the last generation is rapidly going to pieces. The contemporary world wants and will have what it chooses to call the "live" journalist, and the Scotchman who is a live journalist to the extent of evolving anything bright or subtle or suggestive or original has yet to be found. At the present moment he is managing to keep himself alive by imitation. As a plagiarist of ideas, necessity has made him a master.

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He knows that the reign of dulness is coming to an end, and that the auld-wife journalism in whose benevolent presence he has prosed and prosed for so many years, is even now in her dotage and cannot last much longer. So that he has taken thought and determined to aim higher. What man has done, a Scot can do. It is not given to him to be witty and brilliant and unhackneyed on a little oatmeal. But, thank Heaven! he can always play sedulous ape, and sedulous ape it shall be.

These remarks, of course, apply only to the lower reaches of journalism, to the sub-editorial, reportorial, contributorial and contents-bill making departments. When it comes to a question of editors, matters assume quite a different complexion. A Scotch editor is, as a rule, a sight for gods and little fishes. Dr. Nicoll will tell you that the Scot makes a good servant but a bad master. This is the truth. Mercifully, you can count the Scotch editors of London on the fingers of one hand. So far as I am aware, there are only two of them, Dr. Robertson Nicoll and Dr. Nicol Dunn. Of one of them — he of the

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Morning Post—you hear little, save that he is a good fellow and a man of parts, and that he holds at his office a daily reception for raw, unlicked Scotch youths who are come newly over the Border and crave the benefits of his advice and assistance. Politically his paper can scarcely be considered a power, its views on most questions are of no great consequence, but it appears to have an enormous circulation among the blue-blooded and the wealthy, whose doings it chronicles with touching fidelity and regularity, and without the smallest reference to the notoriously independent guinea-stamp views of Dr. Dunn's favourite poet. The other Scotch Editor, Dr. Nicoll, is a horse of another colour. He is all for Nonconformity and the appraisalment of healthy and improving literature. Each of his papers is a paper for the bosom of the family and the Ministers' Monday, and warranted to do all that can be done for the unco' guid of North Britain, for all Scottish writers of whatever degree of merit or demerit, for Dr. Nicoll's English admirers and Dr. Nicoll himself. On every issue of these handsome publications Dr. Nicoll stamps the impress of his own engaging personality. I have heard it

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said by an admirer of his that he is three men—a Scotch divine, a judge of letters, and a journalist who never forgets that his main business in life is to sell papers. These three Dr. Nicolls are, I am assured, quite different persons, inasmuch as the Doctor possesses the blessed gift of detachment and thinks nothing of dictating an article on the Genius of Dr. Parker, a kindly appreciation of the latest gory detective story, and a set of "Sunday afternoon verses" or so in a single morning. Of his lucubrations as a divine I shall say nothing, because I have not studied them. As a judge of letters, however, I take him to be the most catholic scribbler in Europe. Any author who is doing well—that is to say, any author whose record of sales entitles him to be considered a success—may always reckon on a large hospitality in Dr. Nicoll's journals, and will always find Dr. Nicoll and his merry men beaming round the corner and hat in hand. It is a matter of what would you like, sir? all the time. Are you spending your holiday cruising on the blue Mediterranean in the Duchess of Puttlesham's yacht? Very good. Paragraph in the column signed "Man of Kent," with a

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delicate reference to your last great novel. Have you projects? Equally good. Mr. So-and-So is, I understand, hard at work on his next great novel. Will your new book, 30,000 copies of which have been sold before the day of publication, make its appearance on April 1? Capital. Send us portraits of yourself at all ages from three months to the present day, pictures of the modest tenement in which you were born, and of your present town house and little place in the country, and, bless your heart, we will do the rest. Do people say that the great novel, of which you have sold fifty million copies in England and America, is a pot-boiler and a failure? Dear, dear me! You have our heartiest sympathies, sir, and if you would like to vindicate your character as an artist in a couple of pages of the *British Weekly*, why, my dear sir, they are at your service. I do not say that there is any terrific harm in this species of enterprise. That it pleases the mass of mankind and therefore sells papers goes without saying. On the other hand, it is quite subversive of the best interests of letters, and therefore I am inclined to think, and I set it down with great sorrow, that in

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spite of his devotional connections Dr. Nicoll is, if he have any force in letters at all, a distinctly dubious and undesirable force.

As an example of what the *Bookman* really can do when it has a mind, let us quote the following review of a book by Mr. Le Gallienne :

Mr. Le Gallienne is the Dick Whittington of Song. His story reminds us of that other Richard, who, one summer morning many hundreds of years ago, sat listening to the bells of distant London. The one carried his little all tied up in a handkerchief slung to the end of a stick; the other came to London to seek his fortune with a sheaf of manuscript poems in his pocket and any number of poems singing in his head. Now, Mr. Le Gallienne is a figure in "society," and lives in a beautiful house crowded with costly *bric-à-brac* and valuable books; but I like to think sometimes of the sloping-roofed room, nestling under the gables of one of the most picturesque buildings left in London—quaint old Staple Inn—which was his first home in the great city.

It was in just such a room that one might picture Chatterton—rough-hewn oak beams above, uneven oak flooring below, and in front a "magic casement" "opening upon the foam"—not of "perilous seas"—but of perilous streets, where the black tides of hurrying human creatures never ceases [*sic*] to ebb and flow. Here were his bed, his books, and his papers. Here, too, though shillings were probably scarcer than sovereigns are now, were the flowers, which the extravagant tenant

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of the prophet's chamber was never too poor to deny himself—the flowers which were the inspiration of many of his songs. And here, on a little stove in a corner, he would himself boil the water with which to brew for his visitor the tea or coffee that he would hand round with the ease and grace of a duke dispensing hospitality in his castle.

The score or so of "Fancies" which form the volume are, as was only to be expected, of very varying merit. To the opening idyll, "A Seventh-Story Heaven," reference has already been made. Mr. Le Gallienne's friend and neighbour, Mr. Grant Allen, a delightful naturalist and essayist, whom Society by her neglect has turned into a thrower into her midst of Nihilistic bombs in the guise of novels, could bear witness to the fact that nests are built in stranger places, but surely never did love-birds find such strange quarters for their home as this eyrie at the top of a building, the ground floor of which was a sailors' tavern. But dingy and unlovely as the spot may be, it is made beautiful for us in Mr. Le Gallienne's page as the scene of a love-story so exquisitely told, and so tremulous with tender pathos, that we can only compare it to the work of the gentle Elia.

I cannot say as much for the second Fancy, whimsically entitled "Spring by Parcel Post," for it is surely an error of taste which every admirer of Mr. Le Gallienne's genius must regret. "The big Dutch hyacinths," he writes, "are already shamelessly *enceinte* with their buxom waxen blooms, so fat and fragrant—(one is already delivered of a fine blossom. Well, that is a fine baby, to be sure ! says [*sic*] the other hyacinths with babes no

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less bonny under their own green apron—all waiting for the doctor Sun).”

I wonder if this offends the taste of my readers as much as it offends mine. Mr. Le Gallienne may quote science and physiology against me, but I must confess that in regard to children and flowers I like to keep my very thoughts free from the smirch of sex, though I concede and contend that the smirch is entirely of man's, not of God's, making. But in the passage I have quoted there is a certain coarseness of associations which is painful in connection with the purest and most perfect thing on God's earth—a flower. It was to me as if hot hands were tampering with the petals of a lily. The air seemed to become close as I read, and it was not until I had had a dip—as into cool spring water—into the flower-poems of Burns and Wordsworth that I could go on with my reading of “Prose Fancies.”

Let us turn the page and forget that one of the most delicately-minded of living poets, whose work has hitherto been distinguished for exquisite fancy and excellent taste, should so far have “lost himself” as to have written it.

“Variations upon Whitebait” is a caprice as skilful as Rossetti's famous sonnet, “A Match with the Moon.” It is a very curiosity in similes, and though Mr. Le Gallienne will toss you a fresh and apt simile for every fish upon your fork, though he introduce as many variations as a pianist introduces into “Home, Sweet Home,” yet the essay is not all variation, but has a pretty story running like the thread of a tune throughout.

As for the “Letter to an Unsuccessful Literary Man,” I would suggest that it be lithographed in order that the

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successful author may use it as a form with which to reply to the uninvited correspondent. "A Seaport in the Moon" is an exquisitely beautiful fancy. Mr. Le Gallienne was in the right mood when he wrote it, and when he is in the mood he is a magician. His page glows like a painter's palette with rich colours, and the pictures come and go before us like sunset pageant.

Apart from the delicious Scotch snobbery which jumps at you from pretty well every line of this admirable piece of criticism, and leaving altogether out of the question the downright vulgarity and viciousness, and futility of it, one would like to know what the *Bookman* would say if Mr. Le Gallienne published a similar book to-morrow. At the time when this review was published, Mr. Le Gallienne was in the zenith of his somewhat slender and rarefied popularity. He had captured the heart of Kensington with dainty vacuity. His locks were curled and perfumed; he figured prettily and replied to the toast of letters at the dinners of literary clubs, and was the delicate high priest of a little school of hot pressed poetry and vapid prose. The *Bookman*, of course, was bound to salute him with a chaste appreciation. Since then the world has gone on and left Mr. Le Gallienne

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somewhat behind it, also Mr. Gallienne himself has settled in America and cut off his hair. No more does he publish the booklet that takes the town; no longer does he write of the "Woman's Third Profits" or sigh over the sorrows of tender-hearted schoolgirls, who have provided one with a sonnet. In short, his laurel hangs dustily on a nail at the "Bodley Head," and the raven locks that once bore it have probably by this time gone to help in the making of a mess of honest builders' mortar. So that the *Bookman*, probably, knows him no more.

From the issue of the *Bookman* which contains the review above quoted I take a couple of "news notes."

Mr. J. M. Barrie has finished a book on his mother, which will be entitled "Margaret Ogilvy." It is perhaps the most beautiful and exquisite piece of work he has yet accomplished. It is not a biography in the ordinary sense, but gives aspects and incidents of his mother's life in the style which Mr. Barrie's readers know, keeping close throughout to facts. The volume will be published in this country by Messrs: Hodder and Stoughton, and in America by Messrs. Scribner.

Mr. S. R. Crockett's new novel is to be entitled "Lochinvar." Some eminent critics who have had the

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privilege of reading the portion already written, are enthusiastic in their praise of the work. It is said to be more in the manner of "The Lilac Sun-bonnet" than some of Mr. Crockett's more recently published novels.

So much for Scotch journalism.

CHAPTER V

THRUMS AND DRUMTOCHTY

THE Scot abroad, or at any rate the Scot that one knows and loves in London, is a creature so winning and delectable in character that one proceeds to the study of the Scot at home with anticipations of the most pleasurable kind. The best way to study the Scot at home is, of course, to consult the works of those eminent Scottish writers, Dr. J. M. Barrie and Dr. Ian Maclaren, with occasional reference to Dr. S. R. Crockett. Dr. Barrie and Dr. Maclaren (otherwise Watson) have been at pains to portray for us, with what Dr. Nicoll would no doubt call "loving and exquisite fidelity," the peoples and manners and customs of two Scotch parishes, named respectively Thrums and Drumtochty. Both, one gathers, are the prettiest, most charitable and most godfearing communities to be found upon this globe of sinful continents. Butter

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will not melt, and ginger is not hot in the mouth either at Thrums or Drumtochty. The various books of the chronicles of that earthly paradise Thrums are of formidable number, and I do not profess to have read more than five of them. But I have read enough to know all that I want to know about Thrums. Here, it seems, "twenty years ago, hundreds of weavers lived and died Thoreaus 'ben the hoose without knowing it." Here also lived "the dear old soul who originally induced me to enter the Auld Licht Kirk" and was "as sweet and pure a woman as I ever knew"; also Tammy Meal-maker, who died a bachelor and "had been soured in his youth by disappointment in love of which he spoke but seldom," also Tibbie McQuhattay, "at whom you may smile, but ah! I know what she was at the sick bed side"; also Whinny Webster, who ate peppermints in church, and when detected in the act, "gave one wild scream"; and "straightway became a God-fearing man"; also Hendry Munn, "who was the only man in Thrums who did not quake when the minister looked at him"; also Jess McQumpha, who "sat at the window for twenty years or

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more, looking at the world as through a telescope," and who "was possessed of a sweet untarnished soul"; also Leeby, who "died in the back end of the year I have been speaking of"; and Jamie, who did the homecoming, and gaed somebody "sic a look"; and last, but not least, in childishness, the little Minister and Babbie. For blithering sentiment of the cheapest and most obvious sort, these personages have certainly never been equalled. The whole tone of the Thrums chronicles is as bathotic as it could be made even by a Scotchman, and wherever one turns one finds Dr. Barrie trotting out creatures of a sentiment so slobbery that it would be eschewed even by the scribbling, simpering misses at a seminary. And at Drumtochty, need one say, Dr. Ian Maclaren introduces you to the same set of silly figures. Dr. Maclaren, it is true, puts in the front of his show a cunning Scotch farmer upon whose attempts to cheat his landlord the worthy doctor—parson though he is—would evidently have you smile; but all the rest of his people are rare and radiant pieces of virtue, clothed on with Scotch flesh and sandy hair, and speaking the most uncompromising dialect. To begin with, there

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is Mrs. Elspeth Macfadyen. This lady's claim to greatness is not exactly of a moral kind, being based on the circumstance that she obtained a penny above the market price for her butter. All the farmers' wives of the Scotch romances invariably do this. Even Dr. Crockett's lady of the lilac sunbonnet made the best butter in three parishes. The butterwoman, however, is not intended to count, so that we will let her go by, and proceed duly to note the heavenly dispositions of the rest of the Drumtochtyans. In the first place let us consider Baxter of Burnbrae. Baxter, it seems, "had to make the choice that has been offered to every man since the world began"; in other words he had to choose between losing his farm and changing his kirk.

"Well, Baxter," said the factor in his room next day, 'your offer is all right in the money, and we'll soon settle the building. By the way, I suppose you've thought over that kirk affair, and will give your word to attend the Established Church, eh?'

"Ye may be sure that a've gien a' ye said ma best judgment, and there's naething I wudna dae to be left in Burnbrae, but this thing ye ask a' canna grant.'

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“‘Why not?’ and the factor, lounging in his chair, eyed Burnbrae contemptuously as he stood erect before him. ‘My groom tells me that there is not a grain of difference between all those kirks in Scotland, and that the whole affair is just downright bad temper, and I believe he’s right.’

“‘A’ wudna say onything disrespectfu’, sir, but it’s juist possible that naither you nor your groom ken the history o’ the Free Church; but ye may be sure sensible men and puir fouk dinna mak sic sacrifices for bad temper.’”

Which is exceeding good of Baxter, if a little too bad of Dr. Maclaren.

And our excellent Scotch author makes the worthy Baxter conclude the interview thus: “‘Sir,’ he said with great solemnity, ‘I pray God you may never have such sorrow as you have sent on my house this day.’” I should very much doubt whether there is a Scotchman in all Scotland who would not have lit upon quite a different ending with much fist-shaking and calling down of curses in it.

Well, in the result, Baxter does leave his farm; anyway there is a sale, or as the

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Scotch elegantly term it, a roup. And what happens? Why, the neighbours, good honest bodies, turn up in their thousands and buy in Baxter's farming stock at noble prices, bidding high for everything in order that Baxter may at least have a good roup. Meanwhile the minister of the Kirk of which Baxter scorned to become a member has communicated with the owner of the soil, the Earl of Kilspindie to wit, and to Baxter, Kilspindie writes, "Meet me in Muirtown on Friday." On Friday Baxter meets the Earl. They crack together of Baxter's son the sergeant, who, like all the other Scotch sergeants of fiction, has just won the Victoria Cross. "There will be no speaking to Mrs. Baxter now after this exploit of the sergeant's! When I read it on my way home I was as proud as if he had been my own son. It was a gallant deed, and well deserves the Cross. He'll be getting his commission some day. Lieutenant Baxter! That will stir the Glen, eh?" Then they touch on the matter of the farm, and the tears come to Baxter's eyes. "'A' thocht," he said, 'when yir message cam, that maybe ye hed anither mind than yir factor, and wud

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send me back tae Jean wi' guid news in ma mooth.'

“ ‘Gin it be yir wull that we flit, a'll mak nae mair complaint, an' there's nae bitterness in ma hert. But a' wud like ye tae ken that it 'ill be a sair pairtin'.’

“ ‘For twa hundred years an' mair there's been a Baxter at Burnbrae and a Hay at Kilspindie; ane wes juist a workin' farmer, an' the other a belted earl, but gude freends an' faithfu'; an', ma Lord, Burnbrae wes as dear tae oor fouk as the castle wes tae yours.’

“ ‘A' mind that day the Viscount cam o' age, an' we gaithered tae wush him weel, that a' saw the pictures o' the auld Hays on yir walls, an' thocht hoo mony were the ties that bund ye tae yir hame.’

“ ‘We haena pictures nor gowden treasures, but there's an' auld chair at oor fireside, an' a' saw ma grandfather in it when a' wes a laddie at the schule, an' a' mind him tellin' me that his grandfather hed sat in lang afore. It's no worth muckle, an' it's been often mended, but a'll no like tae see it carried oot frae Burnbrae.’

“ ‘There is a Bible, tae, that hes come doon, father tae son, frae 1690, and ilka Baxter hes

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written his name in it, an' 'farmer at Burnbrae,' but it'll no be dune again, for oor race 'ill be awa frae Burnbrae for ever.'

" 'Be patient wi' me, ma Lord, for it's the lest time we're like tae meet, an' there's anither thing a' want tae say, for it's heavy on ma hert.'

" 'When the factor told me within this verra room that we maun leave, he spoke o' me as if a' hed been a lawless man, an' it cut me mair than ony ither word.'

" 'Ma Lord, it's no the men that fear their God that 'ill brak the laws, an' a' ken nae Baxter that wes ither than a loyal man tae his king and country.'

" 'Ma uncle chairged wi' the Scots Greys at Waterloo, and a' mind him tellin', when a' wes a wee laddie, hoo the Hielanders cried oot, "Scotland for ever," as they passed.'

" 'A' needna tell ye aboot ma brither, for he wes killed by yir side afore Sebastopol, and the letter ye sent tae Burnbrae is keepit in that Bible for a heritage.'

" 'A'll mention naething aither o' ma ain laddie, for ye've said mair than wud be richt for me, but we coont it hard that when oor laddie hes shed his blude like an honest man

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for his Queen, his auld father and mither sud be driven frae the hame their forebears hed for seeven generations.'”

What a family! The sergeant with the V.C., ma uncle who chaired wi' the Scots Greys, and ma brither who wes killed by yir side afore Sebastopol! And, of course, the Bible has to be lugged in. What wonder that at this outburst of Scottish reticence, so to say, Lord Kilspindie “rose to his feet.” In the twinkling of a paragraph or two the shallow, monstrous, black-hearted English factor is coming in for a bit of his Lordship's mind.

“‘You'll reduce the rent to the old figure, and put in the name of John Baxter, and let it be for the longest period we ever give on the estate.’

“‘But, Lord Kilspindie . . . I . . . did you know——’

“‘Do as I command you without another word,’ and his Lordship was fearful to behold.”

Baxter goes home to his farm victor. The news goes down the Glen—or up it as the case may be—and the question arises as to what Baxter is going to do with a farm that has been denuded of live stock and

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implements. And before you can say Jack Robinson every man who has made a purchase at the Burnbrae roup is off to Burnbrae with his purchase, and dumps it down and leaves it there free gratis and for nothing.

Now the whole of this story is simply ridiculous. Even if one swallowed the English factor who had turned an old tenant out of his farm on a question of Kirk ; even if one swallowed the neighbourly bidding up at the roup (not to mention the Victoria Cross and the fighting uncle and brither), Dr. Maclaren cannot make us believe that a Scotchman would part freely and without price with anything that he had once bought. And what a reflection it is upon the dulness of the patient, resigned, and tear-stricken Baxter, that he did not have the presence of mind to address the dear, good Earl of Kilspindie before the roup came off ! But had he done that, of course, Dr. Ian Maclaren could not have made his point as to the incredible generosity of the dwellers about Drumtochty. Which would have been a sair and waeful thing for Scotland.

But the Glen could boast much more

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remarkable men than Baxter. There was Drumsheugh, about as pale a martyr as a martyr-loving people could wish for. Drumsheugh passed in the Glen for a hard man and a miser, "a wratch that 'ill hae the laist penny in a bargain, and no spend a saxpence gin he can keep it." But Drumsheugh was sairly misjudged. He carried his tribble for mair than thirty year, and then unburdened himself of it over the whiskey to his friend Dr. Maclure. "' It wes for anither a' githered, an' as fast as I got the gear a' gied it awa', and Drumsheugh sprang to his feet, his eyes shining; 'it wes for love's sake a' haggled an' schemed, an' stairved an' toiled, till a've been a byword at kirk an' market for nearness; a' did it a', an' bore it a', for ma love, an' for . . . ma love a' wud hae dune ten times mair.'" Naturally. And the lady in the case was named Marget, the bonniest as weel as the noblest o' weemen (they all are). Well, Drumsheugh fell in love with Marget when she was in her bloom. With the true Scottish reticence, however, he omitted to mention his condition to the object of his affection. So that she went off quite properly and married a feckless person named Whinnie,

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who, being feckless, got himself into persistent holes for money, with the result that Whinnie and Marget were continually being threatened with the loss of their happy home. And all the time Drumsheugh, for love's sake, kept on sending them money through his solicitors in the name of Whinnie's rich uncle in America. For thirty years Whinnie continued to be a drain on Drumsheugh's purse, and Drumsheugh spake no word, but went on loving Marget all the time. Being made the recipient of this astonishing confidence Maclure at once posts off with it to Marget, and she, good woman, posts as swiftly off to Drumsheugh. It is a case of ae fond kiss and dinna peety me, Marget; a've hed ma reward, an' a'm mair than content. And we wind up with the biblical reflection that "They which shall be accounted worthy . . . neither marry nor are given in marriage . . . but are as the angels of God in heaven." Which is all very pretty, and all very Scotch, and all made to sell. We may note, however, that Drumsheugh did not stand alone in Drumtochty for his devotion to a lost love. The fetch is too easy and too safe for Dr. Maclaren to allow himself the use of it

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only once. There was a man in Drumtochty who had been counted a cynic and a railer against "merridge," even as Drumsheugh was accounted a miser. In the course of nature this man, Jamie Soutar, came to die. On his death-bed he remarked to a friend, "' Wha sed a' wes against merridge, Doctor Davidson?' and Jamie's face flushed. 'Did ever man or woman hear me speak lichtly o' the mystery o' love? The Glen hes thocht me an auld cankered bachelor, an' a've seen a lass leave her lad's side on the sicht o' me. Little they kent!'" And it transpires that "' forty-five years syne a' met . . . a lassie near Kildrummie, an' a' cam tae love her aince and for ever, an' we hed . . . seeven evenin's thegither. When a' cam the next day she wesna there, an' a' hoddit amang the trees for a ploy; but it wes lang waitin', for she didna come, an' a' gaed hame wi' fear in ma hert. . . .'

"' A' set aff tae her hoose, and ilka turn o' the road a' lookit for Menie. Aince ma hert loupit in ma breist like a birdie in its cage, for a wumman cam along the near road frae Kildrummie, but it wesna Menie.'

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“ ‘ When a’ saw her brither wi’ his face tae Drumtochty, a’ kent, afore he said a word, that he wes seekin’ me, an’ that Menie was deid. Never a tear cam that day tae ma een, an’ he telt me, stannin’ in the middle o’ the road where it begins tae gae doon the hill :’

“ ‘ It wes her throat, an’ the doctor wes feared frae the first day. The nicht she didna come she wes carried (delirious) ; she . . . said “ Jamie, Jamie,” ower an’ ower again, an’ wanted tae rise.’

“ ‘ Aboot daybreak she cam tae hersel’, and knew oor faces. “ A’m deein’,” she said, “ an’ a’ didna keep ma tryst last nicht. It’s ower late noo, an’ a’ll no see him on earth again.’

“ ‘ “ Tell James Soutar that it wesna ma blame a’ failed, an’ gie him ma Bible,” an’ a while aifter she said, “ A’ll keep the tryst wi’ him some day,” an’ . . . that’s a’ ’.

After that any child could tell you what Jamie’s “ last words ” would be.

“ ‘ Menie,’ he cried suddenly, with a new voice, ‘ a’ve keepit oor tryst.’ ”

Heaven help us !

CHAPTER VI

BARBIE

FROM Thrums and Drumtochty the blest to Barbie, which is also in Scotland, may be fairly described as a far cry. In the beautiful communities conceived by Drs. Barrie and Maclaren the milk of human nature flows like a river ; everybody lives, not for his or her foolish self, but for somebody else ; everybody dies for somebody else ; all bachelors are faithful to the sweethearts of their youth "for forty year and more" ; all the women make the best butter in Galloway ; all the girls are pretty and angelic of temperament, and, in short, Thrums and Drumtochty are little bits of heaven dropped on to the map of Scotland. But Barbie is not of heavenly origin in the least. The chronicles of Barbie have been put into print for us by Mr. George Douglas, and he calls his book "The House with the Green Shutters." If he had

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wanted a just title for it, he might very well have called it "The Unspeakable Scot." Nowhere in letters does there exist such an unsophisticated revelation of the minds and habits of a savage and barbarous people as is to be found in this book. It is fiction, of course ; but it is that kind of fiction which has been written from close observation, and it amounts to an authentic document. The Barbie crowd do not waste any time on little acts of kindness ; there is not a man among them who cannot fairly be termed mean. If meanness were the only fault, one might be able to put up with Barbie ; but the inhabitants have graver failings. They are all dour ; they are all bitter-hearted ; they are all greedy ; they are all merciless and full of the wickedest guile. Gourlay, who is the hero of the piece, counts among the most unpleasant persons one has ever met in a book. He has "the black glower in his een," and the Scotch qualities of envy, hatred, overweening pride and tyranny find full expression in him. For years he has trampled the rest of Barbie under his feet, and Barbie hates him. "He had been born and bred in Babrie, and he knew his townsmen—

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oh yes, he knew them. He knew they laughed because he had no gift of the gab, and could never be Provost, or Bailie, or Elder, or even Chairman of the Gasworks! 'Oh, verra well, verra well, let Connal and Brodie and Allardyce have the talk, and manage the town's affairs (he was damned if they should manage his!); he, for his part, preferred the substantial reality.' " So that he treated Barbie with contempt; he had a civil word for nobody, and his manners were as bad as only Scotch manners can be. It was these very manners, however, that helped to bring about his downfall. One fine morning a stranger walked into Barbie; he was a Scotchman, and in his appearance there was "an air of dirty and pretentious well-to-do-ness" which is the Scotch way. Well, this stranger ran up against Mr. Gourlay.

"'It's a fine morning, Mr. Gourlay!'" simpered the stranger. His air was that of a forward tenant who thinks it a great thing to pass remarks on the weather with his laird.

"Gourlay cast a look at the dropping heavens.

"'Is that *your* opinion?'" said he. 'I fail to see 't mysell.' . . .

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“The stranger laughed, a little deprecating giggle. ‘I meant it was fine weather for the fields,’ he explained. . . .

“‘Are *you* a farmer then?’ Gourlay nipped in, with his eye on the white waist-coat.

“‘Oh—oh, Mr. Gourlay! A farmer, no. Hi—hi! I’m not a farmer. I daresay, now, you have no mind of *me*!’

“‘No,’ said Gourlay, regarding him very gravely and steadily with his dark eyes. ‘I cannot say, sir, that I have the pleasure of remembering *you*!’

“‘Man, I’m a son of auld John Wilson of Brigabee!’

“‘Oh, auld Wilson, the mole-catcher!’ said contemptuous Gourlay. ‘What’s this they christened him now? “Toddling Johnnie,” was it noat?’

“Wilson coloured. But he sniggered to gloss over the awkwardness of the remark.”

Here you have the two types of Scotchmen presented in speaking likenesses, namely, the bully, primed with “repressiveness” and “force of character,” and the giggling lick-spittle who does not know how to fight and consequently falls back on livid revenges.

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Later Wilson ventures on a remark about business. Gourlay retorts :

“ ‘Business ! Heavens, did ye hear him talking ? What did Toddling Johnny’s son know about business ? What was the world coming to ? To hear him setting up his face there, and asking the best merchant in the town whether business was brisk ! It was high time to put him in his place, the conceited upstart, shoving himself forward like an equal ! ’

“ For it was the assumption of equality implied by Wilson’s manner that offended Gourlay—as if mole-catcher’s son and monopolist were discussing, on equal terms, matters of interest to them both.

“ ‘Business ! ’ he said gravely. ‘ Well, I’m not well acquainted with your line, but I believe mole-traps are cheap—if ye have any idea of taking up the oald trade ! ’

“ Wilson’s eyes flickered over him, hurt and dubious. His mouth opened—then shut—then he decided to speak after all. ‘ Oh, I was thinking Barbie would be very quiet,’ said he, ‘ compared wi’ places where they have the railway ! I was thinking it would need stirring up a bit.’

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““Oh, ye was thinking that, was ye?”
birred Gourlay, with a stupid man’s repetition
of his jibe. ‘Well, I believe there’s a grand
opening in the moleskin line, so *there’s* a chance
for ye! My quarrymen wear out their breeks
in no time!’

“Wilson’s face, which had swelled with red
shame, went a dead white. ‘Good morning!’
he said, and started rapidly away with a vicious
dig of his stick upon the wet road.

““Goo-ood mor-r-ning, serr!’ Gourlay
birred after him; ‘Goo-ood mor-r-ning,
serr!’ He felt he had been bright this
morning. He had put the branks on
Wilson!”

In spite of his smallness and rattiness, Wilson
is not without his Scotch feelings, so that he
goes away and schemes. And the end of his
scheming is that he becomes a trade rival of
Gourlay’s in Barbie. Perhaps man never had
a more unscrupulous or fiendishly cunning
trade rival. The end of it is that Gourlay
is brought to the verge of bankruptcy and
dies miserably, while Wilson is left to go on
his wicked way rejoicing. This fight between
two ugly natures is watched by the population
of Barbie with great zest; the combatants are

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continually egged on by the sarcastic comments of the neebors, who practically hate them ooth as they hate one another. And the result is a picture which rivals in hideousness anything of the kind which has hitherto been attempted. From the "House with the Green Shutters" one is able to gather what life in a Scotch township really means. One understands, too, how it comes to pass that the Scotchmen one meets in London are so wanting in the qualities which render communication between men possible and tolerable. Persons who have spent their youth in such a township as Barbie must of necessity have altogether wrong views about life and the reason for it. Their hand is against every man; to get and to keep by fair means or foul is their sole ambition, and of the finer feelings which keep existence sweet they know absolutely nothing. It is a squalid picture, and not in the least flattering to Scotland. Yet the Scotch critics have not ventured to deny its authenticity; indeed, they admit that there is a great deal in it. Mr. Douglas, the author of "The House with the Green Shutters," is himself a Scotchman, and to malign his country is about the last thing you

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may expect from a Scotch writer; his tendency usually is the other way. To put Thrums, Drumtochty and Barbie into one vessel, as it were, to mix them and make a blend of them is probably to get at the truth about the Scot as he lives and moves in his native element. And when one has done this, one can only apprehend that the average Scotchman is a compound of two things, to wit, the knave and the fool.

CHAPTER VII

THE BARD

IN England "the Bard" stands for Shakespeare; in Scotland, of course, when you say "the Bard" you mean Robert Burns. Nothing that Scotland ever possessed has abided so firmly in the heart of the Scotchman as "the Bard"—Robert Burns, that is to say. An Englishman can forget that Shakespeare ever existed. A Scotsman never forgets that Robert Burns was a Scotchman. Morn, noon, and night he will talk to you of Burns if you give him half a chance. Till Dr. J. M. Barrie and Dr. Crockett came in, the Scotchman had no other book but a dog's-eared Burns, from which work he gathered his views of life, including justification for his vices. Round the person and poetry of Burns numberless well-meaning people have found it worth their while to write a literature. There was a time when "the Bard"

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received praise only from mere poets. Keats wrote sonnets about him; Montgomery offered him the usual graceful tribute; Wordsworth mentioned him cheek by jowl with Chatterton; and even Eliza Cook had her metrical say about him. Then the prose men came along—Carlyle, Stevenson, Henley. Carlyle took the man Burns and set him up for a tremendous genius, with “a head of gold.” Stevenson, whom for this among other reasons the Scotch do not love, ventured to suggest that Mr. Burns had “feet of clay.” Mr. Henley followed and accentuated the feet of clay, greatly to the annoyance of all Scotland. It ill becomes the present writer to attempt to do what has already been done so well, therefore he will say nothing about either heads of gold or feet of clay. But Robert Burns is everybody’s property, and one may crave leave even at this late day to say about him the thing that one believes. The whole truth about Burns may be summed up in half a dozen words. He was a poet, he was a loose liver, and he was a ploughman. And if one looks through his writings, one is forced to the conclusion that he owes his fame to the circumstances that he was a loose liver

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and a ploughman rather than to the circumstance that he was a poet. To take up the works of Burns in one volume and to glance through them haphazard, assaying here a page and there a page, is to come to a knowledge of him that is rather staggering. As I write, I have before me the Globe Edition of the Complete Works of Robert Burns, edited by Alexander Smith. It is a portly volume, and one is aware that it contains matter which is really of excellent quality considered as poetry. Yet to test it by chance openings is to perceive that in the main Burns, as poet, has been vastly overrated. On page 211, for example, which is about the middle of the book, I find five pieces, not one of which is good enough to grace a common valentine. We lead off with "Peggy's Charms":—

My Peggy's face, my Peggy's form,
The frost of hermit age might warm;
My Peggy's worth, my Peggy's mind,
Might charm the first of human kind.
I love my Peggy's angel air,
Her face so truly, heavenly fair,
Her native grace so void of art;
But I adore my Peggy's heart."

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Not to put too fine a point upon it, this is arrant drivel, villainously rhymed. Then comes "Up in the Morning Early" :—

Up in the morning's no for me,
Up in the morning early;
When a' the hills are cover'd wi' snaw,
I'm sure it's winter fairly.

Cauld blaws the wind frae east to west,
The drift is driving sairly;
Sae loud and shrill's I hear the blast,
I'm sure it's winter fairly.

The birds sit chittering in the thorn,
A' day they fare but sparely;
And lang's the night frae e'en to morn,
I'm sure it's winter fairly.

"Up in the Morning Early," one surmises, belongs to "that great body of treasurable songs with which Burns has dowered his countrymen." On the face of it, to find sorrier stuff one would have to visit an English music-hall. There is not a glimmer of poetry in any one of the twelve lines, and the composition as a whole might have been written by a precocious infant in a Glasgow Board School. After this precious production we are regaled with

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the appended touching piece of sentimentalism :—

Tho' cruel fate should bid us part,
As far's the pole and line ;
Her dear idea round my heart
Should tenderly entwine.

Tho' mountains frown and deserts howl
And oceans roar between ;
Yet, dearer than my deathless soul
I still would love my Jean.

The spectacle of a gentleman having somebody's "dear idea" entwined, whether tenderly or otherwise, round his heart would surely set a cat laughing. And the loving of Jean, though mountains frown and deserts howl and oceans roar between, is clearly the merest fustian. Follows "I Dreamed I lay Where Flowers were Springing"—a stupid sort of dream to say the least of it. The flowers, it seems, were springing "gaily in the sunny beam," and the poet, it seems, not only "dreamed that he lay among them," but that he was "list'ning to the wild birds singing by a falling crystal stream," which is a very common and hackneyed

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thing for a tenth-rate poet to do. But
mark :—

Straight the sky grew black and daring;
Thro' the woods the whirlwinds rave;
Trees with aged arms were warring,
O'er the swelling, drumlie wave.
Such was my life's deceitful morning,
Such the pleasures I enjoy'd;
But lang ere noon, loud tempests storming
A' my flowery bliss destroy'd.
Tho' fickle fortune has deceived me,
She promised fair, and performed but ill;
Of monie a joy and hope bereav'd me,
I bear a heart shall support me still.

(The moral here is as lame as the metre, and
in the open market to-day the "poem" is
not worth fourpence. We finish the page
with "Bonie Ann" :—

Ye gallants bright, I red you right,
Beware of bonie Ann:
Her comely face sae fu' o' grace,
Your heart she will trepan.
Her een sae bright, like stars by night,
Her skin is like the swan ;
Sae jimpy lac'd her genty waist,
That sweetly ye might span.
Youth, grace, and love, attendant move,
And pleasure leads the van;
In a' their charms, and conquering arms,
They wait on bonie Ann.

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The captive bands may chain the hands,
But love enslaves the man:
Ye gallants braw, I red you a'
Beware of bonie Ann.

One notes that three out of these five lucubrations have to do with love, and one wonders how a man who went about with such ill-considered love-verses in his pocket ever got a woman to look at him.

To take our life in our hands once more, we open on page 153. Here we have a choice selection of short pieces, and feeble, which we reproduce as they stand :—

TO JOHN M'MURDO, Esq.

O, could I give thee India's wealth,
As I this trifle send !
Because thy joy in both would be
To share them with a friend.
But golden sands did never grace
The Heliconean stream;
Then take what gold could never buy—
An honest Bard's esteem.

ON THE DEATH OF A LAP-DOG,
NAMED ECHO.

In wood and wild, ye warbling throng,
Your heavy loss deplore;
Now half-extinct your powers of song
Sweet Echo is no more.

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Ye jarring, screeching things around,
Scream your discordant joys;
Now half your din of tuneless sound
With Echo silent lies.

LINES WRITTEN AT LOUDEN MANSE,

The night was still, and o'er the hill
The moon shone on the castle wa';
The mavis sang, while dew-drops hang
Around her on the castle wa'.

Sae merrily they danced the ring,
Frae eenin' till the cock did crow;
And the o'erword o' the spring,
Was Irvine's bairns are bonie a'.

These three effusions, dear reader, are really and truly the work of Burns—or, if you prefer it, of Burrrrrrns. In despair one hunts up something for which the man is noted. “Scots Wha Hae,” one thinks, will serve. It has been described as noble, and marvellous, and inspiring, and heaven knows what besides. Here it is:—

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled
Scots, whom Bruce has often led;
Welcome to your gory bed
Or to victorie!

Now's the day, and now's the hour
See the front o' battle lour,
See approach proud Edward's power—
Chains and slaverie!

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Wha will be a traitor knave ?
Wha can fill a coward's grave ?
Wha sae base as be a slave ?—
Let him turn and flee !

Wha for Scotland's king and law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw
Freeman stand or freeman fa',
Let him follow me !

By Oppression's woes and pains
By your sons in servile chains,
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be free.

Lay the proud usurpers low !
Tyrants fall in every foe
Liberty's in every blow,
Let us do or dee !

As a matter of fact "Scots Wha Hae" is one of those poems which most people have heard about and few people have read. For this reason I print it in extenso and commend it to the consideration of the critical. Is it really noble, or marvellous, or inspiring? Would it pass muster as a new performance? Is it a whit the better, or sounder, or more convincing than "God Save the King," which everybody cheerfully admits is not poetry? I, for one, hae me doots.

Like Artemus Ward and writers of "Wot-

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the-Orfis-Boy-Finks" order, Burns owes much of his seeming inspiration and humour to an uncouth orthography. Put into decent English many of his most vaunted lays amount to nothing at all. Indeed, practically the whole of the poetry (as distinguished from the doggerel) which came from his pen could be compressed into a book of fifty pages. I do not say that much of the matter one would have to include in those fifty pages is not matter of an exceptional and extraordinary quality. Mr. Henley has told us that in the vernacular Burns, at his best, touches the highest level ; and with this pronouncement nobody who knows the difference between good writing and bad will quarrel. But I do assert that the best of Burns is not sufficient, either in quality or quantity, to justify the absurd fame which has been bestowed upon him by his countrymen. James I., whom the average Scotchman barely knows by name, was, taking him all in all, quite as good a poet as Burns. So was Dunbar ;¹ so was Drummond of Hawthornden ; and, I had almost added, so were

¹In the opinion of Scott, Dunbar was "a poet unrivalled by any that Scotland has ever produced."

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Stevenson and Robert Buchanan. The question naturally arises, how comes it to pass that Burns who, excepting by a fluke, was always more or less of a middling poet, has come to rank as the finest thing in letters that Scotland can boast? The answer to that question is simple enough. In spite of "The Cotter's Saturday Night," and two or three other pieces which are the delight and mainstay of the Scotch kirk-goer, Burns was undoubtedly the poet of licence and alcoholism. Also he was a ploughman.

Should humble state our mirth provoke!
What folly to misca' that,
The sapling grows a stately oak
Wi' spreading shade and a' that.
For a' that and a' that,
His toils and cares and a' that,
We've seen a ploughman crowned at last
The king o' men for a' that.

After illicit love and flaring drunkenness, nothing appeals so much to Scotch sentiment as having been born in the gutter. In this matter of admiration for people who attain notoriety from a basis of humble origins I do not know that the Scotch stand entirely alone. At the present moment, much fuss is being

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made in the newspapers over a policeman who has seen fit to devote himself to the painting of pictures, and who has succeeded in getting one of his canvases hung at Burlington House ; and if I remember rightly, there used to be a postman poet of whom sundry highly placed critics wrote sundry kindly, encouraging and gratuitous things. Also the English press is apt to tell us that the great Lord So-and-So was originally a bootblack, and that the great Mr. So-and-So went to Canada with seven shillings in his pocket. In fact, the prodigy who began on nothing, and ultimately became rich or famous, is a figure which British humanity dearly loves. And Burns, as we have seen, was a ploughman. What special excellence may lie in being a ploughman nobody but a Scotchman may perceive. In England our booms on humble talent are of short duration. Clare and Ebenezer Elliott both had their little day, and ceased to be. But the Scotch ploughman persists, and the fact that he was a ploughman helps him to persist, and is a great source of pride to the Scotch. The real reason, however, why Burns became, and continues to be, a sort of patron saint to the peoples North of the

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Tweed is, as I have already suggested, that he was a libidinous writer, and a condoner of popular vices. Turn where you will in his precious works, you will find that drunkenness and impropriety are matters for which he has unqualified sympathy. Whiskey and women are the subjects which furnish forth the majority of his flights. He writes of both with a freedom which would not nowadays be tolerated, and the moral effect of what he has to say cannot be regarded as otherwise than detrimental. I have before pointed out that one of Mr. Henley's critics has asserted that the standard of morality in the rural districts of Scotland is much lower to-day than it was in Burns's time. The inference is obvious. Burns, every Scotchman tells you, and tells you truly, has played no small part in moulding the sentiments and tendencies of the Scotch people as we know them. It was he who gave them their first notion of bump-tious independence; it was he who taught them that "a man's a man for a' that," which on the whole is a monstrous fallacy; it was he who averred that whiskey and freedom gang together; and it was he who gave the countenance of song to shameful and

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squalid sexuality. In a great number of Burns's love songs the suggestion is of the lowest. One could take a selection of these songs, print them in a little book, have them sold in the streets of London at a penny, and be prosecuted at Bow Street for one's trouble. The man's mind was not clean; he made the Muse an instrument for the promulgation of skulduddery (I will not vouch for the orthography, but every Scotchman knows what I mean); he degraded and prostituted his intellect, and earned thereby the love and worship of a people whose distinguishing trait is fundamental lewdness.

It is hard to get the truth about Burns out of the Scotch writers; yet the more honest among them have always had a sneaking suspicion that he was an overrated poet. Somehow, in perusing their estimates, one has a feeling that Burns is not so much being expounded as defended. Stevenson, who tried to be just, has come nearer the mark about him than any writer of our own time; but even Stevenson lacked the courage to go the whole hog. Of Burns, the writer, he could be brought to say nothing more trenchant than that he "had a tendency to borrow

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a hint," and that he was "indebted in a very uncommon degree to Ramsay and Fergusson." And he adds, by way of defence, that "when we remember Burns's obligation to his predecessors, we must never forget his immense advances on them." Perhaps not.

As to Burns, the man, it is safe to say that a more profligate person has never figured on the slopes of Parnassus. In love he was as bestial as he was false. He canted and prated and pretended, but his relations with women will not bear examination. His life as a whole would have discredited a dustman, much less a poet. He whined about his "misfortunes," and advertised them and made much out of them ; but nobody in his senses can sympathise with him. That he should be held up for a model by Scottish writers and Scottish preachers is a crying scandal. The king o' men cackle is the sheerest impertinence. Burns never was the king o' men. He was never even a decent living man. He never had a rag of conduct wherewithal to cover himself. He was simply a superincontinent yokel with a gift for metricism. That his memory should stand for so much in Scotland constitutes the very

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gravest reflection upon the Scottish character and the Scottish point of view.¹

NOTE.

The Scots opinion of Burns may perhaps be best illustrated by quoting a Burns-Night oration. The appended speech is a moderate sample of what Burns's admirers are in the habit of saying about him. I am indebted to Dr. Ross's volume "Henley on Burns" for the excerpt: "Burns suffered more from remorse and genuine penitence than probably any man who ever lived. Not only so, but the very bitterness of his cry, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' has been seized upon by his calumniators, and used as a weapon to stab him

¹ In the Embankment Gardens, London, there is a statue of Burns, on the pedestal of which appears the appended inscription:

"The Poetic Genius of my country found me at the plough and threw her inspiring mantle over me. She bade me sing the loves, the joys, the rural scenes, and rural pleasures of my native soil in my native tongue. I tuned my wild, artless notes as she inspired."

Now any poet who can babble about his "wild, artless notes" is beyond praying for. I think this particular monument ought to be taken down.

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behind his back. But leave Burns to his Maker, and keeping in view the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, it is just possible, nay probable, that those who talk so glibly about the sins of Burns may find at the great day of reckoning that the penitent poet and the penitent publican are justified rather than they. There are certain classes of people who must always look upon Burns with doubt and suspicion. Many decent, worthy people, naturally and properly disliking the clay, miss the gold. Many worthy teetotalers dislike the poet on account of his drinking songs ; but even they are beginning to forgive him for writing 'Willie brewed a peck of maut,' and such like. The Pharisee and the hypocrite, throughout their generations, will always dislike him, not because of his sins, but on account of his satires :

Oh ye wha are sae guid yersel,
Sae pious and sae holy,
You've nought to do but mark an' tell
Yer neebour's fauts and folly ;
Whose life is like a weel-gaun mill
Supplied in store o' water :
The heapit klappers ebbin' still,
An' still the clap plays clatter.

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“The ‘gigman’ and the clothes-horse can never take to Burns. He is not sufficiently genteel for silly ladyism and spurious nobility:

What though on hamely fare we dine,
Wear hodden gray, an’ a’ that,
Gie fules their silk, an’ knaves their wine,
A man’s a man for a’ that.

“The ultra-Calvinist can never take to Burns, for Burns broke the back of ‘the auld licht.’ The genuine Calvinist of the poet’s time showed only the dark side of the shield. Burns showed the bright:

Where human weakness has come short,
Or frailty stepp’d aside,
Do thou, All Good, for such thou art,
In shades of darkness hide.

Where with intention I have err’d,
No other plea I have,
But “Thou art good, and goodness still
Delighteth to forgive.”

“The golden calf is as much worshipped in England to-day as it was in the desert 4000 years ago:

If happiness have not her seat
And centre in the breast,
We may be wise and rich and great,
But never can be blest.

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“Burns will never be praised by those who dote upon forms, vestments, and such like priestly trumpery, for he wrote ‘The Cotter’s Saturday Night’:

Compared with this, how poor religion’s pride
In all the pomp of method and of art,
When men display to congregations wide
Religion’s every grace except the heart.
The Power incensed the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole ;
But, haply in some cottage, far apart,
Will hear, well pleased, the language of the soul,
And in his book of life the inmate poor enrol.

“A child of the common people himself,
Burns never deserted his class. He taught
the poor man that:

The rank is but the guinea stamp,
The man’s the gowd for a’ that.

“He ennobled honest labour:

The honest man, though e’er sae *puir*,
Is king o’ men for a’ that.

“He was the high priest of humanity:

Man’s inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn.

Affliction’s sons are brothers in distress ;
A brother to relieve, how exquisite the bliss.

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It's coming yet for a' that,
That man to man the world o'er
Shall brithers be, an' a' that

“Ay, Burns is like a great mountain, based on earth, towering towards heaven—of a mixed character, containing gold, silver, brass, iron, and clay, and from which every man, according to his taste, can become enriched by the gold and the silver, or get mired in the clay. All that is best in Burns (and that is nearly the whole) will remain a precious possession with the Anglo-Saxon race in the ages yet to come. The stars and stripes of our cousins across the sea, the great American people, will ere long float side by side with the grand old flag that for a thousand years has braved the battle and the breeze. And the Bible and Burns will lie side by side in the homes of the reunited Anglo-Saxon race the freest, bravest, and most liberty-loving people the world ever saw or shall see.”

It will be noted that herein Burns is made out to be an honest fellow who went wrong only at times. He was the high priest of humanity; he ennobled honest labour; also the mire in him is a small detail, his best being nearly the whole of him; also that

THE BARD

in the glorious days to come, when the Anglo-Saxon races shall have fused into one great people, Burns and the Bible are to be our great literary and ethical standby.

As indicating the kind of abuse that the Scot is in the habit of levelling at persons who disagree with him as to Burns I print a set of verses aimed at Mr. Henley by one of Dr. Ross's scarifiers:

Ere disappointment, cauld neglect, and spleen
Had soured my bluid an' jaundiced baith my een,
My saul aspired, upo' the wings o' rhyme,
To mount unscaithed to airy heichts sublime ;
An', like the lark, to drap, in music rare,
Braw sangs to cheer folks when their hearts were sair.
I struggled lang, but fand it a' nae use,
Nocht paid, I saw, save arrogant abuse.

"Blind fule," I cried, "to fling your pearls to swine.
Awa' wi' dreams o' laurell'd days divine!
Bid Fame guid-bye, and a' sic feckless trash,—
Henceforth write naething but what brings ye cash."

I glower'd about for something worth my while—
Some *thing* held dear—on whilk to "spew" my bile,
An' fixt my e'e upo' a certain bard,
Syne bocht a Jamieson, an' studied hard ;
An' wha that hears me the vernacular speak
Wad think I learn'd the hale o't in a week.

THE UNSPEAKABLE SCOT

Weel up in Scotch, I set mysel' to wark
To strip the *Poet* to his very sark,
An' gie the warld a pictur' o' the *Man*
An' a' his *Doin's*—on the cut-throat plan.
My book, gat up regairdless o' expense,
Was hailed *the* book by ilka man o' sense ;
Some "half-read" gowks ayont the Tweed micht sneer,
An' name mysel' in words no' fit to hear ;
I only leuch. The man himsel' was deid—
He couldna reach me, sae I didna heed.

The author of this effusion must have known perfectly well that Mr. Henley would have written just as he has written, if Burns had been alive. The suggestion that "he couldna reach me, and I didna heed," is purely gratuitous and foolish.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SCOT AS CRITIC

TAKING him all in all, the Scotch critic is a good deal of an anomaly. To criticise is scarcely the Scotchman's forte, his chiefest gifts lying rather in the direction of admiration, particularly of admiration for whatever is Scotch. But we have amongst us (and I do not wish him other than a long and prosperous career) one Scotch critic—or, at any rate, a Scotchman who passes for a critic. I refer, need it be said, to Dr. William Archer. Dr. Archer is the dramatic critic of the *World* newspaper. Whenever I have looked into the *World* newspaper, I have found a page or so of Dr. Archer. His work appears to be done to the satisfaction of his employers, and I have no fault to find with it, excepting that I cannot bring myself to feel enthusiastic about it. To tackle Dr. Archer flying, as it were, let us peep at his contribu-

THE UNSPEAKABLE SCOT

tion to the current number of his journal. Herein he deals with a play by Miss Netta Syrett, and preaches a little sermon to theatrical managers.

“I admit, then,” he says, “that from the actor-manager’s point of view—his quite legitimate and inevitable point of view under our accursed system—the play has drawbacks that might well stand in the way of its production. But if any manager read it and did not recognise that he was face to face with an exceptional talent, and one of which, by judicious encouragement, much might be made, then I say that he showed a deplorable lack of discernment. This—hypothetic—manager ought to have sent for the authoress and said, ‘Miss Syrett, I cannot, for such and such reasons, produce this play. But there are scenes in it which show me that you have the making of a playwright in you. Have you other ideas? Yes, of course you have. Well, go home and draw me out the scenario of a play that you think would suit me, and then come and let us talk it over. Remember, I promise nothing, except my very best attention to anything you may bring me. But that you shall have; and if you are not

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above taking hints from my experience, you may be able to avoid certain trifling errors and crudities into which you have fallen in this piece. Don't be in a hurry. You ladies, if I may say so, are apt to imagine that, when once you have got an idea, a play can be improvised like a newspaper article or a six-shilling novel. This is a mistake. A play, to have any solid value, must be carefully and laboriously built up. You will make false steps, find yourself in blind alleys, and have to try back and start afresh many and many a time. You will have days of discouragement, when your characters refuse point-blank to do what you want them to. Probably you will find in the end that you have given as much thought and labour to every line of your play as you would to a whole page of a novel. But if you are prepared to take your art seriously, you may rely upon my taking seriously whatever you may offer me. And be assured of this, that if you fail to do something really worth while, my disappointment will be scarcely less than your own.' In some such words, as it seems to me, should the sagacious manager have addressed the authoress of 'The Finding of Nancy.' "