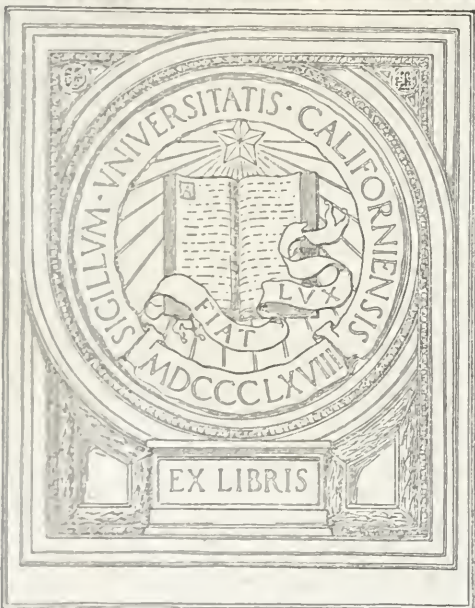





Hood in
Scotland

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TENEMENT AT FOOT OF OVERGATE

Where Hood resided during his first visit to Dundee.

The "Buckie Stair" is shewn in the centre of
the View.

HOOD IN SCOTLAND:

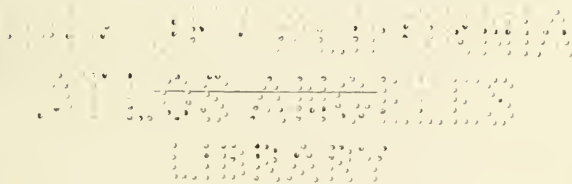
REMINISCENCES
OF
THOMAS HOOD,
Poet and Humorist.

INCLUDING

SKETCH OF HIS ANTECEDENTS,
ORIGINAL LETTERS AND POEM HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED,
AND LETTERS, &c., BY HIS SON AND DAUGHTER.

COLLECTED AND ARRANGED BY ALEX. ELLIOT.

Introductory Notice by Charles C. Maxwell,



DUNDEE:
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PREFATORY NOTE.

Dawson's JUN 30 1942 English Dept.

IN respectfully laying the following pages before the public, I venture to express the hope that their imperfections will be regarded with a kindly eye. Throughout, I have been actuated by the thought that many of my fellow-townsmen might feel interested in the fact that the greatest humorist of modern times had resided for a considerable period in "Bonnie Dundee," and would be gratified to know that the shaping of a career so distinguished as HOOD'S was in a great measure due to the influence of the friendships and associations he there formed.



The biographers of the Poet pass lightly over his Scottish connection, and in the "Memorials" collated by his son and daughter the fact is summarized in a few lines. HOOD is stated to have lived for a time with his relatives in Dundee, but who they were, or in what particular part of the town they resided, is not mentioned. These facts were worthy, I thought, of consideration and research. To their elucidation I have therefore devoted considerable time and labour, and, if I have been able to throw some light upon an interesting period of the Poet's life, I will feel amply rewarded.

I take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to those parties who have kindly supplied me with information, and who have done everything in their power to facilitate my inquiries. I am particularly indebted to Mr CHARLES C. MAXWELL for the beautiful and fitting tribute to the memory of the great poet and humorist prefixed to the volume; and to Mr A. H. MILLAR, F.S.A., for his researches on my behalf in Edinburgh and London.

I have also to accord my thanks to Miss ELIZABETH HOOD, Dundee, for supplying me with a number of holograph letters, written by the Poet to his friends in Tayport; to Mr DAVID ROLLO of Bloomfield, Lochee, and his brothers SYLVESTER, GEORGE, and NORMAN, representatives of the late Mr GEORGE HAIR ROLLO of Hairfield, Lochee, for allowing me to have access to the correspondence which took place between him and HOOD, as well as for permission to publish "The Bandit"; to Mr FINLAY MILN of Hoylake, Cheshire, for the letter relating to the "Dundee Guide"; and, in conclusion, I beg to acknowledge the great kindness I have received from Mr A. C. LAMB, Mr JAMES ALEXANDER, Dundee, Mr PEARSON, Registrar, Errol, and others.

A. E.

LOCHEE, *December* 1885.



INTRODUCTION.

THERE are some authors who enjoy while they yet live the full measure of their fame, which after generations may lessen or even extinguish ; there are others who are never truly appreciated till they are gone, and whose reputation rises with the lapse of time. THOMAS HOOD, who “sang the Song of the Shirt,” is one of these, for year by year his name grows in favour, and his works in popularity. Nor is this to be wondered at, since his qualities as a Poet and Humorist were so high, his motives so worthy, his sympathies so true and keen ; while his command over the springs both of tears and laughter was complete and irresistible. The most remarkable feature in his writings, as a whole, is their unique combination of wit and tenderness, of gaiety and wisdom, of puns and pathos. And herein they are a faithful reflex of his life, which, although one long struggle with ill health and adverse fortune, was yet full of that “sweetness and light” which Philosophy and Religion alike commend. To give some idea of the physical weakness and pain which it was his lot to bear, I quote from a letter by his physician to his wife, five years before he died :—“Your

husband," he writes, "is suffering from organic disease of the heart, and hemorrhage from the lungs, or spitting of blood, occurring very frequently. There is also disorder of the liver and stomach. These diseases have been greatly aggravated of late years by the necessity, which I understand has existed, that he should at all times continue his literary labours. You have seen him break down under the struggle, and reduced to the brink of the grave by repeated attacks of bleeding from the lungs, attended by palpitation of the heart." Reflecting on the gravity of these words, need we wonder that THOMAS HOOD died at the comparatively early age of forty-seven? We may wonder rather that he lived even so long; still more, that he achieved so much sterling work of brain and hand; and, most of all, that he preserved amid his many troubles such strong sympathies,—such kindly cheerfulness. A hero, we may well call him;—a hero, with pale cheek and feeble frame, yet of vigorous mind, high thoughts, and a brave heart withal.

Concerning such a man, surely anything fresh and authentic will not be unwelcome, and I therefore heartily commend this volume to the favourable attention of the reader. It contains a minute account of HOOD'S residence in Scotland at an early and interesting period of his life; together with a number of characteristic Letters; and an original Poem from his pen hitherto known to but a few—all published here for the first time. For the privilege thus offered of perusing these we are indebted to the

perseverance of Mr ALEXANDER ELLIOT. Inspired solely by ardent admiration for a true genius, Mr ELLIOT, with patience and industry, has traced the footsteps of THOMAS HOOD through those dim and distant years, and in the following pages he offers the result of his investigations. It is, I think, a creditable record of facts worthy of note, and documents worthy of study; and I most willingly do what I can to help and to advocate a real labour of love by writing these introductory lines.

C. C. MAXWELL.

DUNDEE, *December* 1885.



HOOD IN SCOTLAND.



CHAPTER I.

Introductory—The Hood Family ; their connection with Errol, in Carse of Gowrie—Thomas Hood the elder ; his Birth, Education, and Apprenticeship as a Bookseller in Dundee—His subsequent residence in London—His Career as a Publisher—and Death—Sketches of the Poet's Uncles, Robert and George, and of his Aunt Jane—Anecdote of George—Curious Story of a Ring.

IN the domain of English literature there are few poets better known, more generally read, or, from the brightness of his wit, the geniality of his never-flagging humour, and the breadth of his sympathies, more justly admired than Thomas Hood. In him are centred all the elements of the genuine Englishman ; and if he satirized weaknesses and foibles, he did so in a broad, hearty English way. If he hit hard upon characteristic follies and infirmities, he was actuated by unflinching good nature. He loved his countrymen too well to insult them. He might occasionally, in holding the mirror up to Nature, turn the glass upside down ; but in the end he was sure to put it right again. Hood revelled in fun and humour. He could not divest himself of their entanglements, and the rich stream came

bubbling up, free and unrestrained, from an inexhaustible well of drollery.

As a punster, Hood was the greatest of his own or of any other period, and it is impossible to divest our language of the happy quips and cranks into which he often contorted it. The brilliancy of his merry fancy will never grow dim, nor the glad thoughts which turned melancholy into laughter become stale. He was a literary gem of many facets. In one page he is sharp and sparkling, and scintillates with the brilliance of Sterne. Turn over the leaf, and he changes into the piquancy of Fielding and Smollett, tinted, perhaps, with a Hogarthian hue. Hood was a devoted student and admirer of the satirists of the Queen Anne era, and his writings, to some extent, are a reflex of theirs, set off with the broad fanciful comicality of a gifted, intellectual Grimaldi—grotesquely funny, but intensely real. His true sphere was that of a humorist, surpassing, in some aspects, even that of Lamb, Dickens, or Thackeray. Of him Walter Savage Landor wrote:—

“Jealous, I own it, I was once,—
 That wickedness I here renounce.
 I tried at wit . . . it would not do;
 At tenderness . . . that failed me too—
 Before me on each path there stood
 The witty and the tender Hood!”

Hood was an accomplished versifier, and he instinctively adopted rhyme as the medium most suitable for the felicitous expression of his thoughts. His best and

wittiest effusions are therefore couched in verse. Wit, with fun and banter as attending satellites, bursts from every page and ripples in every line. But his genius was twofold, and the great jester has given abundant evidence that he could step from the arena of liveliest satire to dally with the Muse in sentimental vein. The "Plea of the Midsummer Fairies" alone would have brought him into prominence as a poet; and those remarkable productions, "The Bridge of Sighs," "The Dream of Eugene Aram," and "The Song of the Shirt," have made his name a household word wherever the English language is spoken.

The poet, by inheritance, was a man of intellect. He belonged to a family whose mental capacities were above the average. He, it is true, was pre-eminently gifted, but it is known that his father, his uncle Robert, and his brother James, were endowed with abilities of a very high order.

Rossetti, one of Hood's biographers, in an able critical notice of the poet's life and works, parodies a verse from "The Bridge of Sighs," and asks—

"Who was his father?
Who was his mother?
Had he a sister?
Had he a brother?"

The latter three questions are fully answered in "The Memorials," an interesting work compiled by Frances Freeling Hood, and Tom Hood, junior, the son and daughter of the poet. But comparatively little reference

is made to their paternal grandsire, who is described as belonging to Scotland. The place of his birth is not given, and the writers seem to have been ignorant of or indifferent about his connection with the "land of brown heath and shaggy wood." Regarding the poet himself, "The Memorials" contain much information. They describe his career from the time he became associated with the London Magazine in 1821, and give particulars of his residence in Coblenz, and subsequently in Ostend. They also relate the circumstance of his return to London, and several of the letters are descriptive of his second visit to Scotland in 1843. And, finally, they tell the sad story of his prolonged illness, ending in his death on 3d May 1845. The references to his youth, the occupations he followed, and his first visit to the north, are, however, vague and unsatisfactory; and it is with the view of throwing some new light upon these phases of his life that the following details have been collected.

Owing to lapse of time, the work of tracing the antecedents of the poet has been accompanied with much difficulty. It has, however, been ascertained that the family belonged to the village of Errol, a pretty place, situated on the north bank of the Tay, and lying about midway between Perth and Dundee. The name of Hood was common in the district, and people of that designation resided for generations in the adjoining villages of Inchtute, Abernyte, Baledgarno, and Invergowrie. The members of the branch to which Thomas Hood the elder belonged were engaged in agricultural pursuits. The father and mother are said to have been hardworking

people, who, upon what would now be considered a pittance, brought up their family in a manner which enabled most of them to rise to good worldly positions. Of the father all that can be learned is, that he was an honest, painstaking man. The mother, on the other hand, is described as being a woman of distinctive traits of character, in which, it is said, the humorous was conspicuously prominent. She lived to a ripe old age. Their family consisted of five sons and one daughter. These were Thomas, the poet's father, Robert, Peter, James, George, and Jean. Their youth was spent in Errol, and they received a homely education at the village school. Thomas and Robert were studious young men; Peter has sunk into oblivion; James became a shopkeeper; and George, who was the youngest, was what the Scotch people call "halliket." Whilst his brothers were busy with their books he was roystering in the woods or taken up with play. The sister, Jean, who was afterwards married to Captain Keay, a well-known Dundee skipper, filled an honourable position for a number of years in the family of Mr Kinnear of Lochton, to whom the Hoods were remotely related.

Thomas, on leaving school, was sent to Dundee, where he was bound apprentice to a bookseller. Although every endeavour has been made to find out the name of his apprentice master, the search has resulted in failure. Robert struggled hard to qualify himself for the ministry. His scholastic attainments brought him into notice, and Admiral Duncan, who afterwards became the hero of Camperdown, engaged him as tutor to a member of his

family, a position which he retained till he was compelled to relinquish it from failing health. The young man was held in much favour by the Camperdown family. On leaving, he received from the Admiral a set of silver garter and shoe buckles as marks of esteem, and the family presented him with a Bible and silver pencil-case. At his death he bequeathed these highly-prized souvenirs to his sister, Mrs Keay, at whose house in Dundee he expired about the end of last century. When Hood visited her in Tayport in 1843, she gave the silver pencil-case to "Tom Junior," who accompanied his father, Mrs Keay being desirous that the gift should be preserved as a memento of the honour which had been conferred upon her brother by a family of distinction. She died in 1851, and the remainder of these valued souvenirs were divided amongst her relatives. The Bible and three of the buckles were forwarded to friends in London, whilst the fourth buckle was presented to Miss Isabella Hood, who waited upon Mrs Keay during her last illness.

No information can be obtained about Peter; but there are people still alive who remember James, a "douce, canny man," retailing provisions—oatmeal in particular—in his little shop fronting High Street, Errol.

George, who to the end of his life was a plain, though somewhat eccentric man, learned the useful but prosaic business of saddler. He became an expert workman, and, as an old Carse farmer remarked, "His stecks (stitches) held thegither as lang as leather wad last!" He combined another profession with saddlery—that of butcher. Thus, when work at one branch failed, he followed the other. In the long run the latter had a preference. It

was then, and still is, customary for saddlers to trudge from one farm to another, where they are employed in mending harness and doing other odd jobs. This occupation is far from being agreeable; and George, to lead a more comfortable life, opened a shop for the retail of butcher meat in the principal thoroughfare in Errol. He followed that business for many a day, and seems to have prospered. Throughout the "kintra side" he was known as a "gear gatherin' carle, who keepit a gey hard grip o' the bawbees." That is a characteristic of many Scotchmen. Several amusing anecdotes are related of this peculiar individual. From his singular ways he was regarded as a "character," and his sayings and doings are still recorded by the people. As an evidence of his habits, the following incident is related. One day, while walking near the village, he espied a calf lying dead in a field. Without any consideration for the rights of property, he determined to appropriate the defunct animal to his own uses and purposes. He knew it was unfit for human food, but his conscience was pliable, and caused him no inconvenience. After a little consideration, he resolved to wait till twilight, thinking he could carry the calf into Errol without attracting much attention. Accordingly, when gloaming set in, he lifted the carcass upon his shoulders and wended his way homewards. But the "best laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft agley." He would have escaped detection had he been discreet. His intention was to delude, as he thought, the good people of the village, and to induce them to suppose that the animal was alive. He therefore entered Errol imitating the bleat of a calf, and crying "Beh, beh, beh!" as he

limped along, for he was lame. Geordie's ruse, however, did not succeed. The villagers were too 'cute to be mystified. They saw the drift of the butcher's strategy, so they gathered around him, and laughed and hallooed till he reached his shop, the young folks crying "Beh, beh," all the way. The joke was too good to be lost, and for years after the youngsters took pleasure in tantalizing him, whenever he made his appearance, by imitating the bleat of a calf. George was married, but matrimony weighed heavily upon him. He was unhappy, and a separation became inevitable. His wife, who belonged to Brechin, returned to her native place, and the family, of whom there were five, were scattered. Mary remained with the father; Annie and Catherine settled in Coupar-Angus, Annie subsequently being married to a man named Crichton; whilst Robert and Peter followed their mother to Brechin. Robert, who was brought up as a farmer, tenanted the farm of Wellbank, in the vicinity of Broughty Ferry, and afterwards that of Crudie Acres, near Arbroath, in which latter place he died at an advanced age. Mary, George's favourite daughter, who was married to Charles Jackson, a sawyer, in comfortable circumstances in Errol, still lives in the remembrance of many of the people of the Carse of Gowrie. Imbued with a share of her father's peculiarity of temper, she was kindhearted and generous withal. She died at Errol a few years ago.

When Thomas Hood's apprenticeship expired, he left Dundee with the determination of trying his fortune in London. He was accompanied by Patrick Gardiner, a distant relative and companion, who also came from the Carse, his father being tenant of the farm of Mains of

Errol. He had learned the grocery business in Dundee, and, wishing to gain experience, with the view of returning to Scotland to start on his own account, he resolved to spend some time in the metropolis. Hood obtained employment in one of the large publishing houses, where he remained for several years. Subsequently he entered into partnership with Mr Vernor, and established a publishing business at No. 31 The Poultry, the title of the firm being "Vernor & Hood." They prospered, and ere long were entrusted with the publication of works of a high literary standard. They issued "The Lady's Monthly Museum," a magazine which became popular amongst ladies, to whose interests it was devoted. The contents were select, and, as the sub-title states, consisted of "Amusement and Instruction, being an Assemblage of whatever could tend to please the Fancy, interest the Mind, or Exalt the Character of the British Fair." It was projected by a Society of Ladies, who exercised a rigid censorship over its tone and sentiment. The "Museum" met with approval, and was successfully conducted for several years. It was well got up, and deserved the popularity it enjoyed. Mr Hood presented a complete set of the Magazine, bound in yearly volumes, to his sister Mrs Keay, a gift of which she was very proud. The volumes for 1800 and 1801, of this set, are in possession of a lady in Broughty Ferry. He also published two novels written by himself. Although a minute search has been made to ascertain their titles, we have failed to discover them.

A notable incident occurred in the history of the firm. Sir John Carr, who at one time had been an attorney in

Dorsetshire, attracted attention by the publication of a series of travels of a light, gossipy nature. While in Ireland he was knighted by the Duke of Bedford, who was then Lord Lieutenant. In 1806 Sir John published "The Stranger in Ireland." The peculiarities in the volume caused a good deal of comment, and a witty *jeu d'esprit*, bearing the title of "My Pocket Book," severely satirized the traveller. The Knight was indignant, and instituted an action for damages against the publishers, Messrs Vernor & Hood, who were described by the opposing counsel as "very opulent booksellers, and carrying on great trade in the metropolis." The case was tried before Lord Ellenborough, but the jury, without retiring, brought in a verdict of "not guilty." "My Pocket Book" was written by Mr E. Dubois, a barrister of the Temple, but it was said that Mr Hood assisted materially in its literary concoction. A report of the trial was written by Hood and published by the firm. It contained a number of illustrations, and enjoyed considerable popularity. With regard to Sir John, he is characterized by Byron, in some suppressed stanzas of "Childe Harold," as "green Erin's knight and Europe's wandering star."

The business of Hood and his partner increased rapidly, and ere long a Mr Sharpe was assumed as junior member of the firm, which was afterwards known by the title of "Vernor, Hood, & Sharpe." Thomas Hood devoted himself closely to business, and his assiduity and energy soon enabled him to settle down for life. He married a daughter of Mr Sands, a well-known metropolitan engraver. The union, otherwise a very happy one, was marred by a

sorrowful blight. Their children were born to an heirloom of delicate health. Several died in infancy, and those who were spared had their existence overshadowed by the direst ills that can afflict humanity. The eldest son, James, a young man giving promise of a bright career, died prematurely at the residence of his uncle at Sandhurst; and it was while on a visit to his bedside that the father caught the illness which resulted in his death, an event which took place in the autumn of 1811. The father and son died about the same time; and it is stated in the "Memorials" that, at this date, Thomas, the second son, was the only male member of the family left to comfort his widowed mother.

That Mr Hood was a man of ability is a fact which no one will seek to dispute. It is shown by the manner in which he assisted in conducting the business of the firm and the honourable position to which he raised himself in society. Mr Hessey, a contemporary, speaks of him as an honest, upright man, and it is to be regretted that so few details can be obtained of his career. While collecting information about the Hood family generally, every endeavour was made to find out the exact date of the elder Hood's birth. The little that the old people in Errol and other parts of the Carse of Gowrie could tell of the family has been related, but they had not the remotest idea of the year when Thomas was born. The parish registers of last century are stored in the Register House in Edinburgh, and it was hoped that the desired information might be obtained from that source. The records for Errol were therefore minutely searched by an expert, who took a range of dates, starting from 1760, and

extending onwards for several years, but no trace of Thomas Hood's birth could be found. The registers of the adjoining parishes of Inchtute, Abernethy, and Baledgarno, were also subjected to close scrutiny. The name of Hood was common in these places during last century, but the surname of Thomas does not appear amongst them. So anxious was the writer to obtain evidence of Thomas Hood's birth that he visited the churchyard of Tayport, where he presumed the remains of Mrs Keay, his sister, were interred, in the hope that if the date of her birth was inscribed on the tombstone—a practice common in some parts of the country—he might have an approximate idea of the time when her brother was born. It was only after he had patiently read every inscription, that he was informed that she was not buried in Tayport, but in the old Howff at Dundee, and that the names of the whole of her family were inscribed upon the headstone there, with the exception of her own, which had been omitted. An examination of the Howff was next made, and after a long and weary search in that ancient place of sepulture, the headstone of David Keay and his family was discovered. It was too true—the date of Jean Hood's death is unrecorded. She was the last of her generation, and the inscription had been neglected. The hope of getting the coveted date was therefore extinguished, and we exclaimed, in the words of an epitaph in a churchyard in Dunkeld—

“Here Eppie lies—here or hereabout;
Whaur Eppie lies there's nane can find it out—
Whaur Eppie lies there's naebody can tell
Till the resurrection day, when Eppie 'ill rise hersel'!”

But accident determined otherwise, as the sequel will show.

Several months afterwards, the writer was told that if he called at the farm of Crudie Acres at Arbroath the tenant might be able to give some information about the family of George Hood. A visit was therefore paid to that place on a hot, broiling day. It was labour in vain. All that the farmer was able to tell was that Robert Hood was his predecessor, that his fore-bears were natives of Errol, and that Peter Hood, his surviving son, had at one time been employed as a ploughman on a neighbouring "steading" some distance off. Thither he went and saw the farmer's lady, who stated that the man of whom he was in search had left long ago, and she was ignorant of his whereabouts. The lady had heard that he was employed as a labourer in Arbroath, but could not indicate any part of the town where he could be found. As to Hood, the poet, she had never even heard of him. Such is fame!

Far from being discouraged, the writer turned to the highway, and, after a smart walk, reached Arbroath. Here another source of annoyance awaited him. The annual holidays were being observed. The most of the shops were closed. Everybody who could afford it was off by rail, and those who could not were enjoying themselves on the breezy Cliffs. Still, *nil desperandum*. Every man who had the faintest semblance to a labourer was accosted, and asked if he knew Peter Hood, and, if so, where did he live, and what did he do. Many were the cogitations and scratchings of the head. Some said that a Hood lived here, others that another lived there, and

several intimated that he lived "over yonder." But none of them bore the name of Peter. For several hours he perambulated the dusty streets, squares, and alleys of the good town, and came within the shadow of the old Abbey several times, his inquiries always proving provokingly fruitless. Fatigued and footsore he was about to give up the search, when he espied a dustman, who was busy with his broom, in the middle of the street. Dustmen are shrewd observers, and are generally well versed in the *locale* of the people. When asked if he knew Peter Hood, he lifted his head, laid his broom over the spokes of his wheel-barrow, ceremoniously wiped his brow, and, taking a pinch of snuff, answered laconically, "Od, ay, min; he lives awa' up there a wee bit," and pointed with a dirty, begrimed finger to a thoroughfare some distance off. "He's a cairter, an' that's a' I kin tell ye." Bending his back, he resumed his broom, and was soon enveloped in a cloud of dust. A clue at last. A gentleman who heard the inquiry soon showed where Peter resided, in St Vigeans Road. With a sigh of relief the inquirer rapped at the door. Another disappointment. Peter was from home; he was out on the Cliffs, but was expected to dinner. A patient wait of three-quarters of an hour, and he was at last found at his own fireside.

A plain, quiet, decent, "hame owre" man he is. He was able to give a good deal of information about "Geordie Hood," his grandfather, Mary Hood, his aunt, and several of his other relatives; but when questioned about Hood the poet, he looked up with a puzzled expression in his face, and frankly admitted that he had never heard of his celebrated relative. He added, how-

ever, that he had always thought that some of his friends were "jewellers, or something of that sort," in London, because when Mrs Keay, his grandaunt, died, she left him a valuable gold ring, which he produced for examination. The design is antique, and the ring has been well worn. The signet, which is fully larger than the ordinary size, is reversible. On one side are two locks of hair, black and golden, neatly plaited, encased in a setting of turquoise stones. On the other side the following words are inscribed:—"THOS. HOOD, OB. 20th AUG. 1811; Æ 52." The engraving has been skilfully executed, the lettering being inlaid in gold upon a ground of black enamel. It is needless to say with what astonishment and pleasure the inscription was read. The search for the year of Thomas Hood's birth, painstaking as it had been, had ended in failure. Now, here was the date, by an accidental circumstance, thrown in our way, while inquiries were being made about matters relating altogether to another member of the Hood family. The date of his death, as shown on the ring, corresponds with the date given in the "Memorials," thus showing its genuineness. His age is stated to be 52 years, and the year of his death 1811. This will give 1759 as the year of his birth. The hoop is above the average size; but Mrs Keay, who wore it in remembrance of her brother, was a stout, portly woman, and required a ring of more than ordinary dimensions to fit her finger.

In the examination of the Register of the Parish of Errol, the range was taken from 1760, a year after the date on the ring. The discovery of the ring led to the expectation that the date might yet be found amongst

the documents in the Register House, and another examination of the Parish Records of Errol was made, embracing the years 1758, 1759, and 1760. The result was again disappointing. In order to give full scope to the search, a gentleman in Edinburgh who had taken an interest in the matter made another minute investigation of the Register of Errol. He found, as before, that the name of Hood was common in Errol and adjoining parishes, but it was borne by families different from that of which he was in search. This gentleman, however, observed an entry in the Register to the effect that, owing to the death of the Rev. George Wemyss, on 6th July 1758, there was a vacancy in the parish till 7th June 1759, when the Rev. J. Jobson was appointed to the charge. During the interval several children were baptized in neighbouring parishes; and as the clerk had not been informed of their names, they were consequently omitted from the church records. As Thomas Hood was born at this date, it is probable that the entry of his baptism had been neglected. In olden times the people were not so particular in recording advents into and exits from the world as those of the present day.





CHAPTER II.

Hood's Birth—Variations in Date—His Boyhood—His Sketching Proclivities—Straitened circumstances of his Mother—Obtains employment as a Clerk—Ill Health—Discrepancies in Biographies—Apprenticed to Engraving—Change of Air and Scene prescribed—Sent to Scotland—His Arrival—Search for Lodgings—Resides in Newport—Boatmen of the Tay—Trips to Stobhall, Perthshire—The Poet and the Pony—Jessie Keay—Tantalizes his Aunt—Separation.

THOMAS HOOD the poet was the second surviving son of Thomas Hood the publisher who is referred to in the foregoing chapter. According to his son and daughter, he was born in the Poultry, London, in the closing year of the last century. It is somewhat strange that, as in the case of the birth of his father, a doubt should exist as to the exact date. Yet such is the fact. Several biographers give 1798 as the year. This is notable in Chambers's "Cyclopædia of English Literature"; and, in the notice of Hood in the "Encyclopædia Britannica," 1789 is recorded as the date of birth. It is evidently a misprint, and the transposition of the two last figures would make the date the same as that stated by Chambers.

On the other hand, it is related in the "Memorials" that he was born on 23d May 1799, and other biographers accept this statement as correct.

As it was important to obtain the correct date, the registrar or clerk of the parishes in which the Poultry is situated was applied to. He kindly responded to the inquiries, and made repeated searches amongst his records, but his efforts resulted in failure. On 29th September of this year he wrote: "I have had search made in the Registers of St. Mildred, but can find no entry of the birth of Thomas Hood." On 3d October he again wrote: "A further and very careful search has been made in Registers of St. Mildred, Poultry, for a few years before and after 1799, but they contain no entry of the baptism of Hood." And lastly, on the 9th of the same month, in reply to another query, he wrote: "Whilst searching the Register of St. Mildred, we took the opportunity of searching that of St. Mary, Colechurch, also, the only other parish connected with the Poultry, and did so for some years on either side of the date named by you. We have had much pleasure in assisting you, and regret the search has been unsuccessful." One would have thought that a man holding the social position of the elder Hood would have been careful to see that the births of the different members of his family were correctly entered in the registers of the parishes in which they were born. This duty, however, has been omitted, so far as the poet is concerned; and the exact year of his birth, we are afraid, will remain a doubtful point, unless cleared up by some unforeseen circumstance, as in the case of the father.

The little that is known of his boyhood shows that the child was father to the man, and that he gave early evidence of the talents which distinguished him in after life and made him famous. He was "singular, silent, and retired, with much quiet humour," relieved with occasional bursts of boyish fun, in which he tells us his sisters took part. He began early to sketch. He could not fail to do so; his brother was an adept, and no doubt he would frequently visit his grandfather's workrooms, where all branches of engraving would be in full operation. With these opportunities for observation, a lad with the natural aptitude of Hood would soon acquire a knowledge of the rudiments of the art,—an accomplishment which became second nature to him in after life.

At the death of his father he was, according to the "Memorials," about twelve years of age, and, his mother having been left in straitened circumstances, he resolved to provide in a small way for his own support. The resolution was characteristic. From that time till death fell upon him he acted independently, and worked for his last meal. Through the influence of a friend of the family, he obtained employment as a clerk in the counting-house of a city merchant. His son and daughter seem to doubt this. In the "Memorials," they give his first occupation as that of an engraver, stating that he "preferred the drudgery of an engraver's desk to encroaching upon the small family store." Hood, however, gives a too circumstantial account of his early acquaintance with a merchant's office to permit us to ignore the fact. In his introduction to the first instalment of the "Reminiscences," in "Hood's Own," he says:

"Time was, I sat upon a lofty stool,
 At lofty desk, and with a clerkly pen
 Began each morning, at the stroke of ten,
 To write in Bell & Co.'s commercial school;
 In Warnford Court, a shady nook and cool,
 The favourite retreat of merchant men;
 Yet would my quill turn vagrant even then,
 And take stray dips in the Castalian pool.
 Now double-entry—now a flowery trope—
 Mingling poetic honey with trade wax—
 Blogg, Brothers—Milton—Grote and Prescott—Pope—
 Bristles—and Hogg—Glyn Mills and Halifax—
 Rogers—and Towgood—Hemp—the Bard of Hope—
 Barilla—Byron—Tallow—Burns—and Flax!"

"My commercial career," he continues, "was a brief one, and deserved only a sonnet in commemoration. The fault, however, lay not with the Muses. To commit poetry, indeed, is a crime ranking next to forgery in the counting-house code; and an ode or a song dated Copthall Court would be as certainly noted and protested as a dishonoured bill. . . . The principal of *our* firm, on the contrary, had a turn for *belles lettres*, and would have winked with both eyes at verses which did not intrude into an invoice, or confuse their figures with those of the ledger." These explicit remarks not only confirm the assertion that he was engaged in a mercantile occupation, but at the same time give a glimpse into the scribbling propensities of his youth. But office life was not for him. He was a tender plant, requiring sunshine and freedom; and his sensitive, fragile constitution soon

became affected by the close atmosphere of the counting room. He persevered, but the confinement continuing to have a prejudicial effect upon his system, he was compelled to relinquish a situation which, perhaps, was unsuited to his temperament and tastes.

As a restorative, he was ordered by his physician a thorough change of air and scene. It is to be observed that at this point the story of his life as told in the "Memorials," and the narrative written by himself in the "Reminiscences," do not coincide. Hood's son and daughter suppress his mercantile occupation, and state that the cause of his ill health arose from "the sedentary employment of engraving." Could they be ignorant of the fact that he had been employed as a merchant's clerk, and conclude that being engaged in such a capacity was only a medium for perpetrating one of his jokes? They do not appear to have put themselves to the trouble of ascertaining.

When the "Memorials" were compiled, the poet's sisters were alive; and Elizabeth, a shrewd though peculiar woman, could have enlightened them upon their father's first occupation. Hood, on the other hand, ignores his connection with engraving; and one would think, while reading his "Reminiscences," that he had proceeded direct from the merchant's desk and shipped forthwith for the North. Why should these discrepancies exist? Hood when he wrote the Reminiscences had reached middle life. He had passed through ordeals which would have tested the strength of constitutions stronger far than his. For years he had been harassed by sickness, trouble, and worry—both mental and physical. He had been inter-

mittently prostrated by the disease which had haunted him from his youth. A life that would otherwise have been bright and sunny, was obscured by unwholesome clouds of "cankered care." It is probable, therefore, that, through a derangement of memory, caused by overwork and illness, he may unwittingly have omitted to mention his connection with the art of engraving, his mind dwelling naturally upon the occupation with which he was first associated, and in the prosecution of which he was so early stricken with ill health. With regard to the omission in the "Memorials" of any reference to his short mercantile career, it may be observed that the poet's family, to judge from the meagre account they give of their father's boyhood, seem to have had comparatively little knowledge of his parents; and from his tendency to indulge in banter, appear to have looked upon his employment as a merchant's clerk, not so much as a fiction, but as a misleading and good-humoured joke.

But, setting these discrepancies aside, let us follow out the general line of his career. When he recovered from the illness which compelled him to leave the employment of Messrs Bell & Co., he went to learn the art of engraving with his uncle, Robert Sands. He was, it is presumed, scarcely thirteen years of age when he entered upon his duties, and he seems to have remained at this occupation till his health again broke down. It was then, it can be inferred, that the doctors were called, and found that "by too much sitting he had hatched a whole brood of complaints." They prescribed a change of air, particularly recommending the "bracing breezes of the North."

We have a picture of his life at this period. Mr John Wilson, author of a valuable work on the "Antiquities of Clerkenwell," in a letter to the writer, states that his mother and Mrs Hood were on terms of intimacy, and were in the habit of visiting each other. "In 1814," writes Mr Wilson, "my mother said to me, 'We will go up to Mrs Hood's and see her.' She lived at Islington Green, in an old brick house, Queen Anne's, quite a day's journey for us. Found Mrs H. and Master Thomas at home. I fancy he was sketching. I was not much of a judge then—but nine years of age." This visit was paid some time prior to Hood's journey to Scotland, and in all likelihood on a day when illness prevented him attending to his duties in his uncle's workshop. The young man followed the advice of his physicians. The thought of escaping from the turmoil and smoke of the metropolis to inhale the balmy invigorating breezes of the hills and dales of bonnie Scotland would no doubt inspire and elevate his spirits. "Accordingly," he says, "I was soon shipped, as per advice, in a Scotch smack, which '*smacked* through the breeze,' as Dibdin sings, so merrily that on the fourth morning we were within sight of the prominent Old Steeple of 'Bonnie Dundee'!"

Owing to the lapse of time and the limited acquaintanceship Hood made, much difficulty has been experienced in gathering together details of interest bearing upon his residence in Dundee. All his intimate companions are dead, and there are only one or two persons of extreme age who recollect anything of his incomings or outgoings. A great deal of patience and care has

been expended in collecting these stray unrecorded gleanings in the highways and byways trodden by the great humorist while a youth. If the task had been longer neglected, those who are able to throw a little light, however obscure, on an interesting period in the life of this remarkable man, would have passed away. The few who remember him, although bowed down with years, are hale and hearty, and they tell what they know of him in their plain, old-fashioned way. The families of some of the companions of his early days have been visited, to ascertain what their fathers said of him; the oldest inhabitants of Errol and the Carse of Gowrie have been interviewed; and persons in remote parts of the country who were able to contribute the smallest item of information upon his youth or early manhood have been communicated with. These inquiries, meagre and insufficient though they are, have in some respects been satisfactory, as they not only throw a little new light upon the poet's style of life while he resided in Dundee, but differ on some material points from the narratives in the "Reminiscences" and "Memorials."

Hood, when he left London, sailed on board the trading smack "Union." This vessel, which was owned by the Dundee, Perth, and London Shipping Company, was considered amongst the finest craft which sailed between the Thames and the Tay. Its captain—the late Charles Lyon, between whom and Hood there subsisted a steadfast friendship—was exceedingly popular with the public, as well as with the seafaring population. Although, like all true poets, a lover of the picturesque, Hood does not give us his impressions of the town as he approached

its shores. Perhaps he was too young to appreciate the fine views which the banks of the Tay presented, or he might have been suffering from the effects of his voyage. Dundee then was not the smoke-canopied city it now is. It lay in a beautiful hollow; it was surrounded by attractive scenery; and its margin was laved by a broad, noble river. At that time it well deserved the appellation of "Bonnie Dundee." In after life, when he renewed his visit, he speaks in terms of praise of the beauty of the scenery of the Tay. To the town itself he refers somewhat disparagingly. It had undergone a great change when compared with what it was when he first beheld it. On his first visit it was a quiet, sleepy place, and its inhabitants douce, canny-going folk. That commercial energy which afterwards characterized it had not begun to develop. The weaver's shuttle had not given place to the whirl of machinery, and the town lay in undisturbed monotonous repose. The people were Scotch to the backbone, and their customs and institutions were "auld farrant" and homely. They followed in the beaten tracks of their sires, the events passing beyond their own quiet homes disturbing them but little. Such was the general condition in which Hood found Dundee and its inhabitants.

When he reached the harbour, he stepped ashore, he says, and trod for the first time "stout and original Scotland." As we are inclined to differ from the description he gives of his reception, it is perhaps desirable in the first place to quote his own remarks.

"Like other shipments," he states, "I had been regularly addressed to the care of a consignee; but the latter, not anxious, perhaps, to take charge of a hobbledehoy,

yet at the same time unwilling to incur the reproach of having a relative in the same town and not under the same roof, peremptorily declined the office. Nay, more, she pronounced against me a capital sentence, so far as returning to the place from whence I came, and even proceeded to bespeak my passage and reship my luggage. Judging from such vigorous measures the temper of my customer, instead of remonstrating I affected resignation, and went with a good grace through the farce of formal leave-taking. I even went on board, but it was in company with a stout fellow, who relanded my luggage, and thus while my transporter imagined—good, easy soul!—that the rejected article was sailing round St. Abb's Head, or rolling off the Bass, he was actually safe and snug in Dundee, quietly laughing in his sleeve, with the Law at his back. I have a confused recollection of meeting, some three or four days after, a female cousin on her road to school, who at sight of me turned suddenly round, and galloped off towards home with the speed of a scared heifer.

“My first concern was now to look out for some comfortable roof under which ‘for a consideration’ one would be treated as one of the family. I accordingly entered into a treaty with a respectable widower, who had no sons of his own; but, in spite of the most undeniable references, and a general accordance as to terms, there occurred a mysterious hitch in the arrangement, arising from a whimsical prepossession—which only came afterwards to my knowledge—namely, that an English laddie, instead of supping parritch, would inevitably require a rump steak to his breakfast! My next essay was more

successful, and ended in my being regularly installed in a boarding-house, kept by a Scotchwoman, who was not so sure of my being a beef-eater. She was a sort of widow with a seafaring husband 'as good as dead,' and in her appearance not unlike a personification of *rouge et noir*, with her red eyes, her red face, yellow teeth, and her black velvet cap. The first day of my term happened to be also the first day of the New Year; and on stepping from my bed-room I encountered our hostess—like a witch and her familiar spirit—with a huge bottle of whisky in one hand and a glass in the other. It was impossible to decline the dram she pressed upon me, and very good it proved and undoubtedly strong, seeing that for some time I could only muse its praise in expressive silence, and, indeed, I was only able to speak with '*a small still voice*' for several minutes afterwards. Such was my characteristic introduction to the Land of Cakes, where I was destined to spend the greater part of two years under circumstances likely to materially influence the colouring and filling up of my future life."

Read in the light of inquiries we have made, we would respectfully indicate that there are several passages in the foregoing extracts which we think scarcely consistent with correct narration. These discrepancies, perhaps, may be accounted for by the innumerable vicissitudes through which Hood had passed prior to the time he wrote his "Reminiscences." His recollection may have become confused. In a life such as he endured that was probable. Bodily suffering and unremitting strain upon his mental faculties might impair his memory, and throw a dim,

hazy uncertainty upon the recollection of events which had happened in years past and gone, and which at the time of their occurrence were deemed of slight importance.

There is another and perhaps more tenable reason which might have led Hood to tell the story of his life in his own peculiar way. He was a professional humorist. As such, he was in the habit of looking at things from an inverted, or at least grotesque point of view, and adapting them to suit his whimsical fancy. The conformation of his mind was such that this predilection obtrudes in every possible way. It is quite probable, therefore, that while relating his early experiences he had followed his natural bent, and indulged his love of fun and caricature at the expense of a divergence from strict narrative.

When Hood arrived in Dundee he was in indifferent health. He was suffering from "a whole brood of complaints hatched by so much sitting." They were of such a serious character that they required the "bracing breezes of the North" to alleviate or cure. When he landed he proceeded direct to the house of Jean Hood, his paternal aunt, the consignee referred to. He was not rejected, nor was his passage bespoke for reshipment. These were not the days of crack steamboats and rapid sailing. The smacks of the Dundee and London Shipping Company, although well-appointed vessels, depended, like other sailing craft, upon wind and weather, and only left about once a week. Where was the young man to reside during that time, presuming that his luggage was re-shipped and his passage re-taken? The fact is, there is a tinge of dramatic colouring in relating his advent to

Scotland, and it shines out somewhat conspicuous in these quotations. Hood on his arrival took up his abode with Mrs Keay—the Jean Hood spoken of. She had long before become the wife of Captain Keay, the owner and master of the brig “Hope,” a well-known trading vessel belonging to the port. The captain and his lady resided in a tenement in Nethergate opposite the Old Steeple, the building being pulled down many years ago, to make way for the fine block of dwelling-houses erected by the late Mrs M’Kenzie. Not only was the young man well received, but it is averred that he was treated with the utmost indulgence by his aunt. The captain had departed on a voyage to Riga, and his wife and family went to summer lodgings in Newport during his absence. Hood was in luck. The village of Newport—now the residence of many of the well-to-do merchants and business men of Dundee—is situated in a pretty nook on the Fifeshire side of the Tay. In Hood’s time the traffic between the two shores was conducted by means of pinnaces, and the piers at Newport and Dundee were the scenes of continuous stir and bustle. He accompanied his aunt to her summer quarters, and frequent reference is made in the “Reminiscences” to his trips across the river. He soon became a favourite with the “guid folk” of Fife. With the boatmen of the Tay Ferries he was speedily on a footing of intimacy, and it was from them he imbibed his lasting love for “the breezes that smack of the ocean brine.” The most of the boatmen were old man-of-war sailors, and had a liking for smartness and tact. The coxswain of one of the boats took an especial love for Tom, and seemed to appreciate his exuberant fun. Tom

returned the kindly feeling, and immortalized the good natured "salt" by drawing his portrait. The boatman was in the habit of standing close to his pinnace, looking up the Craig Pier on the watch for late or stray passengers. When he saw any one approach, he put his hand to his mouth and shouted with a voice like the tone of a speaking trumpet, "Are ye gaun ower?" meaning, of course, across the river. This euphonious phrase so tickled Hood's fancy that he delineated the sturdy sailor in the act of inviting passengers into his boat to "row them o'er the ferry." The likeness is said to have been a faithful one; so much so that in after years, when the genial boatman had been rowed over that ferry from which no travellers return, his worthy spouse, who survived him, kept it in a conspicuous place in her apartment, and blessed the English laddie whose graphic pencil had enabled her to preserve a memento of her liege lord and master.

Indeed, so far from being ill-treated or restrained during the first few months of his residence with his aunt, Hood was, on the contrary, allowed every latitude. He was introduced to her acquaintances, and his "far awa' Scotch freends" gave him a cordial welcome. His father's old friend and companion, Patrick Gardiner, who returned from London in 1808, and settled in Dundee as a grocer, was particularly kind to him. Hood often frequented his shop in Overgate, near Thorster Row. During the fine summer weather, Mrs Gardiner paid a visit to her sister-in-law at Stobhall in Perthshire, and took Hood along with her. When introduced to the lady at Stobhall, she closely scrutinized his slim, delicate figure, and, turning

to Mrs Gardiner, exclaimed, "Losh, woman! What are ye daein' bringin' that laddie up here to dee!" The "laddie" did not "dee,"—at all events not till many years after,—but lived to ornament with wit, humour, and pathos the literature of his country! He was kindly treated, and revisited Stobhall several times while residing with his relatives in the Carse of Gowrie. Miss Isabella Hood relates that Mrs Keay came to see her father and mother one day, bringing young Tom with her. Miss Hood's father was a merchant in Murraygate. An entry on the north side of that thoroughfare still bears his name. By this time Hood's health was improving, and the bracing breezes of the North were beginning to make their beneficial influences felt on his constitution. Miss Hood states that he appeared to be in the best of spirits, and full of liveliness and fun. The merchant had a favourite pony, and ere long the pony and Tom were on the best of terms. Many a scamper they had together over the breezy Wards and gowany Meadows, and along the bonnie green lanes near the town. Miss Hood, although well advanced in years, is a very intelligent lady, who tells with much relish the remembrances of her "far awa' English freend" in his "roy'd" days. The "female cousin," who fled at the sight of him "with the speed of a scared heifer," was Jessie Keay, the youngest daughter of his aunt. She was his frequent companion. A lady residing in Springfield, Dundee, distinctly recollects Hood and Jessie visiting her parents at their house at foot of Crichton Street. This lady describes him as being a thin, delicate-looking lad, who had the appearance of having suffered from prolonged illness.

Being older by some years, he held the girl by the hand, and seemed to be very happy with her. It may be stated in passing that Jessie Keay became an accomplished young woman. She possessed many of her cousin's remarkable talents, although their exercise was confined to the family circle. Falling a victim to the disease which afflicted the Hood family, she died, in her twenty-eighth year, of consumption.

The foregoing incidents show that, instead of being repudiated by his aunt, Hood received the kindest treatment both from her and his father's old acquaintances. There are people still living who knew Mrs Keay well, and who speak of her as being a person of exemplary habits—a little straitlaced perhaps, according to English notions, but still an excellent woman. She was endowed with strong common sense, was exceedingly pious, and of high character—one, in fact, from all that can be gathered regarding her, who would not stoop to act towards her departed brother's only son in the manner related in the "Reminiscences." That Hood frequently annoyed her there is little room for doubt. A plain, sensible, commonplace Scot, she could not understand, far less appreciate, the thoughtless and, undoubtedly to her, annoying pleasantries which, in spite of himself, he was ever and anon committing. As an instance of the method in which he teased her, we quote the following extract from the "Memorials":—

His aunt being a rigid Sabbatarian and "unco guid" woman, did not realize his love of fun, which evidently manifested itself thus early. She was temporarily laid up

by illness, and debarred from attendance on her favourite "meenister," when her chief solace was to perch her nephew up at the parlour window, which commanded a good view of the stream of worshippers on their way to the kirk. Then something like the following dialogue would ensue:—

"Tammie, my man, keek oot. Wha's that?"

"That's Bailie So-and-so's daughter, aunt, and isn't she making desperate love to young Somebody, who's walking by her side!"

"The graceless hizzie! I'd wauk her, gin I were her mammie. Keek oot again, Tam."

"There's Mrs Blank, aunt, and she's got on a grand silk gown, and such a velvet mantle!"

"Set us up, laddie! She, indeed! The silly wastrife bodie! She'd far better pay a' she's owing. Wha's neist?"

And so they would go on, the *crabbed auld* Scotchwoman little suspecting half the "stour" proceeded from the active imagination of her "nevoy" to heighten the fun and draw her out.

So much for Hood's heedless, playful banter; and let us at the same time point out that the expression "crabbed auld Scotchwoman" is inappropriate and inaccurate. Mrs Keay, no doubt, when crossed and "drawn out," could show her temper like any high spirited woman; but she was not "crabbed." None of the Hood family were ill-tempered, and Mrs Keay's disposition was warm and generous. And with regard to her age, she would be between thirty and forty at the time of her

nephew's visit. No woman is old even at a much greater age than that.

The charge, too, of inhospitality is found, upon inquiry, to be untenable. It is impossible to believe that the woman to whom Hood in his latter years, as will be proved in the sequel, wrote the most feeling letters, and to whom the last note he ever penned on earth was indited, would act in the unkindly, heartless manner described in the "Reminiscences." Such an act would go against the grain of Scottish hospitality and the ties of kindred. It would be difficult, therefore, to come to any other conclusion than that Hood had either forgotten or unwittingly omitted certain interesting facts relating to his reception and early residence in Dundee.

The reader, too, would infer from the passage which takes place between Hood and his landlady—whom he so graphically describes in the second paragraph quoted—that he arrived in Dundee at the festive season of the New Year. A little consideration will show that this is another inconsistency. When his health broke down he was suffering from pulmonary complaints, weakness of the system, and other physical disorders. Would any sensible medical man, who had regard for his reputation, order a patient so affected to take a trip in midwinter, on board a vessel with the limited passenger accommodation which the smacks then trading between Dundee and London afforded? And would the person afflicted be able to withstand the buffetings and tossing of the German Ocean, or the rigours of a Northern winter at such a severe season?

It is needless to answer these questions. The assump-

tion is that Hood, after spending the previous five months in unfettered enjoyment, had, by frequent outbursts of irrepressible raillery, grievously offended his relative, and it became necessary that they should part. She could not withstand his "aff-taking" ways. Mrs Keay, as has already been observed, was a woman of high temper, and, when once provoked to a certain pitch, would scarcely forgive or relent. That the aunt and nephew separated with feelings of irritation on both sides cannot be doubted; but that she was guilty of such a breach of hospitality as to "reship him to the place whence he came," without allowing him to reside under the same roof, is an assertion for which we can find no foundation.





CHAPTER III.

Mrs Butterworth's Lodgings in Overgate, Dundee—Was Mrs Butterworth "a coarse vulgar woman"?—Description of Mrs Keay—Mrs Butterworth's Dinners—Means of Support while in Scotland—Hood's Companions—Description of aged Dundonians—The Harbour and Craig Pier—Capsizing of Ferry Boat: Sad Calamity—"The Apparition"—HIS FIRST APPEARANCE IN PRINT—Sends Poem to "Dundee Magazine."

MRS KEAY was on terms of intimacy with a Mrs Butterworth, who was in the habit of visiting her. This lady kept a number of young men as boarders. Hood, of course, became acquainted with her when she visited his aunt; and accordingly, when the rupture took place, he left the house of the latter and took up his abode with Mrs Butterworth, whose dwelling was situated at foot of Overgate, within a few yards of the High Street. The stair which led to her apartments, owing to its peculiar formation, was styled the "Buckie Stair." It is situated between the shops of Mr Fleming, hardware merchant, and Mr Beattie, confectioner, and Mrs Butterworth's apartments occupied the flat above.

It is, perhaps, undesirable to be carping and finical with Hood's narrative; but it would be unfair to the memory of his landlady to pass over the passage in

which he describes her personal appearance. "He was, he says, "regularly installed in a boarding-house kept by a Scotchwoman. She was a sort of widow with a seafaring husband, 'as good as dead,' and in her appearance not unlike a personification of *rouge et noir*, with her red eyes, her red face, her yellow teeth, and black velvet cap." In a letter to his maternal aunts, dated September 1815, he refers disparagingly to her manner of speech, sneers at her "broad brogue," and remarks that she was guilty of "blunders which would do credit to an Hibernian." Rather hard upon the Scotch.

Hood depicts his landlady as a coarse, vulgar woman. Was that the case? In his letters in the "Memorials," as in his statements in the "Reminiscences," there is not the slightest indication that he resided with any other person. Besides, most exhaustive inquiries have been made to ascertain if he lodged with more than one landlady after he had separated from his aunt. The oldest people of the town who had the slightest acquaintance with Hood have been questioned as to the truth of the assertion that he dwelt under the roof of a "sort of widow with a seafaring husband as good as dead"; and those of his "far awa' friends" who are still alive have been asked if they knew that he had lodged with a woman of the gross external appearance attributed to his landlady. The answer invariably has been that he lived with Mrs Butterworth, and, so far as they ever knew or heard, with Mrs Butterworth only. If Hood had given the smallest hint that, after leaving his aunt's house, he had occupied apartments with more than one landlady, there would have been no cause to doubt his remarks.

But he gives no such clue. The only definite opinion, therefore, that can be formed is, that he lodged with one landlady only, and that that lady was Mrs Butterworth.

Now, instead of being a coarse, vulgar woman,—the personification of *rouge et noir*, and whose broad brogue and blunders would do credit to “an Hibernian”—we are informed by those who knew her that Mrs Butterworth was the reverse. She was well-educated, accomplished, and, in person, handsome and ladylike. Music, chess, and a good selection of books were to be found in her house. Are such refinements generally to be had amongst the coarse and vulgar? Indeed, Hood was fortunate in obtaining lodgings of so good a class, where he met with several young men whose tastes and sympathies were akin to his own, and amongst whom he “was destined to spend the greater part of two years under circumstances likely to materially influence the colouring and filling up of his future life.”

In describing his landlady, could the poet have had his aunt in his mind's eye at the moment? It has been ascertained that her complexion was flrid; that she was plain of speech—so plain, indeed, that it might be characterized as broad—that her eyes were “blear” or red; that she was in the habit of wearing a cap; and, it is needless to state, that her husband was a seafaring man, and so frequently at sea that it might be said of him, he was “as good as dead.”

In those days there were no public dining-rooms in Dundee. These are modern institutions in the North. Merchants, clerks, and others, who now enjoy their luncheon in handsome saloons, had either to “fast” or

quietly eat a "piece," which they brought with them, to take the edge off their appetites till the meal hour arrived. Mrs Butterworth was, perhaps, the first to establish a *table d'hôte* in Dundee. Several of her lodgers were young men engaged in offices and shops. Their hours were long and irregular, and she supplied them with dinners as they happened to drop in. Gradually other young men took advantage of her cuisine, and in the course of time a select number sat down daily at her table. Hood made the acquaintance of most of these young fellows, with one or two of whom he became on terms of the most familiar intimacy.

It does not appear that he followed any distinct occupation while residing in Dundee, although the late Robert Miln, at one time a well-known lawyer, and who was a fellow-lodger with Hood in Mrs Butterworth's, frequently averred in company that he was employed in an office in town for a time. That, indeed, is very probable, but it must have been for a very short time. His object was to regain his lost health, and strengthen his system against the recurrence of the "brood of complaints," the "hatchin'g" of which had caused him so much pain and misery. Then, if he did not work, whence did he derive his means of support? His mother, with her limited income, was unable to give him much assistance, and he did not seem to expect it. It is noticeable in the "Memorials" that the letters he sends south are addressed only to his aunts—the Misses Sands. There are none to his sisters or parent—at least they do not appear in print. Robert Sands, his uncle, took a deep interest in James Hood before he died. It is probable, therefore,

that he extended the same kindness to the younger brother, and, in conjunction with the Misses Sands, provided the means necessary to maintain him for a time in the Land o' Cakes. In one of the letters he thanks his aunts for their "handsome present," and no doubt such welcome gifts were frequently sent north.

Hood appears to have been very happy while in lodgings, and the most of his companions were young men belonging to good families residing in town or the immediate vicinity thereof. Amongst these were Robert Miln, George Rollo, Andrew Wyllie, Frederick Shaw, and J. G. M'Vicar, who became the respected parish minister of Moffat, and upon whom the University of St. Andrews, in after years, conferred the degree of Doctor of Divinity. If they were not residents under Mrs Butterworth's roof, they were visitors to her house, or frequenters at her dinner table. Regarding this period Hood says—"It will hardly be expected that from some half-dozen young bachelors there came forth any solemn voice didactically warning me in the strain of the Sage Imlac to the Prince of Abyssinia." Of the climate and its effect upon his constitution he speaks in high terms. "To do justice," he says, "to the climate of 'stout and original Scotland,' it promised to act kindly by the constitution committed to its care. The air evidently agreed with the natives, and Auld Robin Grays and John Andersons were plenty as blackberries, and Auld Langsyne himself seemed to walk, bonneted, amongst the patriarchal figures in the likeness of an old man covered with a mantle. . . . It was like coming amongst the Strulldbrugs; and truly, for any knowledge to the contrary, many of these old

Mortalities are still living, enjoying their sneeshing, their toddy, their cracks, and particular reminiscences. . . . Scotia, according to the evidence of Mr Buckingham's Committee, is an especially drouthie bodie, who drinks whisky at christenings, and at buryings, and on all possible occasions besides. Her sons drink, not by the hour or by the day, but by the week,—witness Souter Johnny—

‘Tam lo’ed him like a vera brither,
They had been fou for weeks thegither,’

swallowing no thin, washy potation, but a strong over-proof spirit, with a smack of smoke,—and ‘where there is smoke there is fire,’—yet without flashing off, according to temperance theories, by spontaneous combustion.”

The harbour and its busy landing places had a strong attraction for him. It was the favourite rendezvous for sailors, old and young, lumbermen, and amphibious individuals who were neither landsmen nor seamen, but for whom the pierhead had a peculiar fascination. Everything around smelt of tar and salt water; and bluff marine characters lounged, smoked, and expectorated, filling the air with the fumes of strong-flavoured tobacco. The Craig Pier, too, was a favourite resort. He had made the acquaintance of the boatmen while sojourning with his aunt in Newport, and he continued to keep up his intimacy with them. It was while he was in the habit of frequenting this place that he obtained material for his sketch, “The Apparition,” which appears in

“Hood’s Own”—an incident associated with a sad calamity which happened by the upsetting of a boat on the Tay. The *Dundee Advertiser* of date June 2d, 1815, gives the following account of the catastrophe:—

“On Sunday forenoon one of the pinnaces plying between Dundee and Newport, in Fife, suddenly sank about half a mile from the latter port, and out of twenty-three or twenty-four persons supposed to have been on board only seven were saved. From some of the people who escaped and others, we have with great pains collected the following details of this very sad disaster:—About a quarter past ten o’clock the pinnacle sailed from the Craig Pier, but as the tide was ebbing, and the sand-bank, which now forms an opposing barrier to the passage, was uncovered, it was necessary to make the circuit of its eastern extremity, and for that purpose, the wind blowing strong from the south-east, the boatmen set her along shore till she was opposite the east harbour. Here those cumbrous and unmanageable sails, called *lugsails*, were hoisted. The main lugsail was first reefed, but after some altercation among the seafaring people on board, the reefs were let out and the whole canvas unfurled. A yawl belonging to Ferry-Port-on-Craig, with one man on board, was fastened by a tow-rope to the stern of the pinnacle to be towed across the river. In this manner, and under a heavy press of sail, the pinnacle weathered the bank, when, having shipped some water, a fresh altercation ensued about taking in the mainsail. In a few minutes afterwards the person at the helm rose either to clear the yawl’s tow-rope from the outrigger of the pin-

nace's mizzen, or to assist in taking down the mainsail—it is uncertain which—and having accidentally put the pinnace too broad from the wind, she instantly filled with water and went down by the stern. At this moment the man in the yawl, with admirable presence of mind, cut the tow-rope which attached her to the pinnace, and not only preserved his own life, but afforded the means of saving the seven persons from the pinnace.”

John Spalding, commonly called *Ballad*, or *Cossack Jock*, master of the pinnace, was amongst the drowned, and it was after his remains had been brought home that the following incident is said to have occurred. It is quoted from “Hood's Own,” and it will be observed that the poet throws a good deal of sarcasm upon the superstitious propensities of the Scotch:—

THE APPARITION.

A TRUE STORY.

“To keep without a reef in a gale of wind like that—Jock was the only boatman on the Firth of Tay to do it!”—

“He had sail enough to blow him over Dundee Law.”—

“She's emptied her ballast and come up again,—with her sails all standing—every sheet was belayed with a double turn.”

I give the sense rather than the sound of the fore-

going speeches, for the speakers were all Dundee ferry-boatmen, and broad Scotchmen, using the extra-wide dialect of Angus-shire and Fife.

At the other end of the low-roofed room, under a coarse white sheet, sprinkled with sprigs of rue and rosemary, dimly lighted by a small candle at the head, and another at the feet, lay the object of their comments—a corpse of startling magnitude. In life, poor Jock was of unusual stature, but stretching a little, perhaps, as is usual in death, and advantaged by the narrow limits of the room, the dimensions seemed absolutely supernatural. During the warfare of the Allies against Napoleon, Jock, a fellow of some native humour, had distinguished himself by singing about the streets of Dundee ballads, I believe his own, against old Bonny. The nick-name of Ballad-Jock was not his only reward; the loyal burgesses subscribed among themselves, and made him that fatal gift, a ferry-boat, the management of which we have just heard so seriously reviewed. The catastrophe took place one stormy Sunday, a furious gale blowing against the tide, down the river—and the Tay is anything but what the Irish call “weak tay” at such seasons. In fact, the devoted Nelson, with all sails set,—fair-weather fashion,—caught aback in a sudden gust,—after a convulsive whirl capsized, and went down in forty fathoms, taking with her two-and-twenty persons, the greater part of whom were on their way to hear the celebrated Dr Chalmers, — even at that time highly popular,—though preaching in a small church at some obscure village, I forget the name, in Fife. After all the rest had sunk in the water, the huge figure of Jock was

observed clinging to an oar, barely afloat,—when some sufferer probably catching hold of his feet, he suddenly disappeared, still grasping the oar, which afterwards springing upright into the air, as it rose again to the surface, showed the fearful depth to which it had been carried. The body of Jock was the last found; about the fifth day it was strangely enough deposited by the tide almost at the threshold of his own dwelling, at the Craig, a small pier or jetty, frequented by the ferry-boats. It had been hastily caught up, and in its clothes laid out in the manner just described, lying as it were in state, and the public, myself one, being freely admitted, as far as the room would hold, it was crowded by fish-wives, mariners, and other shore-haunters, except a few feet next the corpse, which a natural awe towards the dead kept always vacant. The narrow death's door was crammed with eager listening and looking heads, and by the buzzing without, there was a large surplus crowd in waiting before the dwelling for their turn to enter it.

On a sudden, at a startling exclamation from one of those nearest the bed, all eyes were directed towards that quarter. One of the candles was guttering and sputtering near the socket,—the other just twinkling out, and sending up a stream of rank smoke, — but by the light, dim as it was, a slight motion of the sheet was perceptible just at that part where the hand of the dead mariner might be supposed to be lying at his side! A scream and shout of horror burst from all within, echoed, though ignorant of the cause, by another from the crowd without. A general rush was made towards the door, but egress was impossible. Nevertheless horror and dread

squeezed up the company in the room to half their former compass: and left a far wider blank between the living and the dead! I confess at first I mistrusted my sight; it seemed that some twitching of the nerves of the eye, or the flickering of the shadows, thrown by the unsteady flame of the candle, might have caused some optical delusion; but after several minutes of sepulchral silence and watching, the motion became more awfully manifest, now proceeding slowly upwards, as if the hand of the deceased, still beneath the sheet, was struggling up feebly towards his head. It is possible to conceive, but not to describe, the popular consternation,—the shrieks of women, —the shouts of men —the struggles to gain the only outlet, choked up and rendered impassable by the very efforts of desperation and fear! Clinging to each other, and with ghastly faces that *dared* not turn from the object of dread, the whole assembly backed with united force against the opposite wall, with a convulsive energy that threatened to force out the very side of the dwelling—when, startled before by silent motion, but now by sound,—with a smart rattle something fell from the bed to the floor, and disentangling itself from the death drapery, displayed—a large pound Crab! The creature, with some design, perhaps sinister, had been secreted in the ample clothes of the drowned seaman, but even the comparative insignificance of this apparition gave but little alleviation to the superstitious horrors of the spectators, who appeared to believe firmly that it was only the Evil One himself transfigured. Wherever the crab straddled sidelong, infirm beldame and sturdy boatman equally shrank and retreated before it,—ay, even as it changed

place, to crowding closely round the corpse itself, rather than endure its diabolical contact. The crowd outside, warned by cries from within, of the presence of Mahound, had by this time retired to a respectful distance, and the crab, doing what herculean sinews had failed to effect, cleared itself a free passage through the door in a twinkling, and with natural instinct began crawling as fast as he could clapperclaw, down the little jetty before mentioned that led into his native sea. The Satanic Spirit, however disguised, seemed everywhere distinctly recognized. Many at the lower end of the Craig leapt into their craft, one or two even into the water. whilst others crept as close to the verge of the pier as they could, leaving a thoroughfare,—wide as “the broad path of honour,”—to the Infernal Cancer. To do him justice, he straddled along with a very unaffected unconsciousness of his own evil importance. He seemed to have no aim higher than salt water and sand, and had accomplished half the distance towards them, when a little decrepit poor old sea-roamer, generally known as “Creel Katie,” made a dexterous snatch at a hind claw, and before the Crab-Devil was aware, deposited him in her patch-work apron, with an “Hech, Sirs, what for are ye gaun to let gang siccan a braw partane?” In vain a hundred voices shouted out, “Let him bide, Katie, he’s no cannie”; fish or fiend, the resolute old dame kept a fast clutch of her prize, promising him, moreover, a comfortable simmer in the mickle pat, for the benefit of herself and that “puir silly body the gudeman”; and she kept her word. Before night the poor Devil was dressed in his shell, to the infinite horror of all her neighbours.

Some even said that a black figure, with horns, and wings, and hoofs, and forky tail, in fact old Clooty himself, had been seen to fly out of the chimney. Others said that unwholesome and unearthly smells, as of pitch and brimstone, had reeked forth from the abominable thing, through door and window. Creel Kate, however, persisted, ay, even to her dying day and on her death-bed, that the Crab was as sweet a Crab as ever was supped on; and that it recovered her old husband out of a very poor low way,—adding, “And that was a thing, ye ken, the Deil a Deil in the Dub of Darkness wad hae dune for siccan a gude man, and kirk-going Christian body, as my ain douce Davie.”

When the weather was unpropitious Hood stayed at home and sketched and studied during the day, and played at chess in the evenings. We are strongly inclined to believe, too, that he continued to improve himself in the art of engraving, by practising during his spare time, else it would have been difficult for him to take the position he afterwards did in that art, with only about two years' experience preparatory to leaving London. This was probably one of his sources of support while living with Mrs Butterworth.

Several months prior to the accident referred to, Hood ventured to appear in print. The *Dundee Advertiser* at that time was conducted by Mr Stephen Rintoul, who afterwards, as editor of the *Spectator*, became the most accomplished journalist of his day. With a youthful partiality for skits, he forwarded a letter to Mr Rintoul bearing upon certain phases of local politics. The

letter, to the delight and apparent astonishment of a friend whom he had taken into confidence, was inserted. "Memory recalls," he says, "but a moderate share of exultation, which was totally eclipsed, moreover, by the exuberant transports of an accessory before the fact, who, methinks, I still see in my mind's eye rushing out of the printing office with a wet sheet steaming in his hand fluttering all along the High Street, to announce breathlessly that 'we were in.'" The accessory before the fact was a young man named Gordon, who, to judge from the sarcastic references to him in the "Reminiscences," seems to have been a harum-scarum fellow. The *Advertiser* at that time was printed in New Inn Entry, so that Hood's *debüt* to the world of letters was made in that locality. With regard to the identity of the letter, it may be stated that the files of the paper have been carefully examined, and the publications for 1814 and 1815 gone over repeatedly by different persons. During these years the letters in the *Advertiser* refer almost entirely to the opening of the harbour, the dispute between Mudie—afterwards a well-known author and writer for the London press—and the patrons of the Academy, and questions of a kindred nature. The only letter at all resembling the style of Hood, and bearing upon the "political and domestic economy" of the town, was one to which was attached the youthful and appropriate signature of "Juvenis." That the public may be able to form an estimate for themselves, it is subjoined:—

Mr Editor,—Your insertion of the following remarkable dream of mine, if you should think it will be of any ser-

vice, will oblige:—As I was meditating one day on the number of abuses that might be rectified in Dundee I insensibly fell asleep. My fancy presented to me a large, black dæmon of irregular features, whose name I found was “Dundee.” He presented to me a roll of papers, and immediately disappeared. The first that came into my hand I found, on inspection, to be a petition from a traveller complaining that, having stayed out rather late to sup with a friend, in coming home through one of the narrow streets, the name of which he is not acquainted with, he received great injury to a brand new hat and greatcoat. A second complained of the smell from the putrid entrails of fish and other filth left in the Fish Market. Two more complained that while the Bailies and other Magistrates were squabbling about privileges, and looking over old records, they lost two fine horses through the bad state of the pier. The next stated that he was eye-witness of a child being run over by a cart, while the driver was walking before, ignorant of what was passing, and praying the Magistrates would take into consideration and determine the length of rope to be allowed for a halter in future. And, lastly, a long list of queries, such as, When would the Harbour be finished? I also observed something about the building of a new Academy, but the entrance of a friend dispelled the vision.

JUVENIS.

Dundee, April 24, 1815.

Two months later he forwarded an effusion in the shape of a poem to the *Dundee Magazine*, a monthly periodical published by Thomas Colville & Son. The poem,

too, met with the favour of the editor, and was accepted. The *Magazine* was printed and published in Castle Court, Castle Street, and Hood's poetic birth took place in that dingy, unhealthy part of the town. The *Magazine*, like the *Advertiser*, has been subjected to the most careful scrutiny, and the following lines are fixed upon as bearing a strong resemblance to the great humorist's handiwork:—

SABBATH MORNING.

How few of all this hurrying crowd
 Who press to reach the house of prayer,
 Who seek the temple of their God—
 Seek Him whose spirit hovers there!

See yon demure and pious maid—
 She surely shows devotion true;
 In robes of purity array'd,
Her bonnet, not her heart, is new!

To yonder heaving bosom turn,
 Which swells with rapture high;
 With sacred zeal her heart *must* burn—
Ah! trace the coquette's glancing eye!

That grave and stately sage, indeed,
 His thoughts must be on *Heaven* intent;
 But *Heaven*, perhaps, in him may read
 A pondering wish for *cent. per cent.!*

With nimble steps and eager haste
That pious youth with pleasure view,
Who fears a single moment's waste—
His footsteps yonder fair pursue!

Yet who shall dare presume to raise
A din of censure, better grudg'd;
Take, then, the moral of my lays,
And judge not, that ye be not judg'd!





CHAPTER IV.

Hood's Visit to Errol—His Grandmother, and Old-fashioned "Travellers' Rest"—He Visits Patrick Matthew at Gourdie Hill, and the Gardiners at Grange of Errol—He becomes an Angler—His Precocity—Errol Market and Races—He returns to Dundee—Writes Poem for "Dundee Magazine"—"The Dundee Guide"—Description of Dundee in Rhyme—"The Bandit."

THE village of Errol, the native place of the family, is distant only a few miles from Dundee; yet Hood seems to have been reluctant to pay his friends there a visit. In the interval between the letter and the poem—that is to say early in the summer of 1815—he appears to have gone thither. The cause of delay may have arisen from the influence of his aunt, who, for reasons of her own, had little or no intercourse with her relatives in the Carse. While in Errol he lived principally with his grandmother. She had been a hard-working woman all her days, and now, when the evening of her life had set in, she had become one of those poor bodies who were "scant o' cash." Her son George may have assisted her; but he was such a close-fisted carle that it is doubtful. To enable her to eke out a livelihood, she kept lodgers, and stray or be-

lated travellers made her house their temporary home. On the occasion of Hood's first visit, the old lady was in a dilemma. She was unaccustomed to the habits of her English grandson, who, she thought, would not look with complacency on her own or her lodgers' homely ways. They would soon be dropping in, and their quality and appearance might not suit the tastes of her better bred Cockney friend. A happy thought struck her. It was getting late, and she induced Tom to retire to rest. The dwelling consisted of one large apartment, which was furnished with a "fixed-in" or close bed. With much kindness and assiduity she showed the young man to his sleeping-place; and when, as she thought, he was in deep slumber, she softly closed the bed door, turned the "sneb," and locked him in. But Tom, from his grandmother's wily ways and manœuvring, suspected she had a motive for it. He had, therefore, feigned asleep. As soon as the old woman had returned to her duties, he opened his eyes, and found himself in darkness, illumined only by a stray beam from a "cruzie" which found its way through a crevice in the panelling of the bedstead. Creeping to the aperture he could observe everything that was transacted on the "floorhead." First one lodger dropped in, then another, until this old-fashioned caravansary was well filled. For the first time he got a peep at a peculiar phase of Scottish low life. It was a scene full of piquant humour, which made a lively impression on his fancy; and next day, when he visited Patrick Matthew at Gourdie Hill, he imitated the sayings and doings of the individuals composing the promiscuous gathering with evident pleasure and delight.

Hood spent a good deal of his time during the summer in the Carse, and a more interesting, health-giving tract of country could not be found. He resided principally with his grandmother, but frequently took up his abode with Mr and Mrs Gardiner at the farm of Errol Grange, where his visits extended over a week at a time. The Gardiners and the Hood family were distantly related, and Mr and Mrs Gardiner were the parents of Patrick Gardiner, the friend of the elder Hood. The young man was on intimate terms with the late Mr Patrick Matthew of Gourdie Hill. Mr Matthew, who was a shrewd, intelligent Scotchman, knew his father, and had visited him in London. He, therefore, took an interest in the son, and was the first to perceive those remarkable powers which even at that time had begun to develop. Matthew was a keen angler. Although more than a dozen years Hood's senior, he showed him the "pows" and the burns where the best trout were to be hooked, and initiated him into the pleasant mysteries of the gentle art.

Captain Gardiner, the youngest son of the family of that name, was a frequent companion. He was an enthusiastic sportsman, and the streams of the Carse, and the braes of Fingask, Abernyte, and Rossie were familiar to him. Many a trudge Tom had; but it was newness of life to him. He slept sound o' nights, and the invigorating exercise braced and strengthened his slender frame. Long after, when Hood had become famous, Mr Matthew was wont to relate to his family the happy time he spent in his society, both in these excursions and as an occasional visitor to his lodgings in Dundee; how

he and Captain Gardiner were amused with his strange conceits, how they laughed at his witty sayings, and were surprised at his "auld farrant" cracks. His peculiar genius occasionally flashed out, and he often made them merry with an odd remark curiously twisted and fashioned.

While residing at Errol he had an opportunity of witnessing a Scotch fair of the old school. Errol market and races, generation after generation, were looked forward to by the inhabitants within a radius of twenty miles as an annual event, in which holiday-making, marketing, horse-couping, and horse-racing were all mixed together. It was, and still continues to be—although shorn of much of its ancient glory—a promiscuous assemblage of jockeys, their aiders and abettors, itinerant musicians, showmen and their shows, and sweetie vendors and their stalls. People flocked to it from the farms and villages around, the crowd being augmented by numbers of individuals with sporting proclivities, who hailed from Perth and Dundee. Hood was immensely tickled with this rural gathering. The merry-making was one to which he was totally unaccustomed. Whatever grotesqueness of character he had seen in the highways and byways of London, it could not be matched with the bluff ruggedness displayed by the Scottish rustic in his jocund moments. He was particularly struck with the loud-voiced vendors at the sweetie stalls, and made sketches of them in the act of retailing their goods.

Hood through life had a penchant for drawing sketches of character; but his early efforts seem to have been appreciated and admired only for the moment, and

then thrown aside, so that not a single trace of them can now be obtained. While residing in the Carse he made one or two trips to Stobhall. The mode of conveyance was of a primitive description—an ordinary farm cart filled with straw—but none the less enjoyable. He went in company with old Mr and Mrs Gardiner, and the guidwife of Stobhall would no doubt be rejoiced to see the improvement in the young man's health. He made a sketch of the horse and cart while on one of these trips. The life he led at this time could not be otherwise than pleasant. He had “nae coont, nae care,” and the bracing breezes of the fertile valley of the Tay wrought wonders upon his constitution. He was allowed to roam at will, and took full advantage of his prerogative. When he left London he was told to consult Dr C—— [Crichton]; but the recuperative air of the North, he states, rendered such a step unnecessary. He “trusted to Natur’,” and that physician did her best for him.

Hood returned to Dundee, and devoted his time to study. He wrote, as stated, a poem for the *Dundee Magazine*, and in the ensuing autumn and winter “continued to compose occasionally,” he remarks, “and, like the literary performances of Mr Samuel Weller, my lucubrations were generally committed to paper, not in what is commonly called written hand, but an imitation of print. . . . It was adopted simply to make the reading more easy, and thus enable me the more readily to form a judgment of my little efforts. Print settles it, as Coleridge says.” The lady who resides in Springfield, Dundee, already mentioned, remembers that he kept a MS. Scrap

Book, in which he wrote desultory verses. It was illustrated by sketches of Stob's Fair; the Meadows and women engaged in washing — similar, no doubt, to the sketch of "The Fair Maid of Perth" in "Hood's Own"; and scenes in the Overgate. This interesting sketch-book, like most of the youthful mementoes of Hood, was regarded as valueless. It was given to children to amuse themselves with, and was ultimately torn and destroyed.

About this period Hood contemplated the publication of a series of letters, in rhyme, descriptive of the town, which he entitled the "Dundee Guide." He took his friends Rollo and Miln into confidence, but for some unexplained reason the "Guide" was allowed to lapse, and Hood ere long left Scotland. It appears, however, from a letter to Mr Miln, dated Islington 1820, that it was still his desire that the contents of the "Guide" should be given to the public, and he instructed his friend to call upon the editor of the *Advertiser* to ascertain if he would open his columns for that purpose. But the "Guide" was destined to an unlucky fate. It had been left in possession of Mr Rollo, and that gentleman having lent it to a friend, it was, to his great regret, irrecoverably lost.

Fortunately, a specimen of the style in which the "Guide" was written is preserved in the "Memorials." In a letter to his aunts, dated Dundee, December 1815, the poet says:—"Instead of giving you any regular description of this irregular town, I shall give you some extracts from my note-book, wherein I am endeavouring to describe it after the manner of Anstey's Bath Guide

in letters from a family (Mr Blunderhead's) to their friends in London." The extract from the note-book is subjoined:—

“The town is ill-built, and is dirty beside,
For with water it's scantily, badly supplied
By wells, where the servants, in filling their pails,
Stand for hours, spreading scandal, and falsehood, and
tales.

And abounds so in smells that a stranger supposes
The people are very deficient in noses.
Their buildings, as though they'd been scanty of ground,
Are crammed into corners that cannot be found.
Or as though so ill-built and contrived they had been,
That the town was ashamed they should ever be seen.
And their rooted dislike and aversion to waste
Is suffer'd sometimes to encroach on their taste,
For beneath a Theatre or Chapel they'll pop
A saleroom, a warehouse, or mean little shop,
Whose windows, or rather no windows at all,
Are more like to so many holes in the wall.
And four churches together, with only one steeple,
Is an emblem quite apt of the thrift of the people.

* * * * *

“In walking one morning I came to the green,
Where the manner of washing in Scotland is seen;
And I thought that it perhaps would amuse, should I
write
A description of what seemed a singular sight.

Here great bare-legged women were striding around,
 And watering clothes that were laid on the ground.
 While, on t'other hand, you the lasses might spy
 In tubs, with their petticoats up to the thigh,
 And, instead of their hands, washing thus with their
 feet,

Which they often will do in the midst of the street,
 Which appears quite indelicate,—shocking, indeed,
 To those ladies who come from the south of the Tweed!

* * * * * * *

“Like a fish out of water, you’ll think me, my dear,
 When our manner of living at present you hear.
 Here, by ten in the morning our breakfast is done—
 When in town I ne’er think about rising till one;
 And at three, oh how vulgar, we sit down and dine,
 And at six we take tea, and our supper at nine,
 And then soberly go to our beds by eleven,
 And as soberly rise the next morning by seven.
 How unlike our great city of London, you’ll say,
 Where day’s turned into night, and the night into day.
 But indeed to these hours I’m obliged to attend,
 There’s so very few ways any leisure to spend,
 For they ne’er play at cards, Commerce, Ombre, or Loo,
 Though they often are carding of wool, it is true.
 And instead of “pianys,” Italian sonatas,
 At their spinning wheels sitting, they whistle like carters.

* * * * * * *

“A poor man who’d been reading the public events,
 Amidst prices of stock, and consols, and per cents,

Observed Omnium, and anxious to know what it meant,
 With the news in his hand to a Bailie he went,
 For he thought the best way to obtain information
 Was by asking at one of the wise corporation.
 Mr Bailie humm'd, ha'd, looked exceeding wise,
 And considered a while, taken thus by surprise,
 Till at length the poor man, who impatient stood by,
 Got this truly sagacious, laconic reply—
 'Omnium's just Omnium.'
 Then returning at least just as wise as before,
 He resolved to apply to a Bailie no more!

* * * * *

“I have seen the Asylum they lately have made,
 And approve of the plan, but indeed I'm afraid
 If they send all the people of reason bereft
 To this Bedlam, but few in the town will be left.
 For their passions and drink are so terribly strong
 That but few here retain all their faculties long.
 And with shame I must own, that the females, I think,
 Are in general somewhat addicted to drink!

* * * * *

“Now I speak of divines; in the churches I've been,
 Of which four are together, and walls but between,
 So as you sit in one, you may hear in the next,
 When the clerk gives the psalm, or the priest gives the text.
 With respect to their worship, with joy I must say
 Their strict bigoted tenets are wearing away,
 And each day moderation still stronger appears,
 Nor should I much wonder, if in a few years,

The loud notes of the organ the burthen should raise
 Midst the chorus of voices, the homage, and praise.
 For I cannot conceive for what cause they deny
 The assistance of music, in raising on high
 Our thanksgiving and psalms, as King David of old
 Upon numberless instruments played, we are told ;
 Nor to music can theme more sublime be e'er given,
 Than of wafting the strains of the righteous to heaven.
 They've a custom, a little surprising, I own,
 And a practice I think found in Scotland alone ;
 For in England for penance, in churchyards they stand
 In a sheet, while a taper they hold in their hand ;
 But here in the Church, if the parties think fit,
 On a stool called the "Cuttie," for penance they sit,
 And, as though absolution they thus did obtain,
 Go and sin, then appear the next Sunday again !
 Superstition as yet, though it's dying away,
 On the minds of the vulgar holds powerful sway,
 And on doors or on masts you may frequently view,
 As defence against witchcraft, some horse's old shoe.
 And the mariner's wife sees her child with alarm
 Comb her hair in the glass, and predicts him some harm.
 Tales of goblins and ghosts that alarmed such a one,
 By tradition are handed from father to son,
 And they oft will describe o'er their twopenny ale
 Some poor ghost with no head, or grey mare without tail,
 Or lean corpse in night-cap, all bloody and pale !

* * * * *

"Some large markets for cattle, or fairs, are held here,
 On a moor near the town, about thrice in a year.

So I went to the last, found it full, to my thinking,
Of whisky and porter, of smoking and drinking.
But to picture the scene there presented, indeed
The bold pencil and touches of Hogarth would need.
Here you'd perhaps see a man upon quarrelling bent,
In short serpentine curves wheeling out of a tent,
(For at least so they call blankets raised upon poles,
Well enlightened and aired by the numerous holes),
Or some hobbling old wife, just as drunk as a sow,
Having spent all the money she got for her cow.
Perhaps some yet unsold, when the market has ceased,
You may then see a novelty, beast leading beast!"

"The Bandit," another of his youthful "amusements," has happily been saved from neglect and destruction, a fate which has attended nearly all his compositions while residing in Dundee. From the style in which it is written it appears to be an imitation of the class of verse made popular by Lord Byron in his "Giaour," "Corsair," and similar poems. "The Bandit" was a gift from Hood to his friend Rollo, who esteemed it as one of the most valued relics he possessed, and treasured it with care. At his death the poem became the property of his brother, Provost Rollo, of Bloomfield, who manifested the same

anxiety for its preservation. Prior to the death of the Provost he gave a letter to each of his four sons. David, his eldest son, was entrusted with the poem; and it is through that gentleman's kindness we are enabled to place it before the public.

“The Bandit” forms the next chapter, and Hood's reference to it will be found in one of his letters to Rollo, quoted further on.





CHAPTER V.

THE BANDIT.

Canto First.

“WHILE the red glaring torches illumine the cave,
Bring the wine that was bought by the blood of the brave!
 No coward’s pale lip
 Of the liquor shall sip
While we drink to our comrades that lie in the grave!

“We gained it in strife, and in danger we won;
But we merrily drink now the battle is done!
 And the goblet we quaff
 While we merrily laugh,
Nor to fill it anew the same danger we’ll shun.

“Then fill the bright goblets—replenish the whole!
Pour, pour the rich liquor that gladdens the soul;
 For remorse we defy
 When the goblet is by,
And conscience and care are soon drowned in the bowl.”

Thus sung the bandit crew, and as they sung,
Wildly their harsh, discordant voices rung;
And jarring echoes filled the vaulted cave
As each harsh voice joined rudely in the stave;
And when they ceased, the scoffing jest gave birth
To sounds of laughter—loud and boisterous mirth;
Or all was lushed in silence round while one
Triumphant told of deeds of horror done;
Or boasting speech and bitter mockings rose
To angry words, and threatenings to blows
And bloody contest, till the din swells high
With shouts of fury, pain, and blasphemy.

But instant sunk the tumult and the din,
As suddenly the Chieftain came within;
His tall, majestic, and commanding form
Had been depressed beneath misfortune's storm;
And on his brow care's lineaments uncouth
Belie his age and rob him of his youth.
And, save when all convulsed, his features show
He strives within for mastery with woe;
While half his agitated frame reveals
The inward agony his pride conceals;
His face and form assume the settled air
And wonted attitude of calm despair.

He was not formed by Nature for the part
That he now played—once foreign to his heart.
He had been formed to love; but 'twas his fate
To meet with none but who deserved his hate.

He had been mild, but injuries had fired,
And with a savage sullenness inspired;
Repeated wrongs had turned his breast to steel,
And all but these he had forgot to feel.

Apart from all, within a dark recess,
He sat him down in gloomy silentness,
Where he was wont to sit in gloomy thought
O'er dark designs with woe and fury fraught,
And his wild brain each frenzied plan revolved,
Or acts of daring enterprise resolved;
Even now, thus darkly did he meditate
One last sad act to signalize his hate—
One deed of retribution to be hurled
To 'venge the wrongs he suffered from the world!

Nor oft the robbers ventured to intrude
By careless noise upon his thoughtful mood;
And fewer still e'er strive by curious speech
The secret purport of his plans to reach,
One look—one word—the intrusive speech repressed,
And the inquiry hushed, ere scarce expressed;
So was he ever feared and held in awe—
They crouched to him who spurned at every law!

Wolf only to address the Chieftain dared,
Nor for repulses oft repeated cared.
Next to the Chief they feared and hated him
Whose joy was blood and cruelty his whim.
His sheathless blade was never known to rust,
Nor the fresh gore e'er suffered to encrust;

Peace he abhorred, and endless warfare waged,
 In jarring strife, eternal broils engaged.
 Ambitious, too,—impatient of control,—
 Subjection grated on his haughty soul,
 And made him—spurning at his leader's sway—
 First to rebel and latest to obey.
 And now, with angry tone the Bandit spoke,
 And on the Chieftain's reverie thus broke—

“Say, do you scorn us, that you shun our feast,
 For that invites not your contempt at least;
 Our wine is good, and even Dacre's Lord
 Scarce sees such venison smoke upon his board.
 Such is our feast—would it were never worse,
 Nor more deserving your contempt than us.”

Up rose the Chief in haste, but not a word
 Implied the discontented speech was heard.
 “To arms,” he cried, “to arms with speed prepare,
 This night our final enterprise to share,
 And then we part, for 'mid these wilds I see
 No firm security remains for me.”

He spoke—they lingered still, and some expressed
 Their discontent in murmurs half repressed—
 “When steals our wearied limbs repose from toil,
 While we make merry o'er our hard-earned spoil,
 This very night we fondly hoped at last
 To rest and revel after labours past;
 And, as I live, a feast, 'twas our belief,
 Would celebrate the accession of our Chief.”

“A feast! a banquet! rather let it show
In my life’s calendar a day of woe!
A day that rose in gloom is lowering yet,
And soon, I fear, as gloomily will set;
And for your calling, think you I have prized
Your avocation, nor yourselves despised?
Have I your savage, brutal deeds admired,
Nor cursed the sordid motives that inspired?
No! I have viewed ye as a scourge designed—
A plague—a curse—to chasten humankind.
As such, as instruments I chose you, then,
To wreak my vengeance on ungrateful men!

“And in your banquets did I ever sip?
Your food untasted ever pass my lip?
No! I will eat wild berries and wild fruit,
Drink of the stream and famish on a root.
Couch in a cave and lodge me where I can.
Ere I will now hold anything of man!
And, hear this truth,—the plainest morsel now,
By honest labour, earned with sweating brow,
Were dearer, sweeter far, to me at least,
Than all the viands in your guilty feast!

Enough of this. Time hurries on! Draw near;
For once my plan and all its purport hear,
That, known more fully, you may judge aright,
You join or not my enterprise to-night!”

In deep attention,—hushed without a sound,—
With wondering eagerness they circle round;

Ne'er had he deigned before one word to hold
In converse with them or his plans had told;
But now he speaks, for once without command,
And the mute robbers, listening, round him stand.

“Who has not heard the Earl Glenallan’s name,
And been familiar with his warlike fame?
Who, by his king ungratefully repaid,
Left courts and kings and sought the rural shade,
Till roused from happy indolence he heard
The plaint his bondaged countrymen preferred,
And heard the summons to his patriot hand
To burst the fetters that enslaved his land;
’Twas then reluctantly he drew his sword
Against the king for whom his blood had poured,
But poured, alas, in vain;—who does not know
His combats, victories, and overthrow?
Though all his perils, both by land and sea,
And sorrows since, are only known to me.

“Defeated and deserted—under ban—
Chased like a tiger by the hate of man;
By day through lonely wilds he urged his flight,
And couched beneath Heaven’s canopy at night.
Alone he fled—his tenantry’s goodwill
And wishes for his welfare followed still;
But more they dared not—till, by happy chance,
Two boldly aided his escape to France.

“But ere he went he bade a long adieu
To one, the last, the only friend he knew;

To him confided his intended wife—
His love, his hope, his all, and more than life;
And then he hurried from the ingrate strand,
But first bequeathed his blessing to his land.

“ In France he covered all his deeds with shame,
And, first, for aye resigned the patriot's name.
Cursed be the day—the era of his fall—
He gave his hand in friendship to the Gaul;
Ne'er might his foes so well exult till then,
Nor he deserved thus of his countrymen;
Ne'er had he raised before his traitor hand
Against the welfare of his native land;
His deeds were blasted and his shame was sealed.
There first he fought and first was known to
 greet
A joyful feeling in his own defeat;
Oft had he sighed to join in fight once more
With those he led to victory before;
But, they victorious,—'t were a coward's deed!
He sighed, and left it for the day of need.
It came. He marked the Gaul's superior force—
Resistless, bursting its triumphant course.
He left the conquerors in joyful haste,
And fought when ruin and defeat menaced.
Again he conquered, and returned once more
With hopes rekindled to his native shore,
And fondly thought this service might recall
His country's love and make amends for all.
In vain! His service they remembered not,
But all, except his many faults, forgot,

And drove him into solitude to find
 A refuge with the vilest of his kind.
 And now, to fill the measure of his woe,
 His friend must strike the last inhuman blow.
 This night—save we avert the guilty deed,
 Or his cold heart, like that he tortures, bleed—
 He weds the hand and heart he basely stole,
 And whelms keen anguish o'er Glenallan's soul!
 Love, friendless, poor—yet while my arm is strong,
 And my blade keen, I can avenge the wrong.
 Till now I've righted others' cause alone,
 But now Glenallan shall avenge his own!"

Awhile the robbers paused in deep amaze,
 And on the Chieftain turned their earnest gaze,
 Not that they pondered aught unusual now
 In the dark workings of his gloomy brow;
 But ne'er before they heard his lofty name,
 Nor knew they had a Chieftain of such fame.

He spoke again: "Your guilty hands are red,
 And blush with blood too often they have shed.
 Many perchance may feel in after times
 The woe, the misery that tracked your crimes;
 But can remorse or conscience now recall
 One deed so black as this among them all?
 If so, remain, unworthy of the care
 To speed the chastening you ought to share.
 Speak! What so sacred to a Highland breast
 As is the claim of safety for his guest,
 And far more sacred if he be distrest?"

'Twas thus we hailed the Stuart when he fled,
And spurned the gold that hung upon his head:
Was there a wretch, a traitor so accurs't,
A seeming friend who dared betray his trust?

“Lead on!—We go! The traitor's heart shall bleed,
Our hands shall aid, our tongues approve the deed.
Long live our Chieftain, and all traitors die!”
They cried—one only joined not in the cry.
'Twas Wolf! “I say not so,” with scornful smile
He said, and gazed upon his brand the while.
“Could this relate the deeds its edge had done,—
Lost in amaze ye would forget that one,
As each succeeding each you found them still
All brighter far, or blacker, if you will,”—
And o'er his haggard features as he spoke
A scornful smile of exultation broke.
All have some passion, pride, or ruling will,
And his to be in all superior still;
And now he gloried o'er the blood he spilt,
That made him paramount, though but in guilt.

And now the sign, the bustle and the din
Of preparation reigns without—within;
Loud ring the arms, and loud the bugle strain,
Recall the stragglers to the cave again.
They came in weary groups, but gaily bring
Fresh game and booty for the banqueting,
But, lo! deserted is the festive board,
And each girds on his armour and his sword,

While all their converse and their words imply
Some daring enterprise and booty nigh.
They marvel and inquire the Chief's intent,
And rather give submission than consent.
They arm—the order given—the route is known,—
They hurry out, and Wolf is left alone.
The sun, still lingering in the golden west,
Slow sinks behind the purple mountain's crest
That rears its head sublime; and far below
The lake's calm bosom sparkles in the glow,
Save where is seen an undulating shade
By frowning rocks and woods and forests made;
Or the tall vessel gently seems to glide
In silent majesty along the tide,
Her white sails wooing the soft zephyr's breath,
Scarce rippling in the dancing wave beneath
That rolls with gentle murmuring to lave
The willow twig that loves to kiss the wave.

One bright departing ray of golden fire
Still hangs reluctant on the village spire;
Like Hope's last beam, it fondly lingers yet,
Then leaves the highest pinnacle—'tis set!
And now the mountains, blending with the sky,
Or, lost in clouds, elude the gazer's eye,
And wide and far the lengthened shadows round,
Creep slow and silent o'er the darkened ground;
And travelling on, obscuring hill and dale,
The shades of night enshroud the quiet vale.

Now sleeps the peasant, and forgets the while,
In sweet oblivion, his daily toil;

Now rest the weary, and perchance in sleep
The wretched and unhappy cease to weep ;
Some few in pain, or revelry or woe,
Or worldly cares, its influence forego.
Perhaps it flies the dark uneasy bed,
Where the pale invalid reclines his head ;
But chiefly Guilt its balmy sweets forsake,
And the cursed murderer and robber wake,
For Conscience and Remorse, that sleep not, seem
To sting when waked and haunt their every dream.

Canto Second.

Through Arden's pile the lighted tapers blazed,
The sound of mirth and revelry was raised,
And in the mazy dance light bounding feet
The sprightly measure of the music beat,
The song, the jest, the laugh, the bowl flew fast,
And grey-haired Time smiled gaily as he passed ;
And "joy to Arden and his bonny bride!"
Was hymned by joyous tongues on every side ;
And oft they pledged the fair in sparkling wine,
Inspiring wit that better seemed to shine.
And there were lovely maids that blushed to hear
The grateful praises whispered in their ear ;

And undisguised, love mingled with the rest,—
 A welcome, nor an uninvited guest ;
 And there were beating hearts with rapture filled,
 And throbbing pulses that with pleasure thrilled,
 And eyes that shone with flames they could not
 veil,
 And tongues and lips that oft confirmed the tale,
 Or strove the avowal but in vain to shun,
 And all were happy—pleasing--pleased—but one !

Clad as a mourner in a sable suit
 The stranger stood—pale, motionless, and mute,
 Nought could divert his glaring eyes aside,
 That gazed reproachfully upon the bride.
 In vain her supplicating glance she raised ;
 Unmoved, immovable he sternly gazed ;
 But when she wildly clasped her hands of snow
 He turned aside in pity to her woe.
 Still where he moved all gaiety was crushed,
 The dance was ended and the song was hushed,
 And if, perchance, the speaker's glance had caught
 His countenance, with woe and fury fraught,
 He smiled no more—his face unconscious took
 The gloomy semblance of the other's look,
 His speech was checked as sudden as his glee,
 Or ended in the whisper—"Who is he?"

'Twas Ulric, on whose brow a sadder shade
 Half mourned the gloomy change his presence made,
 And while the dulcet sounds of music stole
 So soft, so sweetly o'er his stormy soul,

His heart half softened, and his fury soothed,
As ruffled waves by oily drops are smoothed,
Inly he shuddered at himself, who stood
To end the scene of happiness in blood!

But when he pondered on his own sad fall,
That left him dark and lone among them all,
Or looked on some exulting at his cost,
And revelling in joys himself had lost,
Then roused the slumbering Demon in his breast,
And mad designs that scarce could be repressed,
As, suddenly, he laid his eager hand
And grasped impatiently the starting brand.

Thus terrible he stood, when Arden pressed
To view the figure of his stranger guest,
And while in that stern countenance, with dread,
The well-known features of the Chief he read,
A damp, chill shuddering shook his startled frame.
His tongue, too, trembled while he spoke the name,
And his heart sank as his fixed eye-balls viewed
The frowning look and threatening attitude.

“Yes! I am he—deserted and despised,
Whose heart is tortured and whose head is prized!
Yes, I am he—your treachery has driven
From all his kind—hope, happiness, and heaven;
But shall you not sit mocking at my fall,
Nor hold your banquets in my father’s hall:
Nor shall you revel in her beauties now,
Nor glory in the false one’s broken vow.

No! I will act, in just resentment strong,
 As late avenger in each former wrong;
 Requite all injuries received of old,
 And match the justice man has dared withhold."

Thus spoke the Chief, and from his girdle drew
 His brazen bugle-horn, and loudly blew:
 Shrill rung the strain, and instant from without,
 Responsive rose the impatient robbers' shout,
 Fierce rushed the ruffian band, and burst within,
 With mingling curses and terrific din,
 Like straining bloodhounds round the Chief they stood,
 And watched the signal for the work of blood.

Brandished aloft the robbers' weapons gleam,
 And, flashing, glance beneath the taper's beam,
 While partially the broken rays illumine
 Their rugged features, shaded by the plume
 That o'er each brow imparts a deeper gloom. }
 Pale—trembling now, the ladies start aside,
 And crowd in fearful groups around the bride;
 The guests recoil afraid—e'en Arden shrinks,
 And on his knee a faltering suppliant sinks:
 "Oh! I have wronged you, but in hour like this,
 When sparkles at my lip the cup of bliss,
 Can you behold it yet untasted shine
 And dash it down?"—

"Thus was it dashed from mine;
 Thus did you blast each lingering hope, and steal
 The last sole joy my wounded soul could feel,

And thus will I your budding hopes destroy
And blight them ere they ripen into joy.
Oh, Arden, you have driven me to deeds
At which my soul revolts, my nature bleeds,
For you have severed the last tie could bind
My soul in amity with humankind.
Stripped—exiled—deserted—under ban—
In you I still possessed one friend in man;
But, lo! your treachery has crowned my fall,
Stolen my last friend, and made me foe to all.
Then look around once more—behold these charms,
And that fair bride, now severed from your arms;
Mark the late partners of your joy and see
The broken wreck of thy last revelry;
And this, the scene of thy rejoicings view—
Survey all these, and bid them all adieu,
And tear from off your brow the bridal wreath
Before you meet the cold embrace of death!"

But ere his lingering arm could speed its aim,
The trembling Adelaide affrighted came;
Pale was her check, and tear-drops glistened there
Bright as the gems that sparkled in her hair,
And her clasped hands expressed a deep distress
That ill accorded with the bridal dress,
As thus in speechless agony of grief
She bent her lovely form before the Chief.

On Ulric's brow, each trace of fury flown—
The gloominess of grief remained alone.
He dropped the fatal point—who could forbear
When tears implored and beauty urged the prayer?

But still internally his stubborn pride
Strove the best feelings of his heart to hide,
And still each pang he struggled to conceal,
As though he deemed it weakness thus to feel.
But Nature triumphed! Though he turned aside
Abrupt, his changing countenance to hide,
From his dark eyes unwonted tear-drops rushed
(So from the smitten rock the waters gushed);
Beneath his cloak he sought the drops to shroud,
But bursting sighs bespoke his grief aloud.

“ Oh, Adelaide! a joyless wretch I came,
With frenzied purpose and infernal aim,
To 'venge the falsehood that had caused my woe,
And make thy blood as now thy tear-drops flow;
But, lo! my heart forgets not that it knew
The time, alas! it only throbb'd for you,
And, loving yet, rebels against my will,
And prompts my faltering tongue to bless you still.
Be blessed! Forget my love! The solemn vow
That with my wretched heart is broken now.
But, ah, to you may ne'er its sorrows reach,
And I alone feel wretched in the breach;
Forget all these! with that unhappy man
Who bids you still be happy—if you can!”

Faltering she answered, but her faint reply
Was drowned amid the robbers' angry cry,
Whose scornful words strove vainly to condemn
The Chieftian's weakness as unknown to them;
And one more daring seized the kneeling bride—
“ Be this my prize! I claim her first!” he cried.

Surprised and awed, accustomed to his sway,
They loudly murmured, but they still obey;
Amid them all he stands, unhurt, alone,
And all the band submit and crouch to one!

“’Tis vain. No longer I pretend to wield
The sword of justice, or the weak to shield,
Or hurl that vengeance which the Final Day
More surely and less blindly will repay.
Enough! From all your oaths I now release;
And this, my last command—Depart in peace.
Your Chief no longer, in some private cell,
Far from the busy haunts of men, I’ll dwell,
And strive to wash my many crimes away
By sorrowing nights, and sighs and tears by day.
Would that ye also left your crimes, and then
Were less a scourge and curse to better men!”

As thus he spoke, in bitterness of heart,
He, sad and sorrowing, turned him to depart;
But, sudden bursting in the hall again,
Came Wolf, and led a strong and armed train.
“Behold our prize! Yon sable plume behold!
Seize—seize him! for his head is gold!
On, comrades, on!”—At once the robbers poured
And seized the Chieftain ere he gained his sword.
One only dared to strike in his defence,
And smote the assailant, but at life’s expense.
The Chieftain saw and seized the falling brand,
And broke resistless from the circling band;
Then, as a lion, when the foes surround,
Springs on the first and tears him to the ground,

Headlong he rushed—death followed on each stroke—
 And felled the foremost till the sabre broke.
 Thrice Arden joining in the unequal strife
 Had stayed the steel that pointed at his life;
 But soon a sword too keen—too surely prest—
 Escaped his zeal and gored the Chieftain's breast.
 He staggered—sunk—and on the bloody ground
 Still feebly combated with all around,
 Then rose again and rushed against the foe—
 Another effort and a final blow;—
 With steady purpose and unerring hand
 He raised the fragment of the faithless brand;
 On Wolf with violence he pressed the blade,
 And lifeless at his feet the robber laid!
 Again he falls—faint, wounded, and beset,
 He fights exhausted but undaunted yet.
 More close the circling foes assault him round,
 From every side he feels the biting wound;
 Blade after blade the crimson current drinks,
 And steals his strength—he struggles—wavers—sinks!
 The broken sabre quits his feeble grasp,
 And life just seems to hang upon a gasp.
 Now he can fight no more, but, doomed to die,
 Gazes on his murderers with angry eye:
 Loud swells the shout for triumph vilely won,
 The prize is conquered and the deed is done;
 But other spoil invites—they turn to where
 Bright diamonds sparkle 'mid dishevelled hair
 Blest if no violence should take them there! }
 In vain they kneel, and gentler pity claim,
 They plead to those who never knew the name.

The robbers seize!—but, bursting from the wall,
What sudden blaze illuminates the hall?
Is it the taper, or the robbers' aim,
Has set the lighted drapery in flame?
All through the robbers burst their fearful way—
Perhaps death to go—but never death to stay!

“Who fired the curtain? 'Twas a foolish deed!
Molest them not, but to the cave with speed.
Haste, comrades, bear yon body in your arms,
Ere yon red blaze the villagers alarm!”

They seize the Chief unconscious of his lot,
And wildly hurry from the fatal spot;
And wondering villagers collect the while
And gaze in terror on the burning pile.

With rapid stride the blaze ascends on high,
Now gains the roof and blushes in the sky;
Each space, each chink, the fiery guest betrays,
And through each window bursts the angry blaze,
And rocking walls and burning beams impend,
And crackling timbers with a crash descend!
Downward they hurl, still blazing as they go,
And fall, half-smothering the flames below!
And lo! the brightest and the last of all—
One turret trembles at its threatened fall;
In vain through many a long and stormy age
It braved the battle and the tempest's rage,
Now o'er its frowning crest, that once so proud
Looked down exulting o'er the misty cloud,

The roaring flames and spiral blazes curl,
And fire and smoke in mingled eddies whirl;—
It shakes—it totters on its shattered base,
And headlong falls with brave Glenallan's race.
Soon will the nettle's humble top alone
Look proudly down upon the fallen stone;
And waving grass will flourish o'er the head
Of him who scarcely lingers from the dead.

Canto Third.

Loud crows the cock—the peasant's slumbers cease!
He wakes to days of innocence and peace;
And with the lark that leaves the yellow corn
Begins the matin song and hails the morn,
While peering in the East, the rising sun
Proclaims a bright, a new-born day begun;
Aurora, blushing, hails the god of day,
Who comes to kiss the glittering tears away;
And opening buds and flowers expanding rise,
And blush with colours borrowed from the skies.
All wakens into life—the chiding hound
And huntsman's horn awake the echoes round,
And rouse the stag who listens to the strain,
Then starts away and bounds along the plain!

Men, horses, hounds, the flying game pursue,
And ruddy health attends the happy crew.

Where'er they fall the pleasing rays adorn—
Now gild the stream, and now the waving corn,
On all they glow;—but ah! where'er they strike
They gild the evil and the good alike;
The cloud that's golden when beneath the ray
Is gloomy, dark, and ugly when away.
The beam that played upon the rosy bower
Now gilds the summit of yon dungeon tower,
And, through the close and narrow grating east,
Is hailed by the sad captive as his last!

With that first ray the fettered Chieftain rose
From fearful visions and disturbed repose;
For him that sun would never rise again.
Towards the grate he dragged his heavy chain.
“This is my latest day, but ere I die,
Fain would I gaze upon the earth and sky.
Oh, heavens! how lovely is the new-born day!
All Nature smiles, all beautiful and gay,
Oh, in my youth, what fairy dreams of bliss
Would Faney picture on a morn like this!
When like the buds I felt my soul expand,
And pictured love and joy on every hand!
When ne'er expecting aught less fair to find,
I ope'd my heart in love to all mankind.

“Ah! thus my fancy in my youth's gay morn
Would her bright images of life adorn;

Yea—like yon sky-lark that so gaily sings
 To heaven, aspiring on exulting wings—
 Would leave this world below and wildly soar
 To add to that fair heaven one heaven more ;
 Life, like yon firmament she drew serene,
 Nor clouds obscured—nor storms disturbed the scene,
 And Friendship, Pleasure, Love, and Hope, were given
 To shine as stars in her ideal heaven !
 'Twas all delusion ! What are earthly joys
 But pleasing dreams our wakening destroys ;
 And I have wakened, yea, to scenes of pain
 That make me wish that I could dream again.

“Love is a madness—happiness a dream !
 And Hope and Friendship things that only seem.
 I've tried them all, and found them all untrue,
 And long have bid them and the world adieu ;
 I loved it once, and prized its idle state—
 Suspected—then despised—and now—I hate !”

Thus spoke the Chief, but now in angry tone
 He spoke aloud—“Why am I here alone ?
 Why am I fettered when all else are free,
 And left to act their crimes at large but me ?
 And greater villains that deserve my fate”——
 He turned indignantly and left the grate,
 Where he could see the swallows round him skim,
 And all in happy liberty but him.

E'en thus, a wild enthusiast in all
 The Chief had been, and it had shed his fall,

One he had known—his honourable sire—
Such as his heart could cherish and admire,
And loved to imitate, and Fancy dressed
And with his virtues painted all the rest—
Free, open, generous, gay, noble, young,
Assailed too often by the flattering tongue;
Affected love and proffered friendships fell,
He prized too highly and believed too well;
Beloved, he thought, by all, and loving too,
These were the best, the happiest days he knew;
Blest in his blindness! For how blest is he
Who sees the world as it ought to be;
Who, pressed by want, or misery, or woe,
Still finds, or fancies, friends, but not a foe,
And with Despair successfully can cope,
Buoyed up by frail but never-failing Hope,
Though never realized, and blessed at last
If the veil drops not and reveals the past.

Not so with him, for soon as fortune wore
A frowning look, and friends were friends no more,
But shunned his woe, not blushing to condemn
The very faults that had exalted them;
Or rising undisguised as open foes,
Scarce deigned to hide they triumphed in his woes;
But hailed the fall that left him now too weak
Just vengeance for their injuries to wreak!
Then from his cheated eyes the film soon cleared,
And all the world's deformity appeared.
Once he had loved it, and too highly prized,
But now as strongly hated and despised

He fled its vile contagion with speed—
A misanthrope—nor more in word than deed!

By Flattery, that with the world began
The woes, abasement, and the fall of man;
That, demon-like, still ruins and beguiles,
And while betraying each sad victim smiles!
Thus felt the Chief. How hapless are the great,
If such their evils and too oft their fate.
Truth they ne'er know divested of disguise,
And scarcely see but through another's eyes;—
But, knowing other men—and, what is more,
Knowing themselves—how happy are the poor;
Too oft condemned for vices they have not,
And scarce allowed the virtues they have got;
None ever flatter them—nor oft they fail
Betrayed by vanity or flattering tale.

But to my theme. The Chieftain turned away
As though he sought to shun the light of day.
On his hard couch he threw his limbs once more,
All racked with pain, or stiff with clotted gore;
And while across his pale and varying cheek
The sudden throbs of anguish seemed to speak,
His wild and working brain appeared as fraught
With far more keen and agonizing thought;
Remembrance, perhaps, of gay and happier times,
Linked with the memory of after crimes,
And keen remorse that shudders o'er the past,
With deep regret for joys that fled too fast,
And doubtings of the future and his fate,
And all the sorrows of his present state,

With all their varied pangs, were mingled there,
Nor sunk nor settled, but in calm despair.

Oh, who can speak that wandering of thought,
When, with all varied recollections fraught,
In wild confusion the bewildered brain
Now turns from woe to joy—from joy to pain;
Now sinks and saddens over present woes,
And now o'er scenes of former pleasure glows;
Regretting joys and means which, once possessed,
If better known or valued, would have blessed;
Thus boiled the Chieftain's brain, and pondered o'er
The scenes of long-lost happiness once more.

Yes; 'twas the mansion of his sires he eyed,
Such as it had been in the days of pride,
Though many a lingering, long, and painful day
Since he had left its roof had passed away;
Yet could not time nor misery efface
Of former joys the long remembered trace.
No; though each hope of happiness had flown—
Had left the bitterness of life alone;
Though deeds of guilt his soul had long bereft
Of the last solace to the wretched left;
Undimmed the retrospect of happy years
Shone bright through times of misery and tears;
And oft, as in delusive dream restored,
We greet departed friends we've long deplored,
His mind forgot the sense of present pain,
And dreamed o'er scenes of happiness again.

E'en now, abstracted from his present state,—
 His pain, misfortune, and impending fate,—
 His mind retraced the ever-pleasing scene
 Of things, times, pleasures, feelings that had been.

But, suddenly, a harsh discordant sound
 Roused him to consciousness of things around.
 He started, and strove vainly to recall
 The fleeting phantoms on the dungeon wall,
 But they had fled in air like parting breath,
 And left him with the Messenger of Death!

With calm, unaltered voice, unvarying cheek,
 The fated Prisoner was the first to speak:
 "I know thy message—no unwelcome one
 To him whose days of misery are done.
 The time is gone such tidings could impart
 Reluctance, grief, or terror to my heart.
 Too long the cup of bitterness I've quaffed
 Without one hope e'er mingled in the draught
 To quit this wretched being with regret;
 And as for Death—why, I can brave him yet;—
 Nay, as an Angel—Harbinger of Peace—
 I'll hail the Spectre if he bring release!"—

"Enough!"—

Harsh as the grating hinge, and rough,
 Responsive rung the keeper's loud "Enough."
 Surprised, he turned again—ne'er till that hour,
 Of all the inmates of that gloomy tower,

None had he known who gazed on Death so near
 With such rejoicing and so little fear.
 But, lo! he started as he seemed to trace
 Some dear remembrance in the captive's face;
 Swift to embrace the prisoner he flew—
 "Oh, heaven!—my lord—my master—is it you?"

Up rose the Chieftain with a sudden start,
 That voice had struck upon his throbbing heart!
 "Ha! Is it Donald! or a mocking dream?
 Are these things so, or do they only seem?
 Am I awake? The gaoler bent the knee—
 "Alas, no dream—dear master, I am he!"

All pride forgotten quite, the Chieftain pressed
 His former steward warmly to his breast,
 But rudely bursting from the Chief's embrace
 He paused, and wildly gazed around the place.

"Oh, I forgot you lingered here to die.
 Behold the keys! Oh, take them now and fly:
 My clothes, perchance, will happily disguise
 And shroud your person from more careless eyes.
 For, ah, though Arden kneels before the throne,
 I fear 'twill change the punishment alone—
 The gibbet to the block—our nobles hate
 The noble soul that made you once so great.
 No hope remains but this—let me implore
 Your speedy flight."

The Chieftain frowned—"No more!
 Perchance 'tis justice dooms me now to bleed,

And you would save me by a traitor's deed!
 When have I fled my foes or valued life,
 Or shrunk when Death menaced me in the strife?
 Perhaps one more in love with life than I
 Would hail the terms, but now I scorn to fly!
 Beside your hate and punishment, too sure,
 Would leave my safety still too insecure."

Proudly he answered—"Have you then forgot
 The loathsome dungeon—once my cruel lot
 To linger there a sad and joyless time—
 Misfortune's punishment, and not for crime?
 Your bounty freed me thence, and now 'tis due
 From gratitude to pay the same for you.
 And, ah! my life I cheerfully resign,
 For many woes—few comforts—now are mine!
 Oh, add one more—O, hark! The warning bell,
 One short hour more, it tolls your parting knell.
 I pray!—I kneel!"—

"O give me not the pain,"
 The Chieftain said, "to see you kneel in vain.
 I am resolved—a solemn oath I swore
 To leave these hated walls with life no more.
 That oath I keep; but, would you glad my soul,
 Bring me a dagger or a poisoned bowl.
 This last request I urge with latest breath,
 Oh! spare your Chief an ignominious death!"

"Alas, I know Glenallan's word too well
 To hope to move you now, my Lord—Farewell!

I have a dagger, but my heart shall feel
Its deepest reach ere you shall use the steel.
What! can no other hand but mine be pressed
To lend the dagger for my Patron's breast!
Ah! it must be! once more, my lord, adieu;
My death alone surrenders it to you!"

He raised his hand, but with a sudden clasp
The Chieftain caught the dagger in his grasp.
"Ha! Now I laugh to scorn the feeble chain,
The guarded fortress shall not e'en detain.
In vain shall vengeful crowds impatient flock
To see my head fall streaming from the block;
Exulting peers shall not behold me fall,
And for their tortures I elude them all.
Dungeon and fetters may the limbs control,
But what can fetter or confine the soul?
Now I am free—live to behold me die,
And tell the world Glenallan scorned to fly;
And tell with all the courage of a friend
No sign of weakness marked my latter end.
Live, I command you! say to Arden this—
I thank his zeal and pray heaven send him bliss;
Tell him to love"—it died upon his tongue,
The gaoler's hand in agony he wrung.
Each strove to speak, but wept, embraced anew,
They only in their hearts could say—"Adieu!"

Thus had they lingered, but the distant sound
Of hurried footsteps broke the silence round.
Still nearer comes the noise—they rush apart,
A moment more, he aims against his heart—

'Tis missed—he strikes again—too sure the aim—
The deathless spirit quits its mortal frame,
That still and silent lies amid its gore,
And tells to all—Glenallan is no more!

Again the bolts recede, the jarring din
No more disturbs the prisoner within;
He wakes no more, nor can that sound impart
One quicker throb of terror to his heart;
Too late the lingering voice of mercy calls,
And “Pardon!” “Pardon!” echoes to the walls.
He hears it not—nor would the tidings give
More joy, perchance, or pleasure did he live.
But o'er his body hath he still a friend,
Who seems in silent agony to bend.
All knew his crimes too well, and some had wept
The loss of friends where his revenge had swept,
But Arden weeps his breathless body o'er,
And Donald's tears are mingled with his gore;
Together now they pour the sorrowing sigh,
Nor let him quite unwept, unpitied die!





CHAPTER VI.

Hood extends his Acquaintanceship in Dundee—His love of Chess—Experiences as an Angler—A Literary Tobacco-Spinner—The Boatmen and Fishermen of the Craig Pier—His love of Books—Departure for London.

IN the autumn and winter, Hood extended the number of his acquaintances, paid visits, and was on the whole well received. George Rollo and Andrew Wyllie, to judge from the correspondence, seem to have been his most intimate acquaintances. The trio were enthusiastic chess players, and many a keen contest took place between them. Hood had a strong liking for the game, and he frequently refers to it in his earlier letters. After he returned to London he retained his love for it, and when any of his acquaintances paid a visit he was sure to have a bout with them. The chessmen used in Dundee are in possession of Mr Rollo.

When summer returned in 1816, Hood renewed his acquaintance with his friends in the Carse. He became a skilful angler, and whipped the pows, burns, and streams, in search of their finny treasures. The love for this

healthy recreation grew upon him, and even while residing in the pent-up atmosphere of the Overgate he would slip away for a day's outing on the banks of a favourite stream. The following interesting picture of this period is taken from the "Reminiscences." "Whenever the weather permitted," he says, "which was generally when there were no new books to the fore, I haunted the banks and braes, or paid flying visits to the burns, with a rod intended to punish that rising generation amongst fishes called trout. But I whipped in vain. Trout there were in plenty; but, like obstinate double teeth with a bad operator, they would neither be pulled out nor come out of themselves. Still the sport, if it might be so called, had its own attractions, as—the catching excepted—the whole of the Waltonish enjoyments were at my command—the contemplative quiet, the sweet, wholesome country air, and the picturesque scenery, not to forget relishing the homely repast at the shieling or the mill. Sometimes I went alone, but often we were a company, and then we had as an attendant a journeyman tobacco spinner, an original, and literary withal, for he had a reel in his head, whence ever and anon he unwound a line of Allan Ramsay, or Beattie, or Burns. Methinks I still listen, trudging homewards in the gloaming, to the recitation of that appropriate stanza, beginning—

‘At the close of the day when the hamlet is still,’

delivered with a gusto perhaps only to be felt by a day labouring mechanic, who had ‘nothing but his evenings to himself.’ Methinks I still sympathize with the zest

with which he dwelt on the pastoral images and dreams so rarely realized, when a chance holiday gave him the fresh-breathing fragrance of the living flower in lieu of the stale odour of the Indian weed; and philosophically I can now understand why poetry with its lofty aspirations and sublime feelings seemed to sound so gratefully to the ear from the lips of a 'squire of low degree.' There is something painful and humiliating to humanity in the abjectness of mind that too often accompanies the sordid condition of the working classes, whereas it is soothing and consolatory to find the mind of the poor man rising superior to his estate, and compensating by intellectual enjoyment for the physical pains and privation that belong to his humble lot. Whatever raises him above the level of the ox in the garner or the horse in the mill ought to be acceptable to the pride, if not to the charity, of the fellow-creature that calls him brother."

These are fine sentiments, and show that Hood, when he gave expression to them, well understood the feelings of an intelligent working-man, released from toil, setting off to the hills to sniff the "caller air," free and untrammelled. Every effort has been made to find out the literary tobacco spinner, but without success. He seems to have been one of those sedate, unostentatious men, gifted with the best of talents, to be found quietly plodding in many a workshop, but who never rise above their labour. Great readers, clear thinkers, clever men in their way; toiling through life for their daily bread, their light ever burning beneath a bushel, they go down to the grave unknown, except to the limited circle in

which they have moved. Such, so far as can be ascertained, was this companion of Hood's.

"To these open-air pursuits," adds the poet, "sailing was afterwards added, bringing me acquainted with the boatmen and fishermen of the Craig, a hardy race, rough and ready-witted, from whom perchance was first derived my partiality for all marine bipeds and sea-craft, from Flag Admirals down to Jack Junk, the proud first-rate to the humble boatie that 'wins the bairn's bread.' The Tay at Dundee is a broad, noble river, with a racing tide, which, when it differs with a contrary wind, will get up 'jars' (Anglicé, waves) quite equal to those of a family manufacture. It was at least a good preparatory school for learning the rudiments of boatercraft, whereof I acquired enough to be able at need to take the helm without either going too near the wind or too distant from the port. Not without some boyish pride I occasionally found myself entrusted with the guidance of the coach boat—so called from its carrying the passengers by the Edinburgh mail—particularly in a calm, when the utmost exertions of the crew, four old man-of-war's men, were required at the oars. It not unfrequently happened that the 'laddie' was unceremoniously ousted by the unanimous vote, and sometimes by the united strength, of the ladies, who invariably pitched upon the oldest old gentleman in the vessel to

'Steer her up and haud her gaun.'

Such was Hood's mode of living while resident in Dundee. He came as a stranger, and with the exception

of making the acquaintance of a select coterie of friends, he departed as such. He was distant and retiring in his manners, and his bodily complaints caused him rather to shun than seek the society of those of his own age and station in life. He was full of jollity and pawkiness, and, although he could not enter heartily into Scottish sports and pastimes, he appreciated them all the same. Like most young men of delicate constitutions, he devoted himself to the cultivation of his mind by reading every book that came within his reach. He seems, too, to have set himself to the acquirement of a correct knowledge of the principles of art, as his sketching proclivities will show, to qualify himself as an engraver, an occupation which at this time it was his intention of following. Literature he ardently loved, but it was more in the light of an accomplishment than a profession. He did not dream of making it the means by which he was to push his way in the world. His hope lay in the skilful use of the burin, and to the attainment of that end he at that time shaped his energies.

The rupture between Hood and his aunt may have been healed before he left for the south. There is a paucity of information on this point. Mrs Keay was reticent on the subject—Hood is silent; but their friends always understood that there had been an “awfu’ quarrel” between them.

The date of Hood’s return to London cannot be definitely fixed. It may have been in the autumn of 1816 or the spring of 1817. At all events, we find from the first of the following letters that he was engaged in business as an engraver in 1818.

It will also be seen that he received occasional visits from one or two of his old acquaintances. Wyllie, Rollo, and Shaw frequently called upon him. Both Rollo and Shaw resided for a considerable time in the metropolis; and it was only after Hood left for Coblenz that their intimacy was interrupted, to be resumed again, in the case of Shaw only, when the poet paid his second visit to Dundee in 1843.





CHAPTER VII.

LETTERS

WRITTEN BY HOOD AFTER HIS FIRST VISIT TO DUNDEE.

I.

Hood in London—Improved Health—His love of Chess—His Business as an Engraver—Sketch of Messieux of St. Andrews—"The Dundee Guide"—Desire for Travel—Business Increasing—Length of Apprenticeship to Engraving—Orders a Highland Plaid—Anticipates another Visit to Scotland—Death of his Mother—His Love for her—Supports Himself and Sisters by his Labour.

Somewhere near Islington Church,
Sometime about 7th February [1819].

Dear George,—I received your obliging letter per Mr Wyllie, and am grateful to you for the great pleasure which it afforded me.

I promised Mr W. to call on him and try his strength at chess, which I have yet been unable to do, for Christmas brought me no vacation, and this, I trust, will excuse and account with you for my delay in answering your letter.

I have the pleasure in being able to tell you that the improvement in my health leaves me now little to wish

for on that head, added to which my business and connection gradually extend. In short, that I succeed as well as I can reasonably expect in these days of universal depression. The little crosses and vexations, and the chicaneries of business in general, are now less new to me, and I can meet them with comparative calmness, so that in another year I hope to be tolerably settled.

I have made an alteration in the nature of my amusements, and flatter myself that they have now a more useful tendency, and may in the end be of benefit both to myself and others. I sometimes devote an hour to little mechanical inventions connected with my pursuits, and sometime ago completed a little instrument which I deem would be serviceable in copying drawings, &c. I sent it to the Society of Arts, and had the honour of explaining it before the Society's Committee on Mechanics, but found they were in possession of a similar one for the same purpose I had never seen. This was rather unlucky, but I have another one in progress which may succeed better. At anyrate I lose nothing.

I am at present trying to perfect an instrument for drawing lines to meet in a point at any distance, as used in perspective, in order to be able to draw them without going beyond the margin of your drawing, and thus obviating the inconvenience of having to rule so far.

Since writing the above I have had the pleasure of seeing Mr Wyllie, who called to inquire the reason of my not seeing him, and I have returned his visit, and have, moreover, engaged him at chess, gaining five battles out of six. But one trial, of course, is not sufficient to determine the mastery. I must confess that I was afraid

my want of practice would have served me worse, but, after leaving your country *unconquered*, I was resolved not to be beaten by your countryman on my own ground if I could help it. I shall now provide myself with a set, which I have hitherto been without for mere want of somebody to play with. It is true that a young lady within a few doors of us desires me to teach her to play at chess, but to learn it requires so much patience that I am not anxious to attempt the task, recollecting that Job was not a woman.

I should much like to know if Messieux has returned, and to have his address at St. Andrews, if you could procure it for me. He called here when I was with you, but I have not heard of or from him since. If ever you see him in Dundee I wish you would tell him to send it himself, or come with it himself,—whichever may be most convenient.

With respect to what you are pleased to call my poem, you may delay it till any convenient time, as it is of no other use to me but to show of what has been the nature of my amusements. I cannot now find time for anything of the kind, except a few short bagatelles as New Year compliments, &c. &c. And, let me here, in adverting to those compliments, present you with my sincere wishes for that happiness which one friend should wish to another, and which it is customary to offer rather earlier; but, I assure you, they have not lost in strength like some things by long keeping, and therefore still are fit for me to present to you for yours and your brother's acceptance—only, that I regret to be thus obliged to send them wrapped up in paper!

I have said that I cannot find time to write such things now—and, indeed, after the study and close application necessary in engraving, it would cease to be any relaxation. But, independent of this employment, I have to keep my books (not my *ledger*, for that is kept too easily), but my note and plate books, in which I keep account of any hints, occurrences, discoveries, instructions, &c. &c., relative to the art, together with a journal of my own operations and transactions—history of my plates, my own comments and those of others, difficulties, failures, successes, &c. &c. &c. &c., so that I have enough to do in that way. Altogether, these compose rather a meddled history, and one perhaps that will afford me more pleasure to peruse hereafter than it does at present.

In fact, I am now obliged to turn the amusing, if I can, into the *profitable*, not that I am ambitious or of a very money-loving disposition, but I am obliged to be so. Otherwise, I believe, if left to myself, I should be content with a very moderate station, for, like you, I believe I am of a “domestic indolent turn.” But this is all speculative reasoning, perhaps; and I might find—that summit attained—that the content was as far off as ever, increasing by a kind of arithmetical progression. Thus, when seen from the valley, the summit of the mountain appears to touch the skies; but when we have ascended and reached its top, we seem, and no doubt are, as far from heaven as ever!

The most provoking part of my profession is that the fame and the profit are so connected that those who wish to decrease the price can only do it by depreciating the merit and withholding that fame which is, in fact, part of

the price. This is all so much the worse for me, now that I have grown so wise, that if they took away the former I could philosophically console myself with the latter. I find that I am not yet quite *sharp* enough to cope with veteran men of business, but suppose every rub they give me will make my wit much keener. I am now tolerably content with what I pay for my experience, considering I have just concluded my first year's apprenticeship to the world.

I hope you will decipher this, for I see it is vilely scrawled; but deeming it more friendly to meet you *en déshabillé* than to deny myself to you, I send it with this one request that you will put those stops which I cannot stop to put.

Remember me kindly to your brother and all friends, and believe me, dear George, yours very truly,

THOS. HOOD.

P.S.—I do not know anybody through whom you may send anything except Wyllie, unless Captain Lyon would bring it here.

The foregoing letter bears no date; but, as will be shown in a subsequent letter that Hood commenced business in 1818, and as he states that he had "just concluded his first year's apprenticeship to the world," it must have been written in 1819. His prospects as an engraver do not at this period appear to be very bright. He does not despond, but speaks in hopeful tones of success. The "Dear George" to whom this and

the three succeeding letters were written was his companion in Dundee, Mr George Rollo, of Harefield, Lochee, and brother of the late Provost Rollo, an eminent legal practitioner of the town. Mr Andrew Wyllie has already been referred to. He was the son of Mr George Wyllie, manufacturer, who was amongst the leading merchants of Dundee at the end of last and beginning of the present century. The elder Wyllie had business connections in Antwerp and London. These were superintended by the son, who, having made Hood's acquaintance at Mrs Butterworth's, frequently visited him while in the metropolis. The intimacy between the two young men, which was of the most friendly nature, was terminated by the premature death of Wyllie, who succumbed to illness brought on by injudiciously bathing in the Tay, his death taking place in the autumn of 1825. While Hood resided in Dundee he often visited Mr Wyllie's house, in Murraygate, adjoining the premises of his friend, Mr Hood, the merchant, whose pony he so often bestrode. Mr Wyllie had a sister, and the young man on one of his visits engraved her name upon a favourite writing-desk. Miss Wyllie afterwards became the wife of her father's partner, Mr William Johnston, who in 1841 was elected Provost of the town. The desk was carefully preserved, Mrs Johnston retaining it as one of her household treasures during her lifetime, and at death bequeathing it to her son, Mr Alexander Johnston, architect, who appreciates it as an interesting souvenir of the poet. Hood also refers to one of his early compositions, which he had left in the hands of Mr Rollo. This is the poem which has already been quoted.

Hood, in the foregoing letter, frequently mentions a gentleman bearing the name of Messieux. In one of the letters in the "Memorials," dated Dundee, September 1815, he gives a description of his fellow-lodgers, amongst whom, he says—"At present we have a Swiss, who appears to be an agreeable man, but I do not know how he may be on further acquaintance." Messieux was a Swiss, and the gentleman referred to in Hood's letter. From what we have been able to learn, it seems that Samuel Messieux and his brother Adam came about the same time as Hood to Dundee, where they intended to settle as teachers of languages. Samuel and Hood were soon on terms of intimacy, which ripened into friendship. The brothers Messieux were remarkable men. A gentleman who was many years the colleague of Samuel in Madras College, St. Andrews, states that they were the sons of a landed proprietor in Switzerland. On the death of their father, the property was, by Swiss law, divided among eleven children; and, as is also usual, these two, having sold their portions to their elder brother, and having had a university education at Constance, came to this country to see the world and establish themselves in a profession. Samuel at first settled in Dundee and Adam in Aberdeen as teachers of modern languages. Both ultimately gravitated towards St. Andrews as a more promising field, but not before they had made warm friends in their early settlements.

When Samuel was in Dundee it chanced that Thomas Hood came from London and lodged in the same house. They immediately became intimate, and, when the former went to St. Andrews, Hood occasionally visited him in

that city. The brothers became great favourites with the best society of St. Andrews, taking to its sports and ways with the zest of young and generous natures. They became first-rate golfers; and were elected members of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club. They were excellent amateur actors; good at billiards; and were well bred, cultured, and highly esteemed members of the small but critical society of those times. Many stories are extant of their doings in St. Andrews, one being recorded in the club minutes to the effect that Samuel one winter day at golf drove the longest or rather the farthest ball that had then or ever been achieved. Another and still more wonderful feat is told of Adam, who, on the occasion of a pair of carriage horses taking fright in Castle Street, where he lodged, rushed after them, and, just in time to save the occupants of the machine, managed to head, and, by dint of main strength, at the imminent danger of his own life, to swerve the horses from the road by the Castle, thus averting what might have turned out a serious, if not fatal, accident. Their courage, strength, and gentleness were proverbial, and they might in a word be described as "Alpine" in character. Mr Samuel Messieux was appointed Master of Modern Languages in Madras College when it was opened in 1832, and held the appointment till about twenty-five years ago, when, his eyesight failing, he was pensioned, but only to survive for the space of two years or so. Shortly after Samuel's appointment to Madras College his brother Adam left for Switzerland. "My memories of Samuel," continues his old colleague, "are still fresh and altogether pleasant. In conversation, manner,

and address, he was as nearly perfect as I have known—a warm friend, both witty and wise. I am not surprised that Hood should have taken to him so warmly and kindly, for Messieux was the soul of honour—simple and true, and swift of mind to catch and appreciate such gifts as those of Hood. He was endowed with many excellent qualities, which made him worthy of our own country and an honour to his birth-land.”

Such is a description of one of Hood’s earliest and most valued acquaintances in Scotland, and the relationship between the two seems to have been very cordial. Messieux formed one of the coterie of jovial “young bachelors,” and doubtless contributed largely to the happiness of the little circle. As the Swiss exercised his vocation in Dundee for sometime, it is probable that Hood obtained his knowledge of the French language from that gentleman. Messieux died a number of years ago, and his widow and family left St. Andrews and settled in Paris.

II.

The following letter, which was addressed to the late Mr Robert Miln, another of the poet’s early companions, throws further light on the nature of the poet’s studies and amusements while in Dundee. It has been kindly forwarded by Mr R. Findlay Miln of Hoylake, Cheshire—Mr Miln’s son. Encouraged by the success which his contributions to the *Advertiser* and *Magazine* had met, it seems

to have been Hood's intention to follow these up by a series of rhyming letters descriptive of the town, and framed on the principles of "Anstey's Bath Guide," to which reference is made in a letter quoted in the "Memorials." These letters formed a MS. volume, which he entitled the "Dundee Guide." Nothing decisive appears to have been done, and the letters were held in abeyance till 1820, when Mr Miln makes inquiry about them. The following interesting letter in reply shows that Hood still contemplated their appearance in print, for he not only gives direction as to the manner of their publication, but adds a preface, in which he tries to efface his own identity as their author.

Lower Street, Islington, May 1820.

Dear Rob,—I have sent to my friend Rollo,—who will hand you this letter,—the book which you have requested me to send to you—the *Dundee Guide*—and which I have been unable to procure till lately.

Upon looking it over I think that many of the subjects to which it refers will now be out of date, and particularly that part of it beginning—

"And the French jockey hat is now worn in this town,"
and ending at—

"He without her consent would not steal e'en a kiss,"
which I have marked for you to omit in case you should make that use of it which was proposed. It

would be better, I presume, to send a few of the letters together instead of a single one at first, in order that the editor might see the design of them; and I shall endeavour to send a preface addressed to that gentleman, in case you should think proper, on conference with Mr R., to make that use of them.

I have numbered the letters in the order in which I should wish them to follow, and marked some omissions in pencil.

I fear they are not worth the trouble of your writing out, and I cannot forget that *lawyers* are not over fond of writing for nothing.

I have now no news, but, hoping for at least as many lines in return, I am, dear Bob, yours truly,

THOS. HOOD.

P.S.—I write, as you will perceive, in great haste.

Hood did not wait to write the preface separately to the editor, but indites it on the fly-leaf of the same letter he sent to Miln. It is as follows:—

P R E F A C E.

Sir,—Although it is well known that Bath and Cheltenham have been visited by the celebrated Blunderhead Family, it has hitherto been unknown that some of their descendants have visited the town of Dundee in strict incognito.

This fact is, however, confirmed by some letters which have fallen into my hands, which I have arranged, and with the permission of the author, now send to be inserted, if you think fit, in your weekly paper.

Some subjects to which they refer may now be partially out of date, as they were written in 1815, but some remarks may still be applicable.—I am, Sir, yours, &c.

THOS. HOOD.

Whatever negotiations Mr Miln had with the editor of the *Advertiser*—for the Mr R. referred to in the letter was Mr Rintoul, editor of that paper—nothing satisfactory resulted from them. The files of the *Dundee Advertiser* for 1820, 1821, and 1822, have been searched, but not a single trace of anything appertaining to the “Guide” can be found. The files of the *Dundee Courier* were submitted to the same scrutiny, with a like result.

The following letter tells us that the *Guide* has been lost; but we entertained hopes that some of the letters might have made their way into the columns of the paper, and therefore made the search. With the exception of the quotations from the Scrap-book forwarded to his aunt, the remainder of the *Dundee Guide* is lost beyond recovery.

In the annexed letter Hood speaks cheerfully of his prospects.

III.

Lower Street, January, sometime 1820.

Dear George,—Mr Wyllie, in bringing me your welcome letter, found me very busy upon a plate from a drawing of a gentleman's seat which I told you, I think, nearly a year ago, I was endeavouring to obtain. I have just got it, and, as it is for a very fine work, I am obliged to pay very close attention to it, working from ten morning till ten or eleven o'clock at night for these last three weeks, so that this Christmas season has brought me no holidays. But as I had been more idle before, and hunting for business rather than doing it (a general case now), I sit down to it cheerfully, and especially as it shall open to me, if I succeed, a new and wider path. I have done so far as to form some idea of how it will be, and am induced to hope favourably.

From the midst of all this I write in order to ease your mind on the subject of a disaster, which in vexing you one hour has vexed you more than it has me, for I assure you your description of it had no other effect than that of making me laugh. The sudden and mysterious disappearance of the *Dundee Guide* has in it something so romantic as to make a very fine sequel to its history, by leading one to imagine that Apollo—or one of the Nine Muses, perhaps—had taken possession of it. I will tell you, too, a secret for your comfort, that the loss, even if great,

would not be irreparable, for I could, if necessary, write afresh from memory, and nearly verbatim. It is the same with nearly all the rest of my effusions, some of which I shall hereafter send for your perusal, to show you that I do not consider you the "careless friend" you represent yourself to be. I continue to receive much pleasure from our literary society, and from my own pursuits in that way—in which, considering my little time, I am very industrious—that is to say, I spoil a deal of paper. My last is a mock heroic love tale of 600 lines, with notes critical and explanatory, which I lately finished after many intervals, independent of two poetical addresses to the society on closing and opening a fresh session, with various pieces, chiefly amatory. The society only costs me a page or two once in three months or so, but I join in their discussions every fortnight, if able. I receive few visits, and I pay still fewer, and thus my time wears away.

I am very happy, however, when I have time, to pay my visits on paper, as I now do, because I am sure of a greater pleasure in its being returned, not that I mean to stand on ceremonies with you more than Wyllie, for as we do not regularly balance visit against visit, so if it comes into my head to send you two letters for one, I shall not stick at it, and if you do the same, I shall not feel offended by such a breach of punctilio.

I have had no letter from Messieux, and feel obliged to you for your offer to him that you would forward any letter to me. I shall write to him ere long, and, as I know not where to find him, I shall perhaps give you the trouble of directing it and forwarding it to him. I learned from the newspaper the dreadful accident to which

you have carried my attention in your letter, and have no doubt of its being an inexpressible shock to Mrs Brown. If you recollect, there was a pistol with which Messieux and I used to amuse ourselves, and is, I dare say, the one which has proved fatal to poor Henry.

I am the more anxious to open or rather renew a correspondence with M., because—and I am sorry to say it—I see no prospect of seeing you or him next summer, not that I could make any trip more agreeable, but that I shall be able to make no trips at all. I find that I shall have so much to do to establish myself in business properly, and to attain to proficiency in an art which has made so great a progress towards excellence, that I shall have no time at my command, unless I should be able to get a long plate, and do it down with you; and, indeed, if I were engraving there you would have so little of my company as to make it of little or no consequence whether I were there or in London. I shall therefore defer my visit till I can make a thorough holiday of it, and enjoy the company of my friends without interruption.

I should like very much to make with you the tour you propose to make next summer. I could there find first-rate subjects for my pencil; and I wonder that so many persons who can or will travel do not first visit those places in their own country and neighbourhood which could afford them so fine scenery and so great hospitality as the Highlands of Scotland. These, and the western lakes in Cumberland and Westmoreland, I would rather visit, and next to these the romantic and wild scenery of Switzerland.

I hope that Sylvester's translation to Glasgow will be a step towards advancement and happiness. You will, no doubt, regret that he should have to go there while you are stationary; but I hope that, nevertheless, they will not be prevented from coming to you where you are, lest when I go to Dundee I should have to look in vain for you, who are amongst my last friends there.

Grey called on me here some months ago. He came only *en passant*, and was not long enough for me to learn what brought him to London. I was not very desirous of inviting him to an intimacy, for reasons you will readily guess, and I have not seen him again. But with Wyllie I am very thick, as you call it, and we have a duo at flutes and a duel at chess with great pleasure. He told you, no doubt, of his success at the latter, and I begin to doubt if I shall ever regain those laurels I once wore. But I am not cowed, and in a few days I hope to open a fresh campaign with greater success. He drank tea here together with Bailie Thoms' son, who is also a player at chess, but as yet untried by me. I would not advise him to attack me now, for Wyllie has worked me up so, that like an urchin that has been thumped, I am ready to wreak my revenge upon anyone I meet—even though it should be yourself.

Since writing the preceding I have been waiting for a call from Wyllie to send it, but he has stayed away longer than usual, and I have been unable to call on him, as his business is on the other side of the city to where my business lies. I have also had more

business on my hands these last six weeks than I ever had before; for, besides the plate I mentioned, I have three others all in hand at once, which I am obliged to superintend. I have been successful in the plate which has cost me so much anxiety; and the result of four years' learning and experience in the art will appear in a work along with those of my former master, and of others who have generally served apprenticeships of seven years. I was but two years old in engraving when I set up for myself, and have been two more on my own fingers; and, as some of my friends seemed doubtful as to the success of such an experiment, I am very happy and somewhat proud of this result, in which I have obtained one object of my ambition.

I shall send with this or hereafter an impression of my plate for your acceptance, as a thing of no value, but as a token of my regard and esteem. I find that I shall not be able to send my poems to you for sometime, as they are in the hands of an intelligent bookseller, a friend of mine, who wishes to look them over. He says that they are worth publishing, but I doubt very much if he would give me any proof of his opinion, or I should indulge in the hope of sending them to you in a more durable shape.

Wyllie has called, but I have been so busy—sometimes till two and three in the morning—that I could not really finish this. Besides the four plates, I have had two others as soon as I could finish two of the first, so that I am just where I was. I have not been

able, therefore, to call on Wyllie till the date of this. I send, however, the engraving, and something for Messieux, which I will trouble you and thank you to forward at your convenience. I do not know his address, but, if you take charge of it, I have no doubt of its reaching him. I hope to write more at leisure next time, and am, dear George, yours truly,

THOS. HOOD.

Feb. 20, 1821.

It will be observed that the contents of this letter extend over fully a year. It was begun "sometime in January 1820," and had been added to at intervals till Hood concluded it in February 20, 1821. After the first paragraph had been written, there appears to have been a lapse, and he resumes the second one by bantering Rollo upon "the mysterious disappearance of the *Dundee Guide*," which he says he was able to replace from memory. This the poet never did, although he makes further reference to it in the next letter. The melancholy accident to which he refers will be explained by the following extract from the *Dundee Advertiser* of date October 20, 1820, viz.:—"Henry Brown, a fine boy, eleven years of age, the youngest son of our late townsman, Mr Lawrence Brown, of St. Petersburg, lost his life at St. Andrews last week by the accidental discharge of a pistol, which his playmates, the children of Captain Mason, had found in an unlocked drawer. The death of poor Brown was instantaneous, the pistol bullet having passed

through his heart. Two of Captain Mason's children had their arms round his neck and waist when he fell, but they both escaped unhurt. An attempt to rob the house, it is said, had been made a few nights before, and this is the reason why the captain so unfortunately, as it turned out, kept his pistols loaded." Hood and Messieux were wont to amuse themselves with a pistol, which the poet thought was the same by which the young lad had been killed. It may be inferred that Hood occasionally visited his Swiss friend in the University city, as it will be seen that the accident occurred there.

The most important point of the letter is that which relates to the time he devoted to the acquirement of the art of engraving—two years! As has already been shown, the greater part, if not the whole, of these years, had been served prior to his visit to Scotland. If he returned to London in the autumn of 1816, or even early in 1817, he might have been engaged by the Kleux family for a short time, and then started on his own account, but we have no evidence to that effect. The utmost that these letters inform us is, that he commenced business early in 1818. Whether two years of an apprenticeship and two years on one's "own fingers" would be sufficient time to master the intricacies of an art so difficult and delicate in manipulation as that of engraving, and qualify him to produce work to rank "along with that of a former master and of others who have generally served apprenticeships of seven years," is a question for experts to decide. At all events, it is shown that for at least three years prior to entering upon a literary profession Hood was fully engaged earning his

livelihood as a practical engraver, and putting out work which met with the acceptance of his employers.

A Mr Grey is mentioned in the foregoing letter. He belonged to a firm of timber merchants in Dundee, and was an acquaintance of Robert Miln and Andrew Wyllie.

It may here be mentioned that Robert Miln became one of the leading lawyers in Dundee, and, in conjunction with another lawyer, Mr George Milne, projected the *Dundee Chronicle*, a newspaper which was conducted with marked ability for several years. As has been stated in a former page, Hood and Miln were fellow-lodgers with Mrs Butterworth. The young men were drawn towards each other by a similarity in tastes, and perhaps, too, by the delicacy of their constitutions, a cause which prevented them from entering into the more vigorous pastimes of the Scottish youth. Miln was a studious young man, and, like Hood, had a taste for writing verse. In looking over the pages of the *Chronicle* it can be observed that many of the pieces of poetry are imitations of the humorist's most popular poems; and, as they are printed in large type, it may be correctly inferred that they were from Miln's pen. To the end of his life, Mr Miln took a strong and friendly interest in the increasing fame and popularity of his friend of old, and was an enthusiastic admirer of his writings.

IV.

Dear George,—You are a pretty fellow to send me such a short letter, and, if it were not for fear of falling short myself, I should scold you. But I heartily forgive you for hastening it, even in its infant state, or half grown, that I might sooner have the benefit of the enclosures.

That must, indeed, be your excuse for me, for I would have heard of no other. Your town, I know, is barren of news, and ours is all sent you by the papers; but I can feed upon very slight food, and the description of even a fishing excursion or anything of that kind would be very agreeable; or, if you were to sketch me any odd character who may fall in your way, or any odd sayings or stories. I know that you once dealt in such things, and I have not lost my relish for them.

As for me, I am just scribbling a Cockney's sentimental journey from Islington to Waterloo Bridge—about three miles—so what a letter you ought to be able to give me by and by about your excursion to the Highlands, with kilts and Ben-Somethings and Loch-Somethings, and I know not what!

I wish I could go with you, and so do you, and so does R. Miln—but I have told the latter why I cannot. I have a literary engagement which will occupy my leisure time (that is to say, what I have heretofore devoted to scribbling), so that I shall not only write now for Pleasure but for Profit; and I begin to have hopes that what I

have scribbled in verse will make its appearance in a little volume, and, should that be decided on, I shall necessarily have a great addition to my occupation in arranging, correcting, &c. &c., but I expect that they will, in that case, be out by Christmas.

I do not think my health will suffer, for I shall be obliged to go out rather more than I perhaps should do voluntarily, and you may mention this to R. M. for his comfort. He says he supposes I am making my fortune, but he is out there, and, consequently, as I could not leave him anything if I were to die to-morrow, he may wish for my long life most sincerely.

I have written to him that I would rather the *Dundee Guide* should remain unknown, *for I think I can do better things*; and as for the other things (this "Bandit," I believe), it is yours if you like it.

I see our friend Wylie as often as possible. We went together to an exhibition of paintings, some time since, and last Thursday he went with me to our Society, where I gave an essay on Poetry to close the session. But chess I must resign, my head is now so much occupied. Methinks I hear you say, what an altered being I must be to give up chess, and that, too, when I have been beaten! But, from the cause just mentioned, I have ceased to find any amusement in it, and therefore there is no hope of retrieving my laurels. Even my flute I must use but sparingly, although it delights me with my own music when I can get no better. But Health! health!—(show this to R. Miln)—I sacrifice them both to health! And as for my paper concerns, I can take them into a garden (and

luckily we have one), so that I shall not want for fresh air.

I received very great joy from M. Messieux's letter, being only the second since our separation, and have answered it, as you will perceive. I do not know whether I may not be giving you great trouble to forward them to him; but, if not, I shall feel obliged by your becoming the medium of communication. There is never anything in my letters that will cool by waiting, so that you can take any opportunity of himself or his friend being in Dundee to forward them; but pray let me know how the matter stands.

I know not how it is that I find more time to write, now that I have more to do; but it may be that I am more settled, and have got into more of a routine; and, perhaps, above all, I am oftener in the mood for writing. At any rate, I am happy, on looking back, to find that I can keep it up so well, all things considered.

I confess that I want subject more than inclination generally, for I am sick, and you will be too, of eternally writing about Self. But we may sometime start some interesting subject of controversy and inquiry, and then we shall go on better. And as those who challenge give the choice of weapons, so I, who propose, give you the choice of subjects; and I hope in your next you will give me some such things as I have mentioned in the beginning to comment upon. What think you of a discussion of Angling, which I know you are fond of? Pray give me some description of its pleasures, &c. &c. &c., and I will reply all that I can, *pro* and *con*.

Having paved the way, as I imagine, for long letters, I

shall end this; and, though I have only occupied a page more than yours, yet, taking my dwarf hand into account, I think that I have really given you "*two for one*."—I am, dear George, yours very truly,

THOS. HOOD.

June 17, 1821.

P.S.—It has been said that an angling rod and line hath a fool at one end and a worm at the other. I do not believe this, and want your vindication.

The foregoing letter requires little comment. Hood is about to merge from the drudgery of the engraver's desk into that peculiar field of literature which, ere long, he made his own. He had been appointed sub-editor of the *London Magazine*, in the pages of which several of his earliest compositions were published, and was introduced to a number of its most able contributors. There is one noteworthy sentence in the letter—"Health! health!" he exclaims, "I sacrifice everything to health!" This is a passionate exclamation of a young man full of hope, full of bright anticipations, longing after one of the greatest blessings of earth, the pleasures of which he was never to realize in full fruition.

V.

Lower Street, Islington, October 11, 1821.

Dear George,—I write to you for several reasons, viz. :—First, because my sister is going to Dundee ; second, because I have not heard of you for a long time ; and third, to give you a troublesome commission. My youngest sister is going on a visit to her aunt, Mrs Keay, and will forward this to you, in order that you may provide me with a plaid against my winter campaign. There are such things to be got here, but I apprehend not so good ; and I shall be sure to fancy it more for coming *bona fide* from Scotland, as it is such a national article. And, moreover, when I shall be happed in it, I may fancy that I am in Dundee. Therefore, you will oblige me by choosing me one, and ordering it to be made as follows. To tell you the truth, I have fallen in love with our friend Wyllie's, and should like one of the same family—a twin—that is to say, a Stuart ; and if that should be troublesome to get, I will put up with a Kyd, or a — (I have forgot this name ; but I will ask Wyllie, and write it outside). But I should prefer the Royal Stuart, on account of the romantic and practical associations connected with it. The collar, red shag (or green, if there be green ; if not, red) ; the body without sleeves, like Andrew's, but not lined ; and a large loose cape lined with green—(I must write this outside too) ; and—and—and—that is all, except have the goodness to pay for it, for which purpose I enclose £2, which Andrew tells me was about the price of his ; but, at all events, we shall settle that. And now

about the size. I am about five feet nine inches high, and as thick as a rushlight, and I hope that will be measure sufficient. I think Wylie calls his a rachan, or some such name, which I cannot pronounce upon paper; but I hope you will know what I want, and how large it ought to be. I think, as I have described it, that it covers a page of paper, so enough of it. I trust it will not be a very troublesome commission, in which hope I send it; but, if it is at all likely to be so, I beg that you will not take it upon you, and let me give up the idea of Scottish fancies and associations.

Bless me, Geordie, what's come owre ye, man, that ye canna w-write. I hope you hand is not rheumatized! I do nothing but write, write, day and night; but I cannot resist a letter now and then, and, if my present fit continues, this is likely to be a long letter. I was told, or else I dreamt, that a large trout (as muckle as a saumont!) had put both your wrists out, and that you were past scribbling, and consequently could not write to me a letter upon the Pleasures of Fishing, as I had proposed you to do. If it be true, then write upon some other subject, and you will forget your disaster. If you cannot use your fingers, tak' your taes til't, and I shall not mind the handwriting. Write, at all events, whether you can or not. If you have nothing to say, say so. Perhaps, if the truth must be told, you are waiting for Messieux; but, if the horses were to wait for the coach to move, the mail would stand still. I shall perchance enclose a letter for that gentleman, to be forwarded at your leisure.

Perhaps you will ask what I am doing. Why, truly,

I am T. Hood, *scripsit et sculpsit*. I am engraving and writing prose and poetry by turns. I have some papers coming forth in next month's *London Magazine*, signed incog., and in the meantime I am busy extending and correcting my long poem and other pieces—perhaps for publication. I have a good deal to do now—more than ever. I have got my affairs into more regularity, and therefore go on more smoothly to what I did. But I have sustained a very severe and irreparable loss in the death of my dear mother, about three months since, by which event a serious charge has devolved upon me; and I have all the concern of a household and a family of four sisters—a charge which can never be a light one. I have suffered an inexpressible anguish of mind in parting with my only parent, and but for the consolations which I have had I should have sunk under it. I have now recovered a great degree of my cheerfulness; and though such an event will be a cloud upon all my happiness, my other prospects are brighter, and enable me to look forward with a pleasure, which I cannot have, however, without a sigh whilst I look behind. The writing for the *London* is a very agreeable employment for my mind, and prevents my thoughts from preying upon me as they otherwise would do.

There appears now a prospect of my seeing you, as, should my sister stay through the winter I shall most probably fetch her. In this I anticipate much pleasure, as I shall be able to reach Lochee; yea, and much further, and perhaps see more of Scotland. But I must hush upon that subject, as it is too long for any prudent man to look forward.

After a long interval I have attacked our friend again at chess, and with better success; for our meetings stand thus:—

Hood,	Wyllie,
1	—
2	—

1 drawn.

but I had a balance against me in our last campaign of 40 or 30, which I do not expect to pay off.

Last Sunday, we (Andrew and I) went to a very fine garden, &c., and, if you are at all a botanist, I shall regret that you were not with us. There were a greenhouse, 500 feet long, full of camelias, and a hothouse 40 feet high, the whole warmed by steam carried in two miles of pipe. The latter house was a great wonder, being full of African and other plants of the gigantic kind. Palm trees 30 feet high, extremely beautiful; screw-palm, fan-palm; bread-fruit; cinnamon; clove; all-spice; and specimens of very rare and beautiful plants. There was also a contrivance by which they were watered by an artificial rain, in small drops, or rather a dew, by turning a few cocks. There was a beautiful papiflora, and the wonderful pitcher plant, each leaf containing about a tablespoonful of clear water—mimosa, and other curiosities. I just mention this subject, because, if I recollect right, you are a gardener or a botanist, neither of which am I. But, say you, why go on Sunday? Truly because we could not on any other day. But W. and I went to chapel in the evening, and heard a rather ridiculous sermon. W. has

twice taken me to chapel when I otherwise would not have gone, and this was the second.

And, now, the end of my paper gives me warning to end. I am writing to you with my head in my nightcap, and my legs and lower half in bed. My watch says half-past twelve, and I am very dozy, or I would take a fresh sheet. I shall be writing another against yours arrives, with a packet for Messieux.—I am, dear George, yours very truly,

THOS. HOOD.

In the first part of the letter Hood states that his youngest sister, whose name was Elizabeth, was about to pay a visit to his aunt in Dundee; and, in a paragraph further on, he says that, if she stayed through the winter, he would come down to Scotland and take her back to London. He would thus, he thought, have an opportunity of again seeing his familiar acquaintances in the north, and perhaps extend his trip farther than Dundee. Miss Hood went north, but she remained with her aunt only a short time. The two women could not pull well together, and Elizabeth no doubt deemed it prudent to return to her own home much sooner than was expected,—Hood thereby losing the chance of again placing his foot upon the soil of “stout and original Scotland.” Elizabeth and her sister revisited Dundee several years after with better results. The curious grain in the tempers of the aunt and niece was for the time subdued, and the happiness of those concerned consequently promoted.

Whether Mr Rollo was able to comply with Hood's order for a Scotch plaid—the Highland cloak of a later day—we have no means of knowing; but there cannot be any doubt that the article of apparel was duly forwarded, as Rollo was not the man to disappoint a friend upon a matter like that. Hood's description of himself is characteristic—"five feet nine inches high, and as thick as a rush-light!"—and no doubt the cloak was a good fit.

The other parts of the letter do not call for particular mention, except that portion, perhaps, wherein he speaks in sorrow of the loss of his mother. This distressing bereavement seems to have affected him very much. He had a deep-seated, tender affection for his parent. The death of the father, while the poet was quite a boy, had strengthened the ties which bound the mother to her family, and her death came upon them as a great calamity. There were few to guide, advise, or sympathize with them in their distress; and the responsibility of looking after the welfare of the sisters was left to their only brother. This was a heavy burden upon a young man afflicted as he was; but with characteristic perseverance and cheerfulness he set himself to the task, and struggled manfully to maintain them by his labours as an engraver. He speaks cheerfully of his success, and refers pleasantly and hopefully to the papers he was preparing for the *London Magazine*.

At this point we conclude our remarks upon his first visit to Dundee. We have exhausted all the sources from which we have been able to obtain a supply of information bearing upon his youthful connection with

Scotland. He came to it delicate, bowed down by bodily infirmities, and he went from it renewed in health, strength, and vigour: a rosy tint suffused his cheeks, and elasticity was in his limbs.

It is not the object of this sketch to follow Hood through his literary career. It would be presumption to do so. His biography has been written by litterateurs of great ability, and Miss Frances Freeling Hood and "Tom Junior" have given to the public those interesting series of letters, entitled the "Memorials," which detail his experiences abroad in full. Nor is it necessary to enter into or refer to the reasons which led him to relinquish the art of engraving for the more congenial profession of literature; his marriage with Miss Reynolds, or the financial difficulties which induced him to go abroad; his residence in Coblenz and Ostend; and his final return to England in 1840. These phases of his life have been so well described by others that it would be superfluous to enter into them here,—the object of the writer being to confine his remarks solely to the poet's visits to Scotland.





CHAPTER VIII.

LETTERS.

HOOD'S SECOND VISIT TO SCOTLAND.

Arrival in Dundee—Visits Tayport—Meeting with his Aunt—Letter to Mrs Hood —“Tom Junior” and Scottish Fare—Hood's Trips to Dundee—Meets several of his old Companions—Death of Robert Miln—Mr Shaw's Back Shop—Visits Watt Institution Exhibition—Trip to Edinburgh—Entertained by Lord Jeffrey and Dr Macbeth Moir—London Again—Pension—Letter from Miss Hood—Death.

IN the autumn of 1843, after a lapse of fully a quarter of a century, Hood, accompanied by his son, revisited “Bonnie Dundee.” Again he was in search of health. The prolonged struggle of hard work, almost incessant illness, and a climate unsuited to his constitution, had done him irreparable harm; and, casting his eyes to the north, he longed once more to inhale its invigorating air. On landing in Dundee, which he did on the morning of Friday, 15th September, he felt disappointed. It was not the place he had known of yore. He expected to meet many old familiar faces, and hold converse with some of those with whom he had been upon terms of intimacy; but most of the friends of his early days were gone, and those who remained scarcely recognized in the pale, cadaverous, consumptive-

looking man, whose hollow eyes shimmered through his spectacles, the bright, cheery, laughter-loving friend of their youth. He landed from one of the Dundee and London Shipping Company's steamers, and took up his quarters for the time being in Merchant's Hotel, Castle Street (now British Hotel). After partaking of breakfast, the father and son had a ramble together, the first road they took being to the office of Mr Robert Miln. Mr Miln was absent, and they turned up the Overgate, and called upon the friend and companion of Hood's father, Mr Patrick Gardiner, who had removed from his old shop to a larger one in the same thoroughfare—the one now occupied by a bar known as "The Pump." Mr Gardiner, too, was from home. Hood and his son, therefore, took train to Broughty Ferry, and sailed across the Tay to South Ferry, now generally known as Tayport—his intention being to visit Mrs Keay, his aunt, who had settled there. Not knowing what might be the nature of his reception, and thinking, no doubt, of their bickerings long ago, he proposed to settle for the night at Scotsraig Hotel, and hired a bed in that establishment. He then called upon his relation. The old lady—she deserved to be styled that now—received him with open arms. "Cankered," in her own way, she may at one time have been with Hood; but, like a true Scot, she had always a warm heart for her "ain kith an' kin." This genuine feeling of true heartedness, notwithstanding, perhaps, a bit crook in the temper, had been shown to Hood himself in his early days; it was manifested afterwards to his sisters; it was now repeated

to himself and extended to his son; and after his death his daughter partook of her kindness. Captain Keay, who was a native of Tayport, had retired from a seafaring life and selected an anchorage for the remainder of his days with the eye of a sailor. Rose Cottage, where he dwelt, is situated high and dry on the braes of Scotsraig, and commands a magnificent view of the whole estuary of the Tay and out towards the German Ocean, the white column of the Bell Rock Lighthouse shining conspicuously in the distance. It has a fine southern exposure, and the garden was well stocked with fruit trees and bushes. If health was to be found anywhere, it was in this pretty place. According to Hood himself, he was exceedingly happy, and "Tom Junior" was delighted. The following letter, written by the poet to his wife, gives a description of his outgoings and incomings at Tayport and Dundee. A portion of it has already appeared in the "Memorials"; but, through the kindness of Mr A. C. Lamb, Dundee, who is in possession of the original, we are enabled to give it *in extenso*.

VI.

Wednesday, September 1843.

My own Dearest,—I received yours the day before yesterday, having had to send for it to Dundee. On Friday we came here to the Ferry, and I engaged a

bed; but my aunt would not hear of it, and made me come to her house at once, where I have been ever since. Very nice house and garden, and we are made much of, and very comfortable. Tom is as happy as can be, and they are much taken with him. By the by, on Monday came a very strange and artful letter from Betsey. Could she have heard of my being here? She does not allude to it; but take no notice of this till I tell you more when we meet. My aunt says she wanted her aye to be singing hymns, and brought some wafers with texts on them. But that's not religion, and, indeed, both she and Mrs Holt seem to rely o'er much on their own good works. She says there is a Mr Grey, a rich man in Dundee, who says I am the first man of the age, and begged when I came to let him know and he would make a party to meet me. I do not know if this will fall out. I have seen Mr Gardiner—his wife is dead. I could not find R. Miln. I have made a sketch for you that will give you an idea of the prospect from here of the mouth of the Tay. It is a noble river. We are living on the fat of the land. Tom has milk porridge, baps, cookies, jelly, &c., and I have good small ale and whisky—and both are much the better—greatly so in looks. I shall go by a steam-boat from here to Leith some day this week, so you must not write again to Dundee, but to the P.O., Edinburgh. You had better send the slippers, if not already sent, post paid, to Mrs D. Keay, Rose Cottage, Ferry-Port-on-Craig, by Cupar-Fife, N.B.

On Sunday I went to hear her minister—one of those who have seceded. He preaches in the Schoolroom;

but at the same time through a window into a large tent adjoining—a temporary accommodation whilst the new church is building, in opposition to the old one—something in the spirit of the old Covenanters. The minister and family take tea here at five, which will shorten this. He and I get on very well.

I write very hastily, expecting every minute to be summoned to tea. I am looking at a hill, out of the back window, covered with sheaves, for it is the middle of harvest. Tom is off, for the minister's two boys are coming, and he has made a crony of one already. He sends his love to you and Fanny and Mrs Dore, and says you are to make yourselves comfortable about him, for he is very happy, and, I can add, very good. I am sorry to miss dear Mrs Dore, but I think I should have been very ill if I had delayed. I eat and drink pretty well, but sleep badly still. However, the time is short as yet for much improvement. I found my uncle and my aunt better than I expected, and the place really a very nice and comfortable one. They had seen my Manchester letter, and altogether I stand high as well as "Tom Junior." Aunt has given him a silver pencilcase of her brother Robert's, who was a scholar at College, for she admires his reading and his spirit, though they have, of course, some *misunderstandings* between English and Scotch. I expect to be much delighted with Edinburgh, and shall most likely go from here on Friday or Saturday; but there will not be time for you to write here again, so direct through if you write before Wednesday, as probably I shall return by Saturday week's packet. And, now, God bless you, dearest. Kiss my

dear Tibbie for me, and give my kind love to Mrs Dore. Perhaps I shall see her on her return from Cheltenham. We have beautiful weather, but east winds. Perhaps you have written. I shall send to Dundee to-morrow to know; but from this side boats are not frequent, and the ferry opposite Dundee is three miles off—a long pull there and back. Take your port, and drink the health of your affectionate,

THOS. HOOD.

Hood was almost daily in Dundee, but made Tayport his head-quarters. "'Deed," as Mrs Keay remarked to a friend, when speaking of the visit, "I saw feint a muckle o' 'im. He was nearly aye awa' tae toon!" He made the most of his time. On his second visit to Mr Gardiner he found that gentleman busy behind his counter. The meeting was very cordial. Mr Gardiner took him to his old acquaintance, Mr Frederick Shaw, who carried on a large bookselling and stationery business in the shop at west side of Pillars, presently tenanted by Mr Anderson. Here he met George Milne, Robert Nicoll, merchant, and several Dundee worthies. But his old and favourite friend, Robert Miln, he saw not. Mr Miln was lying at the point of death, and expired while

Hood was yet in the town; that is to say, on 21st September 1843, at the comparatively early age of 44 years. The poet was deeply affected by his friend's death; the more so, perhaps, that he knew his own could not be far off. On one of the days he visited Mr Shaw—for he made that gentleman's back parlour, or back shop as it is called in Scotland, his halting place—he was very tired and careworn. He looked worse than usual. Mr Shaw sympathized with him; but Hood only shook his head, and, looking tenderly at his son, who accompanied him, muttered despondingly, "Poor boy! poor boy!" Mr Rollo, too, was from home, and he did not have an opportunity of seeing him, as no doubt he wished. Hood visited every place of interest in the town; and, as the Highland and Agricultural Society's show had just been held, the inhabitants were in a ferment of excitement. He was particularly pleased with the Watt Institution Exhibition, then open, and on his return to London forwarded to its Library a copy of his "Whimsicalities," with his autograph written upon the fly-leaf. He was generally accompanied by Mr Gardiner, who shewed him great kindness, and the poet was so gratified with his courtesy that he sent him a special copy of the same work. On one of the fly-leaves the poet wrote the following words:—"To Mr P. Gardiner, with kind regards, from Thomas Hood." These volumes are in possession of a relative of Mr Gardiner, who resides in London. The "bracing breezes of the north" had on this occasion comparatively little effect upon the toil-worn, disease-stricken litterateur. A gentleman who was introduced to him at Tayport

says, that, although he was little over forty years of age, he looked twenty years older. He was pale, weary looking, and seemed bent down, not with the weight of years, but with a load of bodily suffering. His manner of speech was quiet and subdued, and in tone sounded "far awa'," indicating weakness of the internal organs. He was dressed in black surtout and low hat, and wore spectacles; and his clothes hung loosely upon him.

The Mr Nicholson to whom he refers was a minister of the Established Church in Tayport, who "came out" and joined the Free Church in 1843. He became the first Free Church minister in Tayport. He afterwards accepted a charge in London as pastor of the congregation worshipping at London Wall. Having made Hood's acquaintance in Tayport, the minister visited the poet on his death-bed, a kindness which was greatly appreciated. Mr Nicholson subsequently left this country and settled in Hobart Town, New South Wales.

After spending a week, Hood prepared to return south. He left Tayport on Friday morning for Dundee, where he dined with Mr Gardiner. During the day he bade his friends good-bye, and passed the night with the genial merchant. On Saturday (the day his friend Robert Miln died) he sailed for Leith. The subjoined letter, written by the poet after his return to London, gives a description of his visit to Edinburgh. An epistle, written to his wife from Edinburgh, appears in the "Memorials." It contains a similar narrative; but as this letter is directed to Mr and Mrs Keay, it tells more fully how he fared on leaving Dundee.

VII.

17 Elm Tree Road, St. John's Wood,
Thursday, 5th October 1843.

Dear Uncle and Aunt,—Here we are safe and sound after a capital passage of forty-three hours from Leith; the weather so quiet, and the boat so easy; we had no squeamishness even, but were free to enjoy agreeable and good fare. There were a little boy and girl on board, who served as playfellows for Tom—besides the stewardess's scissors, which enabled him to cut out steamships, cats, dogs, and horses, instead of making a fort of your pump or picking up pebbles. So we got on very well.

On reaching Dundee I found a letter enclosing your slippers, which I forwarded to the Ferry, and hope you like them. I called upon Mr Grey, but he was away from home. You would see from a paragraph in *Dundee Warder* that I visited the Watt Institution.

Unfortunately there was thick weather on the voyage to Leith, so that I lost much of the scenery of the Firth, as well as the first sight of Edinburgh, which, as I could judge on my return, was very striking. I was delighted with Auld Reekie and my reception there; but, unfortunately, it was vacation time, and Professors Napier and Wilson were in the country. However, I had an invitation from Lord Jeffrey, and dined with him at his country seat, Craigcrook, about three miles from

the city. I also rode out with Tom to Musselburgh, and made acquaintance with Mr D. M. Moir, a surgeon and well-known author. I was very much pleased with him and his family, and there were some fine boys, with whom Tom was very soon quite at home. I have corresponded with Mr Moir for many years, but never met him before.

In Edinburgh we saw Holyrood, the Castle, the Anatomical Museum, the Advocates' Library, &c. &c.; and altogether my visit to Scotland has been very gratifying to my feelings, as well as beneficial to my health. Tom made several friends in Edinburgh, and amongst the rest some ladies, who send him *short* cake—which, of course, he wished had been a *long* one—of their own making.

I found my family quite well, and had the pleasure of seeing our friend from Belgium, who had been detained longer than she expected. My wife was delighted with the improvement in our looks, and much amused with Tom's account of his travels. His memorandum-book, by the time we got home, was quite full. You will be glad to hear that we brought home everything without loss or damage, including the Venetian wine-glass, in which I shall drink your health, I trust, very often.

I have been very much tempted since my arrival to start for Manchester, having had a very pressing invitation from the Committee to be present at the grand evening assembly at the Athenæum, but found too much to do at home. Otherwise, I should, no doubt, have made some valuable acquaintance. Indeed, for the next

six months I shall be extremely busy, as it is at the briskest season of the year.

Betsey has been at our house during my absence. She will perhaps come on Saturday.

My wife desires me to send her love, and thanks you for your kindness to her boy, who, by his own account, was very happy and comfortable, and is loud in his praise of cookies, jelly, and porridge, not forgetting the beautiful milk and butter. We rather turn up our noses at our breakfasts, for even the haddies are far better north. Fanny writes in love, and thanks for your presents; and Jane (my wife) is much pleased with those pretty mats. The silver pencilcase she puts away till Tom is older to take care of it. We all wish there was a chance of seeing you or my uncle in London—travelling is now so very easy to what it used to be; but there are none of us very young, and I almost fear my journeyings are well at an end. I shall sit still at home for the future, I suspect, like an old young man.—I am, my dear Uncle and Aunt, your affectionate nephew,

THOS. HOOD.

It is evident that the poet enjoyed his visit to Auld Reekie. Several of her most brilliant sons held out the right hand of fellowship, and entertained him with that distinction to which, as a man of letters, he was justly

entitled. The famous "Kit North" was from home, but Lord Jeffrey and "Delta" received him with true Scottish heartiness. The sights in the grand old city interested him much; and, on the whole, his second trip to the north, if it did not infuse into him new life and vigour, was full of pleasure. He took great delight in the happiness which young Tom experienced, and the kindness with which the lad was treated, wherever they went. His love for his son appears to have been great, and it was perhaps intensified by premonitions that he would soon be separated from him.

As has been stated in a former page, at the time of Hood's visit to Dundee, the Watt Institution, with its Museum and Library, was visited by all classes of the town, and a number of distinguished persons went to see it, as will be shown by the following paragraph which is quoted from the *Northern Warder* of September 26, 1843:—"Amongst many others, there were present at the Watt Institution, during the week, The Right Hon. Lord and Lady Kinnaird; Viscount Aitencourt; The Right Hon. Arthur Kinnaird; The Right Hon. The Earl and Countess of Camperdown; Lord Stormont; and Thomas Hood, Esq., London." There are several persons who remember this visit distinctly. Hood was then perhaps the most famous man of his time, and he was therefore the observed of all observers. The *Warder* containing the announcement of his visit to the Institution was published on the Thursday after his departure from the town, but the paper seems to have been forwarded to him by the Keays; hence the reference in the letter.

The next letter again tells a tale of ill health, and of his heroic struggle against a disease which he knew ere long would be the conqueror.

VIII.

Devonshire Lodge, New Finchley Road,
St. John's Wood, 2d October [1844].

Dear Uncle and Aunt,—I have delayed writing to send the first volume of my Magazine, which you will receive shortly after this. My own papers are marked in the index. I only was able to resume the management last month. The four numbers previous were managed for me by a friend. You will see by the opinions of the press, bound up with the volume, that I have very good friends with all parties.

My illness in the spring was very severe—spasms and gasping for breath twelve hours at a time. I had a very narrow escape, and am still very weak and much shattered, as I must not live well for fear of spitting blood and exciting the heart. I had three physicians. Indeed, I am particularly fortunate in that respect, as two of my best friends, Dr Elliot and his brother, are both very skilful practitioners. But I shall be obliged to remove from my present house—the clay soil is not good for me. I must be upon gravel—high and dry! I derived much benefit from being at Blackheath

and Greenwich, and lately from a trip to Calais for the sea air. I took Fanny with me—she is suffering in a milder degree from my complaint, marsh fever. Tom is as usual. He goes to a day school, and gets on very well; and he and his master are very fond of each other.

What a pity I was not Foreign Secretary instead of Lord Aberdeen, and "Tom Junior" captain of the Royal Yacht, as then we might have looked in at the Ferry on our way to Dundee. As it is, there is as little chance of my going to Scotland as of your coming to London. My vehicle in the future is a hackney fly—or an arm chair. By the by, I have been sitting lately for my bust, to be done in marble for exhibition at the Royal Academy. The likeness is said to be very good. If I could travel, I would go to Manchester, having had a very handsome invitation to a grand meeting of 3000 persons at the Athenæum; but the vibration of the railway for so long a journey would be too wearisome for my loose bones. If balloons were manageable they would suit me best.

I have heard from Betsey; she goes on in her usual way, getting more odd in her ways as she grows older, so that she will be a curiosity at last.

Pray, give my kind remembrances to Mr and Mrs Nicholson, and thank him for his kind letter, which I ought to have acknowledged, but was too unwell at the time, and have since been overwhelmed with arrears of business from my long illness. I was sorry I did not meet them when they were in London; but hope for better fortune next time. Our weather is fine, and I am pretty well, in spite of the Magazine, and having to sit up all one night last week to complete my work.

But it will be easier in future. I hope you are both well, and settling in comfortably for the winter with a stock of mountain dew for the cold days and nights. I am obliged to be content with good fires.

My wife, Fanny, and Tom, write with me in love to you both. Please send me a line on receipt of the parcel, as, if it does not reach you, I will inquire after it.—I am, dear Uncle and Aunt, your affectionate nephew,
THOS. HOOD.

A better idea of the poet's state of health at this time may perhaps be obtained from the subjoined letter, which is from the pen of his daughter, quite a girl.

Devonshire Lodge.

My dear Uncle and Aunt,—I am glad to take the opportunity of Mr and Mrs Nicholson's return to write to you. Although I have not been happy enough to have seen you, I am sure you will receive my letter kindly. I hope, however, when papa goes to Scotland again, he will let me accompany him, and I know I shall like it very much. I return you my sincere thanks for the kind presents you sent me. I shall preserve them with great care, and value them, knowing they were my cousin Jessie's. I wish we lived nearer to you, that I might be of use or comfort to you. You will be sorry to hear that my dear papa has been most dangerously ill, and is still in a very precarious state of health. He has had three physicians constantly at-

tending him,—two of them most intimate and kind friends, who came ten miles every day while he was in danger. He is now staying at the house of a friend, a few miles from London; but the weather is very unfavourable to him. Mamma feels very anxious about him, for the least change of weather affects him, and he suffers so from short breathing. Tom is quite well, and goes to school, where he has been working hard to learn writing. He is always talking of you, and of Scotland, and how much he would like to see you again,—he came back so fat and well-looking and brown. He often talks of the nice porridge he had for breakfast, and the beautiful jelly, and nice short-cake.

Mamma writes with me in love to you both, and believe me, my dear Aunt and Uncle, to remain your truly affectionate niece,

FRANCES F. HOOD.

The foregoing, like the other letters, was addressed to the Keays at Tayport. Hood and his family took every opportunity of expressing gratitude to their friends for the kindness shown to him and his son during their recent visit.

Hood, in wishing he had been Foreign Secretary, and "Tom Junior" captain of the Royal Yacht, so that he might have an opportunity of revisiting the Tay, is writing in good-humoured banter of the Queen's visit to Dundee, which took place on 11th September 1844, an event which would be of peculiar interest to him. The royal squadron, with Her Majesty on board, anchored

almost opposite the village of Tayport, and Captain Keay and his lady could easily watch the movements from the windows of their cottage.

Hood had a warm heart for Manchester, where his writings were exceedingly popular; and he speaks with feelings of pride on receiving a second invitation to be present at the great assemblages at the Athenæum. Alas! he was compelled to decline the invitation; and in a letter to the secretaries of the Institution, written the day prior to the foregoing, he stated that "for him all journeys, save one, were over." Lord Beaconsfield, then Mr Disraeli, presided on the occasion; and it may be of interest to quote Hood's remarks upon that statesman at the conclusion of the letter:—"You will have a chairman who, inspired by his father's spirit, will discourse so eloquently of the pursuits and amenities of literature, and the advantages of the Athenæum, that every leg in the hall will become a member. In brighter colours than mine he paints to the 'new generation' of your busy city the wholesome recreation to be derived from Science and Art; the instruction and amusement to be gained from works of Philosophy and Poetry, of History, Biography, and Travels; and last, not least, the infinite relief, amidst commercial occupations, of alternative matters of *Fiction and Fact-ory*."

The following letter shows his gratitude to Sir Robert Peel for conferring upon his wife, at his own request, a pension of £100 a year—a piece of good news of which he hastens to inform his relatives, whom he knew would be as proud as himself of the distinction.

IX.

Devonshire Lodge, New Finchley Road,
St. John's Wood, 30th Nov. [1844].

My dear Uncle and Aunt,—You will be glad to hear what follows, so I take the first opportunity of writing.

One or two pensions have lately fallen into the Crown by the death of the parties. Out of these Sir Robert Peel, with the Queen's approval, has settled on me a pension of one hundred pounds a year for my literary services, which, as I am not a political writer, is very flattering. I said, settled on *me*; but I ought to have said, my life being so precarious, it is considerably settled on my wife's life instead, at my request.

In communicating this to me, Sir Robert Peel wrote a most handsome letter, with high praise of my works, of which he is a reader, and expressing a wish for my personal acquaintance.

I have just had a serious attack of illness, but am better. I hope you and my uncle will get comfortably through the winter. Some of the weather-wise say we are to have a severe one. We have not seen or heard anything of Mr Nicholson. I suppose he has not come up yet—or has he built himself into London Wall in mistake for a stone thereof?

There is no news, or, if there is, I must have heard of it. I have just written a song, which, like the "Song of the Shirt," has been in almost all the papers, called "The Lay of the Labourer." It will comfort me before I die to have done some service to my poor countrymen and countrywomen.

My wife, Fanny, and Tom, send their love to you both. Tom's little marmoset, between a monkey and a squirrel, survived the poor fellow who brought it for him from the Brazils—a young surgeon, by name Robert Douglas, of Glasgow.

I have not seen Betsey lately. God bless you both.—I am, dear Uncle and Aunt, your affectionate nephew,

THOS. HOOD.

Pray, keep the "Song of the Shirt." I shall be able in the beginning of the year to send you a portrait that is being engraved from my bust, and which is said to be a strong likeness.

He speaks in calm contemplation of his approaching end; but is comforted with the knowledge that "before he dies he will have done some service to his poor countrymen and countrywomen," referring of course to the influence of the "Song of the Shirt," the "Lay of the Labourer," and other great poems, in clearing away abuses which seriously affected the industrial population. On the 23d of the same month he got a short respite from the ever-recurring attacks of illness, and his gaiety arose. "The fever heat is gone," he says, in a letter of that date, "so are the musicals—the whistlings and wheezings"; and he has a good-humoured jibe at Mr Nicholson's expense, wondering if he had built himself into London Wall. But this blink of sunshine was transient, and he soon relapsed into his former state. His aunt having neglected to answer his letter, the

following shows his anxiety that they should know of Sir Robert Peel's kindness.

X.

Devonshire Lodge, New Finchley Road,
St. John's Wood, January 4 [1845].

My dear Uncle and Aunt,—Some time back I wrote to inform you of a piece of news that I thought would please you—that Sir Robert Peel would give me a pension of £100 a year, which, at my request, was settled upon my wife, as likely to survive me; so that, whatever may happen to me, there is some provision so far for my family. As these pensions are bestowed on men or women who have distinguished themselves in science or literature, it is honourable to me; and was rendered still more gratifying by a very handsome letter from Sir Robert that he was a reader of my works, of which he spoke in high terms, concluding with a wish for my personal acquaintance.

I have repeated this, fearing that my former letter may have been miscarried. I hope you have not been ill. I am sorry to say that I have. It is now six weeks that I have been in my bed, but I hope to be up in a day or two.

I have no other news. We have not yet seen anything of the Nicholsons.

I shall be able to send you next month a portrait of me that is being engraved from the bust. They say it is a very good likeness.

Please to send me a line to say whether you have got my former letter, and that you have not been ill.

We all unite in love to you and uncle. Fanny and Tom will write one of these days.—I am, dear Uncle and Aunt, your affectionate nephew,
THOS. HOOD.

Betsey has been here yesterday.

Notwithstanding his illness, he did not forget to forward a copy of his Magazine, with a beautifully executed portrait enclosed. The Magazine and portrait have been preserved, and are in possession of Miss Isabella Hood. The light of life is now burning low in the socket, and although the flames flicker a little, their gleams are transient and feeble.

“Slowly, slowly up the wall
 Steals the sunshine, steals the shade;
 Evening damps begin to fall—
 Evening shadows are displayed!”

The end draws nigh. The first part of the following letter shows that, although his day was far spent, and the long, dark, unfathomable evening, from whose folds we all instinctively shrink, near at hand, he still retained a moiety of his former joyousness. The second part, or addendum, which consists of about a dozen words, is dated twelve days after. It shows that the shadows are closing around, and that the hand which once wrote so neat and plain was beginning to lose its cunning.

Devonshire Lodge,
New Tenchley Road,
St. John's Wood
12 March 1845.

My dear Uncle & Aunt

With this you will receive
a Magazine with the Portrait
of me, which I promised.

I little thought to have
been alive at this date, - but
some strong points in my consti-
tution has made a desperate
struggle to recover, though in
vain. I am now helpless in
bed, dreadfully swollen by
dropsy, from weakness & have
suffered very much: - but
only bodily - for my mind has
been calm & resigned, as
Dr. Nicholson would inform you.
I was glad he came, on that
account,

for I have been a good deal persec-
-cuted by Betsy, who you know
has some peculiar religious notions
of her own, & would very
likely describe me to you, as
dying a pagan, or infidel,
because I do not conform to
her views.

God bless you both — we
shall soon meet I hope in
a better world —

Let it comfort you to know
that I die beloved & respected
& have met with unexpected
kindness & distinction from
very many strangers as well
as friends. These are probably
the last lines I shall write.

Your affectionate Nephew

Thos. Hood.

24th Still alive - but
cannot last long. God
bles you & again a
last farewell. T. H.

The foregoing, so far as known, is the last letter written by Hood. It is a pathetic picture, and evidences the domination of a strong mind over bodily suffering. There the great poet lay on his death-bed, his body "dreadfully swollen by dropsy," prostrated by fell disease, "smelling the mould above the rose," but his mental faculties are undimmed.

If any one entertained doubts of his religious sincerity, a perusal of this letter will dispel them. A supreme hater of bigotry, he felt persecuted by the well-meant attentions of his sister Betsey, who had "some peculiar religious notions of her own." He was not a churchman, perhaps; but, nevertheless, in his own heart he was a true and sincere worshipper of the Divine Being, and he listened with the attentive ear of a man rapidly nearing the grave to the words of consolation and hope told him by a devout Christian whom he had heard preach in a tent in Tayport. He lay "calm and resigned," undergoing much bodily suffering. His mind

was unobscured, and he patiently and meekly awaited the final call.

“Colder, colder, colder still,
Upward steals a vapour chill.”

And at last, that great, loving spirit, which had sustained him through many weary vicissitudes, quitted its frail, worn-out tenement, and returned to the Giver of Life. He, “of gentle heart and open hand! foe to none but the bigot, the pedant, and the quack; friend to the suffering, to the careworn, and the needy—Hood, the generous, kind, and true,” departed on 3d May 1845.

LETTER FROM HOOD'S SISTER ANNOUNCING HIS DEATH.

The announcement of the death of the poet was received by his relatives and friends in Scotland, not with surprise, but with a feeling of deep sorrow. The annexed letter, which seems to have been hastily written, intimated the sad event to the Keays in Tayport.

XII.

My dear Aunt,—My poor brother is at last released from his sufferings. He departed this life about half-past five o'clock on Saturday night. For the last three days he had been insensible. It was only by his

groaning occasionally and heavy breathing that we could perceive life in him. I did not expect that he would have lived through Thursday night. When I saw him then he was unconscious, and had not spoken since Wednesday noon, except the words, "Die, die!" Indeed, I may say, he has been for some time desiring his departure. It has been a lingering death, and his sufferings have been very great; but everything that could be suggested was done to endeavour to alleviate them. Poor Mrs Hood, I am afraid, will feel very much when all the excitement of the funeral is over, for she has been a devoted and attentive wife to him day and night, and had very little rest for some months past; and as she said she had no time to write to me, I have been obliged to ride up every week to St. John's Wood, sometimes twice or three times, if I wished to know how he was, when he was in danger. He expressed himself as composed in mind, and prepared for death. Mrs Holt has just been to see my sister. She was not so well as when I saw her last month, and was not so much affected by her brother's death as I dreaded she would be, but was anxious to be allowed to see her brother, which will not be permitted. With love to you and uncle, I am your affectionate niece,

ETH. HOOD.

This letter bears no date, but, judging from its closing sentence, it appears to have been despatched immediately after the demise of the poet.

It is needless to write further of this gifted man, or tell how he was mourned wherever the English language is spoken; or speak of the pilgrimages that are made to do homage at his resting-place in Kensal Green Cemetery, or repeat the deep sigh and the words of honour and praise and blessing that are heaped upon the memory of him whose mortal remains mingle with the dust at their feet.

Let the curtain drop!





CHAPTER IX.

THE POET'S FAMILY.

Hood's love for his Wife and Family—Death of Mrs Hood—Her Character as a Helpmate—A Scattered Family—Miss Hood—Sketch of Tom Hood, editor of "Fun"—His first Letter—Characteristic Fac-simile Letter to his Friends in Tayport—Miss Hood's gratitude to the Queen—Poem by the Poet's Daughter—Finis.

THE love of the poet for his family was a beautiful and elevating trait in his character, and his affection seemed to grow in intensity as the years stole on and his infirmities increased. He never wearied in their society, and never seemed to enjoy himself out of it. When from home his letters teem with tender endearments for his wife, loving remembrances to "Tom Junior," and later on an enclosed kiss or kind word for his daughter. Wherever he went he carried the thought of home and his dear ones along with him. Of Tom he was especially fond. He made him his companion, and treated him with the partiality of an indulgent parent. While Tom was quite a child, Hood wrote a "Parental Ode

to my Son, aged Three Years and Five Months," of which the following is the opening verse:—

"Thou happy, happy elf!
 (But stop—first let me kiss away that tear),
 Thou tiny image of myself!
 (My love, he's poking peas into his ear)
 Thou merry, laughing sprite,
 With spirits feather light,
 Untouched by sorrow, unsoiled by sin
 (Good heavens! the child is swallowing a pin)."

The poet speaks less about his daughter, Frances Freeling Hood. She partook more of her mother's disposition, and elung rather to her than to her father. The family was an exceedingly happy one, and when some of their birthdays came round, and an entertainment was given in honour of the event, the humorist was seen in his gayest mood—the soul of wit and fun—bright, sparkling, effervescent. A gentleman, whose family were guests at one of these children's parties when Hood was ill, speaks of the exuberance of his spirits, and the delight he took in seeing the young people enjoy themselves—Mrs Hood, Miss Hood, and Master Hood doing the honours of the evening with much heartiness.

With the death of the poet a blight fell upon this happy circle. Mrs Hood did not long survive her husband. She had been a faithful helpmeet to him, sustaining and sympathizing with him in all his trials and troubles, and solacing and tending him as a mother her child in his illness. And now, when he had passed from

her tender care, it seemed that the strength which buoyed her up so long had forsaken her, and, eighteen months after the earth had closed over the remains of her husband, she, too, was called away, and two children—for they were little else—only remained of that once gladsome fireside.

It is stated in the "Memorials" that Mrs Hood "was a woman of cultivated mind and literary tastes, and well suited to the poet as a companion. He had such confidence in her judgment that he read, and re-read, and corrected with her all he wrote. Many of his articles were first dedicated to her, and her ready memory supplied him with his references and quotations. . . . She was a most amiable woman, of excellent manners, and full of sincerity and goodness. She perfectly adored her husband, tending him like a child; whilst he with unbounded affection seemed to delight to yield himself to her guidance. . . . In spite of all the sickness and sorrow that formed the greater portion of their married life, the union was a happy one."

After the death of their parents the children were taken care of by their relatives. The pension which was conferred on the mother was extended to them. They received an excellent education, and both early developed literary tastes. The daughter, who was an accomplished young woman, became the wife of the Rev. J. Somerville Broderip, for some time rector of Cossington, Somersetshire. She did not enjoy her married life for any length of time, and died at a comparatively early age.

The son inherited much of the brilliant talent of his father. He attained considerable distinction amongst the *liverati* in London, and was much esteemed amongst them. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* says of him: "After attending University College School and Louth Grammar School, he entered Pembroke College, Oxford, where he passed all the examinations for the degree of B.D., but did not graduate. At Oxford he wrote his first work, *Pen and Pencil Pictures*, which appeared in 1854-55. This was followed in 1861 by *The Daughters of King Daker, and other Poems*, after which he published a number of amusing books for children. His serious novels were not so successful, and are now almost wholly forgotten. He also wielded the pencil with considerable facility, among his illustrations being those of several of his father's comic verses. Having become editor of the comic paper *Fun* in 1865, he succeeded in acquiring for it a wide popularity, principally as a depicter of the humours and eccentricities of middle-class life." Thomas Hood, junior, was born at Lake House, Wanstead, January 19, 1835, and died in London on 20th November 1874.

Through the kindness of Miss Elizabeth Hood we are enabled to publish, for the first time, the subjoined characteristic letters from the pen of "Tom Junior." Both letters were directed to the Keays in Tayport, after the poet's second visit to Scotland. The following is undoubtedly the first letter he had ever penned, as the

caligraphy is that of the junior schoolboy order, the most of the characters being written in the style known as “half-text”:—

“My dear Aunt and Uncle,—I am not able to write well, but I will try my best. I enjoyed myself in Scotland. I hope you are both well, and that I may some day see you again. I am at school now, and like it very much. I am proud to say that I have not been punished since I have been there, and I hope next holidays to get a prize. I hope the garden looks nice. I am saving some flower seed to you out of our garden. Please to give my love to all friends, and believe me, with the same to you both, I remain, dear Aunt and Uncle, yours truly,

TOM HOOD.”

“P.S.—I have had a monkey given me. Such a beauty! It is the kind called Marmoset. I will draw you his picture and send it you next time.”

The next letter, written by the same hand, was forwarded to the Keays after Miss Hood’s marriage with Mr Broderip. The sketches are scenes in the vicinity of Cossington Rectory.

My dear Aunt Mary

I am now spending my holidays with Fanny so I take the opportunity of her writing to enclose my letter. This part of the country is very beautiful but not so beautiful as Scotland. The other day I went to Cheddar. It is a little village in the bosom of high rocks & cliffs that seem on the very point of falling. I got some beautiful crystals & Spar like a piece that you gave me when I was at Dundee we got up to the top of one of the cliffs but as

The weather was misty we could not see very far. We are going to Sockley wood this afternoon

It is a very nice place I believe

and it is celebrated for the escape of one of the Duke of Monmouth's men, who was taken by the soldiers & sentenced to be shot, but he in three astonishing leaps jumped over the heads of the soldiers & escaped into the wood. The place is now



marked by three stones. We have got such a nice little dog a Scotch terrier called "Nettle"



and a puppy called Pug



Such a sharp little fellow but he is always getting into mischief he has had his leg nearly broken one foot stung by a bee & all the ills that puppies are heirs to. He & the cat are always playing



and he bites her feet
they being the tenderest
parts till pussy is

obliged to complain. I don't know
whether Fanny has
sent you a drawing of
the house so here is
one. It is very pretty
I think. Mr Broderick has got a lathe
for turning & all sorts of amusements
are to be had for mere seeking I
enjoy my holidays very much indeed



The church is a very
pretty one & painted
very nicely in fact
everything you see

is very pretty. The dress
of the people is picturesque
or rather it might be made
so & as it is it looks very pretty in
the bright yellow corn fields
when they are reaping & gleanng.



Put as Fanny to long to close her
letter

Believe me my dear aunt

Yours most affectionately
Tom Hood

The annexed letter was written by Miss Hood to Mr and Mrs Keay some time after Mrs Hood's death. The original is in possession of Mr C. C. Maxwell, who kindly placed it at our disposal for publication.

Monday, July 5 [1847].

My dear Aunt,—I have just got your kind letter. I had already commenced writing to you to tell you a piece of news that will please you, I am sure. Her Majesty has been graciously pleased to grant us the pension. Thank God for it. It is indeed a great and unspeakable blessing, and I recognize His hand in it; for without His assistance we are nothing. But He is truly the “Father of the fatherless,” and hears those who have need of His comfort. May He also bless and spare the Queen for her goodness to us. We have written a letter of thanks to Lord John Russell for his kindness in our behalf, and I hear it is to be seen by Her Majesty. I am sure you will rejoice with us in this unhopèd-for mercy. I am sorry to hear, my dear Aunt, you still feel the remains of your former illness. I firmly hope it may please “Him who is the friend of the widow and orphan” to spare you in health and peace “which passeth all understanding” for many years to come.

My Aunt Betsey called upon me a day or two ago to ask me to go with her to see Mrs Nicholson, and I very much regretted I could not accompany her; but I am now staying with a very favourite cousin of mine, and she has had the small-pox, and is not yet recovered from

it, and I have been nursing her, so that I was unable to leave her that evening, besides being afraid I might carry the infection with me, although, through God's mercy, I have not taken it myself. My cousin is now much better, and all our fears are over, and she is going on favourably, but I shall most probably stay with her a little while yet. I have not given you the address, because all letters are sent to me from home every day.

I have not seen dear Tom for three weeks, for I was afraid to meet him on account of the infection. He is very well and very good. I often see him on his Saturday half-holidays. He is as good a brother to me as I could wish, and I am sure would do anything in his power to make me happy. Tom has begun a letter to you, and will finish it as he can find time. He is very well, and happy at school, he says.

I am very busy, and can hardly find time to write so long a letter as I would wish; but it shall be better next time. I often wish I had wings to fly over the sea and pay Scotland a visit, even for a few hours. I should so like to see you, but it is such a great way off that I must be contented with writing.

When Mrs Nicholson comes back I intend to go and see her, and then I shall hear all about you and how you are. I much like Mrs Nicholson; indeed, I took quite a fancy to her; she seems so very kind and warm-hearted. It is so long since she saw me, or else she could describe me to you at least. Mamma and papa used to tell me I was quite a Scotch lassie, with the colour of my hair and eyes. I am sure I love Scotland dearly enough from the descriptions I have heard of it, and because my

dear papa loved it. Now, God bless and keep you, my dear Aunt Keay, is the fervent prayer of your affectionate orphan niece,

FANNY F. HOOD.

The following poem is from the pen of Miss Hood. We are not aware that it has been published before. Apart from its fine sentiment, it shows that the poet's daughter must have had a good knowledge of the Scottish dialect.

To the Laverock.

Lilt awa', dear laverock,
 Ower the bonnie lea ;
 Rising frae the gowans,
 Lilt a sang to me :
 Tell me o' thy birdies
 In their nestie a',
 O' the heather blossoms,
 In the greenwood shaw.

Look nae up sae timid
 Wi' thy large dark e'e ;
 Bonnie, gentie lav'rock,
 I'll but peep at thee !
 I'll nae harm thy wee anes,
 I'll but peep an' gae
 To the pink-e'ed gowans
 On th' sunward brae.

Fare-ye-weel, dear lav'rock,
 Ye need fear nae mair ;
 Flee, flee up to heaven,
 Lilt your sweet sang there.
 I sall hear ye liltin'
 Ower the dewy lea ;
 When ye're up near heaven
 Tak' ae prayer frae me.

As I didna fricht ye,
 Birdie, flee on hie,
 To the door o' heaven,
 There lilt merrilie.
 May nae harm come near ye,
 Or your nestie sma',
 Gin ye do my biddin',
 Cammily and a'.

That, like thee, to heaven
 My first thoughts may flee—
 Liltin', bonnie lav'rock,
 Thankfully like thee—
 Wi' the morn's first peepin',
 To the braid blue skies ;
 Wi' the evenin' gloamin'
 My thanksgivings rise.

FRANCES FREELING HOOD.

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