

THE STORY OF THE EDINBURGH BURNS RELICS

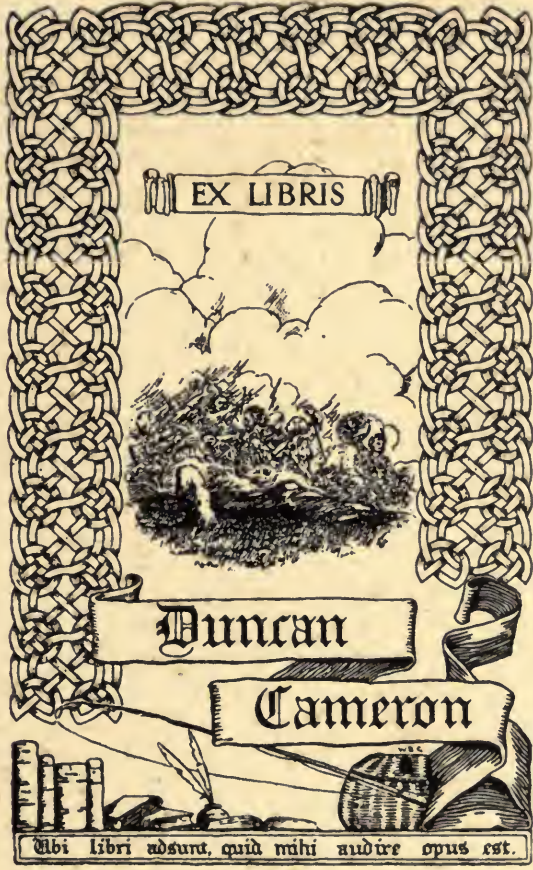
BY ROBERT DUNCAN



A
0
0
0
7
0
2
2
5
2
8

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY

311



LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA
SAN DIEGO



presented to the
LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA • SAN DIEGO
by
FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

Dr. Allan D. Rosenblatt

donor









Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

The miniature of Burns on the cover of the book is from the well known picture by Alexander Nasmyth. It was executed in the Studio in which the Artist painted his famous portrait of the Poet.

THE STORY
OF THE
EDINBURGH BURNS RELICS



By kind permission of Messrs Otto Schulze & Co.

THE STORY
OF THE
EDINBURGH BURNS RELICS

WITH
FRESH FACTS
ABOUT
BURNS AND HIS FAMILY

BY
ROBERT DUNCAN
Hon. Secretary, Edinburgh Burns Club

EDINBURGH :
ANDREW ELLIOT, 17 PRINCES STREET
1910

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. The Burns Museum	11
II. The Burns Family and the Museum	18
III. Other Relics and their History	28
IV. Life at Ellisland : Fresh Features	40
V. Miscellaneous Mementos in the Museum	44
VI. Burns as a Royal Archer	49
VII. The Battle for Burns's Punch-Bowl	57
VIII. Unpublished Song by Robert Burns, Junr.	66
IX. MS. Volume in University Library	70
X. The Poet's Hopes, Fears and Aspirations	74
XI. A Period of Poetic Activity	78
XII. Memorial Letters and Miscellanea	83
XIII. Cased Relics in University	89
XIV. The Poet's Friends in Literature	94
XV. The Poet defends his Honour	100
XVI. The End of the Song	103

FOREWORD.

THE fresh facts about Burns and his family and The Story of the Edinburgh Relics of the Poet, here told for the first time in detail, must be the Author's apology for yet another addition to the monumental mass of Burns literature.

Some of the matter which the book contains has appeared in "The Scotsman" and in "Chambers's Journal." To the Proprietors of these publications the writer is indebted for kind permission to reprint.

His thanks are due to The University of Edinburgh and the Faculty of Advocates for liberty to use information from Burns Manuscripts in their respective libraries, and to Sir Henry Cook, Secretary of The Royal Scottish Archers, for much kind and courteous assistance.

THE STORY OF THE EDINBURGH BURNS RELICS

CHAPTER I.

THE BURNS MUSEUM.

THE appropriate entrance to a place dedicated to the reception of the relics of the great departed would be a passage of easy access from which the noise of the outer world would be completely excluded. It should be a carpeted way where the footfalls of the visitor are subdued, and where is left undisturbed the quiet train of thought that inevitably carries him directly back to the central object of his visit.

This is the feeling which the zealous pilgrim is likely to entertain as he crosses the courtyard of Edinburgh City Chambers, where, in the Municipal Museum, are deposited the civic relics of Scotland's National Poet. Here, the stranger looks upon a scene that happily for the most part is of an older day. Before him and on either hand the greyness of the masonry and the simplicity of the architecture unite to form a sight of impressive solemnity to which a welcome touch of colour is given by

The Story of

the bright green patch of grass in the centre of the square.

But alas! this feeling of reverence is doomed to be rudely dispelled when we arrive at the entrance to the Museum. Whereas we would like to linger, measuring the way as it were to make the visit precious in remembrance, we are suddenly confronted with the prosaic time-saver of the restless present—the incongruous lift. By it we are briskly conveyed to the top of the building. A clatter, a jerk, a quick exit, a “turn the corner, please,” and lo! we stand beside the metropolitan mementos of the poet. In presence of these pathetic reminders of his greatness and of “the gloom behind the glory”—the glory that shone so brightly but fitfully upon the long road he quickly travelled—we once more yield ourselves to a rapture of reverent delight.

The room in which the relics are enshrined is on the North side of the building. It is small—a mere adjunct to the Museum proper—but how hallowed are the memories it contains! And in one important aspect its situation is specially befitting, for it stands among and partly overlooks the principal scenes familiar to the poet during the ecstatic days of his sojourn amid the sparkling life of the capital.

With the relics around us, we can readily picture Burns as he appeared to the citizens of Edinburgh.

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

We can see him at Baxter's Close, where, on his arrival in 1786, he took up his quarters with John Richmond, the friend of his youth, who had come up from the country in the previous year to study law, and now bade his old companion welcome to share his bed and board.

We can see him clad in his blue coat, bright with metal buttons; in striped vest of blue and yellow; in tightly fitting buckskins and top boots; we can see him walk the historic plainstones of the Old Town, wrapt in contemplation of the city's mighty past. Then we are wafted to the little dingy printing house of William Smellie. Burns is there, and he is gaily cracking his whip and exchanging jokes with the printer. And then their bursts upon our gaze a scene of indescribable jollity! Burns is again the central figure. He is in his merriest mood as he consorts with his cronies of the Crochallan Club in Anchor Close.

Directly opposite the Council Chambers, on the South side of the High Street, is the High Church, the stately, ancient, and venerable Cathedral of St. Giles, to which Burns frequently came to worship; and adjacent to it are the Supreme Courts of Justice, where, from the graphic descriptions he has given us, we may reasonably infer that he listened to the debates and addresses of the distinguished pleaders of the day.

The Story of

To the East beyond the city is the commanding hill called Arthur's Seat. Of all the walks around the capital this was the favourite walk of Burns. Robert Ainslie, Writer to the Signet, has left on record that the poet was very partial to this particular part of the city's surroundings. Nor need such partiality be wondered at. The locality had historic and heroic memories that would at once appeal to Burns. It was flooded with romantic interest which would draw him irresistibly to it. Ainslie tells how he invited the poet to a window-seat where wine was kept, but Burns refused to imbibe, asking instead that his young friend should accompany him on a walk to the hill and return to tea late in the afternoon.

Well might the scene that spread before them satisfy the poet's gaze; in the foreground the historic Palace of Holyrood, its exterior dark as the deeds committed within its walls, and, farther afield, the lush meadows of Craigentenny and Restalrig gently falling towards the gleaming waters of the Forth. Flanking this exquisite panorama were two views, diverse in character but equally picturesque: on the one hand the rich corn lands of East Lothian with the Bass Rock and the towering cone of Berwick Law completing the perspective: on the other, and grandest scene of all, the ancient city rising gradually to the famous fortress which guards its destinies.

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

With his friend, Nasmyth, the painter, Burns also frequently climbed the hill; for they were kindred spirits who gave expression to their loving admiration of the beautiful—one by the wonderful power of words, the other through the charming medium of colour. With Nasmyth, too, the poet rambled as far as Roslin. There Burns commemorated his visit by leaving some impromptu lines at the village inn. There, doubtless also in the dell which is a dream of faerie, memories of Drummond of Hawthornden would occupy the poet's mind.

It was on such occasions that Burns was at his best. The neighbourhood of Edinburgh, with its many delightful highways and byways, gave him ample opportunity for falling into the poetic vein. Southward from the city runs the road to the Hills of Braid. Thither on several spring mornings Burns accompanied Professor Dugald Stewart, the philosopher, and, among the burning yellow of the whins which then covered the hills, the twain conversed upon the beauty of the landscape and the simple joys of country life.

Looking round upon the lands of Liberton and the demesne of Duddingston, the latter crowned by the Castle of Craigmillar where Queen Mary lodged of old; on Swanston, peacefully resting on the slopes of the Pentlands where a Louis the Beloved of letters was to dwell; on the

The Story of

smiling hamlets of Slateford, Colinton and Corstorphine down in the valley—Burns, surveying those scenes of rural bliss and quiet, remarked that “the sight of so many smoking cottages gave a pleasure to his mind that none could understand who had not witnessed as he had done the happiness and worth which they contained.” Such are glimpses of some of the remoter scenes with which the visits of Burns to Edinburgh are imperishably associated.

Not far from the Museum, which has set us thinking of the poet's romantic wanderings, is George Square, where, at the house of Dr. Adam Ferguson, occurred the memorable meeting of Burns and the future Wizard of the North. The meeting was momentous. Burns prophesied the coming greatness of the youth who bore the name of Walter Scott. The prophecy was fulfilled. Burns was the elder by a dozen years and had reached his intellectual stature. The younger was yet a lad, but in the fullness of time he also would be famous. Such was the only meeting of these giants in Scottish Literature, an historic episode that has been happily depicted in our own day by the masterly art of Mr Martin Hardie.

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

Eastward the eye roves over the fertile fields of Fife which Burns traversed when returning from his Highland tours, while from the west window we can see the Ochil Hills that watch and ward the windings of the Forth. There, during the halcyon days at Harvieston—one of those bright periods in a brief life of baffled ambitions and disappointed hopes—Burns extolled the quiet beauty of the district and the charms of Miss Hamilton, in the song :

“ How pleasant the banks of the clear
winding Devon,
With green-spreading bushes and flowers
blooming fair.”

The outward and the inward vision are thus happily blended in this little room devoted to the memorials of the transient, splendid but pathetic career of Coila's Bard.

CHAPTER II.

THE BURNS FAMILY AND THE MUSEUM.

FROM various unpublished letters and papers which came into the hands of the present writer in the year 1906, it appears that the inception of the Museum was indirectly due to the soldier-sons of the poet, William Nicol Burns and James Glencairn Burns. The former, named after his father's boon-companion, William Nicol, of the High School of Edinburgh, was born at Dumfries in 1791. His brother, who bore the name of Burns's noble benefactor, first saw the light three years later. Both were thus mere babes when their illustrious father died in 1796.

In his "Address to the Sons of Burns on visiting his Grave," Wordsworth wrote:

“Mid crowded obelisks and urns
I sought the untimely grave of Burns;
Sons of the Bard, my heart still mourns
 With sorrow true,
And more would grieve but that it turns,
 Trembling to you.
Let no mean hope your souls enslave,
Be independent, generous, brave;
Your father such example gave,
 And such severe;
But be admonished by his grave,
 And think and fear.”

And afterwards, as he lay and mused upon the

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

braes of Ellisland, the same great poet of nature penned his unqualified and doubtless true opinion of his brother bard when he commended us to

“Think of the moments pure and bright
And not a few,
When wisdom prospered in his sight,
And goodness too.”

By their career the sons of Burns showed how well they had fulfilled the wishes of Wordsworth. Early in life they both went abroad and served their country with distinction under the burning sun of India. After receiving their education at Dumfries Grammar School, they were in 1811 appointed to cadetships in the East India Company's service.

For thirty-three years William Nicol Burns was an officer in the 7th Madras Infantry, of which he ultimately became Lieutenant-Colonel. His brother joined the 15th Regiment of Bengal Native Infantry. After a brief sojourn in his native land in 1831, when he was entertained by Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford, the latter returned to India, in 1833, and was appointed Judge and Collector of Cachar in Eastern Bengal.

In 1843 the brothers, after a meritorious career in Britain's great Eastern possession, arranged to live together at Cheltenham, in England—a town much favoured by Anglo-Indian residents, and where Miss Annie Beckett Burns and the late Mrs Sarah

The Story of

Hutchinson, daughters of Colonel James Glencairn Burns, continued to reside. From Cheltenham, on 4th May 1862, the following letter was written to Mr James Ballantine, then Secretary of the Edinburgh Burns Club, who was on friendly terms with the family, and whose own songs, "Ilka Blade o' Grass keps its Ain Drap o' Dew," and "Castles in the Air," deservedly rank among the best contributions to Scottish minstrelsy :

4 BERKELEY STREET,
CHELTENHAM, *4th May.*

"My Dear Mr Ballantine,

"My cousin, Dr James Burnes, has sent
"me some very interesting autograph letters of
"my Father and Grandfather to his Grand-
"father ; and my brother and I also have some
"MS. We are all anxious that these should
"not remain in private possession, where they
"will scarcely ever be seen, but in some public
"place where they will be accessible to every
"one. Now I want your advice (and better we
"could not have) as to *where* to place them—of
"course in one of the Museums of Edinburgh.
"Give me a line or two on this subject at your
"convenience.

"Yours sincerely,

"J. G. BURNS."

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

The letters so generously offered by Dr. Burnes and his cousins were all addressed to Mr James Burnes, Montrose, the uncle of the poet, and elder brother of William Burnes, the poet's father. They comprise a letter from Burns's father, dated 1781; one from Robert Burns (the poet's uncle), dated 1784, and no less than nine from Burns himself, ranging in dates from 1783 to 1796. In his reply to Colonel Burns, Mr Ballantine appears to have outlined a scheme which had been contemplated, but not carried out at the conclusion of the Burns Centenary Festival in 1859. On that occasion he applied to the Town Council of Edinburgh for permission to clean and repair the Burns Monument on the Calton Hill; to erect a keeper's house, and lay out the grounds around it. The valuable manuscripts mentioned would seem to have revived Mr Ballantine's interest in this project, and, in addition, he conceived the idea of forming a Burns Museum, of which they would be a satisfactory nucleus. The scheme met with the entire approval of the Burns family, for, on 7th May 1862, Colonel J. G. Burns wrote as follows to Mr Ballantine :

“ We are quite delighted with your plans. The
“ letters will require great care in securing them,
“ being in a tattered state. Some of those we
“ have are secured in a way calculated to shew

The Story of

“them to advantage; when the MS. are
“written on both sides they are placed between
“two glasses in a frame. One that I purpose
“sending has a rather curious story attached to
“it. It is a copy of the Lines written under a
“portrait of the Earl of Glencairn. In Currie’s
“edition there is a letter from the Poet to the
“Earl asking permission to publish them. In
“a note, the doctor says it is not known
“whether permission was given; nor were the
“(words) found among his papers. In the cold
“season of 1815-16 I was at the Military
“Station of Meerutt (800 miles from Culcutta).
“There I met with Mrs Col. Hodgson, who
“with her husband some years before had been
“(on) a visit to Mr Bushby of Tinwald Downs,
“near Dumfries, with whose family my father
“was intimate; the young ladies shewed her
“as a relic this MS., the only copy in existence.”

The letter concludes by narrating the circumstances under which this relic came into the Colonel’s possession.

The generosity of the brothers did not end with the substantial first offering they had made to the Museum, for, in the following year, Colonel J. G. Burns forwarded an interesting reminder of his father’s affection for the ill-fated Fergusson. This was the account and receipt for cost of the monument

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

which, by permission of the Bailies, Burns caused to be erected over Fergusson's resting-place in Canongate Churchyard. The monument was designed and erected by Mr Robert Burn, of Messrs R. & J. Burn, Masons. The solemn interest attaching to the work entrusted to him does not appear to have appealed to Mr Burn, who was evidently endowed with the saving grace of humour, for appended to his account is the following note: "I shall be glad to receive orders of the like nature "for as many more of your friends that have gone "hence as you please!" This facetious foot-note, which Colonel Burns described as rather characteristic, indicates that the merry mason was on such friendly footing with his famous customer that he could indulge in a mild joke over the transaction.

Other relics gifted by the Burns family were the MS. of "The Kirk's Alarm"; a letter from Mrs Burns to James Burnes, Montrose, dated 1796; and the celebrated letter to Burns from the Earl of Buchan. The last-mentioned was sent by Colonel William Nicol Burns on 13th September 1865. This communication would doubtless be forwarded by him on account of the increasing infirmity of his brother. It is of much interest, for it indicates that he had the democratic feelings of his father, and the personal recollection he gives of his mother's love of song carries one back to her widowed days at

The Story of

Dumfries in the beginning of last century. He wrote :

“ I enclose you as a curiosity the pedantic letter
“ of the Earl of Buchan to the poet, to which
“ there is a reply from the Bard in the second
“ volume of Currie’s edition. His lordship’s
“ condescension in beginning his letter ‘ Mr
“ Burns’ and ending ‘ Your well-wisher ’ is rather
“ amusing, in these days. If you think it worth
“ while, keep it ; if not, you can return it. You
“ will observe there is a scrap of an old Scotch
“ song in pencil in the poet’s own handwriting
“ on the opposite page. I have often heard my
“ mother sing it when I was a little boy.”

The snatch of song referred to is a verse of
“ Bonnie Dundee,” apparently jotted down in a
rough way by Burns. It runs thus :

“ Where gat ye that hauer meal bannock ?
O, silly blind body, O do ye na see ;
I gat it frae a sodger laddie,
Between St. Johnston’s and bonny Dundee.

“ O gin I saw the laddie that gae me’t
Aft has he doudled me on his knee ;
May heaven protect my bonny Scotch laddie,
And send him safe back tð his babie and me.”

It may be recalled that Burns contributed this
song to the first volume of Johnson’s Museum, and
that at a later period he wrote a second and happier
version which begins :

“ O where gat ye that bonnie blue bonnet ?
O what makes them aye put the question to me ?”

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

It appears from the correspondence that a few weeks prior to this point of our narrative Colonel J. G. Burns and his brother had been on a visit to Ilfracombe, no doubt in the hope that the health of the former might be benefited by the bracing breezes from the Atlantic. From there the last letter from Colonel James Glencairn Burns to Mr Ballantine was written. Although it contains some matter foreign to our subject, we cannot refrain from quoting it in detail, as it shows the kindly nature of the family and foreshadows the lamented death of the Colonel himself some months later. It is addressed from Compass Cottage, is dated 12th July 1865, and reads :

“There is a clever artist at Cheltenham, Mr
“Bartlett, who has made a capital photograph
“of the poet from Nasmyth’s portrait. My
“daughter, Mrs Hutchinson, takes great interest
“in him and wrote me about him since we
“came. He is anxious to know if the photo-
“graphs are likely to sell at the Calton Hill
“Monument. I told her I would write to you
“as the best person who could give an opinion,
“and you will much oblige me by doing so,
“and address to me above, for we shall be here
“till 29th inst. My brother and I (Mrs H. is
“at Cheltenham and Annie in Ireland) came
“on 30th ulto. to this most lovely place, and

The Story of

“we have comfortable lodgings close to the sea.
“I have been a great sufferer last winter from
“my old enemy, lumbago, and walk a very
“little and with pain and difficulty, but am in
“other respects in very tolerable health. I can
“sleep well for eight and nine hours at a stretch
“without pain: in fact I only suffer when the
“parts affected are touched; for a person at
“all times a small eater I have a very tolerable
“appetite and a capital ‘Drinkitis’—a word I
“learnt in Glasgow last year! I hope the Monu-
“ment is flourishing as well as you wish it and as
“well as it ought to do under your fostering
“care. My brother joins in kind regards to
“your circle and our friends in Auld Reekie.”

Colonel J. G. Burns's end came much sooner than the cheery tone of this letter might have led us to expect. He passed away a few months afterwards—on 18th November 1865. He was buried in the Mausoleum at Dumfries, where also rest the remains of his brother, Colonel William Nicol Burns, who died on 21st February 1872. It is related that, though past the allotted span, the latter occasionally came to Edinburgh to see old friends and to visit the monument to his father. His health was regularly toasted at the Annual Dinner of the Edinburgh Burns Club, and in his absence was responded to by Mr John Spence, of Gayfield Square,

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

who was an old acquaintance of the poet's family, and had enjoyed the friendship of "Bonny Jean."

CHAPTER III.

OTHER RELICS AND THEIR HISTORY.

IN addition to the relics bequeathed by the Burns family, many others were received not only from friends in Scotland but also from the poet's admirers over the Border. Perhaps the most important contribution was that of Mr William Keddie, of the Philosophical Society of Glasgow, who sent a sheet containing the following poems in manuscript: (1) "A Prayer on the Prospect of Death" (here entitled "A Prayer when dangerously threatened with pleuritic attacks and in the prospect of death, 1785);" (2) Stanzas on the same occasion, in the manner of Beattie's *Minstrel*; (3) The first six verses of the 19th Psalm versified; and (4) "A Fragment in the hour of remorse on seeing a fellow creature in misery whom I had known in better days"—one of the first-fruits of the poet's genius, composed when he was eighteen or nineteen years of age.

Writing in November 1863, Mr Keddie stated that he had obtained this relic more than twenty years previously from the Kilmarnock printing-office from which the first edition of Burns's poems was issued. The authenticity of the manuscript was, he averred, beyond all doubt; it was in the unmistakable hand-

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

writing of Burns, and was the last remaining sheet of a large portion of the MS. which had descended to the successors of the Kilmarnock printer. Mr Keddie was, however, mistaken in thinking that this sheet was a portion of the Kilmarnock manuscript. Only one of the pieces—"A Prayer on the Prospect of Death"—appeared in the Kilmarnock Edition. Two of the pieces were first printed at Edinburgh in 1787, and the "Tragic Fragment" was first published by Cromek in 1808. In short, the sheet appears to have formed part of a collection of early poems presented by Burns to one of his patrons—probably Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop.

It is pleasant to turn from these drab-toned productions of Burns's early days, and from the forbidding field of controversy to the lighter side of the Poet's life—his loves and his libations. Of the first of these features there is a remarkable relic that recalls his "young, fair friend," Jean Lorimer, the rustic beauty around whose life he has thrown the magic glamour of romance. It is one of the veritable "lint-white locks" he celebrated in so many strains, and in none so finely as in the lines :

" My Chloris ! mark how green the groves,
The primrose banks how fair ;
The balmy gales awake the flowers,
And wave thy flaxen hair."

This relic was the gift of Mr Robert Chambers, the eminent publisher. In forwarding it he modestly

The Story of

mentioned that it was given to him by Jean's sister in requital for some little services he was able to render her some years previously—an act which shews the charitable nature of this worthy Scotsman, and the great interest he took in those connected with Burns. The lock of the blue-eyed beauty is in a good state of preservation, and, in respect both of the subject and the donor, it may truly be classed as a metropolitan momento; for, though Chloris's early life was passed amid the rural scenes of Ayrshire, she afterwards migrated to the metropolis, and lies buried in the cemetery in East Preston Street.

The Museum contains other mementos of the heroines of Burns, who was ever the slave of his affections. There is, unfortunately, no relic of handsome Nelly Kilpatrick, whose charms evoked his first effort in poetry. But "Highland Mary" is represented by a snuff-horn that belonged to her father; "The Lass o' Ballochmyle" by a cup and saucer; and "Eliza" (Mrs Stewart) by a jug. The memory of "Clarinda—first of her sex," is recalled by two relics, one being the letter to her from Sylvander (Burns's Arcadian appellation), beginning with the quotation: "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan." This relic was presented by Mrs Carey, Dalkeith. The other is a portfolio which belonged to the heroine. It was the gift of

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

Mr Robert Cumming. The Museum also contains the MS. of a poem written by Clarinda.

More numerous are the relics which pertain to the convivial side of the poet's life. In the course of his wanderings, Burns frequented many places of entertainment, and in them he met many friends. Of these resorts none is so famous or so intimately associated with the mirthful muse of Burns as Auld Nause Tinnock's Inn at Mauchline. This was his especial house of call during the time when he and his brother Gilbert were struggling to extract a meagre living from the unfruitful lands of Mossgiel, distant about a mile from the village. In this hostelry his ready wit, his powers as a story-teller, and, above all, his fame as a poet made him the centre of attraction. That his visits were frequent is not matter for surprise, for the homestead at Mossgiel was cold and cheerless. Besides the social inducement which drew him thither he was in all the youthful ardour of an aspiring poet. The first flash of fame had come to him, and he was panting for "the heights of Parnassus." Natural it was that he should seek the readiest audience, rustic though it might be, and mark the effect of his effusions. Where as yet could he find society more to his liking than the hearty gatherings round the glowing ingle of the village inn? Like Goldsmith, his ideal was :

The Story of

“ Around the fire an evening group to draw,
And tell of all he felt and all he saw.”

From trustworthy materials which have been handed down we can picture to ourselves the youthful Burns with his dark, strong face and burly figure—“ five feet nine ”—entering the little parlour of the inn. He is dressed in a light blue coat of his mother’s making and dyeing ; his black hair hangs down and curls over his coat-neck ; and his dog follows at his heels. Presently, at a table on which a newspaper is spread before him, he engages in animated conversation with a douce elderly neighbour, while his collie fondles at his feet. Refreshment is called for, and Nanse, with a characteristic Scotch expression of face, appears and drops a curtsy to her guests, giving a particular bend to the celebrated Burns. She has brought both food and drink. In one hand she holds a beaker, and in the other a platter laden with tempting bannocks.

It is to the latter “ hamely fare ” that the next contribution to be described relates. This relic, presented by the Rev. Mr Hyslop of Leven in 1871, is the identical trencher on which were placed the bannocks with which Burns was accustomed to be supplied by Betty Kirkland, a servant at the inn. The trencher was given by Nanse to Betty on the occasion of her marriage to Mr Andrew Kirkland, Weaver, Townhead, Old Cumnock. From

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

Betty it passed with another trencher of a similar kind to Mr William Hair, Merchant in Old Cumnock, who lodged in her house, and who, in his turn, gave it to Mr Hyslop.

As interesting as the trencher which bore the poet's food is the quaich from which in auld Nanse Tinnock's he took his liquid fare. The quaich was given to the Museum by Mr W. A. Jardine, C.E., Edinburgh, in 1864. The donor stated that the relic was for many years the property of his uncle, Mr James Jardine, C.E., who, in his boyhood, had been intimate with Burns and his family.

In 1874 Councillor Wellstood of Edinburgh presented a knife, fork, and sugar-tongs which were brought in 1820 from the inn at Mauchline by James Wellstood, John Gibson, and Hew Ainslie, a merry and enlightened trio who made a memorable tour from Edinburgh to Ayrshire. They assumed for the occasion the names of three of the characters in Scott's "Antiquary"—Edie Ochiltree, Jinglin' Jock, and The Lang Linker. Of this tour Ainslie (The Lang Linker) has given a most vivid, mirthful and poetic account in his book, "A Pilgrimage to the Land of Burns." In some of the songs he wrote at home and in America, his adopted country, Ainslie, as a Scottish poet, closely approaches the inspiration of Burns himself. He is a credit to the land of Carrick in which he was born and bred.

The Story of

Let those who doubt it read "It's Dowie at the Hint o' Hairst," or "The Rover o' Lochryan." Let them also read what he has written of Burns in his pilgrim's book.

Of the worthy hostess, Auld Nanse Tinnock, even more fortunate in her literary acquaintanceship than another famous hostess, Tibbie Shiels—for did not Nanse entertain the most illustrious of all the Scottish poets?—of her and her establishment we take our leave by mentioning that a cup of her own was exhibited by Mr George Salmond of Rankinston at the Annual Dinner of the Edinburgh Burns Club in 1873.

Other relics of the convivial type are a wine-glass that belonged to Burns, donated by Mr John Crawford, Alloa, and a quaich made from the woodwork of the "Whitefoord Arms", Mauchline, which was also a resort of the poet. Under this head we may also place the numerous snuff-boxes in the Museum. One of the most interesting is a silver-mounted snuff-box which was presented by Burns to his friend John Richmond. The box was made from part of the rafters of Alloway Kirk, and bears the inscription:

" Frae the oak that bare the riggin'
O Alloway's auld haunted biggin',
Frae the thorn aboon the well,
Whaur Mungo's mither hanged hersel'."

This relic was gifted to the Museum by the

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

celebrated Scottish artist, Mr David Roberts, R.A., a native of Edinburgh, and an intimate friend of Mr Ballantine. Mr Roberts stated that the snuff-box had been given to him by his "old friend, Sandy Fraser." The memorandum which accompanied the gift explained that in eighty-four years it had often changed hands before it fell to Mr Roberts. In connection with this relic, Mr Gilbert J. French, of Bolton, a nephew of a Mr George Richmond, who was probably a relation of Burns's legal friend, mentioned in a letter to Mr Ballantine in 1864 that he well remembered the snuff-box, and that forty-five or fifty years previously he was familiarly acquainted with it. At the same time Mr French forwarded an autograph letter of Burns, which he had purchased some years previously at the small price of £5. Another memento is Souter Johnnie's snuff-horn, the lid of which was made from the rafters of Alloway Kirk. This was presented by Mr W. Porteous of Maybole. Mr Porteous explained that the relic had been his property for many years, and that he acquired it "at the time the late David Auld removed the whole rafters from the area of the old building, of which he made his celebrated chairs and other nick-nacks, which produced him no mean amount of money."

The idea of turning the timber to profitable account was borrowed by David from a company of actors

The Story of

who were at the time performing in the town of Ayr, and some of whom had snuff-boxes made from pieces of wood which they selected on their visits to the venerable ruin. Mr Porteous proceeds thus: "As the history of my box wholly overturns the theory that the Souter was resident in Ayr, I would desiderate that my pamphlet on the subject should be deposited with the box, as proof of its authenticity. With regard to the Ayr-recognised Souter's son, I am old enough to recollect the time when there were three aspirants to that honour located there—one of them the present acknowledged one, another named Goudie; the name of the third I do not recollect."

A friend of Mr Porteous, Mr William Hannay, of Maybole, also sent a snuff-box made from the wood of the Kilmarnock printing-press in which the first edition of Burns's poems was printed. In 1873, the poet's favourite knife and fork were acquired. These were given by his widow to Mrs Kennedy of Nithbank, Dumfries. Mrs Kennedy and her sister were very intimate with Mrs Burns, and it is interesting to record that both had been in the service of Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop, the steadfast friend of the poet—whose high estimate of his character for a longer period than most of his patrons wavered not through good or ill report. Mrs Kennedy presented the knife and fork to her niece, Mrs Rose, on

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

whose death they were given by her mother to Mr Andrew Cowan, of Ayr, who sent them to the Museum.

We have already referred to the poet Fergusson. In 1876 Miss Janet Irving of 5 Salisbury Place, Edinburgh, sent, for preservation in the Museum, a lock of his hair, which she stated had been obtained by her father, Dr. David Irving, from Mrs Inverarity, a sister of Fergusson.

The charge has frequently been levelled at Burns Clubs that their interest in the poet is mainly confined to the annual gatherings on the anniversary of his birth. We do not propose to combat this allegation beyond saying that, even if the only function of these Clubs were merely that of meeting annually around the social board and discussing Burns and his works, their formation would not be without value. In any event the charge could not, as against the Edinburgh Burns Club, be successfully maintained, when one considers the time and trouble which were given by it to the task of gathering the relics so generously gifted to the Museum. But the Club not only carried out this duty cheerfully; it shewed its vitality and its interest in the collection by purchasing several valuable mementos with its own funds. One of the relics so acquired was a miniature of Jean Armour, purchased in 1874, and another was the sword-stick carried by Burns during

The Story of

his exciting days as an exciseman. The latter was obtained in 1864 from Mr Hugh Kerr, toolmaker, St. Ninians, Stirling. It is of an elegant character, and has Burns's initials engraved on the mounting. Its history, as narrated by Mr Kerr, is of much interest. It was presented by the poet to a Lieutenant Arnold on the occasion of his departure from Dumfries, and would be an appropriate gift at a time when probably the roll of drums and the rattle of musketry resounded through the streets of the quiet county town. The Lieutenant gave it to Mr Kerr's father-in-law, who was at the time residing in Stirling, and who had it in his possession for nearly thirty years. Thereafter it was in the keeping of Mr Kerr himself for thirty-five years. It will thus be seen that the history of the relic is fully traced, and that there can be little question as to its authenticity, of which at the time of its purchase the Club would no doubt fully satisfy itself.

There are other relics appertaining to Burns's career in the excise. Foremost among them is the Petition by Thomas Johnston, in Muircleugh, for remission of a fine imposed upon him for defrauding the revenue, and a characteristic reply from the poet to his appeal. These documents were presented by Mr Alexander Maxwell of Glengaber, "The Grove," Dumfries, and in sending them he mentioned that they were long in the possession of his friend, Mr

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

William M'Gowan, whose widow gave them to him. To these details, Mr J. Trotter, of Dumfries, added that the papers were, he believed, obtained from the Justice of Peace Court, and that, although the poet's reply does not bear his name, there is no doubt that the handwriting is his, and that both documents are authentic.

Excise returns by Burns, dated 1794 and the two succeeding years, were gifted by Mr David Murray, Edinburgh; and a letter, dated 1792, from Burns to his friend and fellow-officer, Alexander Findlater, came from Mr George Dods, Edinburgh, who also presented a mallet made from the

“Winnock bunker i' the East,
Whaur sat Auld Nick in shape o' beast.”

The mallet was given by Collector Findlater to Collector Watson of Haddington in 1814, and at the Edinburgh Burns Centenary Banquet in 1859 it was used by the chairman, Lord Ardmillan.

CHAPTER IV.

LIFE AT ELLISLAND: FRESH FEATURES.

ONE of the most prominent relics in the Museum is the lease of the farm of Ellisland, which Burns rented from Mr Miller of Dalswinton. To the lease there has lately been added the award shewing the sum due by Burns to the incoming tenant for dilapidations on the farm buildings during his short tenancy. This document was discovered by the present writer amongst the papers of the Edinburgh Burns Club, and is in the following terms :

“Elisland, 19th Janr. 1792.—We, Joseph Han-
“ning, in Merkland, and Patrick Barr, in
“M‘Cubbinstown, Barleymen, at the desire of
“Mr John Morrin of Laggan, we went this day
“and viewed the Houses upon Elisland, lately
“possessed by Mr Robert Burns, and find that
“the byre and stable will take ten shillings for
“thatch and workmanship, the Barn thirteen
“shillings for thatch and workmanship, the
“dwelling-house for Glass six shillings, for
“sclate and workmanship five shillings. This

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

“we give as our opinion to put the Houses in
“a tenantable condition.

“PATRICK BARR,
“JOSEPH HENNING.

“£0 10
 0 13
 0 6
 0 5

£1 14 in whole.”

The valuation presents several features of interest, and, in particular, brings to mind the bitter quarrel between Burns and the Laird of Laggan. It will be noted that the value of the dilapidations is small compared with the extent of the buildings, which were comparatively new, having been erected only four years previously. By the lease Mr Miller, the proprietor, bound himself to pay to the poet £300 for the construction of suitable buildings—consisting of dwelling-house, barn, byre, stable, and sheds. Into this work Burns entered with a will which made his early days at Ellisland amongst the happiest of his life, and it is related that on laying the foundation he took off his hat and invoked a blessing on his future home. The world to him seemed full of promise, and, in his own words, he “bade farewell to those giddy follies, those varnished vices, which, though half sanctified by the bewitching levity of wit and humour, are at best but thriftless idling with the precious current of existence.”

The Story of

But the Poet's hopes were doomed to disappointment. In 1791, Mr Morrin, whose lands adjoined those of Ellisland, purchased the farm, which was described as the "forty shilling or three merk land "of old extent of Ellisland." Burns, glad to get rid of what he considered a bad bargain—"a ruinous affair"—became a party to the transaction by relinquishing his lease; and the discovered document is the record of what is still known in the district as "the sichtin' o' the houses" by two neighbouring farmers—one acting for Burns, and the other for the incoming tenant.

The settlement of the matter did not proceed smoothly between the Poet and the new proprietor. The dispute, as is not uncommon even nowadays, originated with regard to the value of the manure left on the farm, and the state of the offices and fences. As to the latter, Burns urged that, as a *quid pro quo*, there should be taken into account the fact that during his tenancy he had reclaimed what was practically a piece of waste ground. But the laird stuck to the letter of the lease, and insisted upon Burns leaving everything in proper order before quitting the place. The Poet felt aggrieved at this strict stipulation, and on the day of the removal several incidents occurred which tried his temper and displeased his pride. So he resolved upon a rich revenge.

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

When inspired by the Muse, it was one of his quaint conceits to write his lines with a diamond upon the window panes, and of these compositions the glass at Ellisland doubtless had an ample share. Accordingly, in the evening—for, be it noted, the deed was done in the dark—he sent Adam Armour from Dumfries, with orders to break every pane on which there remained any of his writings. This commission was faithfully executed. All the panes were smashed; and although, as will be seen from the award, the laird received the modest sum of six shillings as the value of the damage, he lost many priceless relics of the Poet.

The valuation, which at one time belonged to Mr Archibald Hastie, M.P. for Paisley, is the last touch to the unpleasant picture of the Poet's unfortunate experience in farming—an experience which fairly ruined him financially, and completely dispelled his fond hopes of leading an idyllic life as a farmer-poet. But, though Ellisland proved a bad speculation for the bard, it must ever remain classic ground. It was there he sang his sweetest, and by its banks and braes wrote those matchless compositions which made him the "High Chief of Scottish Song."

CHAPTER V.

MISCELLANEOUS MEMENTOS IN THE MUSEUM.

FROM Ellisland Burns removed to Dumfries ; and, relating to his death there, the Museum contains a relic remarkable for the manner in which it was found, and happily saved from destruction. This is a copy of "The London Herald" of 27th July 1796. On the front page is the following announcement :

"DEATH OF MR ROBERT BURNS,
"THE CELEBRATED POET.

"On the 21st instant, died at Dumfries, after a
"lingering illness, the celebrated Robert Burns.
"His poetical compositions, distinguished
"equally by the force of native humour, by the
"warmth and tenderness of passion, and by the
"glowing touches of a descriptive pencil, will
"remain a lasting monument of the vigour and
"versatility of a mind guided only by the light
"of nature and inspiration of genius.

"The public, to whose amusement he has so
"largely contributed, will learn, with regret, that
"the last months of his short life were spent in
"sickness and indigence ; and his widow with
"five infant children, and in the hourly expect-

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

“ation of a sixth, is now left without any
“resource but what she may hope from the
“regard due to the memory of her husband.”

This old newspaper was sent by Mr S. M'Lean, of the Ordnance Survey Office, Southampton. He related that in 1861, one of the lads in his office (“a young John Bull,”) had his eleven o'clock lunch of bread and cheese rolled up in it. Mr M'Lean, who appears to have been connected with the Dumfries district, noticing the announcement of his famous countryman's death, promptly rescued the paper and sent it to Mr Ballantine for preservation.

In addition to the relics we have specified, the Museum contains other mementos requiring no detailed description. As you enter the room the eye is immediately attracted to the original model of Flaxman's famous statue of the poet, which was presented by the sculptor to Mr George Thomson, who bequeathed it to Colonel William Nicol Burns. The model stands upon a beautiful oak table, richly carved. This table was made from the roof beams of the Crochallan Club-room, and was the gift of Mr Ballantine himself.

Another piece of sculpture is the celebrated bust of Burns by Wm. Brodie, R.S.A., which was subscribed for and presented to the Museum by one hundred of the leading citizens of Edinburgh.

In 1875 Mr William Tapp, of Edinburgh, presented

The Story of

a plaster cast of the poet, supposed to have been modelled during his life-time.

There are also a letter from Burns to Creech, dated 1787, presented by Mr Peter Collier, Mountblairy, Banff; another letter from the poet to Mr John Tennant, Glenconnar, dated 1788, sent by Mr Henry Houldsworth, Glasgow; one from the poet to his early friend, Thomas Sloan, gifted by Mr James Falshaw, Edinburgh; an enamelled marble apple which Burns gave to Jean Brackenridge on the occasion of her marriage to his brother Gilbert, presented by Mr William Goodlet, Bolsham, by Arbroath; the "Verses to Maxwell of Terraughty on his Birthday," presented by Mr William Paterson, Edinburgh, and the stool on which Burns sat while correcting his proofs in Smellie's printing office, presented by Mr William Grey, Edinburgh. Regarding this relic the following story is told.

It happened one day that Sir John Dalrymple was occupying the stool in Mr Smellie's office at the time he was issuing his essay on the properties of coal tar. Burns entered the correcting-room and naturally looked for his favourite seat. He was requested to wait in the composing-room, and, while he was waiting there, Sir John was requested to oblige him with the stool, but replied, "I will not give up my seat to yon staring fellow." Thereupon he was told that the "staring fellow" was the

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

much-talked-of man of the day—Burns the poet. “Goodness gracious!” exclaimed Sir John, as he hurriedly left the stool, “give him all the seats in your house.” Burns was then called in. He quietly took possession of the stool, and commenced the reading of his proofs.

There is also a curious jug which belonged to Mrs Bruce of Clackmannan, who “knighted” Burns with King Robert the Bruce’s sword, during the poet’s visit to Harvieston already referred to. And to close the list there are pictorial illustrations by Roberts, Mackie, Bonnar, Ferrier, Green, and others, miniatures of Burns, and several editions of his poems.

Mr Ballantine’s enthusiastic work was crowned with such success that he could not resist the poetic expression of his feelings in the following :

“LINES WRITTEN IN THE BURNS MONUMENT
EDINBURGH, JANUARY 1869.

Time mak’s grave changes, sees queer turns—
Fills cradles, coffins, cups and urns ;
Ae country laughs, anither mourns ;
 But what care we ?
While Scotland has her Robbie Burns,
 She ne’er can dee.

There’s nought in a’ Auld Reekie’s keepin’
In whilk true wisdom lies sae deep in,
As in the sayings, sleely peepin’
 Frae Robin’s mou’,
Wi’ whilk kind donors now are keepin’
 His temple fou.

The Story of

Around me a' Rab's life is seen,
Frae early dawn till closing e'en,
In sangs and letters, bright as sheen
 Wi' mense and feeling ;
His mission maun frae heaven hae been,
 Sic thoughts revealing.

Then Flaxman's model, Brodie's bust,
Sic chiefs for truth we weel may trust,
Show ye the bard just as ye wis't
 To see him leevin',
And fills your breast wi' gratefu' gust
 'Yont a' discreevin'.

The drinkin' quaich o' Auld Nanse Tinnock,
The mallet frae the bunker winnock,
The account for Fergusson's stane binnock
 Paid for by Robin,
Gaurs ilka heartie play din-dinnock,
 Wi' kindly throbbin'.

Rab's sword-stick carried when a gauger,
That frichted mony a wild rampauger,
And oh, what unctious sweet refrager
 The nose inhales
Frae snuff mulls ower whilk bard and cadger,
 Changed sangs and tales.

Gang whaur I like in a' time comin',
Whaure'er my restless feet gae roamin'
Frae early daw' till latest gloamin',
 I'll aye, by turns,
Think on the relics, this wee dome in,
 O' Robin Burns."

The relics were in 1868, formally resigned by the Edinburgh Burns Club into the hands of the Town Council, as Custodiers of the Burns Monument ; but in order that they might be better housed, and made easier of access, they were transferred some years ago to the Municipal Museum, where they form one of the most interesting sights of the city in which the Poet's fame blazed forth in all its glory and was established for all time.

CHAPTER VI.

BURNS AS A ROYAL SCOTTISH ARCHER.

OF all the events in the life of Burns none is so remarkable as his sudden leap from obscurity and misfortune into fame. It is, indeed, a feature of his career that is without a parallel in the lives of the poets. In his brave struggle along with his brother Gilbert, to wrest a meagre subsistence from the cold and stony ground of Mossgiel, Dame Fortune frowned upon his labours; and the entanglements into which his fiery affections had led him greatly added to his difficulties. All the world knows how he looked with longing eyes to the golden lands of the West, for a release from his troubles, and how his determination to emigrate to Jamaica was happily avoided by the intervention of the blind Dr Blacklock, whose critical discernment in discovering the poet's genius must for ever entitle him to hold a high and honoured place in the esteem of his countrymen.

When Burns published his first volume of verse at Kilmarnock, the Goddess of Chance smiled upon the venture and turned the tide of his affairs. Acting on Dr Blacklock's advice, the poet hied to Edin-

The Story of

burgh in the hope that a second edition would prove even more acceptable in the Capital. On the way he found that his fame had preceded him, and his journey from Mauchline was of the nature of a triumphal progress. His welcome in the metropolis was no less cordial; he at once attracted the attention of the foremost men of the day by his outstanding talents, and became the idol of the ladies by the brilliancy of his conversation and the engaging deference of his manner. Amongst the first of the public bodies to offer him their hospitality was the Caledonian Hunt, composed of the highest in the land, and at whose revels he was frequently a welcome visitor. To the members thereof he dedicated the second and enlarged edition of his poems, in hearty words of gratitude for their kindness, but sturdily maintaining his inborn independence. His connection with the gay dogs of the Crochallan Club is well known, and requires no further remark; he was elected a member of the Canongate Kilwinning Lodge of Freemasons; and many of the numerous other societies then abounding in the city opened their doors to the distinguished stranger.

But what was perhaps the highest honour in appreciation of his genius did not fall to the poet until he had quitted the noisy scenes of the Capital, and, after another unfortunate experience in farming at Ellisland, had settled down in the town of Dumfries.

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

This was his admission, in 1792, to the membership of the Royal Company of Scottish Archers.

This ancient corporation was formed in 1676. Its existence was formally sanctioned by the Privy Council on 6th March 1677, and was constituted under a Charter of Queen Anne in 1704. No better idea of its high duties and regal responsibilities can be given than in the following quotation from a speech delivered to the members by St.^o Clair of Roslin, who was President of the Council of the Company from 1768 to 1778. He observed: "By signing the Laws of the Royal Company of Scottish Archers you engage to be faithful to your King and country; for we are not a private company as some people imagine, but constituted by Royal Charter, His Majesty's First Regiment of Guard in Scotland; and, if the King should ever come to Edinburgh, it is our duty to take charge of his Royal Person from Inchbunkland Brae on the East to Cramond Bridge on the West."

The claim to be the Royal Body Guard was founded on the silent force of tradition, for the Company's Charter did not specifically confer the privilege, but it was recognised for the first time in 1822, by George IV., and, through successive recognition and definition of the Company's rights and duties by the Sovereigns who have followed the "first gentleman in Europe," the claim now rests beyond all question.

The Story of

It might be inferred from the semi-military nature of the duties attached to the office of a Royal Archer that the honour conferred upon Burns was in recognition of his inspiring contributions to the martial poetry of the period. It is true that in the previous December he had finished the majestic "Song of Death"—supposed to be sung by the wounded and dying of a victorious army as the shades of night fall upon the field of battle :

" In the field of proud honour, our swords in our hands,
Our King and our country to save,
While Victory shines on life's last ebbing sands,
O ! who would not rest with the brave,"

but his chief martial songs were not written till nearer the close of his career. The immortal ode—"Scots Wha Hae"—that blood-stirring song of liberty—though it had long been simmering in his brain, did not become the polished product of his pen until 1793. And not till 1795, when the threat by the victorious armies of France hung like a phantom over the land, did he write—"Does Haughty Gaul Invasion Threat?"—lines which electrified the country and stirred the pulse of the people to a glorious and defiant degree of patriotic fervour.

The Minutes of the Company are, unfortunately, silent regarding the admission of Burns to the membership. They were not at that time kept with accuracy, but it would appear that it was not then uncommon for the Council to admit distinguished

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

Scotsmen as honorary members without payment of entrance fees. Burns's election was of this class, and the notable addition of his name would be decided upon in respect of his finally established fame as the national poet of Scotland. It is at least certain that the recommendation was made by Mr Alexander Cunningham, Writer, of 46 South Hanover Street, Edinburgh. He was an intimate friend and correspondent of the poet, who, in one of his letters, declared that Mr Cunningham, Mr William Cruickshank, one of the masters of the High School of Edinburgh, and Mr William Dunbar, W.S., the Colonel of the Crochallan Fencibles, were to him

“Dear as the ruddy drops which warm my heart.”

Burns's name was proposed at a meeting of the Council of the Company held on 10th April 1792—probably convened for the purpose of preparing its programme for the season—and a Commission was issued in the following terms which are in use at the present time :

“At Edinburgh, the 10th day of April, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-two. — The Council of the Royal Company of Archers after tryal taken by the judges of the Company and their report, Have Admitted and Received, and hereby Admit and Receive you, Robert Burns, Esquire, to be one of His

The Story of

“Majesty’s Royal Company of Archers, and
“granting to you all the privileges and Im-
“munities that are or may be competent to any
“of the said Company.—In Witness Whereof,
“these presents are sealed with the Common
“Seal of the Company, and signed by the
“Secretary day and place aforesaid. (Signed)
“James Gray, Sy., R.C.A.”

This document, drawn up in the formal legal phraseology of the day, its terms engrossed in all the permanence of parchment, was duly forwarded to the poet at Dumfries. It reached him while he was still brooding on the barren result of his efforts at Ellisland; when he was busily engaged with his disagreeable duties in the Excise, his spare time being occupied with the congenial work of correcting the proofs of the forthcoming edition of his own poems, and with preparing and revising the sheets of Volume IV. of “Johnson’s Museum.” No wonder that amidst this mass of work and worry the poet did not at once acknowledge the honour bestowed upon him by the bowmen of Edinburgh. Indeed, it was not until the 10th of September following that near the “witching time of night” he found time to pen a communication to Mr Cunningham. That his worries weighed heavily upon him is shewn by his opening words: “No!” he exclaimed, “I will not attempt an apology. Amid all my hurry of

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

business I might have stolen five minutes to dedicate to one of the first of my friends and fellow-creatures. I might have done, as I do at present, snatched an hour and scrawled a page or two. I might have congratulated my friend on his marriage; or I might have thanked the Caledonian Archers for the honour they have done me (though, to do myself justice, I intended to have done both in rhyme, else I had done both long ere now).”

The closing sentence shows how much Burns valued the Archers' compliment, and it is regrettable that the bustle of business prevented him from signalling his appreciation in song. Yet their act must always be considered one of the highest in their history; and it is a remarkable commentary upon the aspersions which have been cast upon the character of Burns in his declining years that what is unquestionably one of the most influential corporations in the country should have regarded him as worthy of admission to their ranks.

The subsequent history of the diploma shows that it was carefully preserved by Burns and by his family, in whose hands it was kept at his death in 1796. It passed into the possession of his fourth son, Lieutenant-Colonel James Glencairn Burns, who treasured the interesting relic of his illustrious sire, and carried it with him during his long service in India. This is disclosed by a recently-discovered letter written by

The Story of

the Colonel to the late Mr James Ballantine, of Edinburgh, at the time the latter was collecting mementos of Burns for the monument in that city. Colonel J. G. Burns was then residing at Cheltenham, whither, as we have mentioned, he and his brother, Colonel William Nicol Burns, had retired. Colonel Burns wrote :

“ 4 Berkeley Street, Cheltenham, 29 Oct. 1863.—
“ My dear Ballantine, I have found the Archers’
“ Commission after a weary search, and have
“ packed it with the account of Fergusson’s
“ headstone in a tin case for transmission. The
“ seal I cannot find, but it matters not, for,
“ though in a tin case, the Indian heat had quite
“ obliterated the impression. But perhaps you
“ can get a fresh one as the Company, I believe,
“ still exists.”

Colonel Burns’s desire was given effect to, and a new seal was affixed to the document, which deservedly occupies a foremost place amongst the mementos in the Museum.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BATTLE FOR BURNS'S PUNCH-BOWL.

THE dissatisfaction which has lately been expressed north of the Cheviots at the omission of "Burns" from the great names in English Literature inserted in the panels of the dome in the British Museum recalls the fact that in that Museum lies one of the most interesting mementos of the National Bard—namely, his famous punch-bowl. The present, therefore, is an opportune time to tell the story of how this important relic of the poet came to go outside his native country, and of the energetic efforts which were made in the early sixties of the last century to get it transferred to the Burns Museum in Edinburgh. The attempt to bring the bowl back to Scotland was of a semi-private nature; but as most, if not all, who were engaged in it have joined the great majority, the silence which was imposed upon the principals at the time may now be broken, and the particulars given to the public.

Readers of Burns will remember that the punch-bowl was presented by James Armour to the poet when he married "Bonny Jean" *in facie ecclesiæ*, and

The Story of

took her with him to Ellisland. It was made by Armour himself out of *lapis ollaris*, the stone of which Inverary Castle is built. This species is of a greenish-grey colour, and would doubtless be selected by him on account of its being easily worked and turned in the lathe. Armour has been described as a man rigid and devout; but the character of his gift shows that he neither lacked the social qualities of the times, nor looked askance upon the jovialities of his famous son-in-law. And round the bowl hangs the memory of many merry meetings, for Burns frequently loved to assume the bright cloak of happiness and hilarity with the view of hiding from the world his disappointments, his difficulties, and his doubts. Here is his general welcome in a verse inscribed on the bowl:

“But ye whom social pleasure charms,
Whose hearts the tide of kindness warms,
Who hold your being on the terms,
‘Each aid the others,’
Come to my bowl, come to my arms,
My friends, my brothers!”

Vive la bagatelle! was at these times his motto, with Venus as Queen of the Revels. From all these gatherings there outstands the meeting at Moffat when

“Willie brew'd a peck o' maut,
And Rab and Allan cam' to pree.”

The actors in this historic drama of drink were William Nicol—a bosom-companion of Burns, but one

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

whose influence upon his life was perhaps not of the best—and his friend Allan Masterton, a master of melody, with Burns as the genius of the piece. It is almost needless to infer that the three kindred spirits, endowed with all the elements for a merry-making, would resolve to make the gathering a memorable one in their lives; the time and the circumstances were irresistible, and the immortal song evoked by the occasion shows that their performance was even better than their resolution. Nicol, with his accustomed skill, brewed a potent and plentiful supply of punch; Burns told his queerest tales; Allan sang his sweetest songs, and the “three merry boys” did not disperse until the dawning of the day.

On the death of Burns the punch-bowl was presented by Gilbert Burns to Alexander Cunningham, (the father of Allan Cunningham, one of the numerous biographers of the Bard), the letter of gift being as follows:

DUMFRIES,
16th January 1801.

“ Dear Sir,

“ I herewith send you a small punch-bowl
“ in Inverary marble. To present you with so
“ paltry a vessel of such base material requires
“ some explanation. Mrs Burns has for some
“ time expressed a wish to present you with

The Story of

“some small testimony of the sense she has of
“your friendly attachment to her children as
“well as to their father. I have advised her
“that as this bowl has acquired some cele-
“brity from Dr Currie’s having connected it
“with his description of the social powers as
“well as habits of its former owner, it will be
“an agreeable present to you, and I hope it will
“reach you while Mr Sime is with you, that in
“his company the melancholy luxury of the
“recollection of joys that are past may be pro-
“duced in your mind so susceptible of tender
“impressions.

“ I am, Dear Sir,

“ Yours most truly,

“(Signed) GILBERT BURNS.”

After the death of Alexander Cunningham, the bowl, through the instrumentality of Mr A. Dobie of Lancaster Place, London, came into the possession of Mr Richard Hastie, of Rutland Gate, London, who, for some years, was the parliamentary representative for Paisley.

Mr Hastie appreciated at its true worth the relic which had played such a notable part in the life of the poet, and on each 25th of January he placed it, full of the national beverage, before a select company of his friends. On Mr Hastie’s death it was found that by his will, which was dated 4th June 1857, he

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

had bequeathed the bowl to the British Museum. The bequest was in the following terms: "I Give and Bequeath a Punch-bowl formerly belonging to the Poet Burns, together with a book of sundry manuscripts and relics of that Bard, to the trustees of the British Museum, and I direct and authorise my Executors to take a receipt for the same from any official person connected with the Museum whom they may think competent to give such receipt."

The bequest was considered a valuable one by the Trustees, and in their subsequent report to Parliament they stated that it was one well worthy of public notice. It was unfortunate that Mr Hastie should have left such an interesting relic as the punch-bowl to an institution outside Scotland. There is reason, however, to think that he may have been moved to do so by the fact that there did not exist at the time any body in Scotland which looked after the relics of the Bard. But the great centenary celebrations in the year following Mr Hastie's death aroused intense interest in the poet and his works, and it was therefore not surprising that a short time afterwards successful efforts were made, through the medium of the Edinburgh Burns Club, to collect many valuable mementos of the poet, which were then placed in the Burns Monument. Amongst the relics which could not be recovered was the punch-bowl, and it was felt that an effort should be

The Story of

made to obtain it from the Trustees of the British Museum. Accordingly, after some preliminary negotiations, Sir Roderick Murchison, at a meeting of the Trustees in February 1864, carried a motion that the punch-bowl should be transferred to the Edinburgh Burns Monument collection, on condition that the Burns Club sent to the Trustees for their MS. department a letter or letters of the poet. It transpired at the meeting that the rules and regulations of the Trustees distinctly forbade them to part with any object confided to their care either by gift or on loan; but Sir Roderick happily brought before them their power to exchange objects on special occasions; and it was decided that this was a fortunate way out of the difficulty. Much satisfaction was naturally felt when it was known that the bowl was to be brought to Edinburgh, particularly when the Trustees' resolution was followed by a formal intimation from Mr Antonio Panizzi, the principal librarian, confirming the news. An MS. letter of Burns was accordingly sent to London to be exchanged for the bowl. But "the best laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft a-gley," and some delay occurred with regard to the question of the Trustees' powers in cases of *bequests*, though it was still hoped that the special general meeting of the Trustees in May following would confirm the unanimous resolution of the body to which executive power had been delegated.

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

By this time the hitch in the negotiations had aroused a good deal of interest in Edinburgh, and several prominent citizens joined the movement to regain the bowl, which had now assumed the appearance of a mimic international dispute. To overcome the difficulty which had been created, Mr Robert Chambers suggested that there should be raised a memorial to the Trustees from men of note in the Scottish Capital, and he promised not only to do all in his power, but also to secure the strong support of his brother William. A memorial in the following terms was accordingly sent to the Trustees :

“Your memorialists having learned that the
“Standing Committee or Executive Body of
“your Honourable Board have agreed to send
“the Burns Punch-Bowl to the Burns Monu-
“ment Museum in Edinburgh, in exchange for
“any letter or letters of the Poet, which the
“custodiers of the Monument may send to the
“MS. department of the British Museum ; and
“having ascertained that Mr James Ballantine,
“interim curator of the Monument, has sent
“a letter of Burns to your Museum, your
“memorialists earnestly pray that you may
“authorise the transaction to be concluded.

“The Edinburgh Burns Monument, of which
“the Town Council are the permanent custo-
“diers, was erected thirty years ago, and cost

The Story of

“nearly three thousand pounds, subscribed for
“by Scotsmen in all parts of the world. It
“occupies a prominent point on the Calton
“Hill, is a Grecian temple of chaste design, has
“a well-lighted chamber twenty feet in diameter,
“and contains relics, as per annexed catalogue,
“all of which have been collected during the
“last eighteen months.

“Since the Monument was opened six months
“ago as a Museum, it has been visited by nearly
“five thousand persons, each paying twopence,
“so that it is entirely self-supporting, and daily
“becoming more popular and attractive. As
“the Poet’s Punch-Bowl would here be a pro-
“minent object, would be carefully preserved,
“and more thoroughly appreciated than in the
“British Museum, your memorialists respect-
“fully and earnestly solicit your Honourable
“Board to accede to the prayer of their
“memorial.”

Amongst the signatories to this document were the Lord Provost (Mr Charles Lawson), Mr Adam Black, Sir William Gibson-Craig; the Provost of Leith, Lord Neaves; the Sheriff of Midlothian, Messrs W. & R. Chambers, Sir John Watson Gordon, Sir John Steel, Mr. Alexander Russel (the famous editor of the *Scotsman*), Professor Christison, and Professor Simpson. This powerful appeal from

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

the civic authorities and so many enlightened inhabitants of Edinburgh was not without its due effect upon the British Museum Trustees, and they now deemed the matter of so much importance that a special meeting of the whole body was summoned for Saturday the 23rd of April 1864. As it was essential, in giving away or exchanging objects bequeathed to the Museum, that two of the three principal Trustees should be present, the chief librarian secured the attendance of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Speaker of the House of Commons. At the meeting, the motion to transfer the bowl was strongly and heartily advocated by Sir Roderick Murchison, and he was ably supported by some of the Trustees for whose judgment and character there was the highest respect. But the motion was opposed on the high principle that every bequest to the British Museum was a sacred engagement, and in this particular case it was argued that the punch-bowl formed part only of Mr Hastie's bequest, inasmuch as there accompanied it a whole bookful of the poet's letters. This plea prevailed; the amendment was carried, and the battle of the bowl ended in there being lost to Scotland a remarkable relic concerning a phase of Burns's life, which, toned down by the gentle hand of time, only serves to throw into stronger relief the great glories of his brief but brilliant career.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN UNPUBLISHED SONG BY ROBERT BURNS, JUNIOR.

INSTANCES of inherited genius have been so numerous that science has recorded as an established fact that "the inborn character of structure and function, both of body and mind, has been proved almost all along the line." Carlyle is less emphatic upon the point, but he has significantly said that 'he never knew of a great man who was born the son of entirely stupid parents.' Observation proves the truth of this testimony, yet in comparatively few cases have the children of a great man possessed an equal or greater degree of genius than the father.

In the case of Robert Burns's children heredity seems to have slackened her dominion, for none of them, except the eldest son, Robert, is known to have had any gift of poetical expression. That transcendent power of mind, which in their father's experience—to quote Carlyle once more—was "like a burning ship which has been set on fire for the glorification of the spectators on land," was not ordained to be theirs. It is indeed remarkable that they were devoid of their father's high poetic inspira-

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

tion, but this negative circumstance may have been a fortunate one for them in their walk through life.

Robert, however, seems to have caught an echo of his father's minstrelsy. Faint that echo undoubtedly is; but, unequal as they are in literary quality and in exact rhyme, Robert's poetic efforts show that he had considerable aptitude for natural allusion, and that in a fair degree he could give melodious utterance to his emotions. On account of his turn for rhyming and an amiable disposition to enjoy harmless banter, the other members of the family dubbed him the "laureate"—a sobriquet which he good-naturedly accepted. Alas! poor Robert was the only one of the poet's sons who, along with a trifling share of his father's poetic gift and some of his virtues, inherited also his father's failings. He was a wayward being, whose effusions are still of interest to us for his father's sake.

In his "Life of Burns," Allan Cunningham gives two examples of verse by the poet's eldest son. To the few compositions of his known to the public we are enabled to add another in the form of a song which the present writer found embedded in the Minute Book of the Edinburgh Burns Club. The song was written while its author was living in Dumfries, and after he had retired from the situation which he held in the Stamp Office, London. It was addressed to Mr Turnbull, Edinburgh, and was

The Story of

recited by that gentleman at the Annual Dinner of the Club on 25th January 1854. It is as follows :

SONG : "PRETTY MEG MY DEARIE"

AIR : Mr Wemyss of Cuttlehill's Strathspey.

As I gaed up the side o' Nith
Ae Summer morning early,
Wi' gowden locks on dewy leas
The broom was wavin' fairly.

Aloft unseen in cloudless sky,
The lark was singing clearly,
When wadin' through the broom I spied
My pretty Meg my dearie.

Like dawin' light frae stormy night
To sailor wae and weary,
Sae sweet to me the glint to see
O' pretty Meg my dearie l

Her lips were like a half-seen rose,
When day is breakin' paly,
Her een beneath her snawy brow
Like raindrops frae a lily :

Like twa young bluebells fill'd wi' dew,
They glanced baith bright and clearly ;
Aboon them shone o' bonnie brown
The locks o' Meg my dearie.

Of a' the flow'rs in sunny bow'rs
That bloom'd that morn sae cheerie,
The fairest flow'r that happy hour
Was pretty Meg my dearie !

I took her by the sma' white hand,
My heart sprang in my bosom ;
Upon her face dwelt maiden grace
Like sunshine on a blossom.

Oh lovely seem'd the morning hymn
Of ilka birdie near me ;
But sweeter far the angel voice
O' pretty Meg my dearie l

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

While simmer light shall bless my sight,
And bonnie broom shall cheer me,
I'll ne'er forget the morn I met
My pretty Meg my dearie !

The verses are signed, "R. Burns, Dumfries, November 11, 1841," and it is stated in the Minutes of the Club that their recital "was received with great applause."

On a fly-leaf of the manuscript there is the following jotting :

"Authenticated by Wm. Irving, married to a niece of Mrs Burns, who was long and closely acquainted with the author, and knows that the song was written by him, and has heard him sing it frequently."

It may be mentioned in conclusion that Burns's eldest son survived the date of his song by sixteen years, and died in Dumfries on 14th May 1857, twenty-four years after his retiral from his post in the Stamp Office at Somerset House.

CHAPTER IX.

RELICS OUTSIDE THE MUNICIPAL MUSEUM.

—
IN THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY.

—
I.—MS. VOLUME.

IT is the proud privilege of the University of Edinburgh to be the possessors of a valuable collection of Autograph Letters and Poems by the Poet. These are contained in a bound volume. On their authenticity no doubt whatever can be cast; for their former owner, the late Mr David Laing, LL.D., Librarian, The Signet Library, Edinburgh, was too exact an antiquarian expert to be tricked by faked documents or alleged originals. The mere fact that he bequeathed the manuscripts to the University shows how anxious he was that they should be preserved to the nation.

Appropriately, as showing Burns's abounding pity and magnanimity of purpose, the volume opens with the well-known letter, alluded to in a previous chapter, addressed by the Poet to the Honourable the Bailies of the Canongate of Edinburgh, craving permission to erect a head-stone over the grave of Robert Fergusson in Canongate Churchyard. On the same

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

sheet is a letter to Dr Moore, London, with the date "Edinburgh, January 1787."

Then comes a letter "To James Dalrymple, Esq., of Orangefield on receiving a rhyming epistle from him." The only address and date given is "Edinburgh, Feb.," the year presumably being 1787. The letter begins: "I suppose the devil is so elated at his success with you that he is determined by a *coup de main* to effect his purposes on you all at once in making you a poet." Burns also says that when he saw Mr Dalrymple's verses, he "gagit wide, but naethin' spak'"—an adapted quotation from "Death and Dr Hornbook." He amplifies his amazement by likening it to that of the "three friends of Job, when they sat down with him seven days and seven nights, and spake not a word." Then, as if revelling in exaggeration, he quotes Milton's lurid phrase, "nine times the space that measures day and night in oblivious astonishment, prone-weltering on the fiery surge," with which he associates the consternation of the brave, but unfortunate Jacobite clans "after their unhappy Culloden in Heaven."

He proceeds to extol the virtues of the Earl of Glencairn, and says that his "noble patron's" worth will last "unhurt amid the war of elements, the *wrecks* of matter and the *crush* of worlds." It is not often that Burns's finely attuned ear betrays him as it does in

The Story of

this misquotation. He speaks of "uncoupling his heart and fancy for a slight chace after a certain Edinr. Belle," and ends by quoting a curious snatch of doggerel, which he says is from "An auld sang o' my mither's."

The next letter is dated "Edinburgh, Feb. 1787," and is addressed "To the Earl of Buchan in an epistle of criticisms (*sic*) and advices from his lordship." In this reply to a letter, much commented upon by critics, and appearing to Colonel William Nicol Burns, the poet's son, as ridiculously patronising in its manner, Burns becomingly records his gratitude for good advice, but sturdily refuses to bend the knee to anything that may encroach upon his independence.

How much Burns differed from many successful authors, who in the hey-day of success have altogether forgotten the efforts of humbler brethren of the pen, is admirably shown in the succeeding letter "To the Rev. Mr Greenfield, enclosing two songs, the composition of two Ayrshire mechanics." Introducing these to the minister's notice, Burns says they are "the works of bards such as I lately was, and such as, I believe, I had better still have been."

Although he may sometimes thus appear to under-rate his poetic powers, there is the strongest reason to believe that, even more than his admirers, and certainly better than most of his critics, Burns knew the real position he occupied as a poet. He gives

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

proof of this searching self-examination when he says in this letter, "I know pretty exactly what ground I occupy as a man and poet, and however the world, or a friend, may sometimes differ from me in that particular, I stand for it, in silent resolve, with all the tenaciousness of property."

He makes it unmistakably plain that it would have been unpardonable for those who had the power to discern his genius to have completely neglected him, but he looks ahead and sees the gathering gloom. For having allowed himself, he says, "to be dragged forth with all my imperfections on my head to the full glare of learned and polite observation is, what I am afraid, I shall have bitter reason to repent." The word "bitter," coming as an after-thought, is interlined. Then prophetically he exclaims: "When proud Fortune's ebbing tide recedes—you may bear me witness when my buble (*sic*) of fame was at the highest, I stood, unintoxicated with the inebriating cup in my hand, looking forward, with rueful resolve, to the hastening time when the stroke of envious Calumny, with all the eagerness of vengeful triumph, should dash it to the ground."

The Poet's gloomy forecast was appalling in its tragic truthfulness, and the letter, which is dated "Dec. 1786," is remarkable as containing passages identical with some that occur in one of his numerous communications to Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop.

CHAPTER X.

MS. VOLUME—Continued.

THE POET'S HOPES, FEARS AND ASPIRATIONS.

THE next epistle is penned when Burns has serious thoughts of entering the Excise. He turns for help to the Earl of Glencairn, who has already rescued him from "obscurity, wretchedness, and exile." Alluding to the sum which he has given to his brother, Gilbert, in order to keep the family together at Mossgiel, he thinks he will have left—out of the profits of his poems—a balance of about £200—a fair sum in those days; and in a fit of thrift, he tells of his resolve to husband what remains. "Instead of beggaring myself," he says, "with a small dear farm, I will lodge my little stock, a sacred deposite in a banking-house." He encloses a copy of "Holy Willie," and expresses his intention of waiting upon Lord Glencairn in the following week, "when I hope to have settled my business with Mr Creech."

From "Ellisland, near Dumfries, 15th May 1789," we find the Poet writing to "Lady Betty Cunningham, at Coates, near Edinr.," enclosing to her a

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

“piece pleading the cause of Humanity,” and to “the noble Earl to whom I owe my all,”—“a specimen of the Author’s Political Piety.”

On 22d January of the same year, and from the same address, he had written to Lady Betty in hopeful mood about his worldly prospects, and with pardonable enthusiasm about his poetic pursuits. “That from a dabbler in rhymes,” he says, “I am become a professional Poet, that my attachment to the Muses is heated with enthusiasm; that my squalid Poverty is changed for comfortable Independence is the work of your ladyship’s noble family.” In this long letter he shows remarkable acumen in literary criticism, discusses his chance of further poetic distinction, and declares that he will “put it to the test of repeated trial.” Then he reflectively adds, “I have my Excise Commission in reserve if the farm should not turn out well.”

By the end of the year, 23rd December, the Poet is again pessimistic. But a ray of light breaks through, and he borrows consolation from the kind reception of some verses he had sent to her ladyship; he regards her letter as a bright blink “amid the cheerless gloom and sinking despondency of December weather and diseased nerves.” In his reply he repudiates the thought she seems to entertain that he has forgotten the kind family of Glencairn, and, as a token to the contrary, calls upon

The Story of

Heaven to be his witness. His life, he declares, is modelled with propriety befitting his responsibility due to the friendship of the noble house. He claims to be very temperate, "but at gala times," he says, such as a "christening or a kirk-night when my punch-bowl is brought from its dusty corner and filled up in honour of the occasion, I begin with the Countess of Glencairn! My good woman, with the enthusiasm of a grateful heart, next cries, My Lord! and so the toast goes on until I end with Lady Harriet's little angel whose epithalamium I have pledged myself to write."

Through the kindly offices of Mr Graham, of Fintry," one of the first of men," the poet has been appointed to the Excise Division in the midst of which he lives. He finds the £50 per annum "an exceeding good thing." So overjoyed, indeed, is he at his good fortune that he actually defends his department against opprobrium; and then, in eager mood, remarks, "I had rather that my profession borrowed credit from me than that I borrowed credit from my profession." But amid all his struggles he still fingers the lyre, though to satisfy the public liking for novelty he must change the tune, and, as he says, "adopt another style of expression."

He is meditating the production of a Scottish drama, but for some years to come must qualify himself for the task by close study of men and books.

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

He has begun with Shakespeare, and thereafter proposes to apply himself earnestly to the dramatic authors of repute in English and in French, "the only languages which I know." From this letter, also, we see that, persistently as Burns strove, he could not keep clear of the factious field of politics. At the time of a General Election he managed, by a supreme effort, "to avoid taking a side!"

Intense was the Poet's sorrow for the loss of his unflinching friend James, Earl of Glencairn. Never, indeed, was genuine grief more touchingly expressed than in his "Lament" for that nobleman. Here is a fine autograph copy of the matchless verses, sent by Burns in a letter which he wrote from "Ellisland, near Dumfries, 23rd Oct. 1791." The inscription which follows the verses is in these words: "To Lady Harriet Don, this poem, not the fictitious creation of poetic fancy, but the breathings of real woe from a bleeding heart, is respectfully and gratefully presented by the Author."

CHAPTER XI.

MS. VOLUME—Continued.

A PERIOD OF POETIC ACTIVITY.

NEXT we have in autograph “A piece of new Psalmody said to be composed for and sung on the late joyful solemnity—the twenty-third of April last in a certain chapel-of-ease somewhere in the meridian of K—lm—rn—ck” :

“O sing a new song to the L—
Make all and everyone
A joyful noise even for the King,
His restoration.”

Here we have also the lines, “On seeing a fellow wound a hare with a shot, April 1789,” and the stately “Address to Edinburgh” which the Poet seems to have sent to Lady Harriet Don in 1787.

Then follow the “Verses intended to have been written below the picture of a Noble Earl,” which begin :

“Whose is that noble dauntless brow?
And whose that eye of fire?”

Copied in another hand, we have “Jenny dang the Weaver,” and “Verses by Mr K.”

Then comes, in Burns’s manly penmanship again,

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

“Ode to the memory of the Regency Bill, 1789.” It is written on a long strip of paper, for the Poet was never parsimonious of his manuscript. This is followed in autograph, by “Fragments”—three in number—the opening couplet of the first as follows:

“By all I loved neglected and forgot,
No friendly face e'er lights my lonely cot.”

Next in order is an expurgated copy of the humorous reply which Burns sent “To Mr Robt. Aiken in Ayr, in answer to his mandate requiring an account of servants, carriages, carriage-horses, riding-horses, wives, children, &c.” The manuscript is addressed to Lady H. Don. The lines are now known by the title of “The Inventory.”

In the next manuscript, “The Kirk of Scotland's garland—a New Song,”—the Poet has supplied marginal notes, explanatory of the persons indicated in the song. This is the well-known “Kirk's Alarm,” which begins:

“Orthodox, Orthodox,
Wha believe in John Knox.”

Another manuscript sent to Lady H. Don is the “Ode: Sacred to the Memory of Mrs O—— of A——,” opening with the grim couplet:

“Dweller in yon dungeon dark,
Hangman of creation mark.”

A page or two forward in the volume is another piece in the same measure, but with the romantic element overruling the tragic:

The Story of

“Thou whom chance may hither lead,
Be thou clad in russet weed,”

“Written,” says the Poet, “in Friars Carse Hermitage, Nith-side, June 1788.” Between these compositions is a copy of the lines “To R—— G——, Esq., requesting a favour,” and opening thus :

“When nature her great masterpiece designed,
And framed her last best work—the Human Mind.”

This also was sent to Lady H. Don. It was originally addressed to Robert Graham, Esq., of Fintry. Then comes the famous narration of the “merry core o’ randy gangerel bodies” who

“In Poesie Nancy’s held the splore,
To drink their orra duddies.”

Here the Poet entitles it “Love and Liberty—a cantata.” Lady H. Don is again the recipient. This autograph copy of what is universally known as “The Jolly Beggars” is followed by a copy of the same in a woman’s handwriting.

Next we have a copy, in an unknown hand, of an old song such as Burns was capable of stripping of its dross and perpetuating in decent form. It is called “Muirland Meg.”

Neatly copied by someone, is the bitter epigram, “On the Laird of Cardoness,” and the not less stinging stanza, “On the Earl of Galloway” :

“No Stewart art thou, Galloway,
The Stewarts all were brave;
Besides, the Stewarts were but fools,
Not one of them a knave.”

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

Similarly, some admirer has made a copy of a letter sent by Burns at "Ellisland, 16th Dec. 1789," to Lady Winifred Maxwell Constable. In it occurs the Poet's well-known reference to the Jacobitical strain in the blood of his forebears, telling how they willingly "shook hands with ruin" for sake of the Stewart cause.

Following this is a copied extract from "A Rhyming Epistle to Mr Tytler, of Woodhouselee, author of the "Defence of Mary, Queen of Scots." This effusion, we may be sure, was the natural outflow of Burns's gratitude to one who had striven to uphold an historic heroine for whose memory he had an ardent affection—an affection tenderly expressed in his exquisite "Lament for Mary, Queen of Scots."

From the signature, "C. K. Sharpe," appended to the note on the back of the manuscript, we are led to believe that the epistle forcibly appealed to the antiquarian-minded Charles Kilpatrick Sharpe, and that he expected it to have the same effect on "Sir Walter Scott, Bart., Melrose," to whom he sent it.

Letters from Burns—one to Peter Hill, 2d Feby. 1790, and another 1791—are copied in part. In the latter, Burns refers to Creech's unprincipled trickery in publishing another edition of the poems without his leave, and says that he has taken rare vengeance upon the trickster by ignoring his request to revise the latest edition.

The Story of

Of the autograph letter from Will. Nicol to Mr John Lewars, and the autograph letter from Mr James Johnson of the "Museum," followed by the copies of letters written for Mrs Burns in her early widowhood, we will make more particular mention before we close these notes on a volume that has alike a literary and psychological interest for every lover of the National Poet.

CHAPTER XII.

MS. VOLUME—Concluded.

—
THE POET'S PENMANSHIP.

—
MEMORIAL LETTERS AND MISCELLANEA.

THE Poet's autograph manuscripts are, on the whole, in good preservation. The paper on which they are written is of genuine quality, usually large of page, with a certain pretentiousness that is enhanced by the gilt-edging. This ornamentation is absent from "Love and Liberty." A gilt-edged narrative of beggary and rascality may have seemed incongruous to the Poet, who had ever a fitting sense of proportion.

Critical inspection of the manuscripts will prove the presence of peculiarities in the poet's penmanship. A great statesman has said that words are but "chalk and colour;" the manuscripts of Burns have the added interest of shewing his very moods. Sometimes the writing lacks the firm, decisive line that shews his intense earnestness. Often it is bold and final, as if every stroke were a sword-cut. On occasion it indicates a considered caution; at other times it shews dash and abandon. Then we have

The Story of

the big, strident characters familiar to all lovers of Burns's letters. And not least significant is the occasional word deliberately interlined as an afterthought.

A good many of the University MSS. seem to be copies which Burns made for friends or for himself when *the* originals had to be sent elsewhere. This is especially noticeable in the case of the letters. Sometimes a letter begins on the sheet on which another letter ends. Burns, we know, set value on his correspondence, and was from youth accustomed to keep copies of his best epistles. But, copy or no, the University manuscripts form a most interesting and valuable collection which fortunately has fallen into appreciative keeping.

Pathetic interest attaches to certain letters near the end of the volume. These were written for Mrs Burns by proxy when she was in the first anguish of her great bereavement. In this assistance, Mr John Lewars, the father of the devoted Jessie Lewars, had a kindly hand, and one of the letters bears his signature. A letter from William Nicol, Burns's boon companion, is characteristic of its author. It breathes fury against the detractors of the dead Poet, and more than indicates that the news of Burns's death had given Nicol some pangs of conscience as well as grief for the loss of his friend. The letter is written from "Merchant Street, Edin-

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

burgh," under date, 30th August 1796, and is addressed to Mr Lewars. Nicol writes while convalescent, and above the plaint about his own illness, he rises into a rugged defence of the man in whose undoing he unfortunately had a part. He cannot, however, be taxed with forsaking his friend's memory, and he shows a certain zeal in making provision for Burns's widow and children. But the manner in which Nicol proposes to do so reads like a misinterpretation of the feeling of affection entertained by Burns for his own brothers and sisters. "What has become of Burns's money?" is the question that Nicol asks. Allowing for the money sunk in Ellisland, he finds that Burns should still have had a few hundred pounds over from the profit of his works. Gilbert Burns, according to Nicol, must be compelled, and that quickly, to reimburse the sum which Robert freely gave him to succour the family in Mossgiel. It is just like the High School Master—big-hearted enough, but hasty in his methods of meddling in other people's business. It did not seem to occur to him that what Burns gave by way of gift—a gift it should remain.

Another interesting letter, and to some extent a literary curiosity, is the communication from Mr James Johnson to "Mr Robert Burns, Officer of Excise, Dumfries." This letter is eminently noteworthy as showing to what extent Johnson was in-

The Story of

debted to Burns for the output of "The Musical Museum." He gave unsparingly his best songs, refusing fee or reward, and "The Museum" is an everlasting testimony, not only to his own transcendent lyrical genius, but to the melodiousness of Scotland's national minstrelsy. Well, indeed, might Johnson be anxious to hear as soon as "possibell" from his great lyric-provider. A long critique in manuscript, by whom, not stated, follows this. It occupies many folios of closely written matter, with an examination of the songs contained in "The Museum," and has evidently been written by a skilled critic for some of the publications of the day, such as "The Mirror," "The Lounger," or "The Bee."

Worthy also of notice among the addenda in the volume is a communication from "J. Train," whom we take to be Joseph Train, the antiquarian friend and correspondent of Sir Walter Scott, to whom the novelist was under a deep debt of obligation for much of the material which went to the making of the Waverley Novels. This debt Scott manfully repaid by gratitude and by an active practical interest in the welfare of his correspondent. Train was his guest at Abbotsford and cherished a lifelong affection for Sir Walter, for whose sake he in the main surrendered his prospects as an author. Train was also an Excise Officer. His literary ability was

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

considerable, but was hampered by the bonds of his business. In the discharge of his official duties he traversed much of the ground over which Burns roamed when he was an Exciseman, and in this way gleaned many memories and gathered typical anecdotes of the great Poet. In this light his communication will be found of much interest.

“Who was Tam o’ Shanter?” is the burden of a manuscript by Mr Auld, of Ayr. A perennial interest centres in the bibulous Tam, who miraculously escaped the flying fury of more uncanny beings than have ever pursued a wretched mortal since the night he won “the keystone o’ the Brig.”

We cannot take our leave of this intensely interesting collection without mentioning the notes anonymously contributed in a clear hand on persons and places intimately associated with the life of the Poet. Some remarks which they contain may prove unsavoury. Some readers may be inclined to think that certain passages are mere gossip, if not garbage. On that matter we leave all who examine them to form their individual opinions. Nothing that relates to Burns is devoid of interest. On that ground there is something of value in paragraphs which tell of Burns himself, of Highland Mary and Clarinda ; of Richmond and Davie Sillar ; of Holy Willie, Wee Johnnie, and the stingy Creech ; of Mrs Dunlop, the Poet’s faithful friend, and Mr Murdoch,

The Story of

his accomplished schoolmaster; of "Corn Rigs" and the Poet's life at Mossgiel—that toilsome sojourn which has made it and the neighbouring village of Mauchline shrines of genius worthy to be classed with Abbotsford and even Stratford. To Scotsmen there are two other places which stand pre-eminent in fond remembrance—the "Auld Clay Biggin'" by the Banks o' Doon and the massive, mournful Mausoleum in Dumfries.

CHAPTER XIII.

II.—CASED RELICS.

CROWDED as is the interest in the volume of Burns manuscripts we have described; surpassing as is the spell in which it is sure to hold all those who studiously examine it, we question much if the onlooker will not find an even greater interest in the few remaining relics, that, in trebly locked security, are to be seen in the Scotch Case placed in the Library Hall of the University. Here, with remarkable vividness, are revived the realistic and romantic elements in the life of Burns—elements that sometimes warred with each other—that often harmoniously blended and gave charm and colour to a career that was alternate cloud and sunburst.

Of Burns himself there is much in little bulk that is decidedly representative of his genius and his temperament. The central and most imposing relic is a large-paged manuscript in the poet's handwriting. True, there is no title or note of any kind to attest its authenticity, but the manuscript bears its own testimony of its genuineness. We take it to be a portion—a fairly large portion—of that critical commentary upon the vagabond old songs and snatches

The Story of

of rhyme that Burns assiduously sought and which reached him from many quarters—a kind of commonplace book in which, in moments of splendid idleness, he jotted down his thoughts upon the wandering waifs—the “unconsidered trifles” of old Scotch minstrelsy. But he did more than criticise these vagrant songs. He fixed them on the written page; he rescued them; he purged and purified them; he transformed them from their rags and tatters and vulgarity into gems of rarest lyric beauty. The manuscript before us, is, we think, in part the record of the magnificent work he did for the rhyming wares of indecent nameless poetasters who had occasional gleams of genius.

Let us now turn our attention to a smaller memento of the Poet. This is an autograph song written “To Tune Morag.” It has no name, and at first glance suggests an echo or indicates the coming inspiration of the lyric masterpiece:

“O wat ye wha’s in yon toun,
Ye see the e’enin’ sun upon.”

We give the opening verse and the chorus:

“O wat ye wha that lo’es me,
And has my heart in keeping;
Sweet is she that lo’es me
As dews o’ summer weeping,
In tears the rosebud steeping.

CHORUS—

O that’s the lassie o’ my heart,
My lassie, ever dearer,
O that’s the queen o’ womankind,
And n’eer a ane to peer her.”

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

The next relic is an autograph letter from Burns to Mr Johnson, musical publisher. Most of our readers will be aware that Mr Johnson was notoriously deficient in his knowledge of the English spelling. In his frequent correspondence, he must in this respect have well-nigh lacerated the feelings of the Poet. Seldom, except perhaps in haste or weariness of transcription, did Burns misspell or wrongly punctuate. In the studied outfit of his verse and prose, he was particular to a nicety. But Johnson was an incorrigible sinner—a sinner of course in ignorance—against the laws of orthography.

In this letter, which is addressed “Mr James Johnson, music shop, Lawnmarket, Edinr.,” Burns is anxious about some composition that Johnson has in the press. He points out to the publisher that in the proof “tobacco” is spelt “tobbaco,” and that in the bill of cost, instead of “postages and porter,” Johnson has put “portherages and porter!” Burns asks him to correct these errors and to send him “500 copies by very first coach or fly.”

As to who the writer of the next manuscript was we can merely guess. It is a brief note in a woman’s writing, on a single sheet of small size, and in a freely-flowing, seemingly aristocratic hand. This is all that it contains:

The Story of

“ Mr Wilson,—You will be so good as forward the
“ two Webs sent immediately to the Bleaching,
“ as I am afraid they are rather too late.

“ H. ALEXANDER.

“ Ballamyle, Monday.”

No date is given, but do not the names, “ Alexander ” and “ Ballamyle,” remind us of the Ayrshire beauty, Miss Wilhelmina Alexander, of Ballochmyle, the heroine of the poet’s famous lyric? What a pity this scrap of correspondence is not in the handwriting of the heroine herself !

The next document is prosaic enough. It is the account rendered to Burns by his shoemaker in “ Mauchlen, Novr. 28, 1788,” and covers the period from June 15 to Sepr. of that year. The paper is very much stained, but every item is clearly readable, and shows the village shoemaker to have been something of a book-keeper. The amount of the bill was £2, 10s., no mean sum in those days to expend on shoe leather during three months. But we know that Burns was particular about his personal appearance, and neither he nor his would go ill-shod.

Here now is a document in the handwriting of the Rev. William Auld, who was minister of Mauchline parish in Burns’s day. Although in no way referring to the Poet, it instantly conjures up a time of terrible crisis in his career. Lightly as Burns may have seemed betimes to regard his early relations with “ Bonnie

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

Jean," we know the affair cost him fierce heart-searchings that ultimately drove him almost to desperation, and nearly sent him a forlorn exile to Jamaica.

"Daddy Auld," at whom he poked his poet's fun, as if to hide behind the jest the anguish for his own misdeeds, was to him a kind of grizzly spectre that presided over his untoward destiny. Mr Auld may not have been a very tender-hearted gentleman, but he did his duty, with some sort of sympathy also for the wayward couple ; and in the end what might have been moral ruin for Burns proved to be his blessing ; it won him Jean Armour for his life-partner. The document referred to is a discharge which reads thus :

"Received from Alexander Richmond Seven peck
"and half peck beer as stipend of Achenloigh
"and Bogend for Ivijc and eighty-six. This
"receipt is given 12 Feby. 1789 by the Minr.,
"Machlin, WILLIAM AULD.

"Price of the above, 8^s. 9^d."

The receipt is written in a trembling hand as if the minister were infirm. Beside it is a letter from Gavin Hamilton, writer in Mauchline, whom Burns stoutly defended against his Calvinistic persecutors. It will be remembered that "Highland Mary" was a nurse-maid in this gentleman's household. The letter, dated "Machlin, 7 Sepr. 1787," is to a client regarding some mistake in a bill which he is anxious to rectify ; for Gavin Hamilton was a very upright man.

CHAPTER XIV.

CASED RELICS—Continued.

THE POET'S FRIENDS IN LITERATURE.

A very interesting manuscript in this collection is the note from John Lapraik, "Muirmiln, Oct. 1787" to "Mr John Richmond, to be found in Mr Wilson's office, Writer to the Signet." The writer was "bauld Lapraik, the king o' hearts;" or, as Burns called him on another occasion of rhyming confidences and congratulations, "an auld kind chiel about Muirkirk." Richmond was the friend of Burns—first when apprenticed to Gavin Hamilton in Mauchline, and afterwards in Edinburgh, where, as we have previously noticed, he hospitably entertained the Poet in his lodging in the Lawnmarket.

Lapraik, according to the note, is issuing a volume of poems, and Richmond has been helping him to find subscribers. Lapraik wishes Richmond to send him the list, so that he may know how many copies to throw off. He cannily guards against remainder copies of his volume.

Of equal, perhaps greater interest, is the well-

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

preserved copy of David Sillar's poems. The title-page is in the well-known style of the Kilmarnock Press, from which three years earlier, 1786, had been issued the little volume of "Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect, by Robert Burns"—the unpretentious book of verse that was to stir Scotland to the core. Many a jovial evening Burns and Sillar spent in harmless mirth and musing, for there was a strong bond of affection between them. Is it not to the eternal credit of Burns that, knowing well the greatness of his own powers, he gave himself no airs, but met these men, Lapraik and Sillar, on level terms.

There was nothing insincere in his behaviour to those humbler bards. They were men who had some of the sterling stuff of humanity in them ; their verses had the ring of earnestness and a certain tunefulness that caught his fancy. He rejoiced to have the opportunity of telling his countrymen that there was a little poetic brotherhood in Ayrshire prepared to combat cant and dullness. In the day of his greatness these men retained his friendship and shared a measure of fame as his associates. To this day we do not hesitate to speak of Burns, Lapraik, and Sillar in the same breath, but with this difference—Burns's poetry is as fresh and vital as when it poured from his pen—the feebler lines of Lapraik and Sillar are almost forgotten.

The Story of

A letter from Gilbert Burns completes the list of the University Manuscripts that directly relate to Burns's career. In this letter, written from Grant's Braes, Gilbert shows himself to be in a great pother as to the respectability of the family name, and the names of other families with whom the Poet had been intimate. He dreads that, now that Robert is dead, a great misfortune may occur by the indiscriminate publication of his private correspondence.

To Mr Robert Ainslie he thus expresses his anxiety: "I could not help considering the fame of the author as well as the respectability and peace of his friends in considerable danger from the publication of letters written on private and confidential subjects."

Cromek, the English antiquarian busybody, has recrossed the Border and has carried south with him a goodly batch of letters written by the Poet. He has promised Gilbert to submit them to the judgment of Mr Roscoe, and to refrain from publishing anything which that conscientious critic disapproves of; but will he be true to his promise? Gilbert is getting alarmed. He has concluded that Cromek "seemed to be raking them up for the purpose of making money of them." He is likely not far wrong. He asks Mr Ainslie on his forthcoming visit to London, to seek out Cromek, find what has been done in the matter, and favour him with a report. How different

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

is Gilbert from his dead brother! How staid, decorous, and respectable as compared with the great-hearted, unconventional, erring, loving child of nature about whose posthumous fame he is so much concerned! A prudent man, whose life has been well ordered—a man of ability and of insight too—Gilbert has never fully understood Robert's failings nor accurately appraised his virtues. He undoubtedly means well, though in his good intention there seems revealed a trace of accommodating timidity. And yet it might have been well for Robert if he had had of worldly prudence just what Gilbert could have spared.

Deposited also in this case is a tinted pencil portrait of Dr Currie, of Liverpool, an early biographer of Burns, and editor of an important edition of his works. Here likewise is the manuscript of the "Cape Song" composed by Robert Fergusson for the company of roysterers known as the Cape Club. The song does not encourage one to form a favourable opinion of the high jinks so much approved of by the Poet and his revelling associates. And it is a far cry in many ways from Robert Fergusson to Robert Burns, despite the latter's keen admiration for and acknowledged indebtedness to his Edinburgh forerunner.

Born the year in which Burns died, Thomas Carlyle has linked himself to the Poet's memory in a way for which every Scot should feel grateful. The

The Story of

truest, sanest, grandest estimate of Burns as a Man and Poet that has yet been uttered is contained in Carlyle's "Essay." And what this great heroic thinker did for Burns—he did as faithfully and triumphantly for Scott. Gratifying it is to behold relics which ally the humanity of Carlyle to the humanity of Burns. Whether we read the tender words of almost paternal affection for the students of Edinburgh University, as contained in the valedictory letter from Chelsea, or the expression of compassionate regard for the destiny of endeavouring scholars shewn in the Holograph Draft of Bequest of the estate of Craigenputtock to the same University, we cannot doubt that in loving-kindness, Burns and Carlyle were much akin. Though they never saw each other in the flesh, we can bring them close together, if we but think that in his wandering days of official vigilance and poetic contemplation Burns may have often beheld, as Carlyle did, the lonely Kirk of Dunscore in the wilderness. Little did the Poet know that out of that primeval solitude would come a voice that would transfix as with a javelin the petty detractors of his fame.

With these thoughts running in one's mind, the original manuscript of Scott's "Legend of Montrose" must take a secondary place to the mementos of Burns and Carlyle. Yet we must remember that

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

Burns and Scott actually met in Edinburgh, that they heard each other's voices, and that each in his own domain exercised an influence that is almost unexceeded in literary annals.

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE ADVOCATES' LIBRARY.

—
THE POET DEFENDS HIS HONOUR.

IN the Library of the Faculty of Advocates in Edinburgh are preserved many manuscripts of priceless value. None of them, however, not even the original sheets of "Marmion" or of "Waverley;" the page from Carlyle's "Frederick the Great," or the written Latin Thesis by Robert Louis Stevenson,—among which it is placed,—has the vital interest possessed by the unpretentious letter addressed by the National Poet, about the year 1790, to Alexander Findlater, Supervisor of Excise at Dumfries.

It was written by Burns in vindication of his conduct as an Excise Officer, and to free himself from the imputation of an alleged failure of duty on his part when going through his Division. The letter was the property of the late Thomas McKie, Esq., LL.D., and was bequeathed by him to the Faculty in 1908. Here is a copy :

“DEAR SIR,

“I am both much surprised and vexed at that
“accident of Lorimer’s stock. The last survey
“I made prior to Mr Lorimer going to Edin-
“burgh I was very particular in my inspection,
“and the quantity was certainly in his posses-
“sion as I stated it. The survey I made during
“his absence might as well have been marked
“‘Key absent,’ as I never found anybody but
“the lady, who I know is not mistress of Keys,
“&c., to know anything of it, and one of the
“times it would have rejoiced all Hell to have
“seen her so drunk.

“I have not surveyed there since his return.
“I know the gentleman’s ways are like the
“grace of God—past all comprehension, but I
“shall give the house a severe scrutiny to-
“morrow morning, and send you in the naked
“facts.

“I know, Sir, and regret deeply that this
“business glances with a malign aspect on
“my character as an officer, but as I am really
“innocent in this affair, and as the gentleman
“is known to be an illicit dealer, and particu-
“larly as this is the *single* instance of the least
“shadow of carelessness or impropriety in my
“conduct as an officer, I shall be peculiarly

The Story of

“unfortunate if my character shall fall a sacrifice
“to the dark maneouvres (*sic*) of a smuggler.

“I am, Sir,

“Your obliged and

“Obedient humble Servt.,

“ROBT. BURNS.

“Sunday Even.

“I send you some rhymes I have just finished
“which tickle my fancy a little.”

This document, so full of human interest, is remarkable as shewing a great solicitude by Burns for his personal honour; a dignified manhood in rebutting calumny; and, as indicated by the postscript, a gaiety of heart in spite of everything. Yet the lapse of time makes it none the less pitiable to think of the National Poet urgently pleading for protection against the ruthless accusations of a known contrabandist. That he conscientiously performed his duties is attested to this day by a perusal of “The General Gauger”—the well-thumbed *vade mecum* which, on the authority of his son, Robert, he used while in the Excise—an interesting relic now in the possession of Councillor Dobie, Edinburgh.

CHAPTER XVI.

RELICS IN THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL MUSEUM.

THE END OF THE SONG.

IT would indeed be strange if no mementos of Burns were to be found in a building so distinctively representative of Scotland's patriotic past as is the Scottish National Museum. The Burns relics here deposited, though few, are of much importance. Only one or two letters enhance the cases, but the inkstand Burns was in the habit of using makes up for lack of much that recalls his proud vocation as a Poet.

The inkstand is of bright metal, and has three receptacles, one at each side for holding the ink, and one in the centre for the powder which, in the Poet's day, was used for drying the written manuscript. This inkstand was bought on 11th November 1866 at Mr Chapman's Auction Rooms, Edinburgh. It had been sent thither, along with two other relics, by Mr Little, Dumfries, in whose possession it had been for many years.

Here also, is a grim reminder of Burns's exciting days in the Excise—the pair of handsome pistols, which, during his mortal illness, and knowing well

The Story of

that he never more would need them, he gave to his friend, Mr Maxwell of Dumfries. They eventually passed into the possession of the Right Rev. Bishop Gillis, who patriotically presented them to the Society of Scottish Antiquaries on the occasion of the Burns Centenary Festival in Edinburgh, on 25th January 1859.

These weapons symbolise the adventurous element in Burns's character. Humane as he undoubtedly was, he would doubtless have used them daringly had occasion demanded. Who that calls to mind his gallant capture of a smuggling sloop by Solway-side, or his splendid bearing as a Dumfries Volunteer, will doubt that he, who would not willingly have harmed a field-mouse, would have bravely fought in self-defence or for the freedom and honour of his country! The pistols are unique mementos of a man and Poet whose prosaic calling cast him sometimes among marauders whom he did not fail to overawe.

Last, but not least, is a japanned and ornamented metal platter from which, like the one of wood in the Municipal Museum, Burns took his bannocks and cheese in Auld Nanse Tinnock's inn at Mauchline. Platters there are in plenty from times of old, but this can claim the supreme distinction of having borne the bread that nourished the young life of a Nation's Poet. With it we

The Edinburgh Burns Relics

close our account of the Burns Relics within the Capital.

As a collection these memorials are remarkable in that they afford an effective epitome of the Poet's life. They take us from the humble home where the wintry winds ushered in his stormy existence, past Mount Oliphant where the spark of his first love kindled the Spirit of Poetry; on by the lands of Lochlea where his liking for literature was only excelled by his continued affection for the fair sex; through the gloom and the gaiety of Mossgiel and the merry times at Mauchline; amongst his convivial companions and the brightness of his days in Edinburgh, followed by his return to Ellisland and its disastrous result; through his adventurous career in the Excise to his declining days while still in the noontide of life; and to "the end of the song" at Dumfries. Nay, they carry us even farther. They are reminders of how one hundred years after his birth the whole world awoke to full consciousness of his true worth, and gave him a high place among the immortal sons of poesy.

PRINTED BY
W. CUTHBERTSON & Co., UNION STREET.
EDINBURGH.















10137d
UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 702 252 8

