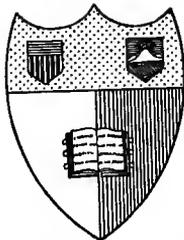


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ROBERT BURNS.

# ROBERT BURNS

AND

# FREEMASONRY

BY

DUDLEY WRIGHT

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Illustrations



PAISLEY: ALEXANDER GARDNER

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# Robert Burns and Freemasonry



**T**HE influence of the Craft of Freemasonry is exemplified in a very strong and striking manner in the biography of Scotia's famous poet, Robert Burns.

In a humble cottage on the banks of the Doon, in the district of Kyle, about two miles to the south of the town of Ayr, Robert Burns was born on 25th January, 1759. His father was a peasant farmer, and of him the poet wrote :—

“My father was a farmer upon the Carrick border, O,  
And carefully he reared me in decency and order, O ;  
He bade me act a manly part, though I had ne'er a  
farthing, O,  
For without an honest, manly heart no man was worth  
regarding, O.”

That father was, during his life, the victim of many reverses and misfortunes. The cottage in which the

poet was born was a clay-built and thatched one, on the highway which leads from Ayr to the southern part of the county. The "auld clay biggin'" was afterwards converted into a neat, whitened public-house, and for some years was kept by a Mr. John Goudie, who, with his wife, knew the poet intimately. The cottage consisted of two rooms only, one of which served as kitchen, and it was in this room that Robert Burns was born. There was then no ceiling to the humble apartment—simply the reverse of the thatched roof,

"This is the cottage as it was of old,  
     The window four small panes, and in the wall  
     The box-bed where the first daylight did fall  
 Upon their new-born infant: narrow fold  
 And poor, when times were hard and winds were cold,  
     As they were still to him. And now, close by,  
     Above Corinthian columns mounted high,  
 The famed Choragic Tripod shines in gold!

"The lumbering carriages of these dull years  
     Have passed away, their dust has ceased to whir  
 Round the pedestrian; silent to our ears  
     Is that maelstrom of Scottish men, this son  
     Of that poor cot we count the kingliest one;  
 Such is Time's justice—Time the harvester."

W. BELL SCOTT.



THE BIRTH-PLACE OF ROBERT BURNS.



The cottage is now the property of the Ayr Burns Monument Trustees, by whom it is set apart as a museum for relics of the poet. In the interior of the kitchen is shown the recess where the poet was born.

The father, William Burnes—for so he spelled his name—is described, by one who knew him towards the latter end of his life, as being “above the ordinary stature, thin, and bent down with labour. His countenance was serious and expressive, and the scanty locks on his head were grey. He was of a religious turn of mind, and, as is usual among the Scottish peasantry, a good deal conversant in speculative theology.” He compiled for his own use “A Manual of Religious Belief for the Instruction of Children.” It remained in manuscript form until 1875, when it was published as a Burns memento. The manual is curious for its quaint phraseology.

William Burnes looked upon Robert as the best reader in the house, and used to employ him to read the Bible to the rest. Burns' mother was Agnes Brown, the daughter of a race of Ayrshire peasants.

Burns in his boyhood learned grammar, writing,

arithmetic, a little mathematics, some Latin, and a smattering of French. He contrived in his earlier years to obtain some knowledge of many English classical works and of the ancient poets, by means of translations.

Burns had attained his sixteenth year only when he made his essay into poetry, the subject of his muse being a comely lass of the name of Nelly, who was associated with him after the usual fashion in the harvest-rig.

He had acquired considerable local fame when, on 4th July, 1781, he was initiated into the mysteries of Freemasonry in the St. David's Lodge at Tarbolton, in the twenty-third year of his age. After this, Freemasonry became to him a great propelling power.

Nine days prior to Burns' initiation, a union—or, as it was termed, a "junction"—was effected between the two Tarbolton Lodges, the St. David Lodge, No. 174, and the St. James' Lodge, No. 178, when it was agreed that the united Lodge should bear the name of St. David. The Tarbolton Lodge had been constituted by a Charter from Kilwinning in 1771, and the St. David's Lodge was formed by a

number of disaffected members of Tarbolton Kil-winning, with a few others, in 1773. The minute recording his initiation reads :—

“Sedarant for July 4th.

“Robert Burns in Lochly was entered an apprentice.

“Jo. Norman, M<sup>r</sup>.”

Lockhart says that he was introduced to the Lodge by John Rankine.

Rankine is said to have been a man of considerable talents and attainments, though very dissipated. He was a well-to-do farmer of the parish of Craigie, residing near Lochlea, or Lochly, the poet's home, and, on several occasions, he was the subject of the poet's verse. Burns on his death-bed wrote the following lines, which were sent to Rankine after the poet had passed away :—

“He who of Rankine sang lies stiff and dead,  
And a green, grassy hillock haps his head ;  
Alas ! alas ! a devilish change indeed !”

The house in Tarbolton in which, from 1784, the meetings of the St. James' Lodge were held, still stands in a street which has since been named “Burns Street.” Its modern appearance differs from the

photograph, and within recent years it has been renovated and slated.

James Humphry, on whom Burns wrote the well-known epitaph :—

“Below thir stanes lie Jamie’s banes ;  
Oh, Death ! it’s my opinion,  
Thou ne’er took such a bleth’rin’ b—tch  
Into thy dark dominion,”

was in early life very intimate with Burns. One day he said to him : “ James, you that are a Brother of the compass and square, can you tell me what like the Pyramids of Egypt are ? ” James felt rather puzzled how to word his reply, but, seldom at a loss for a ready answer, he said : “ ’Deed, Robin, I think they’re shaped gay like your ain nose—broad at the bottom and narrow at the top. ” Burns laughed heartily at the homely solution of the problem by which he hoped to puzzle his talkative friend.

At that time Burns was, in a great measure, unnoticed and unknown—and, it must be admitted, somewhat unpolished in his manners. It was by contact with brethren higher in the social scale, but who recognised his talents and merits, that his manners

became more refined, his intellectual energies were stimulated, and his merits gradually, but surely, acknowledged and applauded. Freemasonry influenced his thoughts, inspired his muse, and nurtured that stern love of independence and brotherhood which became the predominant characteristic of his manhood.

From the time of his initiation by Alexander Wood, a tailor, of Tarbolton, he was an enthusiastic Mason, and wherever he went he always made it his immediate care to identify himself as a member or a visitor in the local Masonic Lodge. With very few exceptions, all his patrons and acquaintances were members of the brotherhood.

William Jolly says of him: "Burns was a very keen Mason, the ideal philanthropy and brotherhood of the system being irresistible to such a mind, and he used to go to Masonic meetings all the way to Tarbolton and Kilmarnock."

It has been left to Principal Shairp to achieve what might almost have been regarded as the impossible task of writing a biography of Burns without once mentioning Freemasonry or the poet's connection with the Craft. The second and third degrees were

taken by Burns on the same evening, in the month of October following his initiation.

Dr. James Currie gives the following description of the poet: "He was nearly five feet ten inches in height, and of a form that indicated agility as well as strength. His well-raised forehead, shaded with black, curling hair, indicated extensive capacity. His eyes were large, dark, full of ardour and intelligence. His face was well-formed, and his countenance uncommonly interesting and expressive. His mode of dressing, which was often slovenly, and a certain fullness and bend in his shoulders, characteristic of his original profession, disguised in some degree the natural symmetry and elegance of his form. The appearance of Burns was most strikingly indicative of the character of his mind. On a first view his physiognomy had a certain air of coarseness, mingled, however, with an expression of deep penetration and of calm thoughtfulness approaching to melancholy. There appeared in his first manner and address perfect ease and self-possession, but a stern and almost supercilious elevation, not, indeed, incompatible with openness and affability, which, however, bespoke a mind conscious of superior talents."



MEETING-PLACE OF ST. JAMES' LODGE IN TARBOLTON (BACK VIEW).



He was passed and raised on 1st October, and the minute runs:—

“Sederant, October 1st, 1781.

“Robert Burns in Lochly was passed & raised.

“Jo. Norman, M.”

Lockhart says that immediately after his initiation he removed to Irvine, where he resided until the end of the following February.

In the following December there was again a disruption, and the seceders reconstituted the old Lodge of St. James, Burns also becoming a member. St. James' Lodge has still in its keeping the Minute Books containing three minutes in the poet's handwriting, and twenty-five signed by him as Depute Master. The Lodge treasures also the mallet used by Burns when presiding at its meetings, the silver badge referred to in the “Farewell to the Brethren of St. James' Lodge, Tarbolton”—reprinted on page 42. The Lodge Bible, which bears the date 1775, was one of the poet's possessions. It was purchased by the Lodge on 29th July, 1786; the minute running: “Bible cost 13s., ‘lettering’ (i.e., the painted name of the Lodge outside) cost 3s.”

Professor J. Stuart Blackie, in his biography of Burns, enlarges upon an innuendo, circulated in the first place by an anonymous scribbler, that his attendance at Masonic meetings led him into excesses. He says :—

“In the latter part of the last century, in such a village as Tarbolton or Mauchline, it (Freemasonry) meant only a convivial meeting of jolly good fellows, which might often be without wit, but never could be without drink. Into the mystical brotherhood at Tarbolton the poet had flung himself with all the ardour of social enjoyment which, next to love, supplied the most potent steam of his soul. But steam requires regulation, explosion is nigh. As an essentially social being, beating in every vein with an intense pulse of human kinship, Burns entered heart and soul into the next company he could find at the time and place ; and if he did not always escape the contagion of unworthy companionship, he could at all events boast for himself that he strangled blue devils in the most brilliant style, and, for his fellow-boosers, that he turned the commonplace

level of their convivial computations into an intellectual treat of the highest order.”

Burns, as is well known, enjoyed a convivial gathering, and doubtless wrote with sympathy and gusto the words :—

“Then fill up a bumper and make it o'erflow,  
And honours Masonic prepare for to throw,  
May every true Brother of the compass and square  
Have a big-belly'd bottle when harass'd with care.”

This was a stanza added to the song, “No Churchman am I.” But the most effective reply to the statement of Professor Blackie, as well as to other statements of a similar character, is to quote from his brother Gilbert's testimony on this point. It is as follows :—

“Towards the end of the period under review (in his twenty-fourth year), and soon after his father's death, he was furnished with the subject of his epistle to John Rankin. During this period, also, he became a Freemason, which was his first introduction to the life of a boon companion. Yet, notwithstanding these circumstances, and the praise he has bestowed on Scotch drink (which seems

to have misled his historians), I do not recollect during these seven years, nor till towards the end of his commencing author (when his growing celebrity occasioned his often being in company), to have ever seen him intoxicated; nor was he at all given to drinking."

"Judge not ye, whose thoughts are fingers,  
Of the hands that witch the lyre—  
Greenland has its mountain icebergs,  
Etna has its heart of fire;  
Calculation has its plummet;  
Self-control has iron rules;  
Genius has its sparkling fountains;  
Dullness has its stagnant pools;  
Like a halcyon on the waters,  
Burns's chart disdain'd a plan—  
In his soarings he was Heavenly,  
In his sinkings he was man."

—D. M. MOIR.

The following letter, addressed to Sir John Whitefoord, Bart., of Ballochmyle, is in Burns' handwriting, and the date of it is believed to be towards the end of 1782 :—

"SIR,—We who subscribe to this are both members of St. James's Lodge, Tarbolton, and

one of us is in the office of Warden, and as we have the honour of having you for Master of our Lodge, we hope you will excuse this freedom, as you are the proper person to whom we ought to apply. We look on our Mason Lodge to be a serious matter, both with respect to the character of Masonry itself, and likewise as it is a Charitable Society. This last, indeed, does not interest you farther than a benevolent heart is interested in the welfare of its fellow creatures ; but to us, Sir, who are of the lower orders of mankind, to have a fund in view, on which we may with certainty depend to be kept from want should we be in circumstances of distress, or old age, that is a matter of high importance.

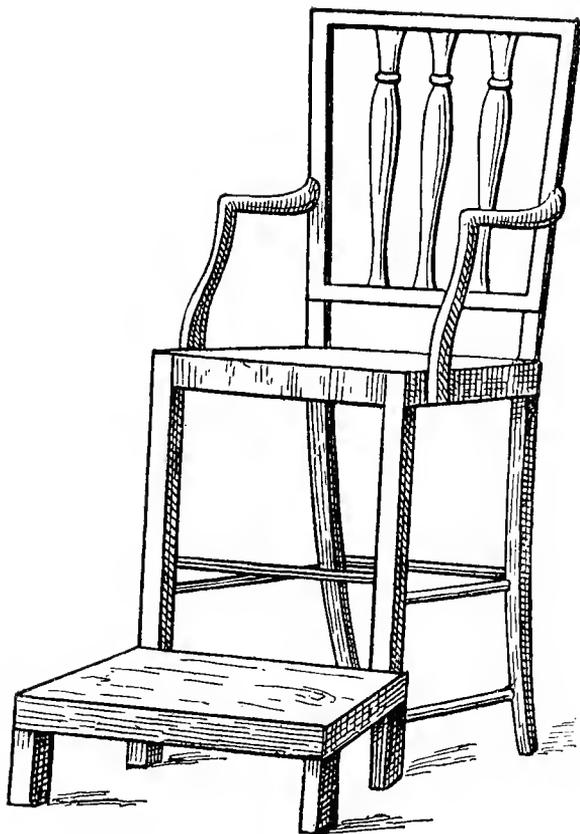
“We are sorry to observe that our Lodge’s affairs, with respect to its finances, have for a good while been in a wretched situation. We have considerable sums in bills which lye by without being paid, or put in execution, and many of our members never mind their yearly dues, or anything else belonging to our Lodge. And since the separation from St. David’s, we are not sure even of our existence as a Lodge. There has been a

dispute before the Grand Lodge, but how decided, or if decided at all, we know not.

“For these and other reasons, we humbly beg the favour of you, as soon as convenient, to call a meeting, and let us consider on some means to retrieve our wretched affairs.—We are,” etc.

Sir John Whitefoord, or Whiteford, was initiated in the Lodge Canongate Kilwinning, No. 2, under the rule of Lord Provost George Drummond, in 1765, and in the following year was appointed Senior Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, which office he held for two years. His eldest daughter, Mary Anne, was Burns' heroine in “The Braes of Ballochmyle.” Sir John Whitefoord died at Edinburgh in 1803.

The first Worshipful Master of the St. James' Lodge after its reconstruction was Major-General (then Captain) Montgomery—the name is sometimes spelt “Montgomerie”—a scion of the noble house of Eglintoun, and Burns, in course of time, became the Depute Master, and, although he removed to Mossgiel, about three miles distant, he was a regular attendant at its meetings. Tarbolton, although an obscure



BURNS' CHAIR AS DEPUTE MASTER, TARBOLTON.



village, was destined to become famous as the birth-place of many important and permanent friendships. Professor Dugald Stewart, who was then resident at Catrine, was admitted as an honorary member of this Lodge, and the minute recording his admission is signed by "Robert Burns, D.M." It was on 27th July, 1784, that Burns was elected Depute Master of the St. James' Lodge, Tarbolton, and he held that position until St. John's Day, 1788. In that capacity he attended, in 1785, on 29th June, 20th July, 2nd and 18th August, 15th September, 26th October, 10th November, and 1st and 7th December. In 1786 he attended on 7th January, 1st March, 25th May, 7th, 15th, 24th, and 29th June, 18th August, 5th October, and 10th November.

The meeting on 25th May, 1786, was eleven days subsequent to the assumed date of the parting with Mary Campbell.

The Lodge Minutes of 15th June, 1786, contain a curious entry, which reads as follows: "It was proposed by the Lodge that, as they much wanted a Lodge-room, a proposal be laid before the heritors, who are intending to build a steeple here, that the Lodge shall contribute to the building of a Lodge-

room here as the basis of that steeple, and that from the funds of the Lodge they allow fifteen pounds, besides what will be advanced from the particular friends of the Lodge : in order that this proposal be properly laid before the heritors, five persons—namely, the Right Worshipful Master, Brother M' Math, Brother Burns, Brother Woodrow, Brother William Andrew—are appointed to meet on Saturday at one o'clock to draw up a proposal to lay before the heritors on Friday first."

On 30th November, 1786, there was a public daylight Masonic procession, in which Burns took part. The Brethren marched to St. Andrew's Church, Newtown, Edinburgh, where a sermon on Brotherly Love was preached by Rev. Bro. Wright, A.M., Maybole, Grand Chaplain.

On 1st March, 1786, the poet's brother Gilbert took the second and third degrees, and it was then that both first signed their names as Burns instead of Burness. Until that date the poet had always signed as "Robert Burness."

Chambers says that his first notable deviation from "Burness" was in the poem "Mossgiel," which was probably taken to suit the necessities of rhyme,

and that he made the final change to "Burns" on 14th April, 1786.

Gilbert Burns, who later on became a factor in East Lothian, survived his brother by about forty years. He has left it on record that Robert was at a Masonic meeting one night in Tarbolton when the village dominie made an ostentatious display of his medical skill. The poet applied to him the epithet of Dr. Hornbook, by way of censure; and after parting, his muse, on the road home, gave vent to "Death and Dr. Hornbook."

Chambers' account of the incident is as follows: "In the seed-time of 1785—the date is given on the poet's own authority—Burns attended a Masonic meeting at Tarbolton, at which one of the brethren present was John Wilson, schoolmaster of the parish. To eke out a living, as Gilbert tells us, Wilson had set up a shop of grocery goods. Having accidentally fallen in with some medical books, and become most hobby-horsically attached to the study of medicine, he had added the sale of a few medicines to his little trade. He had got a shop-bill printed, at the bottom of which, overlooking his own incapacity, he had advertised that 'Advice would be given in common

disorders at the shop gratis.' On this occasion he made a somewhat ostentatious display of his medical attainments. It is said that he and Burns had a dispute, in which the schoolmaster paraded his therapeutics too offensively. Be this as it may, going home that night, Burns conceived and partly composed his poem, 'Death and Dr. Hornbook.' 'These circumstances,' adds Gilbert, 'he related to me when he repeated the verses next afternoon, as I was holding the plough, and he was letting the water off the field beside me.'"

Wilson was Secretary of the Tarbolton Lodge from 8th August, 1782, until some time in 1787. He wrote many of the Minutes and signed two of them as "Master pro tempore," and a third as "M. p. t." In 1787 the poet attended the Lodge on 4th and 25th July, and in 1788 on 7th and 23rd May, 16th June, 21st October, and 11th November. At the meetings in October and November, 1788, he made flying visits from Ellisland. That of 11th November is his last recorded appearance at St. James' Lodge, Tarbolton. Burns has referred to his duties as Depute Master in the lines:—

"Oft, honoured with supreme command,  
Presided o'er the Sons of Light."



“DEATH AND DR. HORNBOOK.”



His first initiate was Matthew Hall, a noted musician, long after a resident in Newton-upon-Ayr.

Hugh Andrew, who in Burns' time acted as whipper-in to General Montgomery, was a Steward in the Tarbolton Lodge, and to him Burns has made reference in his poem, "The Twa Dogs":—

“ Our whipper-in, wee blastit wonner,  
Puir worthless elf, he eats a dinner  
Better than ony tenant man  
His honour has in a' the lan'.”

Andrew, in 1833, was still living in a cottage in the Coilsfield Woods, where Mary Campbell, the subject of the poem "To Mary in Heaven," served as a byres-woman or dairymaid.

This Tarbolton Lodge was the subject on which Bro. A. Glass, of the Ayr Operative Lodge, No. 138, some years ago wrote the following poem, which appeared in *The Freemason* of 5th August, 1871:—

“ I've sat beneath the old roof-tree  
Where Burns oft spent the festive night,  
As happy as a king could be  
Among the honoured 'Sons of Light.'  
To me it was as Mecca's shrine  
To ardent Eastern devotee,  
Where Scotia's minstrel passed langsyne  
So many hours of joyous glee.

“ What hallowed recollections throng  
    Around that spot, endeared to fame?  
What happy scenes of love and song  
    Are conjured up in Burns' name?  
What mystic fane, however grand,  
    Can with the lowly Lodge compare,  
Where, 'honoured with supreme command,'  
    Presided Fame's eternal heir?

“ Along the corridors of Time  
    For ever sweep his deathless lays,  
And Scotia's sons, in every clime,  
    Sing sweetly of their native braes;  
In fancy rove 'whaur Lugar flows,'  
    Where 'hermit Ayr' delights to stray,  
Or 'bonny Doon' in beauty goes  
    Past hoary, haunted Alloway.

“ Nor sylvan bower, nor tiny flower,  
    That blooms where wimplin' burnie strays,  
But he possessed the innate power  
    To twine around them fadeless bays.  
In Nature's Lodge, supreme and grand,  
    He sat as Master in the chair,  
And shed a glory o'er the land  
    That time nor change can e'er impair.

“ His was the keen, prophetic eye,  
    Could see afar the glorious birth  
Of that Great Power, whose mystic tie  
    Shall make 'One Lodge' of all the earth;

Shall usher in the reign of light,  
‘Ring out the false, ring in the true,’  
Cause man to walk ‘square’ and ‘upright,’  
And wisdom’s path of peace pursue.”

It was while acting in the capacity of Depute Master that Burns made the acquaintance of Professor Dugald Stewart, to whom reference has already been made. He was a member of Lodge Canongate Kilwinning, No. 2, and afterwards befriended Burns in Edinburgh. Professor Dugald Stewart, writing to a friend about this time, said :—

“In summer, 1787, I passed some weeks in Ayrshire, and saw Burns occasionally. I think he told me that he had an excursion that season to the West Highlands, and that he also visited what Beattie calls the Arcadian Ground of Scotland, upon the banks of the Teviot and the Tweed. In the course of the same season I was led by curiosity to attend for an hour or two a Mason Lodge at Mauchline where Burns presided. He had occasion to make some short, unpremeditated compliments to different individuals, from whom he had no reason to expect a visit, and everything he said was happily conceived and forcibly as well

as fluently expressed. His manner of speaking in public had evidently the marks of some practice in extempore education."

This meeting was held on 25th July, 1787, and is duly recorded, in the poet's own handwriting, in a Minute of the Lodge, from which we learn that, in addition to the Depute Master and the Professor, there were also present: Claude Alexander of Ballochmyle; Claude Neilson from Paisley; Dr. George Grierson of Glasgow; John Farquhar Gray of Gilmiscroft; and Alexander Allison of Barnmuir.

Burns' opinion of Professor Dugald Stewart was given afterwards in a letter which he wrote to Dr. Mackenzie, in which he said: "I never spent an afternoon with half that pleasure as when, in company with you, I had the honour of paying my devoirs to that plain, honest, worthy man, the Professor. I think his character, divided into ten parts, stands thus: four parts, Socrates; four parts, Nathaniel; and two parts, Shakespeare's Brutus."

It was about this time that Burns wrote to a friend—James Smith: "I have yet fixed on nothing with respect to the serious business of life. I am,



PROFESSOR DUGALD STEWART.



as usual, a rhyiming, Mason-making, rattling, aimless, idle fellow."

The meeting of the Lodge at Mauchline was, as a matter of fact, irregular, as the Charter of the Lodge did not empower the members to hold a meeting outside Tarbolton, but it is stated that Burns, in his Masonic zeal, held Lodges even in his own house for the purpose of admitting new members into the Order. Lodges, however, were not then tied to a single meeting place as now. At that time the regular meetings of the Lodge were held at an inn, known as "The Cross Keys," which was kept by a person of the name of Manson. The building still stands and has been renovated, but the Lodge now meets in a commodious hall of its own. Among its treasured possessions are the chair in which Burns sat as Depute Master, the gavel he used in ruling the Lodge, the minute book in which are records written and signed by him, and the Bible, afterwards acquired by the Lodge. The candlesticks in use at the time he was Depute Master are preserved and are in use at the present time. There is also kept, as a relic, in excellent condition, the following letter which he wrote on one occasion

when he was away in Edinburgh and was prevented from attending a certain meeting :—

“MEN AND BRETHREN :

“I am truly sorry it is not in my power to be at your quarterly meeting. If I must be absent in body, believe me I shall be present in spirit. I suppose those who owe us monies by bill or otherwise will appear : I mean those we summoned. If you please I wish you would delay prosecuting defaulters till I come home. The Court is up and I will be home before it sits down. In the meantime to take a note of who appear and who do not of our faulty debtors will be right in my humble opinion and those who confess debt and crave days I think we should spare them. Farewell!

Within your dear mansion may wayward contention  
Or withered envy ne'er enter ;  
May secrecy round be the mystical bound,  
And brotherly love be the center.

ROBT. BURNS.

Edin. 23 Aug., 1787.”

The defaulters referred to were not, as might at first be supposed, brethren in arrear with their

Men & Brethren

I am truly sorry it is not  
in my power to be at your quarterly meeting - If I must  
be absent in body, believe me I shall be present in spirit  
I suppose those who owe us monies by bill or otherwise will ap-  
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Within your dear Mansion may wayward Contention  
As withered Envy ne'er enters  
May Secrecy round be the mystical bound  
And Brothers by Love be the Center !!!

Edin ~ 23 Aug. ]  
1787

Robt Burns



Masonic dues. The St. James' Lodge, in common with many other Lodges at the time, had been victimised by brethren borrowing money upon the guarantee of bills which, not being met by the borrowers upon maturity, had caused depletion of the Lodge funds. In 1786 the members had decided that they would press for payment of these overdue amounts, and it was in reference to these proposed proceedings that the poet interposed to prevent the resolution being put into execution, as he thought, too rigorously. Many Scotch Lodges were lending societies in these days. Gilbert Burns had a loan from St. James' Lodge of £6 5s. in July, 1787, which was repaid in June, 1788.

The letter, framed with glass on both sides, so as to show the addressing of the epistle, is kept in the Lodge-room, beyond the walls of which it is not allowed to be taken. It was in this Lodge that Gavin Hamilton, of whom Burns wrote—

“The poor man's friend in need,  
The gentleman in word and deed,”

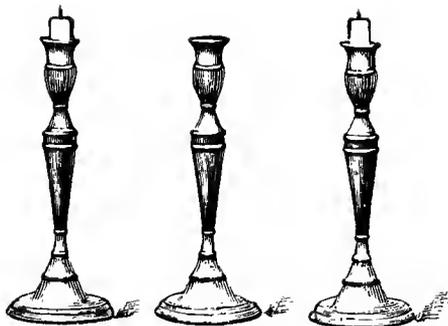
suggested to the poet that he should collect and publish an edition of his poems, advice also tendered

by Aiken, Goudie and Ballantine. Burns acted on the advice, and a collected edition of the poems was published in Kilmarnock in 1786, dedicated to Gavin Hamilton. Of him Burns wrote:—

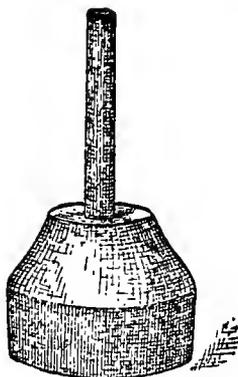
“The poor man weeps, here Gavin sleeps,  
Whom canting wretches blamed;  
Wi’ such as he, where’er he be,  
May I be saved or damned.”

Gavin Hamilton died on 8th February, 1805, aged fifty-two. No tombstone marks his grave in the Auld Kirkyard, the reason for the omission being, according to local tradition, at his own request. He was known affectionately by his countrymen as “the puir man’s friend.” “How did he get that name?” asked Mr. William Jolly of Willie Patrick, the Moss-giel herd, who, in his younger days, had worked for both the poet and Gavin Hamilton, when visiting Mauchline in 1859. “He was aye kind to the puir man, and aye took his pairt,” was the ready reply. Of Gavin Hamilton Burns also wrote:—

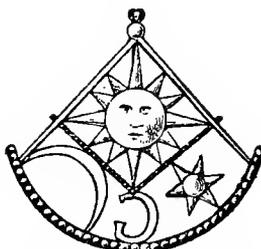
“But if (which powers above prevent)  
That iron-headed carl, Want,  
Attended in her grim advances  
By sad mistakes and black mischances,



CANDLESTICKS AT TARBOLTON IN BURNS' TIME AND STILL IN USE.



BURNS' TARBOLTON MALLET.



BURNS' TARBOLTON JEWEL.



BURNS' DUMFRIES MALLET.



While hopes and joys and pleasures fly him,  
Make you as poor a dog as I am,  
Your humble servant then no more ;  
For who would humbly serve the poor,  
But by a poor man's hopes in heaven !

While recollection's power is given,  
If in the veil of humble life,  
The victim sad of fortune's strife,  
I thro' the tender gushing tear,  
Should recognise my master dear,  
If friendless, low, we meet together,  
Then, Sir, your hand, my Friend and Brother!"

Gavin Hamilton was a later member of the St. Mungo Lodge, No. 240, Mauchline. His three sons were also initiated in that lodge : John Hamilton, his eldest son, on 25th October, 1797. He died in August, 1863, at the age of 84, and had been a factor in the service of the Marquess of Hastings and of the Duke of Portland. Alexander Hamilton, the second son, was initiated on 4th December, 1805 : he became W.M. in 1808. Dr. Dugald Stewart Hamilton was initiated on 11th June, 1808, and became W.M. in the following year. He also joined the St. James Lodge, Tarbolton, in the management of which he took an active interest, resigning the Mastership

in the late fifties. He died at Mauchline in June, 1863.

The site of the Burns Monument at Kilmarnock, erected in the Kay Park in August, 1879, is very appropriate, as it overlooks what was once the little printing office of the printer of the first Kilmarnock edition of his poems. John Wilson was initiated in the St. John Kilwinning Lodge, No. 22, on 13th April, 1784. He suggested to Burns the placing of a piece of a grave nature at the beginning of his poems, and in the walk home one night from Kilmarnock to Mossgiel Burns composed "The Twa Dogs." Another member of the St. John Kilwinning Lodge was Begbie, of "The Ordination" poem:—

"Then aff to 'Begbie's' in a raw,  
An' pour divine libation."

He was initiated in that lodge on 22nd December, 1786, and, as will be gathered from these lines, was an inn-keeper.

There is in the Kay Park a museum for relics of Burns, and in which are deposited several manuscripts. There are also several portraits of Burns, one believed to be by Nasmyth; but Nasmyth's

original portrait of Burns is in the National Gallery at Edinburgh.

It was in the St. James' Lodge also that Burns made the acquaintance of Dr. John Mackenzie, who married one of the celebrated "Mauchline Belles."

"In Mauchline there dwells six proper young belles,  
The pride of the place, and its neighbourhood a';  
Their carriage and dress, a stranger would guess,  
In London or Paris they'd gotten it a'.  
Miss Miller is fine, Miss Markland's divine,  
Miss Smith she has wit, and Miss Betty is braw ;  
There's beauty and fortune to get wi' Miss Morton,  
But Armour's the jewel for me of them a'."

It was Miss Miller who became the wife of Dr. Mackenzie. Miss Markland married Mr. Findlay, an excise officer at Tarbolton, who instructed the poet in the art of gauging. Miss Smith married Mr. Candlish, a teacher at Edinburgh University, and became the mother of Dr. Candlish, the eminent Free Church Divine. Miss Betty Miller married Mr. Templeton, of Mauchline; while Miss Morton married a Mr. Patterson, a cloth merchant, also of Mauchline.

Dr. John Mackenzie was a man of excellent character, broad sympathies, and good social position.

He was one of those friends possessing literary taste to whom Burns submitted his poems, and whose discerning appreciation of their genius was of the highest encouragement to the poet, and of eminent service in developing his muse and making it known to the world. He himself had written pamphlets on some of the religious controversies of the time under the pseudonym of "Common Sense" and one "On the Origin of Morals"—hence the reference in the lines quoted below to "Johnnie's Morals." The annual meeting of the St. James Lodge was always held on St. John the Baptist's Day, 24th June, and on one occasion Burns addressed a note to Dr. Mackenzie, who had expressed a fear that his professional duties might prevent his attendance at that festival, in the following words :—

“ Friday first's the day appointed,  
By the Right Worshipful Anointed,  
To hold our grand procession,  
To get a blad of Johnnie's Morals,  
An' taste a swatch o' Manson's Barrels,  
I' the way of our profession ;  
The Master and the Brotherhood  
Would a' be glad to see you ;  
For me, I would be mair than proud  
To share the mercies wi' you ;

If Death, then,  
Wi' skaith then,  
Some mortal heart is hechtin';  
Inform him  
And storm him,  
That Saturday you'll fecht him."

This anniversary was always borne in mind by Burns, and on one occasion, when in a despondent mood, he wrote:—

"Tarbolton, twenty-fourth o' June,  
You'll find me in a better tune."

Another important friendship formed was that with John Ballantine, to whom the "Brigs of Ayr" was inscribed. It was to the exertions of John Ballantine that Ayr was indebted for the New Brig, opened on 22nd November, 1796, with a grand Masonic demonstration, when the Grand Lodge of Scotland was represented by William Campbell of Fairfield. It was to John Ballantine that Burns was indebted for the publication of the second edition of his poems. When he heard that the poet was prevented from publishing a second edition owing to want of money to pay for the paper, he generously offered to accommodate Burns with the sum needed—£27— but advised him to go to Edinburgh as the fittest place for publishing.

This advice was seconded by the Rev. Dr. Blacklock—another Masonic Brother, but one who suffered from the infirmity of blindness—and Burns went to Edinburgh, but without a single letter of introduction in his pocket. However, through the good offices of his Masonic Brethren, he made a quick and profitable acquaintance with the nobility and literati of the Scottish capital, obtained an appointment in the Excise, and was placed in the possession of a farm. In connection with this journey, Burns wrote :—

“I had taken the last farewell of my few friends ; my chest was on the road to Greenock ; I had composed the last song I should ever measure in Caledonia, ‘The Gloomy Night is Gathering Fast’ ; when Dr. Blacklock’s opinion that I would meet with encouragement in Edinburgh for a second edition fired me so much that I posted away to that city.”

The Rev. George Lawrie, of Loudoun, transmitted to Dr. Blacklock a copy of the Kilmarnock edition of Burns’ poems. In writing to Mr. Lawrie acknowledging the gift, Dr. Blacklock said :—

“Many instances have I seen of nature’s force and beneficence exerted under numerous and formidable disadvantages ; but none equal to that with which you have been kind enough to present me. There is a pathos and a delicacy in his serious poems, a vein of wit and humour in those of a more festive turn, which cannot be too much admired nor too warmly approved. I think I shall never open the book without feeling my astonishment renewed and increased. It were much to be wished, for the sake of the young man, that a second edition, more numerous than the former, could immediately be printed, as it appears certain that its intrinsic merit, and the exertion of the author’s friends, might give it a more universal circulation than anything of the kind which has been published within my memory.”

When Burns arrived in Edinburgh, says Dr. Currie, “Blacklock received him with all the ardour of affectionate admiration ; he eagerly introduced him to the respectable circle of his friends ; he consulted his interest ; he emblazoned his fame ; he lavished upon him all the kindness of a generous and feeling

heart, into which nothing selfish or envious ever found admittance."

Burns himself wrote to Dr. Lawrie, after he had been in Edinburgh some time: "In Dr. Blacklock, whom I see very often, I have found what I could have expected in our friend—a clear head and an excellent heart."

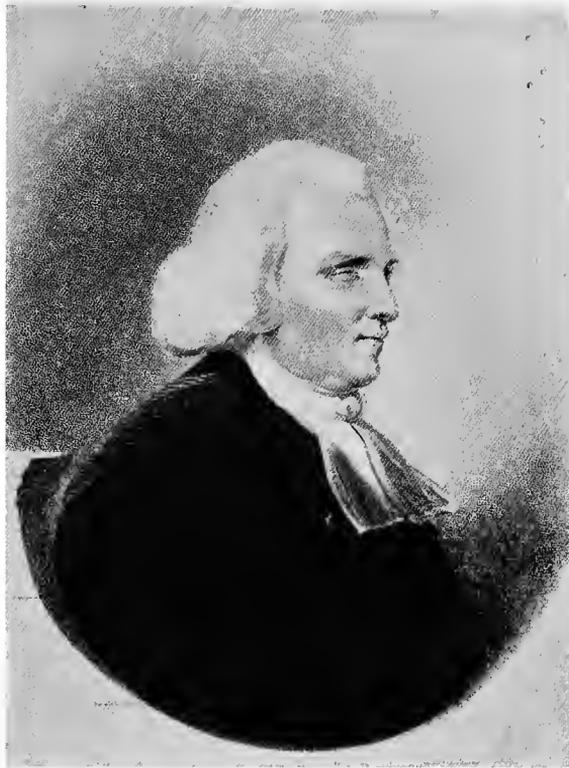
In 1801 Ballantine instituted the Allowa' Club, with the view of celebrating regularly the anniversary of the poet's birth.

John Ballantine of Castlehill, Provost of Ayr, was initiated in the Lodge St. David Edinburgh, No. 36, and afterwards became Worshipful Master of Ayr Kilwinning Lodge—a Lodge erected in 1765 by the Mother Kilwinning Lodge. On the night of his initiation, Robert Aiken was affiliated.

James Rankine, of whom Burns wrote—

"Oh, rough, rude, ready-witted R - - - - ,  
The wale o' cocks for fun and drinkin',"

was another member, as was also John Rankine of Adamhill, a great humorist, who became the companion of the poet.



REV. THOMAS BLACKLOCK, D.D.



The Lodge is in possession of a letter from Sir Walter Scott, as follows :—

SIR,—I am much gratified by the sight of the portrait of Robert Burns. I saw that distinguished poet only once, and that many years since, and being a bad marker of likenesses and recollecter of faces, I should in an ordinary case have hesitated to offer an opinion upon the resemblance, especially as I make no pretension to judge of the fine arts. But Burns was so remarkable a man that his features remained impressed on my mind as I had seen him only yesterday, and I could not hesitate to recognise this portrait as a striking resemblance of the poet, though it had been presented to me amid a whole exhibition.—I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

WALTER SCOTT.

Edinburgh, 14 November [1829].

I will accept of the inscription which you tell me the proprietors intend putting to the engraving as a great honour.

When the conviction had been forced upon the poet that his farming speculation at Mossgiel would

not be successful, he decided to leave Scotland altogether. He secured a post in Jamaica, and bade farewell to the Brethren of St. James Lodge, Tarbolton, in the following words:—

“ Adieu! a heart-warm, fond adieu!

Dear Brothers of the mystic tie!  
Ye favoured, ye enlighten'd few,  
Companions of my social joy!  
Tho' I to foreign lands must hie,  
Pursuing Fortune's slidd'ry ba',  
With melting heart, and brimful eye,  
I'll mind you still, tho' far awa'.

Oft have I met your social band  
And spent the cheerful, festive night;  
Oft honoured with supreme command,  
Presided o'er the *Sons of Light*;  
And by that *Hieroglyphic* Bright,  
Which none but *Craftsmen* ever saw!  
Strong Mem'ry on my heart shall write  
Those happy scenes, when far awa'.

May Freedom, Harmony, and Love,  
Unite you in the *Grand Design*,  
Beneath th' Omniscient Eye above—  
The glorious Architect Divine—  
That you may keep th' *Unerring Line*,  
Still rising by the *Plummet's Law*,  
Till ORDER bright completely shine,  
Shall be my pray'r when far awa'.

And you, FAREWELL! whose merits claim  
Justly the *Highest Badge* to wear!  
Heav'n bless your honour'd, noble NAME,  
To Masonry and Scotia dear.  
A last request permit me here,  
When yearly ye assemble a',  
One round, I ask it with a tear,  
To him, the Bard that's far awa'."

It is said that, in reading this poem to the members of the Lodge, when he got to the last stanza the tears were rolling down the cheeks of many of the Brethren. Happily the eternal disgrace which would have rested upon Scotland had want compelled Burns to leave his native land was saved—mainly through the Masonic tie.

On 26th October, 1786, Burns was made an Honorary Member of the St. John Lodge, No. 22, Kilmarnock. The Master of this Lodge was Major William Parker, a banker, who became one of his principal friends and a subscriber for thirty-five copies of the first edition of his poems. In 1802, he succeeded to the estate of Assloss, about two miles out of Kilmarnock. He is the "Willie" in the song, "Ye Sons of Auld Killie"—a contraction for Kilmarnock. The song is said to have been composed

by Burns on the occasion of his admission as an Honorary Member of the Lodge.

“Ye Sons of Auld Killie, assembled by Willie,  
    To follow the noble vocation ;  
Your thrifty old mother has scarce such another,  
    To sit in that honoured station.

I’ve little to say, but only to pray,  
    As praying’s the *ton* of your fashion,  
A prayer from the muse, you well may excuse,  
    ’Tis seldom her favourite passion.

Ye powers who preside, o’er the wind and the tide,  
    Who mark each element’s border ;  
Who formed this frame with beneficent aim,  
    Whose sovereign statute is order.

Within this dear mansion may wayward contention,  
    Or withered envy ne’er enter ;  
May secrecy round be the mystical bound,  
    And brotherly love be the center.”

The original of this song has the following note attached to it: “This song, wrote by Mr. Burns, was sung by him in the Kilmarnock Kilwinning Lodge, in 1786, and given by him to Mr. Parker, who was Master of the Lodge.”

The minute of the St. John Lodge, No. 22, Kilmarnock, for 26th October, 1786, concludes as follows :—

“ Robert Burns, poet, from Mauchline, a member of St. James', Tarbolton, was made an honorary member of this Lodge.

“(Sgd.) WILL PARKER.”

This was the first Lodge to distinguish Burns with the designation “Poet,” and to honour him with honorary membership. The Lodge met on premises which afterwards formed part of the old Commercial Inn, in Croft Street, Kilmarnock, demolished some years ago to make room for the offices of Messrs. John Walker & Co., the well known Scotch Whisky merchants. It was at this Lodge he made the acquaintance of Thomas Samson, the nurseryman and seedsman, at whose house he was ever welcomed with genuine cordiality. Of him he wrote in the Elegy :—

“The Brethren o' the mystic 'level'  
May hing their head in wofu' bevel,  
While by their nose the tears will revel  
Like ony bead ;  
Death's gien the Lodge an unco devel,  
Tam Samson's dead.”

This elegy was composed in 1786, but Samson did not die until nine years afterwards. When Tam heard that Burns had written his epitaph, he sent for the poet and made him repeat it to him. When it was finished Tam exclaimed: "I'm no dead yet, Robin, I'm worth ten dead fowk; wherefore should ye say that I am dead." Burns withdrew to a window, and in a minute or two returned with the following lines:—

"Go, Fame, and canter like a filly,  
Through a' the streets and neuks o' Killie,  
Tell every social, honest billie,  
To cease his grievin',  
For yet unskaited by Death's gleg gullie,  
Tam Samson's leevin'."

with which Tam was so delighted that he rose unconsciously, rubbed his hands, and exclaimed, "That'll do—ha! ha!—that'll do."

Tam was elected Treasurer of the Lodge on 22nd December, 1779. He was buried in the Churchyard at Kilmarnock, a plain slab marking the spot where his ashes repose, on which appears the following epitaph written by Burns:—

"Tam Samson's weel-worn clay here lies,  
Ye canting zealots spare him,  
If honest worth in heaven rise,  
Ye'll mend or ye win near him."

The interior of Tam Samson's house has been preserved almost intact by his descendants—Samson & Co., Nurserymen. Alexander Patrick, son-in-law of Tam Samson, was the landlord of "Sandy Patrick's" Tavern, a "howf" of Burns, which was situated in a by-lane at the head of the Forgate, Kilmarnock. Another member of the St. John's Lodge was Bailie Greenshields, Brewer, whose premises are now occupied by the Kilmarnock Brewery.

Robert Muir was another trusty friend and Brother, whose name appears on the subscription list for seventy-two copies of the Kilmarnock edition of Burns' poems, and afterwards for forty copies of the Edinburgh edition. John Wilson, his printer and publisher, was a member of the Lodge, who is sometimes mistaken for the "Wee Johnnie" of the epitaph. The latter was a worthless character in Mauchline. Gavin Turnbull, the poet, was another member.

Previous to joining the St. John's Kilwinning Lodge, Kilmarnock, however, Burns had become a member of the Loudoun Kilwinning Lodge, Newmilns, now No. 51, and this was the first Lodge out

of Tarbolton which he joined. This was a purely Kilwinning Lodge, having been warranted in 1747, and not coming under Grand Lodge until 1808. The minute of his admission, which is dated 27th March, 1786, reads:—

“Much to the satisfaction of the Lodge, Mr. Robert Burns, Mossgiel, Mauchline, introduced by the Right Worshipful, was admitted as a member of this Lodge.”

This “Right Worshipful” was the poet’s friend, Gavin Hamilton, Writer, of Mauchline, and it is suggestive that a merchant in Newmilns made himself responsible for the payment of the poet’s dues.

Burns arrived in Edinburgh on 28th November, 1786, and went to live with John Richmond, a law student from Mauchline, in the house of Mrs. Carfrae, Baxter’s Close, Lawnmarket. John Richmond occupied the singular position of being one of Burns’ friends on whom he does not seem to have written a line of verse. Richmond has left behind him the testimony that “Burns, though frequently out in company, usually returned at good hours and went soberly to bed, where he would prevail upon his



HENRY MACKENZIE.



companion, by little bribes, to read to him till he fell asleep." Henry Mackenzie, of Lodge Canongate Kilwinning, No. 2, announced in *The Lounger*, upon Burns' arrival in Edinburgh, that a new poet was born to Scotland.

To the issue of that paper for 9th December, 1786, he contributed a review of Burns' Poems, in which he described the poet as "a genius of no ordinary rank" and "a heaven-taught plowman." Henry Mackenzie, who afterwards became a close Masonic friend of the poet, was the author of *The Man of Feeling*, which Burns read with avidity, and of which work he used to say he had worn out two copies by carrying it in his pocket. He described it as "a book I prize next to the Bible." Mackenzie shared with Sterne the honour of being denominated a "bosom favourite."

Burns visited the Canongate Kilwinning Lodge, Edinburgh, on 7th December, 1786, and on that night the Earl of Errol, the Hon. William Gordon (afterwards Earl of Kenmure), John Newal of Earlston, and Captain Gillespie were initiated; Mr. W. Campbell of Fairfield was also affiliated. The last-named had officiated as Grand Warden at the laying of the

foundation-stone of the Harbour of Ayr, and it is not improbable that he had met Burns in the Ayr Lodges. The same night Burns wrote to his friend, Gavin Hamilton :—

“My Lord Glencairn and the Dean of Faculty, Mr. H. Erskine, have taken me under their wing ; and by all probability, I shall soon be the tenth worthy and the eighth wise man of the world. I have met in Mr. Dalrymple of Orangefield what Solomon emphatically calls ‘a friend that sticketh closer than a BROTHER.’”

Alexander Ferguson of Craigdarroch, Advocate and Assessor of the Burgh of Canongate, was R.W.M. of the Canongate Kilwinning Lodge from June, 1784, to June, 1787. He had previously, in 1782 and 1783, filled the office of Senior Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge of Scotland. Alexander Ferguson, “so famous for wit, mirth, and law,” was a descendant of the great Sir Robert Lawrie of Maxwelton, whose exploits were commemorated by Burns in the ballad, “The Whistle.” He was the father of the Right Hon. R. Cutlar Ferguson, M.P., also an initiate of the Canongate Kilwinning Lodge,

who became the possessor of the celebrated heirloom, the ebony whistle, referred to in the song. Alexander Ferguson was thrown from his horse and died three months before the poet. Burns' account of the history of the whistle was as follows:—

“In the train of Anne of Denmark, when she came to Scotland with our James VI., there came over also a Danish gentleman of gigantic stature and great prowess and a matchless champion of Bacchus. He had a little ebony whistle, which, at the commencement of the orgies, he laid upon the table, and whoever was the last able to blow it, everybody else being disabled by the potency of the bottle, was to carry off the whistle as a trophy of victory. The Dane challenged the Scots to the alternative of trying his prowess, or else acknowledging their inferiority. After many overthrows on the part of the Scots, the Dane was encountered by Sir Robert Lawrie of Maxwelton, who, after three days' and three nights' hard contest, left the Scandinavian under the table,”

“And blew on the whistle his requiem shrill.”

When Burns first made the acquaintance of the Earl of Glencairn, he wrote: "The noble Glencairn took me by the hand to-day, and interested himself in my concerns with a goodness like that benevolent being, whose image he so richly bears. He is a stronger proof of the immortality of the soul than any that philosophy ever produced. A mind like his can never die."

The Earl of Glencairn married, in 1785, Lady Isabella Erskine, daughter of David Henry, 10th Earl of Buchan, and so was the brother-in-law of the Earl of Buchan and the Hon. H. Erskine. As there was no issue of the marriage the title became extinct on his death, which took place near Edinburgh on 24th September, 1791.

The following quotation from Burns' diary is also of interest:—"The noble Glencairn has wounded me to the quick here, because I dearly esteem, respect, and love him. He showed so much attention, engrossing attention, one day to the only blockhead at table (the whole company consisted of his lordship, dunderpate, and myself), that I was within half a point of throwing down my gage of contemptuous defiance; but he shook my hand, and looked so benevolently

good at parting. God bless him! Though I should never see him more, I shall love him to my dying day.”

Burns never did forget him; he put on mourning at his death, and afterwards named one of his sons James Glencairn Burns.

Of Dalrymple also he wrote: “I have found a worthy warm friend in Mr. Dalrymple of Orangefield, who introduced me to Lord Glencairn, a man whose worth and brotherly kindness to me I shall remember when time shall be no more.”

James Dalrymple is described as “a warm-hearted man, an enthusiastic Freemason, a too enthusiastic sportsman, and an occasional writer of verses.” He was connected with John Ballantine in the laying of the foundation-stone of the new Ayr brig with Masonic honours. He was also introduced by Dalrymple to Henry Erskine, the famous advocate, Whig, and wit, who was a Past Master of the Lodge. Of Dalrymple Burns afterwards wrote: “They have ta'en awa' Jamie the flow'r of them a'”; and of the Earl of Glencairn:—

“The Bridegroom may forget the bride  
Was made his wedded wife yestreen;  
The monarch may forget the crown  
That on his head an hour has been;

The mother may forget the child  
That smiles sae sweetly on her knee ;  
But I'll remember thee, Glencairn,  
And a' that thou hast done for me."

According to the majority of opinion Burns walked from Mauchline to Edinburgh, but Richmond said : "The poet was so knocked up by his ride from Mauchline to Edinburgh, that he could not leave his room for two days."

Kilwinning, which takes its name from St. Winning, a bishop of the seventh century, is distinguished traditionally as the place where Freemasonry was first introduced into Scotland.

R. Heron, Burns' first biographer, says that the poet ere he had been many weeks in Edinburgh found himself the object of universal curiosity, favour, admiration, and fondness. He was sought after, courted with attentions the most respectful and assiduous, feasted, flattered, caressed by all ranks, as the first boast of the country, whom it was scarcely possible to honour and reward to a degree equal to his merits.

In January, 1787, at Edinburgh, in the Lodge Edinburgh St. Andrew, No. 48, Burns was toasted



LAMENT FOR JAMES, EARL OF GLENCAIRN.



by the Grand Master in the words, "Caledonia and Caledonia's Bard, Robert Burns," to which toast the poet responded. Writing to his friend Ballantine, Burns described the occasion in the following words:—

"I went to a Mason Lodge yesternight, where the Most Worshipful Grand Master Charters [Charteris] and all the Grand Lodge of Scotland visited. The meeting was numerous and elegant: the different Lodges about town were present in all their pomp. The Grand Master, who presided with great solemnity and honour to himself as a gentleman and a Mason, among other general toasts, gave 'Caledonia and Caledonia's Bard, Robert Burns,' which rang through the whole assembly with multiplied honours and repeated acclamations. As I had no idea such a thing would happen, I was downright thunderstruck, and, trembling in every nerve, made the best return in my power. Just as I had finished some of the Grand Officers said, so loud that I could hear with a most comforting accent, 'Very well, indeed!' which set me something to rights again."

Among those who were present at this gathering were Adam Smith, the author of *The Wealth of Nations*; the Earl of Glencairn, Chairman of the Caledonian Hunt and brother-in-law of the Hon. H. Erskine; the Rev. Dr. Robertson; the Rev. Dr. Blair; Dr. Gregory, of stomachic powder fame; Lord Monboddo; Fraser Tytler of Woodhouselee; and Ramsay of Ochertyre. Through the influence of the Earl of Glencairn, each member of the Caledonian Hunt subscribed a guinea for a copy of the second edition of Burns' poems.

The last verse of Burns' song, "Caledonia," runs:—

"Thus bold, independent, unconquered, and free,  
Her bright course of glory for ever shall run;  
For brave Caledonia immortal must be;  
I'll prove it from Euclid as clear as the sun:—  
Rectangle-triangle the figure we'll choose;  
The upright is Chance, and old Time is the base;  
But brave Caledonia's the hypotenuse;  
Then ergo, she'll match them, and match them always."

Charteris was the 36th Grand Master of Scotland and held office in 1786 and 1787. During his Grand Mastership—in 1787—he succeeded to the title of Lord Elcho, his father having inherited the Earldom of Wemyss. He did not live to succeed to the Earldom as he predeceased his father by ten months.

He belonged to the Lodge Haddington St. John, and was also an affiliated member of the Canongate Kil-winning Lodge, which he joined on 3rd March, 1779. In each of these two Lodges he carried a motion to the effect that the members of the one should be regarded as full members of the other.

James Dalrymple—an enthusiastic Mason, it may be mentioned—was the first to welcome Burns to Edinburgh and to introduce him to the social life of Auld Reekie. He had hoped to meet in Edinburgh his old friend, William Wallace, Sheriff of Ayrshire and Professor of Scots Law in the University, but he passed away suddenly on the very day of Burns' arrival.

Of Edinburgh, Burns wrote :—

“Edina! Scotia's darling seat!  
All hail thy palaces and tow'rs,  
Where once beneath a monarch's feet  
Sat Legislation's sovereign powers!  
From marking mildly-scatter'd flow'rs,  
As on the banks of Ayr I stray'd,  
And singing, lone, the ling'ring hours,  
I shelter in thy honour'd shade.”

Three of Burns' Masonic contemporaries were Major William Logan, the Rev. William M'Gill, and

the Rev. William Dalrymple, who were all members of Lodge Ayr Kilwinning. Major Logan has been immortalised as “thairm-inspirin’ rattlin’ Willie.” In 1787 Dr. M’Gill published an “Essay on the Death of Christ,” which was afterwards denounced by his colleagues as heretical.

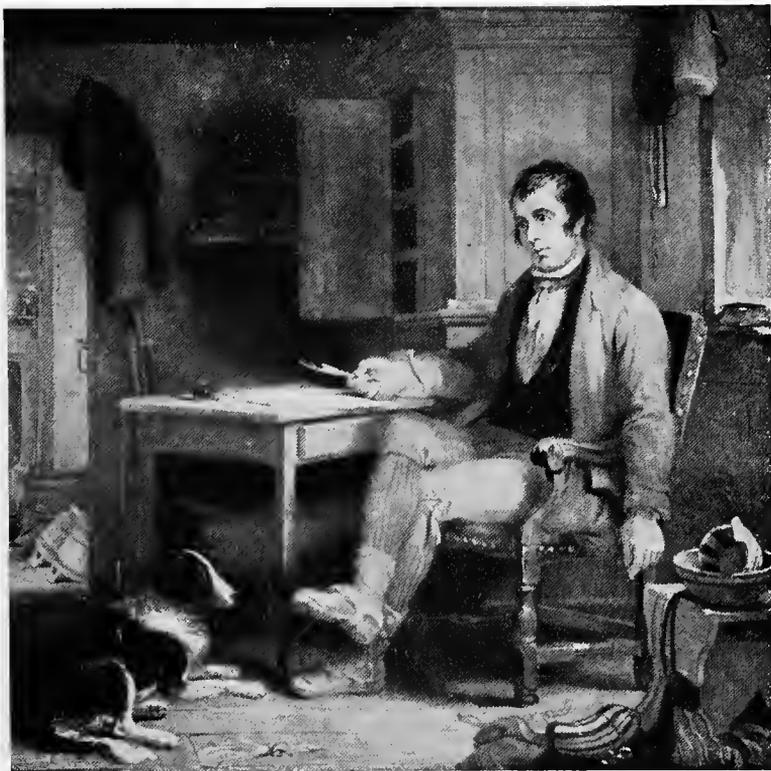
Burns, Gavin Hamilton, and Robert Aiken were all on the side of M’Gill and Dalrymple who were suspected of holding heterodox opinions on several points, particularly the doctrines of Original Sin and the Trinity. M’Gill published an essay which was the cause of his arraignment before the Synod.

The acrimonious and uncharitable spirit shown in the subsequent prosecution of Dr. M’Gill caused the poet to write in “The Kirk’s Alarm” :—

“Dr. Mack, Dr. Mack, you should stretch on a rack,  
To strike evil-doers wi’ terror ;  
To join faith and sense upon ony pretence,  
Is heretic, damnable error.”

Of M’Gill’s colleague, Dalrymple, who was suspected of holding similar views, Burns wrote :—

“D’rymple mild, D’rymple mild, though your heart’s like a child,  
And your life’s like the new-driven snaw,  
Yet that winna save ye, and Satan must have ye,  
For preaching that three’s ane and twa.”



ROBERT BURNS IN HIS COTTAGE COMPOSING "THE COTTAR'S SATURDAY NIGHT."



Burns' "The Cottar's Saturday Night" was inscribed to R. Aiken, a Writer of Edinburgh, in Ayr in Burns' time, who was a member of Canongate and Leith and Leith and Canongate Lodge, and who, in 1772 or 1773, was made an honorary member of the St. Andrew's Lodge, attached to the Scots Greys or Royal Regiment of North British Dragoons. His mother Lodge was Leith Kilwinning.

Burns, in one of his poems, refers to the stupid notion still believed in by some credulous people, that Freemasons are in the habit of conjuring up the Devil at their meetings. In his "Address to the De'il" he says :—

"When Masons' mystic word and grip,  
In storms an' tempests raise you up,  
Some cock or cat your rage maun stop,  
Or strange to tell;  
The youngest brither ye wid whip  
Aff straucht to hell."

Among those holding office in Edinburgh Masonry at that time, all of whom Burns met, in addition to the names already mentioned, were the Duke of Atholl, the Earls of Buchan, Balcarres, Morton, and Eglinton; Lords Napier, Torphichen, Haddo, Binning, Cringletie, and Eldin; Sir William Forbes, Sir James Hunter

Blair, Colonel James Murray, Thomas Hay of Hays-ton, Campbell of Shawfield, Grant of Monymusk, Dr. Nathaniel Spens, Stewart of Allanbank, William Smellie, the printer of the second edition of Burns' poems, William Creech, and others.

David, sixth Earl of Buchan, born in 1742, aided in the formation of the Antiquarian Society and contributed to its lectures. He published a volume of essays on the lives of Fletcher of Saltoun and of James Thomson, the poet. He was Grand Master of Scotland in 1782 and 1783, and was a frequent visitor at Canongate Kilwinning Lodge. Lord Torphichen was initiated in Canongate Kilwinning Lodge on 7th December, 1786, the night of Burns' first visit. He was shortly afterwards nominated as Depute Grand Master but never rose to supreme command. In June 1787, he was elected R.W.M. of Lodge Canongate Kilwinning.

Sir William Forbes, afterwards Grand Master Mason of Scotland, was a liberal patron of the poet. He was a partner in the banking firm of John Coutts & Co., and was also Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Aberdeen.

William Smellie was the eminent naturalist and

writer. In 1780 he entered into partnership with William Creech, which continued until 1789. His acquaintance with Burns began in 1787. He printed the Edinburgh edition of the poems and an immediate and permanent intimacy between the two took place, owing doubtless to their similar social dispositions and mutual relish of each other's wit. William Creech was, earlier in life, tutor to the Earl of Glencairn. He afterwards became Lord Provost of Edinburgh. He purchased the copyright of the poems, and all along proved himself a warm and true friend of the poet.

On 1st February, 1787, Burns became a member of the Lodge Canongate Kilwinning No. 2, being introduced by the Hon. Henry Erskine, the famous advocate, who became Right Worshipful Master of the Lodge in 1780. Many other names associated with literature figure in the Registers of this Lodge, including those of John Wilson—"Christopher North"—William Edmonstoune Aytoun, D. M. Moir, J. Gibson Lockhart, Dr. Hugh Blair, and Henry, Lord Brougham. The ten stanzas which D. M. Moir wrote for the Burns Festival are said to form one of his best pieces. Thomas Aird describes them as

being characterised by “burly picturesque power, intertissued with generous appreciation, and all the moral softnesses of charity and love.”

“Born within the lowly cottage  
To a destiny obscure,  
Doom'd through youth's exulting spring-time  
But to labour and endure—  
Yet Despair he elbow'd from him;  
Nature breath'd with holy joy,  
In the hues of morn and evening,  
On the eyelids of the boy;  
And his country's Genius bound him  
Laurels for his sunburnt brow,  
When inspired and proud she found him,  
Like Elisha, at the plough.”

D. M. MOIR.

Lodge Canongate Kilwinning possesses the most ancient Lodge-room in the world. It is one of the most active Masonic Lodges of the present day, keeping alive the traditions of nearly 800 years. In the Chapel of this Lodge-room is a beautiful old organ with a wonderful sweet tone, which is still used at the meetings of the Lodge. It was built in 1754, is probably the oldest organ in Scotland, and the only existing instrument on which the songs of Burns were played in the presence of the poet. The entry in

the minute book of the Lodge recording the admission of Burns reads as follows :—

“The Right Worshipful Master having observed that Brother Burns was present in the Lodge, who is well known as a great poetic writer and for a late publication of his works which have been universally Commended, Submitted that he should be assumed a member of this Lodge which was unanimously agreed to and he was assumed accordingly.

“(Sgd.) ALEXR. FERGUSON, M.

CHAS. MORE, D.M.

JO. MILLAR, J.W.”

Bro. Charles More, the Depute Master, who signed this minute, was also present at the meeting of the Lodge in June, 1815, when he seconded a resolution then passed concerning the Lodge's subscription towards the mausoleum of the poet.

Among the brethren whom Burns met at Lodge Canongate Kilwinning, and for whom he expressed a liking, was William Woods, an actor, so popular as to be called “The Scottish Roscius.”

Concerning the Hon. Henry Erskine, who died in October, 1817, Burns wrote:—

“ Collected, Harry stood awee,  
Then open'd out his arm, man ;  
His lordship sat wi' ruefu' e'e  
And ey'd the gathering storm, man ;  
Like wind-driv'n hail, it did assail,  
Of torrents owre a linn, man ;  
The Bench, sae wise, lift up their eyes,  
Half wauken'd wi' the din, man.”

On 1st March, 1787, Burns is said to have been invested as the Poet-Laureate of Lodge Canongate Kilwinning. In the following verse, written 3rd May, 1786, Burns called himself Laureate, as indeed he often did:—

“ To please you and praise you,  
Ye ken your Laureate scorns ;  
The prayer still you share still  
Of grateful minstrel Burns.”

There is reproduced here an historic picture of the inauguration of Robert Burns as Poet-Laureate, but it does not represent the actual scene, and Grose did not become a Freemason until 1791. The portly individual in the extreme right of the



INAUGURATION OF ROBERT BURNS AS POET-LAUREATE OF LODGE CANONGATE KILWINNING NO. 2, IN 1787.



picture is Grose, the famous antiquarian. Captain Grose visited Scotland in 1789 to collect information regarding its antiquities, when he was introduced to Burns. They were kindred spirits, and, to use the poet's own phrase, they at once became "pack and thick thegither." To his work on the *Antiquities of Scotland*, Burns contributed the material for his native county of Ayrshire, and also his inimitable poem, "Tam o' Shanter," which Burns regarded as the best of his productions. It was of Grose he wrote the well-known poem commencing—

"Hear, Land o' Cakes and brither Scots,  
Frae Maidenkirk to John o' Groat's,  
If there's a hole in a' your coats,  
I rede you tent it;  
A chiel's amang ye, taking notes,  
And, faith, he'll prent it."

Burns requested Captain Grose, when he should come to Ayrshire, that he should make a drawing of Alloway Kirk, as it was the burial-place of his father, where he himself had a sort of claim to lay down his bones when they should be no longer serviceable to him. Grose agreed, providing Burns would furnish a witch story to be printed along with it. "Tam o' "

Shanter" was the result, and this poem was first published in Grose's *Antiquities of Scotland*.

On 10th December, 1879, at Coale's Auction Room, Toronto, what was described as the oldest Masonic relic in the world was sold to Bro. J. Ross Robertson, of *The Evening Telegram*. It was the Masonic certificate of Souter Johnny, of Burns' "Tam o' Shanter," which was issued by the St. James Lodge, Ayr, in 1790. Pinned to the corner of the diploma was a lock of Highland Mary's hair. The relic was sold for 179 dollars. A large number of people went to Toronto solely for the purpose of attending the sale and in the hope of securing the relic.

About this time Burns wrote to his friend, Gavin Hamilton :—

"I am in a fair way of becoming as eminent as Thomas à Kempis or John Bunyan, and you may expect henceforth to see my birthday inserted among the wonderful events in the Poor Robbins and Aberdeen Almanacs, along with the Black Monday and the Battle of Bothwell Bridge."

William Petrie, who was serving brother to the Lodge during the greater part of the time when Burns was

a member, was asked by one who visited him in 1845 if he remembered Robert Burns. Notwithstanding his great age, he exclaimed with vigour: "Rabbie Burns! Mind Rabbie! I'll no' forget him, puir fellow! Eh, but he was the life o' the Lodge!"

John Lauchlan, a shoemaker in Ayr and a member of Newton St. James Lodge, No. 165, became the Tyler of Ayr St. Paul Lodge, No. 204—a Lodge founded in 1799 by Freemasons serving in the Ayrshire Militia. He is said to be the "Souter Johnnie" portrayed in the famous poem, "Tam o' Shanter":—

"But to our tale—A'e market night,  
Tam had got planted unco right,  
Fast by an ingle, bleezing finely,  
Wi' reaming swats that drank divinely,  
And at his elbow Souter Johnnie,  
His ancient, trusty, drouthy, cronie;  
Tam lo'ed him like a very brither,  
They had been fou for weeks thegither.  
The night drove on wi' sangs and clatter,  
And aye the ale was growing better;  
The Landlady and Tam grew gracious,  
Wi' secret favours, sweet and precious:  
The Souter told his queerest stories;  
The Landlord's laugh was ready chorus;  
The storm without might rair and rustle,  
Tam did na mind the storm a whustle."

The future Souter was born in the parish of Alloway, and he and the poet were close companions in boyhood. Afterwards he removed with his parents to Ayr, where he was bound apprentice to a shoemaker. He was known in and about Ayr as "Souter Johnnie" to his dying day. His remains were interred with Masonic honours. His son, John Lauchlan, died at Ayr on 16th September, 1862, in his eighty-sixth year. The younger Lauchlan was a Freemason of sixty-five years' standing, and was initiated in the Ayr St. James Lodge, No. 163, in which Lodge, also, he received the degrees of the Royal Arch and Knight Templary. He was one of the original members of the Ayr St. Paul's Lodge, and was delegated by his brethren-in-arms to proceed to Edinburgh to receive from the Grand Lodge of Scotland the Charter of the newly-formed Lodge. This document he carried in his knapsack to Stirling, where the Militia then lay, and in the Court Hall of that town, early in the year 1800, the oil of consecration was poured out upon the altar of the Lodge of the Ayr and Renfrew Militia by the office-bearers of the Lodge Ancient, Stirling. Bro. Lauchlan became R.W.M. of the Lodge in 1805,

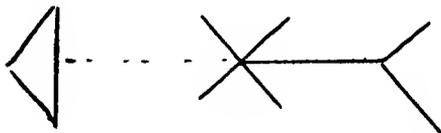
and the like honour was conferred upon him at other periods of its history. So highly were his services appreciated that in 1808 he was presented with a handsome silver medal, in the name of the Lodge, "as a tribute of esteem and mark of respect towards him for his laudable conduct while Master, for his attention to its interests and prosperity, and for his spirited exertions in supporting its dignity and maintaining its independence." He bequeathed his diplomas and Masonic papers, together with the Masonic relics of his father, to Bro. Andrew Glass, a Past Master of Ayr St. Paul's Lodge. He was buried in Alloway Kirkyard, near to the "winnock bunker in the east," and within a few yards of the resting-place of the poet's father.

Canongate Kilwinning Lodge possesses a Master Mason's apron of Burns' Mother Lodge—the first apron worn by him after the completion of his admission to the Order.

Burns mark in the Lodge Book is—



In the Bible it appears twice, each being partly obliterated, the obliterated parts being indicated by dots :—



On the apron, as it appears in the photograph on page 64, it is as—



After being made a member of this Lodge, he added the title “Bard” to his signature, and appended his Masonic mark in the Bible which he presented to Highland Mary at their farewell meeting on the banks of the Ayr :—

“That sacred hour can I forget—  
Can I forget the hallowed grove,  
When by the winding Ayr we met  
To live one day of parting love.”

The Bible given to Highland Mary by Burns was in two volumes, each containing on the fly-leaf his

name and Masonic sign. The first volume also contained the text: Leviticus xix. 12—"Ye shall not swear by my name falsely, I am the Lord"; and the second the text: Matthew v. 33—"Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths." This Bible, after passing through many hands, was purchased in Canada for £25, and was sent home to be deposited in the Monument at Alloway Kirk, on the banks of the Doon, where it may be seen.

"Ye banks and braes and streams around  
The castle of Montgomerie,  
Green be your woods and fair your flowers,  
Your waters never drumlie;  
There simmer first unfauld her robes,  
And there the longest tarry,  
For there I took my last farewell  
Of my sweet Highland Mary."

Until recently there still stood the thorn, called by all the country "Highland Mary's Thorn," but it has now entirely disappeared by the action of time and successive generations of relic hunters. A portion of it has been deposited in the Burns' Monument Museum.

On 18th June, 1855, Bro. Davidson Ritchie presented to Bro. William R. Clapp of Ayr a section

of hawthorn underneath which Burns was in the habit of meeting Highland Mary, and where

“The golden hours on angel wings  
Flew o'er him and his dearie.”

At that time Bro. Ritchie was the occupier of the “Auld Clay Biggin” where the bard first drew breath. This section of the *Trysting Thorn* was presented by Bro. W. R. Clapp to the Connecticut Masonic Historical Society on 23rd July, 1861. There is also a section of it in the Burns' Tavern, Tarbolton.

It is of interest to note that James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, was a Poet-Laureate of Lodge Canongate Kilwinning, No. 2, in later years, and the minute recording his appointment to this office, which was an honorary one, speaks of it as one “which had been in abeyance since the death of the immortal brother, Robert Burns.”

Shortly after the publication of the second edition of his poems, Burns set out with his friend and brother-Mason, Robert Ainslie, on a tour. At Eyemouth they stayed at the house of a brother-Mason, William Grieve, whom Burns described as “a joyous,

warm-hearted, jolly, clever fellow," and they also came across a Knights Templar Encampment held in connection with the Lodge of St. Ebbe. Robert Ainslie was afterwards Clerk to the Signet. He became known in later years as the author of an essay on Evidences of Christianity, and some devotional tracts. He died in April, 1838.\*

Of this Chapter, Burns was elected an honorary member. The minute recording this event is as follows:—

“Eyemouth, May 19, 1787,

“At a general encampment held this day, the following brethren were made Royal Arch Masons: namely, Robert Burns, from the Lodge of St. James, Tarbolton, Ayrshire, and Robert Ainslie, from the Lodge of St. Luke, Edinburgh, by James Carmichael, William Grieve, Daniel Dow, John Clay, Robert Grieve, etc., etc. Robert Ainslie paid One Guinea admission dues, but on account of Robert Burns' remarkable poetic genius, the

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\* See *A Pilgrimage to the Land of Burns*: containing anecdotes of the Bard and the characters he immortalized; together with Scottish Songs, Ballads, and Poems. By the late Hew Ainslie. Edited, with Memoir, by Thomas C. Latto (Alex. Gardner, Paisley).

encampment unanimously agreed to admit him gratis, and considered themselves honoured by having a man of such shining abilities for one of their companions."

Burns' entry in his diary for this date—19th May, 1787—reads—

"Spent the day at Mr. Grieve's—made a Royal Arch Mason of St. Abb's Lodge. Mr. Wm. Grieve, the oldest brother, a joyous, warm-hearted, jolly, clever fellow—takes a hearty glass, and sings a good song. Mr. Robert, his brother, and partner in trade, a good fellow, but says little—take a sail after dinner—fishing of all kinds, pays tithes at Eyemouth."

Bro. Alfred A. Arbuthnot Murray, Grand Sc.E. of the Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Scotland, speaking from his knowledge of the old working of the Scottish Royal Arch Chapters, thinks that in all probability Burns was made a Knight Templar as well as a Royal Arch Mason in Eyemouth, as under the old regime the two were always given together. The last of the Old Arch and Temple bodies came under the Supreme Grand Royal Arch

Chapter of Scotland only in 1911. Until ten years ago there was one Lodge in Scotland in connection with which the Arch and Temple degrees were worked without a Charter.

Some of the proceeds of the Edinburgh edition of the poems published in 1787 were allotted to the erection of a tombstone over the remains of Robert Fergusson, who died on 16th October, 1774, and was buried in Canongate Churchyard, "Rhyme," wrote Burns, referring to his removal to Irvine, "I had given up, but meeting with Fergusson's *Scottish Poems*,\* I strung anew my wildly-sounding lyre with emulating vigour." Fergusson's grave remained undistinguished until Burns went to Edinburgh. When he visited it he uncovered his head and, with characteristic enthusiasm, kneeling down, he embraced the venerated clay. He obtained permission from the magistrates to erect a monument to Fergusson on which he inscribed the following stanza:—

"No sculptured marble here, nor pompous lay,  
'No storied urn, nor animated bust,'  
This simple stone directs pale Scotia's way,  
To pour her sorrows o'er her poet's dust."

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\* See *The Poems of Robert Fergusson*. Edited with Memoir and Notes, etc., by Robert Ford (Alex. Gardner, Paisley).

On the reverse of the monument is the following inscription :—

“By special grant of the managers to Robert Burns, who erected this stone, this burial-place is ever to remain sacred to the memory of Robert Fergusson.”

Burns also inscribed the following lines in a copy of Fergusson's works which he presented to a young lady, on 19th March, 1787 :—

“Curse on ungrateful man that can be pleased,  
And yet can starve the author of his pleasure!  
Oh, thou, my elder brother in misfortune,  
By far my elder brother in the Muses,  
With tears I pity thy unhappy fate!  
Why is the bard unfitted for the world,  
Yet has so keen a relish of its pleasures?”

The following entry in the books of St. James' Lodge, Tarbolton, is proof of the statement of Robert Chambers that “Burns never neglected his duties as a Mason. He might be ‘rhyming,’ ‘aimless,’ and ‘idle,’ but he was also ‘Mason-making.’”

“Mauchline, 25th July, 1787.

“This night the Deputation of the Lodge met at Mauchline, and entered Brother Alexander Allison,

of Barnmuir, an apprentice. Likewise admitted Bro. Professor Stuart [Stewart], of Cathrine, and Claude Alexander, Esq., of Ballochmyle; Claude Neilson, Esq., Paisley, John Farquhar Gray, Esq., of Gilmiscroft, and Dr. George Grierson, Glasgow, Honorary Members of the Lodge.

“ROBT. BURNS, D.M.”

On 27th December, 1788, Burns was “unanimously assumed, being a Master Masson,” a member of the St. Andrew’s Lodge, No. 179, Dumfries. The Secretary wrongly described him as of “St. David’s Strabolton Lodge, No. 178,” instead of “St. James’ Lodge, Tarbolton, No, 178.” He was frequently present at the meetings, and filled the office of S.W.—to which he was elected on 30th November, 1792—during the year 1793. His attendances at this Lodge, as recorded in the Attendance Book, were as follows: 1791, 27th December; 1792, 6th February, 14th and 31st May, 5th June, 23rd and 30th November; 1793, 30th November, when he officiated as S.W. In 1794 he attended the Lodge on 29th November to take part in the election of officers, and on 28th January, 1796, he attended in order to become sponsor for

James Georgeson, a merchant, of Liverpool, who was a candidate for membership. His last attendance was on 14th April, 1796, three months before his death, but, strangely to relate, his decease is not recorded in the Minutes. The Lodge ceased to meet in 1805, though an attempt was made in 1815 to revive it, but it ended in failure, and in 1816 the Lodge was erased from the Roll. The Gavel, Apron, and Minute Book in use in St. Andrew's Lodge in Burns' time were purchased at a public sale by Sir Michael Shaw Stewart, the Grand Master Mason of Scotland at the time, and were by him presented to the Grand Lodge of Scotland, in the Museum of which they were deposited.

In 1795 two companies of volunteers were raised in Dumfries. The English army was for the most part in service abroad, and the French Convention threatened to land troops in England. Burns at once joined the corps and published his political opinions in the song, "The Dumfries Volunteers."

About this time Mr. Perry, of *The Morning Chronicle*, offered him £50 a year for a poem weekly in that paper, which would have been a substantial addition to his income, had he accepted it. Burns,

however, from the peculiar feeling he entertained of the sacredness of poetry, and thinking probably that if he became what he so much dreaded, "the hireling of a party," his muse would refuse to give her aid, so he declined the proposal.

In the performance of his duties as Exciseman, Burns was severe on the regular smuggler, though not unwilling to turn a blind eye to occasional relapses. One of the smuggling fraternity, not knowing Burns personally, offered one night to sell him some smuggled whisky. "You've lichter on a bad merchant," said the Bard. "I'm Robert Burns the gauger." The fellow stared, then impudently replied; "Aye, but ye're likewise Robert Burns the poet; I mak sangs, too, sae ye'll shurely ne'er ruin a brither poet." "Why, friend," said Burns, "the poet in me has been sacrificed to the exciseman, and I should like to know what superior right you have to exemption"—and, sangs or no sangs, the seizure was made then and there.

In his last illness, unable to remunerate his medical attendant in the usual manner, Burns asked the doctor's acceptance of his pair of pistols as a memorial of their friendship. Dr. William Maxwell, who died on the 13th October, 1834, proved a generous friend

to the bard's widow and children, and retained these pistols till his death, after which they were preserved for some years by his sister, and on her death they were presented to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, in whose Museum in Edinburgh they are now kept in an elegant coffer, but open to the inspection of the public.

Allan Cunningham gives a description of this interview with Dr. Maxwell. Burns, he said, looked up one day and saw Dr. Maxwell standing by his side. "Alas!" he said, "what has brought you here? I am but a poor crow and not worth plucking." He pointed to his pistols, took them in his hand, and gave them to Maxwell, saying they could not be in worthier keeping and he should never more have need of them.

Early in January, 1796, Burns contracted the fatal chill which brought on an attack of rheumatic fever. He was able, however, to attend the Lodge on the 28th of that month. About the same time he met in the street an old acquaintance, and in the course of a conversation about his health he made use of the remarkable expression:—"I find that a man may live like a fool, but he will scarcely die like one."



MRS. BURNS, WIDOW OF THE POET.



Mrs. Burns once told James Innes-Kerr Mackenzie, a contributor to *The Scots Magazine*, that Allan Cunningham was wrong in stating that Burns incurred his last illness by being inebriated and falling asleep in the open air. "In all her knowledge of him, she emphatically stated, either before marriage or after, she *never once* saw him intoxicated. Never once did she know him to be 'seen hame,' or in the least difficulty as to disposal of himself when he arrived."

When Burns thought he was dying, he told his wife his fears, adding: "Don't be afraid. I'll be more respected a hundred years after I am dead than I am at the present day."

One of the poet's ardent admirers was Allan Cunningham, whose sympathetic biography is one of the most interesting of the many life stories of Scotia's national poet that has been written. This is not to be wondered at, for it was at the table of John Cunningham, in the farmhouse of Sandbed, that Burns first recited that glorious epic, "Tam o' Shanter," at the same time that one of his best future biographers stood in the ingle-neuk listening with eager and sympathetic interest to the eloquence with which it rolled from the lips of its great author. It is to

this biographer, Allan Cunningham, that we are indebted for a graphic description of the closing days of the poet's life :

“The last time I saw Burns in life,” he says, “was on his return from the Brow-well of Solway. He had been ailing all spring, and summer had come without bringing health with it. He had gone away very ill, and he returned worse. He was brought back, I think, in a covered spring cart, and when he alighted at the foot of the street in which he lived, he could scarce stand upright. He reached his own door with difficulty. He stooped much, and there was a visible change in his looks. Some may think it not unimportant to know that he was at the time dressed in a blue coat, with the undress nankeen pantaloons of the volunteers, and that his neck, which was inclining to be short, caused his hat to turn up behind, in the manner of the shovel hats of the Episcopal clergy. Truth obliges me to add that he was not fastidious about his dress, and that an officer, curious in the personal appearance and equipments of his company, might have questioned the military

nicety of the poet's clothes and arms. But his Colonel was a maker of rhyme, and the poet had to display more charity for his commander's verse than the other had to exercise when he inspected the clothing and arms of the careless bard.

“From the day of his return home till the hour of his untimely death, Dumfries was like a besieged palace. It was known he was dying, and the anxiety, not of the rich and learned only, but of mechanics and peasants, exceeded all belief. Wherever two or three people stood together their talk was of Burns, and of him alone; they spoke of his history—of his person—of his works—of his family—of his fame and of his untimely and approaching fate, with a warmth and enthusiasm which will ever endear Dumfries to my remembrance. All that he said or was saying—the opinions of the physicians (and Maxwell was a kind and skilful one) were eagerly caught up and reported from street to street, and from house to house.”

Another hero-worshipper of Burns was Sir Walter Scott, a brother poet and a brother Mason. Scott

was a boy of sixteen when he met Burns at the house of one of his friends. He had read his poems, and desired eagerly to meet their author. He described him as a strong and robust person, with manners rustic, but not clownish; a kind of dignified plainness and simplicity, which derived part of its effect, perhaps, from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. Scott adds that, had he not known who he was, he would have taken him for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scottish school; that is, the 'douce guidman' who held his own plough. There was a strong expression of sense of shrewdness in all his lineaments: the eye indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large and of a cast which *glowed* when he spoke with feeling or interest. Scott says that he never saw such another eye in a human head, though he had seen the most distinguished men of the time.

On the 21st July, 1796, the poet's earthly career terminated, the death being announced in the local newspaper in the following words:—

“Died here, on the morning of the 21st inst., and in the 38th year of his age, Robert Burns, the Scottish Bard. His manly form and penetrating



HOUSE IN WHICH BURNS DIED.



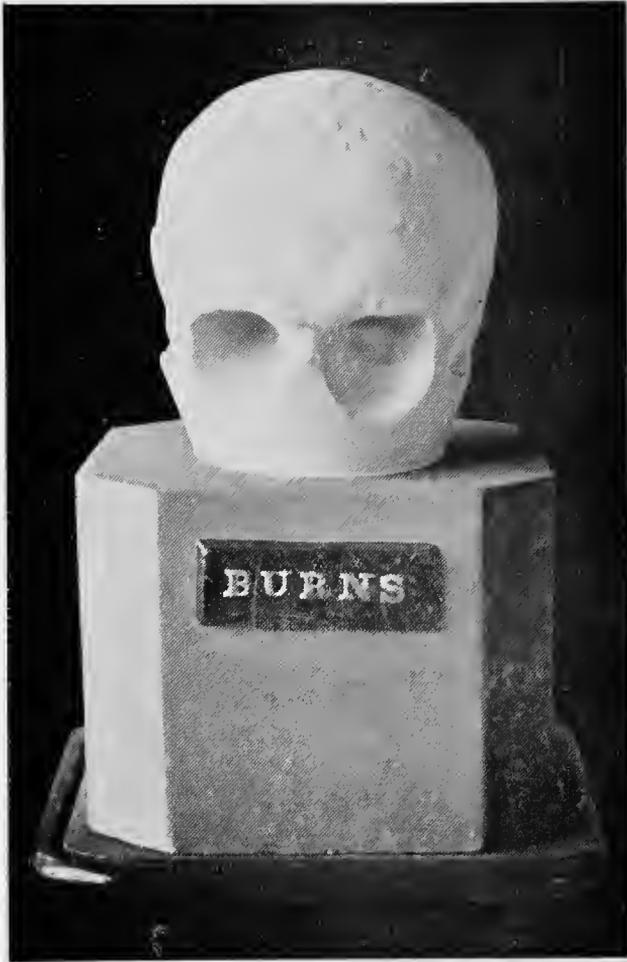
eye strikingly indicated extraordinary mental vigour. For originality of wit, rapidity of conception, and fluency of nervous phraseology he was unrivalled. Animated by the fire of nature, he uttered sentiments which, by their pathos, melted the heart to tenderness, or expanded the mind by their sublimity. As a luminary emerging from behind a cloud, he rose at once into notice; and his works and his name can never die while living divine Poesy shall agitate the chords of the human heart."

And the funeral of Burns? Again, one turns to Allan Cunningham for the best and most vivid description :—

"The multitude who accompanied Burns to the grave went step by step with the chief mourners; they might amount to ten or twelve thousand. Not a word was heard; and, though all could not be near, and many could not see, when the earth closed on their darling poet for ever, there was no rude impatience shown, no fierce disappointment expressed. It was an impressive and mournful sight to see men of all ranks and persuasions and

opinions mingling as brothers, and stepping side by side down the streets of Dumfries, with the remains of him who had sang of their loves, and joys, and domestic endearments, with a truth and a tenderness which none perhaps have seen equalled. I could, indeed, have wished the military part of the procession away—for he was buried with military honours—because I am one of those who love simplicity in all that regards genius. The scarlet and gold—the banners displayed—the measured step, and the military array, with the sound of the martial instruments of music, had no share in increasing the solemnity of the burial scene, and had no connection with the poet.”

The spot of ground in St. Michael's Churchyard, Dumfries, where all that was mortal of the Bard was deposited on Monday, 25th July, 1796, had been selected by himself in the North-East corner of the cemetery. In one of his published letters we find him using this proud language: “When I am laid in my grave, I wish to be stretched at full length, that I may occupy every inch of ground that I have a right to.”



CAST OF THE SKULL OF BURNS.



On 25th January, 1820, the anniversary of his birth, at his birthplace, Kirk Alloway, was laid the foundation stone of a Monument to the Memory of Robert Burns. Dr. John Foulds has related a story with reference to this Monument which is not generally known. When the idea of the Monument was suggested, it was arranged that the Clerk of the County should convene a meeting in Ayr to discuss the matter. This was done, but only Alexander Boswell of Auchinleck, Rev. H. Paul of Broughton, and the Clerk put in an appearance. That did not upset Boswell's equanimity. He calmly elected himself Chairman, proposed that a Monument be erected, declared the motion carried, and instructed the Clerk to send out subscription sheets forthwith. These met with the heartiest reception, with the result that the Monument was erected. This Alexander Boswell was the son of James Boswell, the biographer of Dr. Johnson. He was created a Baronet in 1821, and was shot in a duel in the following year by James Stewart of Dunearn. In private life and in the circle of his friends he was one of the most social and amusing companions. He was much attached to Freemasonry, and in a Lodge none could "preside

o'er the Sons of Light" with greater propriety or more in the spirit of "the privileged few."

On the occasion of the laying of the foundation stone of the Monument the following Lodges and Chapters took part :—

- 1 Mother Kilwinning ;
- 10 Maybole ;
- 24 St. John's, Kilmarnock ;
- 46 Newmills ;
- 64 Partick Kilwinning, Glasgow ;
- 123 Ayr Kilwinning ;
- 124 St. James, Newton Ayr ;
- 125 St. Andrew, Kilmarnock ;
- 126 Thistle, Stewarton ;
- 131 St. David, Tarbolton ;
- 147 St. Andrew, Irvine ;
- 163 Royal Arch, Ayr ;
- 167 Thistle and Rose, Stevenston ;
- 197 Royal Arch, Maybole ;
- 200 St. Thomas, Muirkirk ;
- 201 St. Clement, Riccarton ;
- 203 St Paul, Ayr and Renfrew ;
- 209 St. Andrew, Ayr Newton ;
- 221 Moira, Fenton ;
- 230 St. Barnabas, Old Cumnock ;
- 240 St. Mungo, Mauchline ;
- 270 St. James, Kilmarnock.

Alexander Boswell was Worshipful Depute Grand Master of the most ancient Mother Lodge Kilwinning, and in response to the appeal which he sent out, subscriptions from all parts of the country had flowed in, including a handsome donation from the Prince Regent, afterwards George IV.

In 1807, it may be stated, the Mother Kilwinning Lodge renounced the right of granting warrants, and was placed at the head of the roll of Scottish Lodges by the Grand Lodge of Scotland.

The Lodges and Chapters having formed themselves into an extensive circle, the stone was placed into position by Alexander Boswell, who also deposited a plate bearing the following inscription :—

“ By the favour of Almighty God, on the twenty-fifth of January, A.D. MDCCCXX., of the era of Masonry, 5820, and in the sixteenth year of the reign of our beloved Sovereign, George the Third, His Royal Highness George, Prince of Wales, being Regent of the United Kingdom and a munificent subscriber to the edifice, the foundation stone of this Monument, erected by public subscription in honour of the genius of ROBERT BURNS, the

Ayrshire Poet, was laid by Alexander Boswell, Esq., of Auchinleck, M.P., Worshipful Depute Grand Master of the Most Antient Mother Lodge Kilwinning (attended by all the Mason Lodges in Ayrshire), according to the antient usages of Masonry. Thomas Hamilton, junior, Edinburgh, architect; John Connell, junior, builder and contractor.”

Then the Depute Grand Master exhibited corn, oil, and wine in true Masonic style, and delivered the following address:—

“Brethren, may corn, oil, and wine abound; may all that is useful and ornamental be cultivated amongst us; and may all that can invigorate the body, or elevate the soul, shed their blest influence on our native land.

“We have at length assembled to pay a grateful, though a tardy, tribute to the genius of Robert Burns, our Ayrshire Poet; and the Bard of Coila. There surely lives not the man so dull, so flinty, or phlegmatic, who would witness this event without emotion. But to those whose heart-strings have thrilled responsive to the chords of the poet’s lyre—



GRAND-DAUGHTER AND WIDOW OF THE POET.



whose bosoms have swelled like his, with love and friendship, with tenderness and sympathy, have glowed with patriotism, or panted for glory—this hour must be an hour of exaltation. Whether we consider the time, the place, or the circumstances, at once in operation on our feelings and our fancies—his muse, alas! is mute—who could alone have dared to paint the proud breathings of such an assembly at such a moment.

“When we consider the time, we cannot forget that this day is the anniversary of that which gave our poet the light of heaven. Bleak is the prospect around us; the wood, the hawthorn, and ‘the birken shaw’ are leafless; not a thrush has yet essayed to clear the furrowed brow of winter; but this, we know, shall pass away, give place, and be succeeded by the buds of spring and the blossoms of summer. Chill and cheerless was our poet’s natal day; but soon the wild flowers of poesy sprang, as it were, beneath his boyish tread; they opened as he advanced, expanded as he matured, until he revelled in all the richness of luxuriance. Poverty and disappointment hung frowning around him and haunted his path; but, soothed and

charmed by the fitful visits of his native muse, and crowned, as in a vision, with the holly wreath, he wantoned in a fairy land, the bright creation of his own vivid and enwrapt imagination. His musings have been our delight. Men of the loftiest talents, and of taste the most refined, have praised them; men of strong and sterling, but untutored, intellect, have admired them; the poet of the heart is the poet of mankind.

“When we consider the place, let us remember that those very scenes which we now look upon, awakened in his youthful breast that animating spark which burst upon the world with a blaze of inspiration. In yonder cottage he first drew breath; in that depository of the lowly dead sleeps the once humble, now immortal, model of the cottage life—there rests his pious father—and there it was his fond and anxious wish that his dust should have been mingled with the beloved and kindred ashes. Below us flows the Doon, the classic Doon, but made classic by his harmony; there, gliding through the woods, and laving his banks and braes, he rolls his clear and ‘far-fetched waters’ to the ocean. Before us stands the ruins of Kirk Alloway,



DESIGN OF MONUMENT ERECTED IN THE BURNS' MAUSOLEUM.



shrouded in all the mystic imagery with which it is enveloped by his magic spells—‘Kirk Alloway!’—to name it, is enough.

“If, then, the time and place are so congenial with our fond impressions, the circumstances which have enabled us to carry into effect this commemoration of our Bard must give delight to every enthusiastic mind. In every region where our language is heard, the song of Burns gives rapture—and from every region, and from climes the most remote, the votive offerings pour in to aid all our undertaking; and the edifice, which we have now begun, shall stand a proud and lasting testimony of the world’s admiration. Not on the banks of the Doon alone, or hermit Ayr, or the romantic Lugar, echo repeats the songs of Burns, but amid the wild forests of Columbia, and scorching plains of Hindustan, on the banks of the Mississippi, the St. Lawrence, and the Ganges, his heart-touching melody floats upon the breeze.

“This monument rises like the piled cairn over our warriors of old—each man casts a stone; and in honour of him, the son of a cottager, and himself a ploughman, our prince, with the true feelings of

true greatness, and more illustrious by this act of generosity, pays here his tribute at the shrine of genius. May the work prosper ; and when happily completed, then may it tell to future generations that the age which could produce a Burns was rich also in those who could appreciate his talents, and who, while they felt and owned the power of his muse, have honoured his name.”

The Rev. H. Paul, of Broughton, concluded the ceremony with a suitable prayer, and the whole Masonic body, joined by an immense crowd of spectators, gave three hearty cheers, and the procession returned to the town of Ayr.

In the evening deputations arrived at the Grand Lodge, when the Rev. H. Paul recited the following ode :—

“Thy sorrows, Ayr, are like the dews of night,  
In pearly drops, o'er Nature's cheek descending,  
To bid her vernal beauty beam more bright,  
The tear and smile in lovely union blending ;  
For like the hymn of gratitude ascending  
With incense ever pleasing to the skies,  
Thine and thy darling poet's fame extending,  
Thou hear'st the voice of gratulation rise.

“ And, lo ! on this auspicious holiday,  
The Sons of Light, in bright array,  
    With many a mystic streamer flying,  
To minstrelsy with measured steps advance,  
And seem, at times, to weave the festive dance,  
At times, to shake the spear, or couch the lance,  
    To feet unhallow'd all access denying  
The while they place, by plummet, rule, and square,  
The corner-stone, predestined to bear  
    The precious monumental pile,  
Of Ayr the glory, and the boast of Kyle.

“ Though frail the fabric which you raise  
    The poet's memory to prolong,  
Compar'd with that which speaks his praise,  
    The energy divine of song ;  
Yet still our gratitude is due,  
Thrice lov'd, thrice honour'd friends, to you  
    Who bid the beauteous structure rise ;  
And so our fond regrets were one,  
When Coila wept her favourite son,  
    So in your joys we sympathise,  
When the whole world of taste and feeling turns  
Its gaze, with rapture ever new, on BURNS ! ”

Alexander Boswell also sang the following song, composed by himself, with great power and effect :—

“ Vain thought ! But had Burns witness'd a meeting  
    Of souls so congenial, and warm'd with such fire,  
The wild flow of fancy in ecstasy greeting,  
    Ah ! what might have been the bold notes of his lyre !

- “ As rays by reflection are doubled and doubled,  
His bosom had swell'd to your cheering reply ;  
Soft sympathy soothing the heart that was troubled—  
A smile for his mirth—for his sorrow a sigh.
- “ Admir'd, but unaided, how dark was his story ;  
His struggles we know, and his efforts we prize ;  
From murky neglect, as the flame bursts to glory,  
He rose, self-embalm'd, and destruction defies.
- “ A ploughman he was : would that smiles of false favour  
Had never decoy'd him from home and his team ;  
And taught all his hopes and his wishes to waver,  
And, snatching reality, left him—a dream.
- “ To rank and to title, due deference owing,  
We bow, as befitting society's plan ;  
But, judgment awaken'd, and sympathy glowing,  
We pass all distinctions, and rest upon—man.
- “ And from the poor hind, who, his day's task completed,  
With industry's pride to his hovel returns,  
To him who in royalty's splendour is seated,  
If soul independent be found—'twas in Burns.
- “ His birthright, his muse ! Like the lark in the morning,  
How blithely he caroll'd in praise of the fair ;  
With nature enraptur'd, and artifice scorning,  
How sweet were his notes on the banks of the Ayr !

“ And near to that spot where his kindred dust slumbers,  
And mark'd by the bard on the tablets of fame,  
And near the thatch'd shed where he first lisp'd in numbers,  
We'll raise a proud tribute to honour his name.”

The poet's mother died in January, 1820, thus surviving her son nearly twenty-four years. His wife died on 26th March, 1834. At his death Robert Burns left four sons, and on the day of his interment a fifth son was born, who was named Maxwell, named after the doctor who attended the poet in his last illness, and who died on 25th April, 1799. Robert, the eldest and favourite son of the poet, was born at Mauchline in 1786. He was for twenty-nine years in the Legacy Department of Somerset House. On retirement he resided for some years at Dumfries. In addition to being an excellent linguist and an accomplished musician, he also was a poet of no mean merit. He died in May, 1857, in the seventy-first year of his age. Francis Wallace, the second son, was born at Elliesland on 9th April, 1789, but died in 1803. William Nicol, the third son, was born at Dumfries on 21st November, 1792, and James Glencairn, the fourth, was born on 12th August, 1794. The two last-named, through the influence of Sir James Shaw

and the Marchioness of Hastings, entered the service of the East India Company. The former rose to be Colonel and the latter to be Lieutenant-Colonel. William Nicol died on 21st February, 1872, and James Glencairn on 18th November, 1865. The latter left two daughters, Sarah and Annie. The former married Dr. Hutchinson, and on her death left three daughters and one son, and there are still living direct descendants of the poet. On 17th September, 1831, Captain (as he then was) James Glencairn Burns, who had just returned home from India, paid, with his wife, a visit to Sir Walter Scott, and spent the day under his roof, shortly before the death of the great Scottish novelist. Gilbert, the brother of the poet, died on 27th April, 1827.

Patrick Miller, the owner of Elliesland, son of Sir Thomas Miller, was initiated in Canongate Kilwinning Lodge, on 12th February, 1765. He had been brought up as a banker, but applied himself to scientific pursuits and was the first to propose the application of steam power to navigation.

After Burns' death a Liverpoolitan Freemason and a compatriot, Dr. Currie, obtained the poet's manuscripts

and letters, and, purely as a labour of love, compiled from that chaotic material a biography—for the pecuniary benefit of the widow and little ones. Pierpont Morgan afterwards made a bid for the papers, but, happily, he was not successful in securing them.

In 1868 a number of Masons met together and made all the preliminary arrangements for the resuscitation of the poet's Mother Lodge, St. David's, Tarbolton, No. 125. A petition with that object was in due form presented to the Grand Lodge of Scotland and a sum of money deposited with the petition, and the Lodge, which was chartered originally in 1773, then struck off the Roll in 1843, was re-opened in Mauchline on 8th November, 1869, when the number 133 was assigned to it.

It is interesting to record that one of the unwritten by-laws of the Scots Lodge, No. 2319, London, is: "That every January, after the business of the regular meeting, the 'harmonie' of the evening shall be devoted to the hero-worship of paying homage at the shrine of Burns' immortal fame."

Caroline Fox in her Journals has left on record an interesting account of an afternoon spent with Thomas Carlyle, in which she says :—

“ Burns was the last of our heroes, and here our Scotch patriot was in his element. Most graphically did he sketch some passages in the poet’s life ; the care with which his good father educated him, teaching him to read his Bible and to write. The family was in great poverty, and so deeply did anxiety about rearing his children prey on the mind of old William Burns, that he died of a broken heart. He was a sincere man, and, like every sincere man, he lived not in vain. He acted up to the precepts of John Knox and trained his son to immortality. When Robert’s talents developed themselves, the rich and the great espoused his cause, constantly sent for him when they would be amused, and drew him out of his simple habits, greatly to his own woe. He could not long stand this perpetual lionising unblighted ; it broke him up in every sense, and he died. What a tragedy is this of Robert Burns ! his father dying of a broken heart from dread of over-great poverty ; the son

from contact with the great, who would flatter him for a night or two and then leave him unfriended. Amusement they must have, it seems, at any expense, though one would have thought they were sufficiently amused in the common way; but no, they were like the Indians we read of whose grandees ride in their palanquins at night, and are not content with torches carried before them, but must have instead fireflies stuck at the end of spears. . . . He [Carlyle] then told us he had more than occupied our time, and rushed downstairs."

Burns is described by Professor Craik as "the greatest peasant poet that has ever appeared. Nothing in Horace, in the way of curious felicity of phrase, excels what we find in the compositions of this Ayrshire ploughman."

Some have doubted his investiture as Poet-Laureate of the Canongate Kilwinning Lodge, owing to the absence of certain documentary proofs. But, after all, he was more than that. He was, and is, the Laureate of the Scottish race, of the Masonic Craft, and of all who toil. One writer has given Burns a chapter to

himself in a book he has written, entitled: *Men who have failed*. Whatever may have been the side-tracks in Burns' career, who will venture upon the assertion that he was a failure? He has thrilled the whole world with his songs. Generation after generation have revelled in his verse. Not in Scotland alone, but in every country of each hemisphere his verses and epigrams are quoted as freely and as frequently as passages from the Sacred Scriptures.



ROBERT BURNS' ARMORIAL BEARINGS.



STATUE OF BURNS BY FLAXMAN.



The Spirit of Bro. Robert Burns



## The Spirit of Bro. Robert Burns.

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*Address delivered by Bro. Rev. Dr. FORT NEWTON, Past Grand Chaplain, Iowa, U.S.A., in proposing the toast "To the Immortal Memory of Bro. Robert Burns," at the Burns Meeting of the Scots Lodge, No. 2319, English Constitution, on 24th January, 1918.*

WE are met this evening, as I understand it, just to love Robert Burns and one another. Somehow I feel that Burns would rejoice to be here, for he loved more than all else that festival that was half a frolic and the feast where joy and goodwill were guests. The social magnetism of his spirit found its way into his songs, and we feel it to this day, and he was nowhere more happy, nowhere more welcome, than in the fellowship of his Masonic Brethren. Higher tribute there is none for any man than to say, justly, that the world is gentler and more joyous for his having lived—and that was true of Burns, whose very name is an emblem

of pity, joy, and the genius of fraternity. And it is therefor that we love Robert Burns, as much for his weakness as for his strength, and all the more for that he was such an unveneered human being. If he was a sinner, he was in that akin to ourselves, as God wots, a little good and a little bad, a little weak and a little strong, foolish when he thought he was wise, and wise, often, when he feared he was foolish. It is given but to few men thus to live in the hearts of their fellows; and, to-day, from Ayr to Sidney, from Chicago to Calcutta, the memory of Burns is a sweet perfume. Yes, more than a fragrance, it is a living force uniting men of many lands, by a kind of Freemasonry, into a league of liberty, justice, and pity.

There is a certain fitness in a man of my country proposing this toast to the Memory of Robert Burns. Mark Twain, the Lincoln of our literature, used to say that our American Civil War was a fight between Sir Walter Scott and Robert Burns. Of course, it was an exaggeration, but none the less a picturesque way of stating a fact. We of the South read Sir Walter Scott for his pride of blood and extraction, for his grace and charm of courtesy, for his pictures of an old romantic feudalism—and, I may add, for the strength

and sweetness of his genius. Our Southern society, for all its culture and hospitality, was the old feudalism transplanted to the New World. The Yankees read Robert Burns, who said that "a man's a man for a' that," whether white or black or brown. That is to say, our Civil War was a clash of ideals, each growing and struggling to be free, an old feudalism against a new uprising democracy of which Burns was the God-endowed prophet. And so the conflict was inevitable.

About the walls of Troy, as Homer saw it, two battles raged, one on the earth between Greeks and Trojans, one in the viewless air between gods and goddesses. So to-day, above the long, winding, ragged lines of the greatest of all wars, two battles are raging—a battle of guns and a battle of ideals. It is a conflict of two conceptions of life and civilisation which cannot live together on this earth and keep the peace; and we are struggling together to decide which ideal shall shape the destination of mankind. One in arts and aims and ideals, and now, at last, one in arms, the land of Lincoln and the land of Burns are fighting for the fundamental truths which Burns set to everlasting music.

Some there are who dream of a vague blur of cosmopolitanism, in which all local loyalties, all heroic national genius shall be merged and forgotten. Not so Burns. He was distinctively a national poet, striking deep roots into his native soil, and, for that very reason, touching a chord so haunting that it echoes for ever. When Burns appeared the spirit of Scotland was at a low ebb. Her people were crushed and her ancient fire almost quenched. Her scholars blushed to be convicted of a Scottism in speech. It was at such a time that Burns came, inspired by the history of his people, the traditions of Wallace and Bruce stirring him like a passion, his soul attuned to the ancient ballads of love and daring, singing the simple life of his nation in their vivid and simple language. He struck with a delicate but strong hand the deep and noble feelings of his countrymen, and somewhere upon his variegated robe of song will be found embroidered the life, the faith, the genius of his people. He made it a double honour to be a Scotsman. It is therefor that the men of Scotland love him, as, perhaps, never people loved a poet, and make his home at once a throne of melody and a shrine of national glory.

“The Memory of Burns,” cried Emerson, “I am afraid heaven and earth have taken too good care of it to leave us anything to say. The west winds are murmuring it. Open the windows behind you and hearken to the incoming tide, what the waves say of it. The doves perching on the eaves of a stone chapel opposite may know something about it. The Memory of Burns—every man’s, every boy’s, every girl’s head carries snatches of his songs, and they say them by heart; and, what is strangest of all, never learned them from a book, but from mouth to mouth. They are the property and the solace of mankind.”

If ever of any one, it can be said of Robert Burns, that his soul goes marching on, striding over continents and years, trampling tyrannies down. He was the harbinger of the nineteenth century, the poet of the rights and reign of the common people, whom, it has been said, God must love because He made so many of them. The earth was fresh upon the tomb of Washington when that century was born; it discovered Lincoln and buried him with infinite regret. Indeed, had Burns reached his four-score years, he might have known our peasant-President; he surely must have known him by fame and warm appreciation. In this

way Lincoln knew him and fondly repeated the sombre stanzas of "Man was made to Mourn," because it suited the temper of his melancholy spirit. But the victorious melody of the age of Lincoln first found voice in the songs of Burns, as the Greek singer inspired Petrarch with the fire that forced the Renaissance, and out of the inertia of the Middle Ages created modern times. So, when Taine came to account for that age he found that its spirit "broke first in a Scotch peasant, Robert Burns"—a man of all men most fitted to give it voice, because "scarcely ever was seen together more of misery and of talent."

This is not the time to rattle the dry bones of literary criticism—a dreary business at best, and a dismal business at worst. It is by all agreed that Robert Burns was a lyric poet of the first order, if not the greatest song-writer of the world. Draw a line from Shakespeare to Browning, and he is one of the few tall enough to touch it. The qualities of Burns are simplicity, naturalness, vividness, fire, sweet-toned pathos, and rollicking humour—qualities rare enough and still more rarely blended. But he was a man first, and his fame rests upon verses written swiftly, as men write letters, and upon songs that were as spontaneous,

as artless, and as lovely as the songs of birds. But the spirit of Burns was not merely local. His passion for liberty, his affirmation of the nobility of man, his sense of the dignity of labour, his pictures of the beauties of nature, of the pathos and hard lot of the lowly, of the joys and woes and pieties of his people find response in every breast where beats the heart of a man. Surely no one, since the Son of Man lodged with the fishermen by the sea, has taught more clearly the brotherhood of man and the kinship of all breathing things.

That which lives in Robert Burns, and will live while human nature is the same, is his love of justice, of honesty, his touch of pathos, of melting sympathy, his demand for liberty, his faith in man, in nature, and in God—all uttered with simple speech and the golden voice of song. His poems were little jets of love and liberty and pity finding their way out through the fissures in the granite-like theology of his day. They came fresh from the heart of a man whom the death of a little bird set dreaming of the meaning of a world wherein life is woven of beauty, mystery, and sorrow. A flower crushed in the budding, a field mouse turned out of its home by a ploughshare, a wounded hare

limping along the road to dusty death, or the memory of a tiny bird who sang for him in days ago, touched him to tears. His poems did not grow : they awoke complete. He was a child of the open air, and about all his songs there is an outdoor feeling. He saw Nature with the swift glances of a child—saw beauty in the fold of clouds, in the slant of trees, in the lilt and glint of flowing waters, in the immortal game of hide-and-seek played by sunbeams and shadows, in the mists trailing over the hills. The sigh of the wind in the forest filled him with a kind of wild, sad joy, and the tender face of a mountain daisy was like the thought of one much loved and long dead. So the throb of his heart is warm in his words, and it was a heart in which he carried an alabaster box of pity. He had a sad life and a soul of fire, the instincts of an angel in the midst of hard poverty ; yet he lived with dash and daring, sometimes with folly, and, we must add—else we do not know Burns—with a certain bubbling joyousness, a lyric glee as of a bird singing in the boughs.

Such was the spirit of Robert Burns—a man passionate and piteous, compact of light and flame and beauty, capable of withering scorn of wrong,

quickly shifting from the ludicrous to the horrible, poised between laughter and tears—and if by some art we could send it into all the dark places of the world, pity and joy would return to the common ways of man. Long live the Spirit of Robert Burns. May it grow and glow to the confounding of all unkindness, all injustice, all bitterness.

“ He haunts his native land  
As an immortal youth; his hand  
Guides every plough.  
His presence haunts this room to-night  
A form of mingled mist and light  
From that far coast.”

His feet may be in the furrow, but the nobility of manhood is in his heart, on his lips the voice of eternal melody, and in his face the light of the morning star. I give you the toast, “To the Immortal Memory of Robert Burns!”



## THE SONGS OF BURNS.

'Tis a little land that claims his birth,  
But over the world wide,  
His songs are sung  
By old and young ;  
In the melting strains of the Scottish tongue,  
With hallowed mirth are his sweet songs sung  
At every Scot's fireside.

There's never a land on the earth's broad breast,  
From Clyde to the farthest sea,  
But loves the sound  
Of his name renowned,  
And as oft as his natal day comes round  
Wet eyes in the West to the Doon's green ground  
Look homeward wistfully.

There's never a voice so sweet, so glad,  
Floats over the lone sea-foam,  
As the woodland wile  
Of the Bard of Kyle,  
Whose notes can the mourner's grief beguile,  
Till eyes that are sad wear a welcome smile  
At a glimpse of the hills of home."

—KELSO KELLY.









