SCOTTISH SONGS AND BALLADS.

BY CHARLES J. PETERSON.

It is not every poet who can write a song. A perfect lyric should be single in its theme, should go directly to the point, should never lose sight of the subject for an instant, should be clothed in language at once appropriate and musical, and should glow with patriotic enthusiasm, or melt with tenderness, but always be made vital with the sentiment or idea. Only when the heart is full and the imagination on fire, are thought and passion fused to the white heat of the lyric. It is for this reason that there are so few really good songs in the language. A thousand times poets have said to themselves, "Now I will write a lyric;" and never, when saying this, have they succeeded perfectly. Moore and Bayley are instances in point. On the other hand, some of the best songs we possess, have been written by persons unknown to fame before. "Auld Robin Gray," and a host besides, are examples familiar to all.

The most perfect of our songs are Scotch. It is a mistake, however, to suppose that these have a Highland origin, as the popular mind believes and some writers even assert who pretend to criticism. All the principal songs, which are known as Scotch, can be traced to the Lowlands, where the inhabitants have been substantially of the same race with the English, ever since the Normans conquered at Hastings, the Danes swarmed across the German ocean, or Scandinavian sea-kings ravaged the British coasts. The song of the Gael, like his bag-pipe, is rude and wild. But south of his barbarous hills, and all the way to the English border, the land is vocal with sweet lyrics. An able writer has said that every river, stream and lake, every mountain-slope and summit, every pastoral valley, every ruined tower, nay! almost every farm-house in the Scottish Lowlands has been celebrated in song.

It is, therefore, not because the Scotch are of a different race from the English, that the first can show so many songs, and the last so few. Five centuries ago the people south of the Tweed were as lyrical as those on the north of it; and they continued to remain so till down to a comparatively recent period. It is even doubtful if the English, in the age of Chaucer, had not more songs than the Scotch. It is certain that many, which are now generally thought to belong to Scotland, can be traced back to an English ancestry. So late as the reign of Queen Elizabeth, music and song were household companions of the English, almost as much so as with the Germans of to-day. But the great Puritan revolution was as iconoclastic toward rote and rebec as toward images in the churches, and trampled out song-singing beneath its pitiless hoofs, as remorselessly as Cromwell's Ironsides rode down the cavaliers at Marston Moor. The Restoration, which made a vicious French taste fashionable, did nothing toward restoring the beauty of old English lyrics; and the accession of the House of Hanover, bringing in a coarse, dull court, made the case more hopeless than ever. In this way nearly all the old English songs have perished. But Scotland, by a series of fortuitous events, was saved from a similar doom. North of the border, and up to the very foot of the Highlands, the love of song continued, wherever a dialect of the Saxon English was spoken; and not only continued, but took deeper hold than ever of the popular heart, till it culminated at last in the immortal Burns.

Probably the most perfect song, in any language, is "Ae fond kiss and then we sever." It illustrates, in every burning word, what we have said of the lyric. Its glowing thoughts, intense emotion, and vivid language rush from the poet's soul, like molten lava from a volcano, setting everything a-blaze. Never were words and melody, pathos and passion, so fused together as in the second stanzas.

"I'll ne'er blame my partial fancy,
Naething could resist my Nancy;
But to see her was to love her,
Love but her, and love forever.
Had we never loved so kindly,
Had we never loved so blindly,
Never met—or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted."

But the songs of Burns are too well known to require further mention. It is sufficient to say, that no poet, in any language, has left behind so many glorious lyrics. Next to him, perhaps, comes Allan Cunningham. There is one of his songs, at least, whose superior it would be difficult to select. We allude to that lament of the banished Jacobite, "Hame, hame, hame," which

Sir Walter Scott could never listen to without tears. Compare it with Campbell's "Exile of Erin," and see how far truth and Nature are above artificial trickery.

"Hame, hame, hame! oh, hame fain wad I be!
Oh, hame, hame, hame, to my ain countrie!
When the flower is i' the bud, and the leaf is on the tree,
The lark shall sing me hame to my ain countrie.
Hame, hame, hame! oh, hame fain wad I be!
Oh, hame, hame, hame, to my ain countrie!

The green leaf o' loyaltie's beginning now to fa';
The bonnie white rose it is withering an' a';
But we'll water't wi' the bluid of usurping tyrannie,
And fresh it shall blaw in my ain countrie.
Hame, hame, hame! oh, hame fain wad I be!
Oh, hame, hame, hame, to my ain countrie!

Oh, there's nocht now frae ruin my countrie can save,
But the keys o' kind Heaven, to open the grave,
That a' the noble martyrs who died for loyaltie
May rise again and fight for their ain countrie.
Hame, hame, hame! oh, hame fain wad I be!
Oh, hame, hame, hame, to my ain countrie!

The great now are gane wha attempted to save,
The green grass is growing abune their grave;
Yet the sun through the mirk seems to promise to me,
I'll shine on you yet in your ain countrie.
Hame, hame, hame! oh, hame fain wad I be!
Oh, hame, hame, hame, to my ain countrie!"

The ballad of "Helen of Kirkconnell" dates back beyond authentic authorship. It is a fitting companion to the above. Its directness, earnestness, and vivid language, even in the modernized version which we quote, are in the highest style of the lyric

"I wish I were where Helen lies—
Night and day on me she cries;
Oh, that I were where Helen lies,
On fair Kirkconnell lea!

Oh, Helen, fair beyond compare!
I'll make a garland of thy hair,
Shall bind my heart forevermair,
Until the day I die.

Cursed be the heart that thought the thought,
And cursed the hand that fired the shot,
When in my arms burd Helen dropt,
And died for sake o' me.

Oh, think nae but my heart was sair
When my love fell and spak' nae mair;
I laid her down wi' meikle care
On fair Kirkconnell lea.

I laid her down, my sword did draw,
Stern was our strife in Kirtle-shaw;
I hew'd him down in pieces sma',
For her that died for me.

Oh, that I were where Helen lies;
Night and day on me she cries,
Out of my bed she bids me rise,
'Oh, come, my love, to me!'

Oh, Helen fair, oh, Helen chaste!
Were I with thee I would be blest,
Where thou liest low and tak'st thy rest
On fair Kirkconnell lea!

I wish I were where Helen lies.
Night and day on me she cries:
I'm sick of all beneath the skies,
Since my love died for me."

As perfect a song of its kind, but in a different vein, is "There's Nae Luck About the House." The author was William Julius Mickle, who wrote it not quite a century ago. Burns pronounced it "the finest love-ballad in the Scotch, or perhaps in any other language." The joyous happiness of the "guide-wife," on hearing that her husband has come back safe, becomes infectious as we read, such is the exquisite harmony between the thought and the rythm, till we can hardly avoid jumping to our feet and dancing with glee.

"But are ye sure the news is true?
And are ye sure he's weel?
Is this a time to think o' wark?
Ye jauds, fling bye your wheel?
For there's nae luck about the house,
There's nae luck at a';
There's nae luck about the house,
When our gudeman's awa'.

Is this a time to think o' wark,
When Colin's at the door?
Rax down my cloak—I'll to the quay,
And see him come ashore.

Rise up and make a clean fireside,
Put on the muckle pat;
Gie little Kate her cotton gown,
And Jock his Sunday's coat.

Mak their shoon as black as slaes,
Their stockins white as snaw;
It's a' to pleasure our gudeman—
He likes to see them braw.

There are twa hens into the crib
Hae fed this month or mair;
Mak haste and thraw their necks about,
That Colin weel may fare.

My Turkey slippers I'll put on,
My stockins pearl-blue—
It's a' to pleasure our gudeman,
For he's baith leal and true.

Sae sweet his voice, sae smooth his tongue,
His breath's like cauler air;
His very foot has music in't,
As he comes up the stair.

And will I see his face again,
And will I hear him speak?
I'm downricht dizzy wi' the thought,
In troth I'm like to greet.

There's nae luck about the house,
There's nae luck at a';
There's nae luck about the house,
When our gudeman's awa'."

Hogg, the "Ettrick Shepherd," has written many good songs, but the most famous, perhaps, is "When the Kye Come Hame." As a rural picture it is perfect. Without rising to the power of "Scots Who Hae," or moving the soul like "Auld Robin Gray," it yet makes a lasting

impression in the memory, and is as perfect of its kind. The manner in which "When the Kye Come Hame" is brought in at the end of every stanzas, is especially charming.

"Come, all ye jolly shepherds
That whistle through the glen,
I'll tell ye of a secret
That courtiers dinna ken.
What is the greatest bliss
That the tongue o' man can name?
'Tis to woo a bonnie lassie
When the kye come hame.
When the kye come hame,
When the kye come hame;
'Tween the gloamin' and the mirk,
When the kye come hame.

'Tis not beneath the burgonet,
Nor yet beneath the crown,
'Tis not on couch of velvet,
Nor yet on bed of down;
'Tis beneath the spreading birch,
In the dell without a name,
Wi' a bonnie, bonnie lassie
When the kye come hame.

There the blackbird bigs his nest
For the mate he loves to see,
And up upon the tapmost bough,
Oh, a happy bird is he!
Then he pours his melting ditty,
And love 'tis a' the theme,
And he'll woo his bonnie lassie
When the kye come hame.

When the bluart bears a pearl,
And the daisy turns a pea,
And the bonnie lucken gowan
Has fauldit up his ee.
Then the laverock frae the blue lift
Draps down, and thinks nae shame
To woo his bonnie lassie
When the kye come hame.

Then the eye shines sae bright,
The haill soul to beguile,
There's love in every whisper,
And joy in every smile.
Oh, who would choose a crown,
Wi' its perils and its fame,
And miss a bonnie lassie
When the key come hame?

See yonder pawky shepherd
That lingers on the hill—
His yowes are in the fauld,
And his lambs are lying still;
Yet he dawna gang to rest,
For his heart is in a flame
To meet his bonnie lassie
When the kye come hame.

Awa' wi' fame and fortune—
What comfort can they gi'e?—
And a' the arts that prey
On man's life and libertie.
Gi'e me the highest joy
That the heart o' man can frame,
My bonnie, bonnie lassie,
When the kye come hame."

Among the older songs, "Waly, Waly," is one of the most beautiful. The author is anonymous. It first appeared, we believe, in Ramsay's "The Tea-Table Miscellany," published in 1724. It is as affecting as Motherwell's "My Heid is Like to Rend, Willie," while less diffuse; and the four last lines, perhaps, have never been surpassed.

"Oh, waly, waly up the bank,
And waly, waly down the brae,
And waly, waly yon burn-side,
Where I and my love wont to gae!
I lean'd my back unto an aik,
And thoucht it was a trusty tree;
But first it bow'd and syne it brak:
Sae my true-love did lichtlie me.

Oh, waly, waly, but love be bonnie
A little time while it is new;
But when it's auld it waxes cauld,
And fades away like the morning dew.
Oh, wherefore should I busk my heid,
Or wherefore should I kame my hair?
For my true-love has me forsook,
And says he'll never love me mair.

Now Arthur's Seat shall be my bed,
The sheets shall ne'er be press'd by me,
St. Anton's Well shall be my drink,
Since my true-love has forsaken me.
Martinmas wind, when wilt thou blaw,
And shake the green leaves aff the tree?
Oh, gentle death, when wilt thou come?
For of my life I am wearie.

'Tis not the frost that freezes fell,
Nor blawing snaw's inclemencie;
'Tis not sic cauld that makes me cry;
But my love's heart's grown cauld to me.
When we came in by Glasgow toun,
We were a comely sicht to see;
My love was clad in the black velvet,
And I mysel' in cramasie.

But had I wist before I kiss'd
That love had been sae ill to win,
I'd lock'd my heart in a case of gold,
And pinn'd it wi' a siller pin.
Oh, oh! if my young babe were born,
And set upon the nurse's knee,
And I mysel' were dead and gone,
And the green grass growin' ower me!"

Even to enumerate all the good Scotch songs would require more space than we have to spare. We must content ourselves, therefore, with naming merely a few. Allan Ramsay wrote several excellent ones, the best of which, perhaps, is "The Waukin O' the Fauld;" but his lyrics, in general, hardly deserve the praise they have received. His "Widow, Are Ye Waukin," is a good specimen of his freer style. There is an anonymous version of "Barbara Allan," which has singular merit, and is doubtless the original of the English song of the same name, which is far inferior. "Annie Laurie," another old song, is very good. Hector Macneil, who was born in 1746, was the author of several capital lyrics. His "Come Under My Plaidie," satirizes marrying for wealth as unmercifully as Thackeray's "Newcomes." It is almost too bitter, as these lines show.

"He wander'd hame weary, the nicht it was dreary,
And thowless he tint his gate 'mang the deep snaw;
The howlet was screeming; while Johnnie cried,
"Women
Wad marry auld Nick if he'd keep them aye braw."

"The Braes of Yarrow," by the Rev. John Logan, is a beautiful song. It is founded on a well known story, made immortal in Scottish ballads, but nowhere told more exquisitely than in Hamilton's "Busk ye, busk ye, my bonnie, bonnie bride." Jane Elliot's "The Flowers of the Forest," now more than a century old, and founded on an ancient ballad written after Flodden Field, all of which is lost but two or three lines, is also very fine. "Matrimonial Happiness," by John Lapraik, is second only to Burns' "John Anderson, My Jo." Susanna Blamire, about 1788, wrote "The Waefu' Heart," a song of great excellence. And to William Laidlaw, Scott's steward, amanuensis and friend, we owe that affecting song, "Lucy's Flittin'."

In satirical and political songs Scotland is as famous as in those of patriotism or love. "Our Gudeman Cam' Hame," by an anonymous author, first appeared in print in 1776; but is much older. Its satire is almost too broad for modern ears. "The Barring o' the Door," which is quite as old, is jollity itself. "Maggie Lauder," to use the words of Burns, is full of "Scottish *naivete* and energy." Burns himself has written almost a volume of satirical songs, and among the best is "The Deil's Awa' Wi' the Exciseman," in which the metre goes dancing with rejoicing glee. "Carle, an the King Come" is a chorus as old as Cromwell. An anonymous Jacobite song, under the same title, has considerable merit. We quote a stanzas to show how bitter political songs were a century ago.

"When yellow corn grows on the rigs,
And gibbets stand to hang the Whigs,
Oh, then we'll a' dance Scottish jigs,
Carle an' the king come."

In "O'er the Water to Charlie" is a similar stanzas. But who can wonder at it, when exile, confiscation and the scaffold rewarded those, who, from a mistaken sentiment of loyalty and duty, dared to fight for the Stuarts?

"It's weel I lo'e my Charlie's name,
Though some there be that abhor him;
But, oh, to see Auld Nick gaun hame,
And Charlie's goes before him!"

"Bonnie Laddie, Highland Laddie," an anonymous Jacobite song, is characterized by the most terrible invective, directed against that Duke of Cumberland, who commanded at Culloden, and whose merciless cruelty won for him the name of the "Bloody Butcher." This famous song amply revenges the beaten party, at least as far as poetry can. One may imagine the savage laughter with which it must have been hailed, when sung, with closed windows and doors, in same old Jacobite mansion, which had probably stood a siege from the Hanoverian troops. It is, however, too brutal for modern ears. Yet this very brutality paints the age more vividly than volumes of ordinary history.

Indeed, the song has often made the age, the action, or the person it celebrates, more famous than princes and kings. The Highland Mary of Burns will be remembered long after many a name, now thought certain to be immortal, has passed into comparative obscurity. And to all time, if our language survives so long, the wife of the Marquis of Montrose will be known by his famous song, than whose concluding stanzas we know nothing more appropriate with which to bring this article to an end.

"But if no faithless action stain
Thy love and constant word,
I'll make thee famous by my pen,
And glorious by my sword;
I'll serve thee in such noble ways
As ne'er was known before;
I'll deck and crown thy head with bays,
And love thee evermore."

HEED THY FOOTSTEPS.

BY LOTTIE LINWOOD.

HEED thy feet, oh, wearied wanderer,
Travelling down life's changeful vale!
Gird with strength thy trembling footsteps,
Lest at last thy courage fail;
Even now perhaps they falter,
On the brink of death's cold wave,
And the bright and hoped-for morrow,
Brings thee but a new-made grave.

Youthful dreamer, years are gathering
O'er thy heart's glad sunlight now,
And earth's cares will soon be tracing
Lines across thy placid brow!
Hast thou strength for earth's temptations?
Will they bind thy spirit fast?
Or will Hope and Faith eternal,
Lead thee safe to rest at last.