

through! what peaceful royal progresses, what flights of pursued men! Over this bridge escaped James v from the Douglasses, who held him captive at Falkland; and even in the castle above he felt not safe till the keys were lodged beneath his pillow. But Stirling Brigg has connections with history too long to tell.

Our walk might easily be extended to Cambuskenneth Abbey, whose grey tower riseth off there among tree-tops. But perchance we have rambled enough about Stirling for one day.

MEN I HAVE KNOWN.

JEKYLL.

THERE are certain persons who are made, as it were, representative types of a class, and thus attain celebrity to an extent which could hardly be within the reach of mere intrinsic talent. They are frequently not even first in their own line, but are by circumstances elevated to the supreme rank, and kept there by voluntary homage and complaisant usage. Once inaugurated, their fellow Paladins are among the foremost to support their title, and illustrate it by sacrifices and self-denials which involve an amount of tribute not more extraordinary in the mass than difficult to be accounted for in individual cases. Few monarchs are recipients of such spontaneous contributions. So it is, however, with the king wit, royal office-bearer of the day; and the grand llama has no more devoted worshippers than the priests of his court, who minister the very incense of which his essence is composed. The person whose being I am now about to recall was this type of the wit or jester, the sayer of smart things and writer of clever epigrams, to whom it was the fashion to ascribe not only what he did himself, but nearly all the flying bon-mots, jeux d'esprits, repartees, puns, and witticisms of the day. And, as I have suggested, there is always such a one—such a head of the herd. Not to go back into classic antiquity, I may refer to the famous Mr. Joseph Miller (of whom it is difficult to affirm that he ever uttered a syllable of what has been fathered upon him), to Swift, or Foote, or George Buchanan, to Tom Brown, or Tom Erskine (inferior to his brother Henry of like North-Athenian fame), to the yet greater Tom, Tom Hood, musical Tom Cooke, unctuous Sidney Smith, ever-ready Theodore Hook, stinging Douglas Jerrold, elegant Sam Rogers—all bright meteors in the facetious sphere I have indicated; though perhaps not reigning quite singly, so as to constitute distinct eras of Millerian, Footian, Smithian, Hookian, or Sam-Rogerial dynasties.

Joseph Jekyll, the Joseph Miller of my sketch, for example, was contemporaneous with Tom Erskine; both called to the bar in the same year, 1778; both having that prolific law field for the exercise of their faculty, and both living to extreme old age, as if to demonstrate that pleasantry is not hurtful to health. Even satire, it may be credited, is not so painful or injurious to the dispenser as to the receiver. But these were less satirists than good-humoured pets of good fortune. When Erskine

stood for Portsmouth (his first parliament), Jekyll observed, (the story is rather weak for such distinguished interlocutors,) "You have been long a wanderer: I hope you will now stick to the *Point*" (where boats land at Portsmouth). "Yes," replied Erskine, "I have my eye on the *Pole*, where you know the *pointers* are." I would venture a "Common" "Hard" remark, that neither astronomy nor humour will be thought very brilliantly illumed by this colloquy, but it served as a pleasantry at the moment. But one reflection will strike, if not haunt the mind, on reviewing the list, and lending a retrospective thought to the lives and fortunes of these courted, feared, caressed, hated, flattered, and abused fountains of the jokes so triumphant and trumpeted in their fleeting span: "Where be their gibes now, their gambols, their songs, their flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? . . . quite chop-fallen." Alas! poor Yoricks.

The lingering look behind is not encouraging; nay, it would be most painful to indulge in it, since

"Every year
Some flowers decay, some thorns appear;"

but such considerations belong to graver subjects.

Mr.—ultimately Sir Joseph—Jekyll rose as high as his deserts, literary, legal, political, or humorous, could entitle him. His pen was busy in the "Morning Chronicle" and the "Evening Statesman," and I fancy the "Galliad" was his production. If so, I might justly apply to him the couplet of Rousseau:—

"Raison sans sel est fade nourriture;
Sel sans raison, n'est solide pature."

Elevated to the throne, Jekyll had no vocation to be a lion's provider; but, on the contrary, all the lions upon town performed the customary services in his favour, and he had the reputation of all, insomuch that it is not easy, at this distance of time, to point out what really emanated from him. This may not be worth while, for, in truth, epigrammatic celebrity often rests on very slender foundations, and at the best is of a very transitory nature; but, as a popular blaze while it lasts, and producing certain effects on society, it is not undeserving of sage notice and consideration. Among the attributes to Jekyll, when in full possession of the station in chief to which he had been lifted by his contemporary jokers, I remember he was quoted as the original of the Romanist and Protestant dialogue. *Rom.* "Where was your religion before Luther?" *Prot.* (in answer by another question) "Did you wash your face this morning?" *Rom.* "Yes." *Prot.* "And where was your face before it was washed?" To which, as Sancho Panza says, "there is no reply;" but I doubt the ascription either to Jekyll, or the date. He was more likely to be at home on the new button for the naval uniform:—

"For the navy a button now staggers the town;
To the anchor is soon to be added the crown;
Keep Percival Premier—I speak without rancour—
The crown, be assured, will soon come to an anchor."

Or, more assuredly, the lines on his brother lawyer

Cockle, a bulky, fat, rubicund serjeant-at-law, pleading with much energy:—

“The serjeant’s face was all on fire,
And Justice long did rue it;
His purple garments came from *Tyre*,
His arguments went to it.”

It was of this same rosy serjeant that a better anecdote was told, when badgering a simple countryman witness, in a fishery case. “Do you like fish?” asked the brow-beating but almost baffled counsel—“do you like fish?” “E-es, zur,” answered Simplicity, “I loiks fish, but I donna loik cockle sauce wit’!”

To return, however, to the man himself. In several parliaments he represented Calne, that nursing-mother of so many famous whigs, eloquent orators in the House, and distinguished politicians in the state. At a time when party ran high, Jekyll was appointed Attorney-General to the Prince of Wales—a promotion due rather to his convivial talent than his forensic abilities; for he was exceedingly lively in conversation; full of anecdotes of the bench and bar, often characteristic and generally entertaining. A somewhat Voltaire-like countenance, and a flexible person and agreeable voice, did not detract from these qualifications; and so he wrought his way upward, and was received with welcome in the circle to which he belonged. But, to own the truth, he never got forward as a lawyer, and was at last shelved, with a knighthood, as a Master in Chancery, without having by practice acquired any knowledge of equity—being neither the first nor the last Master who never had been a scholar in that school of equation and court of balance between precedent and right, law and justice. Well, it followed according to the common fashion. The Master out of his chambers, where he had not much to do, continued to be as sparkling as if he had not been dignified, and his wittinesses and manners as acceptable as ever. It was a pleasant life for a pleasant man. Yet I have usually gone from his company without being able to recollect any striking remark or significant effect, but simply satisfied that the time spent had been passed in a very amusing way. He was doubtless a strenuous party man, but he had little or nothing to give up to party, that was meant for mankind.

One moral of this slight sketch in my miniature contribution to the national portrait gallery is, to show how short-lived this sort of fame is—the same now as fifty years ago—only that the town talk has a more abundant and rapid succession of matters to divert it from even nine days’ wonders; and what would have been “argument for a week, laughter for a month,” to London in other days, can hardly obtain a hearing now amid the universal buzz of the huge metropolis, or, if it does, is forgotten as soon as heard.

A still more striking moral may be drawn, in reflecting on the ephemeral and unworthy ends to which Jekyll’s wit was applied. To raise an idle laugh or momentary surprise is a poor use of a talent capable of being turned to highest social benefits, in the discomfiture of evil, or the defence and advancement of good.

WIDOW SIMPSON’S SPOONS.

THE parish of Bathgate, in Linlithgowshire, ought to be reckoned among the classic spots of Scotland, inasmuch as it formed part of the dowry which Robert the Bruce bestowed on his eldest daughter Margery, when she married Walter, the High Steward of Scotland, and thus became progenetrix of the royal and unlucky line of Stuart. Lying midway between Edinburgh and Glasgow, those rival queens of the east and west, but out of the common track of traffic and travel, it has been for ages a pastoral parish, of small and rather backward farms. Of late years, coal has been found there; and steam and trade, which bid fair to leave the world no rustic corner, are rapidly turning it into a mining district; which nobody thought of about the time of the general peace, when Bathgate lived on its own oats and barley, wore its own hodden-grey, and had but two subjects of interest, the corn market and the kirk session. Among its peaceable and industrious population there was one dame who, though neither the wealthiest nor the best born, stood, in her own esteem, above all but the laird and the minister; and her style and title was Widow Simpson. This lady valued herself, not on the farm left her by the good man who had departed this life some seven years before the commencement of our story, for its acres were few, and they consisted of half-reclaimed moorland; not on her grown-up son Robin, though he was counted a likely and sensible lad; not on her own thrifty housekeeping, though it was known to be on the tight screw principle; but on the possession of a dozen silver teaspoons. Her account of them was that they had belonged to the young chevalier, and had been bestowed upon her grandfather in return for entertaining that claimant to the British crown on his march from Culloden—in proof of which she was accustomed to point out a half-obliterated crest and the initials C. S., with which they were marked. The widow’s neighbours, however, had a different tale regarding their coming into the family. It was to the effect that her grandfather, who kept a small inn somewhere in Fife, had bought them from an ill-doing laird for three gallons of Highland whisky, and bestowed them on his grand-daughter as the one of his family most likely to hold fast such an important acquisition.

Whether derived from the Fife laird or the young chevalier, the spoons were likely to be well taken care of. Mrs. Simpson’s powers of hard holding were famous throughout the parish. The shopkeepers of its little town knew her as a driver of stiff bargains for the few articles she purchased. The labourers occasionally employed on her farm testified to her partiality for low wages. Her house was known to be kept on the lowest scale of economy, and the wandering poor avoided it as one where no contributions were to be expected. Yet, as sometimes happens to griping hands, the widow was not a successful gatherer. Nothing but Robin’s muscles, and those of his plough horses, would she expend on the moorland farm; the soil, consequently, grew poorer year by year, and yielded but meagre crops. In order to secure the highest