

NOTCHES ON THE STICK.

PATERFEX TALKS ON POETS AND WRITERS OF THE DAY.

Mr. John MacFarlane and "The Harp of the Scottish Covenantant"—David Lyall is Not an Imitator of MacLaren—His Stories Are Fresh and Charming.

Mr. John MacFarlane, of Montreal, undertook a congenial task in the preparation of his anthology of Cameronian song, "The Harp of the Scottish Covenantant." The work is admirably done, notwithstanding the limitations imposed upon him, by his remoteness from large libraries and scholarly assistance. Yet the pre-researches of the compiler, of his long-while acquaintance with the scenes and subjects included in the work, and his poetic temperament have fitted him to accomplish the undertaking, as he has done, successfully. This is a favorite domain of the singer and remarcist, however partisan inclination may go,—with Scott and Autoun, or with Wilson and Blackie. With what sympathy and power did the lusty champion, Christopher espouse their cause, who by some were stigmatized, "The Cameronian rebels." How fitted was he to have written a romance in which they would have had eloquent vindication. Crockett has lately come to the theme, with a like partiality, in his "The Men of the Moss Hags, which might serve as an excellent prose commentary on this noble collection of songs and ballads. Mr. MacFarlane has however, avoided the partisan motive, and aims at historic justice and literary thoroughness; 'although,' as he confesses, 'I am quite conscious of a strong democratic bias in the blood.' We were, upon looking through these pages, first affected with the same surprise and pleasure expressed by Prof. W. Clark Murray, himself editor of a standard collection of Scottish ballads and songs, in his admirable Preface to the volume: 'I was not aware of the extent to which enthusiastic memories of the Covenanting struggle had found expression in Scottish poetry. The Editor of this volume has proved that there is a Harp of the Covenant, which can strike a genuine poetic tone; and Scotsmen, all the world over, must feel indebted to him for having done such a labor of Love, and for having done it so well.'

Two appropriate mottoes are given, in Wordsworth's lines,—

The Covenant time,
Whose echoes ring through Scotland to this hour!
and the half indignant words of Burns,
who rang true, whenever the rights of Freeman were in question:

The Solemn League and Covenant
Cast Scotland blood—Cost Scotland tears
But it seal'd Freedom's sacred cause—
If thou'rt a slave, indulge thy sneers!

Of names most widely known we have, with their subjects, the following: Allan Cunningham, 'The Downfall of Dalzell'; David Macbeth Moir's 'Covenantant's Night Hymn'; Motherwell's 'Covenantant's Battle Chant'; 'The Battle of Bothwell Brig,' from Scott's 'Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border'; James Hogg's 'A Lay of the Martyrs' and 'Bothwell Brig'; Robert Buchanan's 'The Battle of Drumlemur'; Extract from Graham's poem 'The Sabbath'; John Stuart Blackie's 'Song of Jenny Geddes'; 'Elegy on the Death of James Renwick'; 'John Fraser,' and 'Covenantant's Lament'; 'The Pentland Hills,' and 'Lament of the Covenantant's Widow,' by Lady Nairne; 'Martyr-Land,' by Thomas Pringle; 'The Martyrs of Scotland,' by Dr. Horatio Bonar. Put there are some things, that seem of equal excellence, attributed to names less widely honored. Few if any, of these ballads, are so distinct in vivid realism as that of Thomas C. Latto in which he tells of the slaying of Archbishop Sharpe. It is entitled, 'Andrew Gallane's Stane.' And there are none deeper in spiritual sympathy and richer in subtle poetic feeling than Robert Reid's 'Kirkbride,' which we are pleased to find occupying a prominent place in the volume. Latto is represented further by two brief poems, 'The Persecuted Peewee'; or 'The Covenantant's Curse'; and 'The Signing of the Solemn League and Covenant' on a Flat Tomb-stone in Greyfriars Churchyard, Edinburgh.

Imagination sees the parchment white,
While crowds of patriots brave, but silent, flock,
Despite of courtier's taunt and royal mock,
On its three noble pages their names to write.
There signed MacCallumore, the great Argyll,
And there, Montrose, so soon to be his foe;
The peaceful plume changed for the sword of war,
There Hugh MacKail, with his sweet boyish smile!
Oh! God, that such atrocities should be;
For such adversity they dear ones born;
That those who only sought to worship Thee
In truth, should find from Thee be hacked and torn;
Old tomb stone, mute, and making no reply,
I gaze upon thee with a watery eye.

Alexander Anderson,—known also by his sobriquet of 'Surfaccman,'—sings a genuine strain in his 'Lines on an Old Communion Cup,' and as much may be said of John Struther's 'Poor Man's Sabbath,' from which an extract entitled, 'Martyr-Land,' is given. 'Rullion Green,' by Henry Scott Riddell, is a poem worthy the place it here occupies. But we have space for only brief enumeration. Such things as, Cunningham's, 'On Mark Wilson, slain in Irongray,' and 'Thou hast sworn by thy God, My Jeanie,' Harriet Stuart Menzies's 'Poem at the Grave of Cameron,' 'The Deathbed of Cameron,' and 'The Martyrs of Wigton'; Henry Inglis's 'Brown of Presthall'; Jeanie Morrison's 'John Hackston of Rathillot and Brown of Prest-

hall's Wife' and 'Miss Elizabeth Welsh,' they add much to the historical as well as poetical interest of the volume. The heroes and events of that memorable struggle for religious as well as civil liberty are given in their various aspects and phases, and on the whole with considerable fullness; so that he who studies these pages, together with the records of that crucial time, will arise from the task with a profounder love of what has been so dearly purchased for him by his dauntless brothers of the heather, and a more grateful determination to defend and cherish the boon they gave. At the close of the book we find Stevenson's brief, but exquisite lyric, 'A Cry From Samoa,' written shortly before his death:

Blows the wind to-day, and the sun and the rain
are flying,
Blows the winds on the moors to-day, and now
Where about the graves of the martyrs the whaups
are crying,
My heart remembers how!

Grey recumbent tombs of the dead in desert places,
Standing stones on the vacant wine-red moor,
Hills of sheep, and the homes of the silent vanished
races,
And winds, austere and pure.

Be it granted me to behold you again in dying,
Hills, of home, and to hear again the call,
Hear about the groves of the martyrs the peewees
crying,
And hear no more at all.

Mr. MacFarlane is entitled not only to the praise of successful editorship, but has justly attained to some poetical distinction by the publication of his 'Heather and Harebell,' in 1892. The Doric muse has lately given no strains of more melodious tenderness than his 'Lost Lang Syne,' 'Bonnie Clydesdale,' and 'Atween An' Annan Water.' He, too, has sung the songs of Martyr-land, and of these he has given us two examples,—'The Martyr's Grave,' and 'A Ballad of the Covenant.' An appendix containing some needed historical and biographical data, would assist the general reader, and make the work more complete. It is to be hoped that in a future edition the editor will attend to this.

That David Lyall follows somewhat in line with Ian MacLaren is scarce a detraction from the merit of one who knows so well how to paint Scottish scenery, and that kind of character we love to know; who can so unerringly touch the sources of smiles and tears. His 'Heather From the Brae,' is no poor fictitious article, but the real stuff, fresh with the west of the morn. He is like MacLaren in the subjects he chooses, and in his aim to characterize a chosen group and neighborhood; but he has method and manner of his own; and is no servile imitator. These stories are simply and artlessly told, and seem like transcripts of individual experience. The incidents are few, but impressive and memorable while the characters have the stamp of reality and are distinctly drawn. Dr. Gourlay, and Elsie, his daughter, good Mrs. Gray of Staterigg, Angus and the Colonel, Mrs. Giles Braden and David Cargill, all have lived, and we feel as if we had known them when we have closed the book. 'Robin,' 'A Lost Lamb,' and 'A Wastrel Redeemed,' are full of pathos and of idyllic beauty. Mrs. Gray, the exalting, inspiring character,—reappearing in most of these sketches,—is finely contrasted with the 'narrow pursed proud parvint,' Mrs. Laidlaw. The reader will have much satisfaction in the deserved rebuke administered to her at the church door, when she had scorned the young minister, Angus Fleming:

The Pitbraden folk sat in their carriage
at the kirk gate, but the coachman had
apparently gotten orders to wait, for it stood
still. And shortly to the great wonder-
ment and excitement of such as were wit-
nesses to it, when Angus Fleming brought
his mother out by the door, even as he had
taken her in, the colonel leaped from the
carriage and helped open the door; and
before they could demur or refuse, they
were within, and the horses' heads turned
down the brae. And that of itself was
enough to make town-talk for a goodly
space in Fauds.

'Well, I never!' said Mrs. Laidlaw,
tossing her head. 'I don't call that, seemly,
anyhow. But it's a fitting end to the
morning's farce.'

Now Mrs. Gray was passing at the mo-
ment, and she could not let such a remark
go unchallenged.

'Wad ye ca' a baptism of the spirit a
farce, Mistress Laidlaw? God forgie ye
that ye should be so blind.'

'There was a kind of armed neutrality
always between the two women, who as a
rule confined themselves strictly to a bare
exchange of civilities. The Laidlaws were
great folk in Fauds, having the largest gro-
cery establishment in the place. They had
built a brand new villa on a desirable site,
and Mrs. Laidlaw no longer attended be-
hind the counter, as in the early days of
her career, when she had been a more
humble-minded and a better woman. . . .

At this protest of Mrs. Gray, Lucky
Laidlaw, as she was familiarly called, to-
ssed her head and shrugged her ample
shoulders, which were well covered by a
handsome velvet mantle direct from Paris.
'There's two ways of looking at a thing
always,' she said pertly; 'and as for them
riding home in the Pitbraden carriage, I
call it nothing short of an insult to re-
spectable folk.'

Mrs. Gray's color rose, and a sore anger
burned within her. Gentle and sweet and
even-tempered as a rule, yet she was quick

and passionate when occasion demanded
it, and Lucky Laidlaw seemed to rouse all
the evil in her.

'I can't think what Colonel Braden
means by such a thing, and one is tempted
to suspect something. Do you happen to
have heard the ins and outs of how Jean
Fleming happened to come to Pitbraden
Lodge? If you have, you might enlighten
me.'

'I'll tell ye, if ye want to ken,' said Mrs.
Gray quietly, putting a curb on herself,
though with something of an effort.
'Nearly thirty years since Colonel Braden's
youngest brother, Frank, was at college at
St. Andrews, an' Jeanie Fleming was the
daughter of the weedy woman he lodged wi'.
Ye've maybe heard how he was taken ill
wi' typhoid fever, Jeanie nursin' him to
the end. Efter he was awa', an' it was
found how things were wi' her the colonel
brought her to the lodge, an' took upon
himself the education o' the bairn. An' it
was a christian act, for which God has re-
warded him this day. As for his mither,
her life has been an open book sineyne, an'
some o' micht dae waur than tak' a verse
frae that pure page. She has atoned even
as she has suffered for the sin o' her youth.
I bid ye guid-mornin', an' I wad recommend
ye, Mistress Laidlaw, to tak' a quiet hoor
wi' Paul this efternoon, an' see what he has
to say on the heid o' charity.' So saying,
Lizbeth Gray deliberately stepped back
to meet her husband, who was walking
with Mr. Cairn cross and discussing the
service.

We can say this is one of the books we
could wish had been longer and which we
are in a pleanter frame for having read.

'What did Alfieri say?' anxiously asked
the vain author, in Allston's 'Monaldi,'
hearing that his work had been discussed
in the presence of that genius. 'Nothing,
sir,' O sores thrust, thus to be ignored!
It may be something to have obtained the
approval of professional critics, but when
the Master turns aside to smile and be-
comes cordial to us, warming to the work
of praise, this we account far more. So

may Rudyard Kipling felicitate his muse
when he scents the incense latently burned
to him. Stedman says of his recently pub-
lished, 'The Seven Seas,' (The Book Buy-
er,) that successor of 'Barack-Room Bal-
lads,' 'The spirit and method of Kipling's
fresh and virile song have taken the Eng-
lish reading world. . . . When we turn to
the larger portion of the 'Seven Seas' how
imaginative it is, how impassioned, how
superbly rhythmic and sonorous. . . . The
ring and diction of this verse add new ele-
ments to our song.' Howells joins his voice
in declaring him to be 'the most original
post who has appeared in his generation.
His is the lushest voice now lifted in the
world, the clearest, the bravest, with the
fewest false notes in it. I do not see why
in reading 'The Seven Seas,' we should
not put ourselves in the presence of a
great poet again, and consent to put off
our mourning for the high ones lately dead.'
This is probably a sensible remark on the
part of Mr. Howells, that we should sus-
pend that sort of mourning, however it may
be about that doubtful matter of greatness.

'The Scot in America,' by Peter Ross,
L. L. D. (The Raeburn Book Company,
New York, 1896.) is a mine of informa-
tion to the public lecturer, and after-din-
ner speech maker, who would exploit the
Caledonian. It may give a glow of honest
pride, to him who turns these pages, ob-
serving, in brief record, how many a sturdy
chief has given his force and fire to make
this America what she is to-day, and the
multitude who have been honorable, if not
eminent, in the various walks of life. From
the preface to the closing chapter, these
441 pages are packed with instances. Over
three hundred biographical sketches are
given of persons of the Scottish race who
have become more or less distinguished as
'Pioneers,' 'Colonial Governors,' 'Revolu-
tionary Heroes,' 'Ministers and Religious
Teachers,' 'Artists and Architects,' 'Sci-
entists and Inventors,' 'Merchants and Muni-
cipal Builders,' 'Educators,' 'Statesmen
and Politicians,' 'Public Entertainers,'
'Men of Letters.' There are chapters

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mother and her
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entitled "Among the Women," and
"Among the Poets," and the vol-
ume closes with an account of "Scot-
tish-American Societies." The whole
is in a very readable style, and shows the
author for the sensible, tasteful, pain-
taking man he is. Dr. Ross is the brother of
Dr. John Ross, well known as the author
or editor of many Scottish books; and to
his credit must also be placed, "The Liter-
ature of the Scottish Reformation," "Scot-
land and the Scots," "Robert Burns from
a Literary Standpoint," "Life of St. An-
drew," "The Book of Scotia Lodge,"
"Life and Works of Sir William Alexan-
der, Earl of Stirling." He is also editor
of "The songs of Scotland, Chronologi-
cally arranged."

We ascertain from 'Poet-Lore' that
"More Songs From Vagabondia," by Bliss
Carman and Richard Hovey, will appear
from the house of Copland E. Day, Bos-
ton.

ORINOCO PESTS.

The Caribs and Electric Eels Make Fording
Dangerous.

There are scores of things more harmful
than Indians in the Orinoco and its tribu-
tary streams—for example, the caribs. The
caribs are not men, but fish, and the 'most
ravenous, blood-thirsty devils in the world,'
says a correspondent of the Atchison Globe.
They are small, not much larger than gold
fish, which they much resemble, but swarm
in myriads and have mouths like steel traps.
They are voracious fresh-water sharks, and
when any one of them closes its sharp-
sawed jaws on a piece of flesh he is more in-
sistent than old Shylock in carrying it
away. The taste of blood has the same
effect upon them that it has on a wolf or a
tiger, and woe to the man or beast caught
in Carib waters, for they will strip flees
from bones in short order.

The residents of this region tell fearful
tales of the caribs, but there is another
denizen of these Venezuelan waters, which
they also fear, and that is the electric eel.
It lives in the shallow ponds hereabout on
the llanos, and its flesh is considered a
luxury that the natives cannot resist. The
temptation to 'go eeling,' even though
they run the risk of getting 'shocked in the
process of capture. The eel (the gymnotus
electricus) is ferocious and combative, and
being highly charged with electricity it is
always willing and anxious to let off its
superfluous energy. Being from four to
six feet in length, and one of its discharges
being equal to that of a battery of fifteen
cells it can easily kill the largest fish
and so benumb a man that he could be-
come an easy prey. Now, it happens that
Providence furnished the natives with an

easy manner of capturing the electric eel
without exposing themselves to its vio-
lence. On these same plains there are
vast herds of wild horses, and the wily na-
tives only have to drive a bunch of them
into a pond where the eels are abundant to
accomplish their purpose. Some of the
horses are killed by the repeated shocks
from the enraged eels, but that is nothing,
for horses are cheaper down their than
eels. After awhile the reckless eels have
exhausted all their electricity and lie help-
less on top of the water, and then the
natives wade in and gather them up by the
dozen.

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charitable institutions of this city who is
very fond of recounting the beauty of her
mother, the gallantry of her father and the
honor and excellence of her family in
general. 'Yes,' she said to a visiting King's
Daughter, 'you can realize how great a
family I belong to when I tell you that my
mother was a Miss Canterbury, a descend-
ant of the Archbishop of Canterbury!—
New Orleans Times Democrat.

Change on Condition.

We say you must change human nature
if you wish to have human brotherhood but
we really mean that you must change hu-
man conditions; and this is quite feasible. It
has always been better than its conditions
and ready for new and finer conditions.—
W. D. Howells.

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