

Notches on The Stick

"O Ettrick Sweet!"

The genial Shepherd! full of boisterous glee
As any schoolboy; dreamer of fairy dreams,—
Rapt wanderer by lonely glens and streams,—
More than aught else had he the making of me,
From earliest childhood 'twas my lot to be
Charm'd with his music; with the witching gleams
He caught from Ettrick; and his speech which terms
With rustic mirthfulness, uncurbed and free.
How like his own sweet mountain lark he seems.

—Rob Wanlock.

The Duchess of Buccleugh, when dying, requested of her lord a bequest to the Ettrick Shepherd. There was a little farm, of seventy moorland acres, Altrive, on the Yarrow, which he gave rent free for life; to this the Shepherd afterward added a farm of ampler dimensions, on the opposite bank of the river, known as Mount Benger; and there Hogg reared the home in which his remaining years were spent. But his successes were never in sheep-raising; there were his losses. He had thriving neighbors all around him; but they "tended no flocks upon Parnassus hill," had no excursions to make, to Edinburgh, to look after proofs, or to Fairyland to hunt up Kilmeny. These were plodders, who spent little time in hunting or fishing, or blowing the airy bubbles of the imagination. His literary successes were uncomprehended by them; but they perfectly understood the reasons of his stock failures. Howitt, on visiting Yarrow, after the Shepherd's death had some amusing impressions from the comments of these thrifty peasants upon their famous and recent neighbor. An old farmer and his wife "blamed Hogg extremely for taking Mount Benger. 'Perhaps,' I observed, 'he did not find that little farm of Altrive enough to maintain him.' 'Why should he not?' asked they. 'He has nothing to do there but look after his own little flock—that was all he had to care for—and that was the proper business of a man that called himself the 'Ettrick Shepherd'—as though there was never a shepherd in Ettrick but himself. . . . But he was always wanting to take great farms, without any money to stock them. He was hand and glove with great men in Edinburgh. Professor Wilson, Scott, and the like; he was aye going to Abbotsford and Lord Napier's; and so he thought himself a very great man too, and Mrs. Hogg thought herself a great woman, and looked down on their neighbors. These poets think nothing's good enough for them. Hogg paid the Duke no rent, but he caught his fish, and killed his game; he was a desperate fellow for fishing and shooting. If people did not do just what he wanted, he soon let them know his mind, and that without much ceremony." Here was a mirror with some features reflected; but the honor a man finds abroad is not always accorded him in the little borough to which he belongs; knowing him very well, they know him not at all. Yet, with all the peasantry of the vale of Ettrick have now an honest pride in their famous Shepherd, and the spirit that dictated the foregoing remarks has probably departed. They know indeed, that he was not a shining example of worldly prudence but they understand, better than their fathers, that to be a poet was his pre-eminence vocation.

He was married, in 1820, to Margaret Phillips, an Annandale lady; and having a well-stocked farm, and some £1,000 in cash, they were not in ill circumstances to set up a home. Here, at Mount Benger, much literary work was done. Indeed, when we consider his disadvantages, and the late period of life at which he commenced, the amount of his work is as astonishing as the quality of the best of it. There are some 31 volumes; of which this is a partial list: "The Queen's Wake"; "The Pilgrims of the Sun"; "The Hunting of Badkwa"; "Mador of the Moor"; "Poetic Mirror"; "Dramatic Tales," 2 vols; "Brownie of Bodsbeck," 2 vols; "Winter Evening Tales," 2 vols; "Sacred Melodies"; "Border Garland"; "Jacobite Relics of Scotland," 2 vols; "The Spy"; "Queen Hynde"; "The Three Perils of Mar," 3 vols; "The Three Perils of Woman," 3 vols; "Confessions of a Sinner"; "The Shepherd's Calendar," 2 vols; "A Selection of Songs"; "The Queer Book"; "The Royal Jubilee"; "The Mountain Bard"; "The Forest Minstrel." Few of these books are now much read; but in most of them there are remarkable passages that arrest the reader, and testify what the writer with greater concentrateness and reliance on his own peculiar faculty, might have accomplished. He was too eager to invade all fields, and emulate all success. His speaking out propensity led him to utter sharp comment on the treatment which he, in common with other authors, experienced from his publishers,—who contemned the authors they fleeced, for their shiftless improvidence: "I would never object trust-

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ing a bookseller, were he a man of any taste; for, unless he wishes to reject an author altogether, he can have no interest in asserting what he does not think. But the plague is, they never read works themselves, but give them to their minions, with whom there never fails to lurk a literary jealousy; and whose suggestions may be uniformly regarded as anything but truth. For my own part, I know that I have always been looked upon by the learned part of the community as an intruder in the paths of literature, and every opprobrium has been thrown on me from that quarter. The truth is that I am so. The walks of learning are occupied by a powerful aristocracy, who deem that province their own peculiar right; else, what would avail all their dear bought collegiate honors and degrees?"

In 1831, or shortly before his death, Hogg visited London, and was there the lion of a few days; he had incense in the parlors of the nobility, and sat at their feasts, with the literate and public men of the day. Doubtless the excitement of that time was unfavorable to his health, and by overtaxing him, hastened his death. On his return, an ovation awaited him at Peebles, when, after a dinner at the town-hall, with his friend Wilson, in the chair, he heard the rustling of the laurel again, and knew by the highest attestation that he was a child of fame. But it was the cry in the ear about to grow dull; the fire in the heart whose flame leaped before expiring. "He never afterwards seemed himself again." That he was listless, they say, and feeble, and tried to rally, but never did. A dropsical complaint had been for some time developing, and on the 21st of November, 1835, after some days of insensibility, he breathed his last as calmly, and with as little pain, as he ever fell asleep in his gray plaid on the hillside."

It was a dull and chill November day when the funeral procession left the farm at Mount Benger, and moved slowly along the vale of Ettrick, to the funeral-yard. There was sadness in the walk, and sorrow in the faces of those shepherds, bearing to his rest the most illustrious of their guild, in Scotland; but most affecting and even imposing, it was to see that majestic figure of John Wilson bowed over the coffin of his friend, his great frame convulsed with grief, to see him standing at the grave "after every one else had left it, with his head uncovered and his long hair waving in the wind, and the tears literally running down his cheeks." The Kirk-yard of Ettrick is only a few yards from the poet's birth-place. It is an old burial-place, where lie the ashes of many generations; but the kirk itself is comparatively recent. The shepherd's grave lies nearly central in the yard, and is marked by a stone, erected by his widow. The stone is said to be a handsome one with a sculptured harp upon it, and this inscription:

JAMES HOGG.

The Ettrick Shepherd.

Who was born at Ettrick Hall, 1770, and died at Altrive, 21st Nov. 1835.

"When the dark clouds of winter pass away from the crest of Ettrick-peak, and the summits of the nearer-lying mountains, which surround the scene of his repose, and the yellow gowan opens its bosom by the banks of the mountain stream, to welcome the lights and shadows of the spring returning over the land, many are the wild daisies that adorn the turf that covers the remains of the Ettrick Shepherd."

So wrote Henry Scott Riddell. Around him in kindred dust; and near by the grave of William Liddell, "the far-famed Will o'Paup, who for feats of frolic, agility and strength, had no equal in that day." This memorial was erected to his memory by the Shepherd himself, who also "gloried as much in the sports, feats and exploits of the borders, as in poetry." The vale in which he lies is quiet and sequestered. "Ettrick kirk lifts its head with a friendly air. It is built of the native adamantine rock, the whinstone; has a square battlemented tower; and, what looks singular, has, instead of Gothic ones, square door-ways, and square, very tall sash windows." Within, "like most of the country churches of Scotland, it is a plain fabric, plainly fitted up with seats, and a plain pulpit."

With respect to the poet's esteem for sports, and proficiency in exploits of that kind, it is said that he "in his younger years displayed much agility and strength in the border games; and in his matured years was often one of the umpires at them. In

Lockhart's Life of Scott are related two especial occasions in which James Hogg figured in such games. One was a famous foot-ball match played on the classic mead of Carterhaugh, between the men of Selkirk and of Yarrow, when the Duke of Buccleugh, and numbers of other nobles and gentlemen, as well as ladies of rank, were present. When the different parties came to the ground with pipes playing, the Duke of Buccleugh raised his ancient banner, called the banner of Bellenden, which being given by Lady Ann Scott to young Walter Scott, he rode round the field displaying it; and when Sir Walter led on the men of Selkirk, then the Earl of Home, with James Hogg as his aide-de-camp, led on the men of Yarrow. The other occasion was at the annual festival of St. Ronan's Well, when James Hogg used to preside as captain of border bowman, in Lincoln green, with broad blue bonnets; and when, already verging on three-score, he used often to join at the exploits of racing, wrestling, or hammer-throwing, and would carry off the prizes, to universal astonishment; afterwards presiding, too, at the banquet in the evening, with great éclat, supported by Sir Walter Scott, Professor Wilton, Dr. Adam Ferguson, and Peter Robertson."

The bird has gone! but the beautiful vales of Yarrow and of Tweed remain, and the region of the shepherd's home,—peopled by his genius, and that of the greater Minster, with romanis or fairy forms,—is still there. There are the hills and vales, consecrated by that sweetest vision Kilmeny; and there the rugged heights of Bodsbeck rise between Moffat and Ettrick-dale, haunted by his 'Brownie.' There the traveller, on his way to the poet's birth-place and his grave, may still come to St. Ronan's Well, and St. Mary's Lake, on Yarrow, and may pause there, if he would muse alone on the vanished shadows of greatness. And as he comes to Ettrick-kirk, he may look along the lonely slopes of the "monotonous green mountains," looking softly bright under the evening sky, and dotted over with their white flocks. He may see, too, how "beautifully dark" they can appear, "when the winds come sweeping and roaring" over that great solitary sheep-walk, unobstructed, save by a house, remotely rising here and there, as he approaches, or a sombre cluster of firs; and the rain clouds with frowning impatience swell the water courses and the swift rushing river in the narrow vale below. And by and by, he will come to Ettrick-house, where this child of phantasy first looked at the world, that to him was clothed with supernal beauty, and where he passionately rejoiced in the days when that golden bowl was full of life, that here lies broken beside the fountain. But all are gone! There is not one of all that haunted time—no lingering white-haired bard of all that bright circle to sigh with the Border Minstrel,—

"Seems as, to me of all bereft,
Sole friends the woods and streams were left;
And thus I love them better still,
Even in extremity of ill.
By Yarrow's stream still let me stray,
Though none should guide my feeble way;
Still let the breeze down Ettrick break,
Although it chill my withered cheek;
Still lay my head by Teviot stone!
Though there, forgotten and alone,
The Bard may draw his pining groan."

PASTOR FELIX.

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The writer of the letter declares that, though we have been taught to believe that only the best material was used in constructing the Parthenon, as a matter of fact the builders employed first-class marble on the outside only, where the eye could see it. Faulty stones within, after the building became roofless, invited the destructive work of rain, frost and heat.

The rotten blocks are not only a menace to the structure, but a striking testimony to the fact that ancient architecture had its illusions, and like modern architecture, was sometimes proof that builders were careless about "truth in the inward parts."

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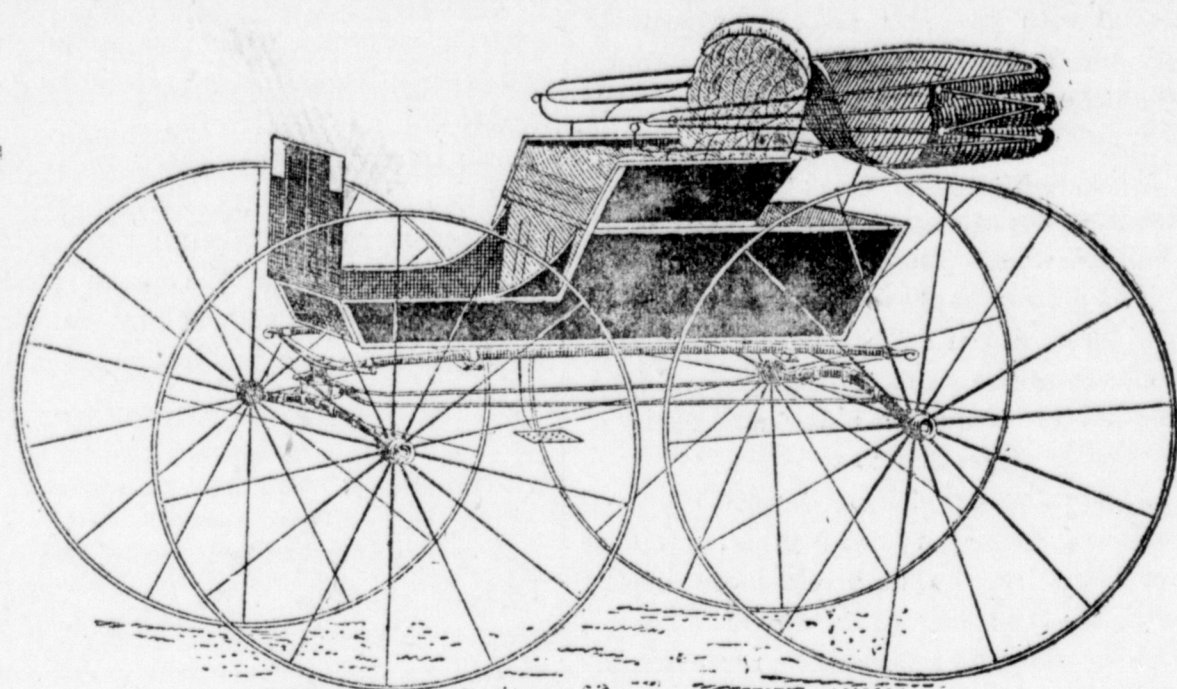
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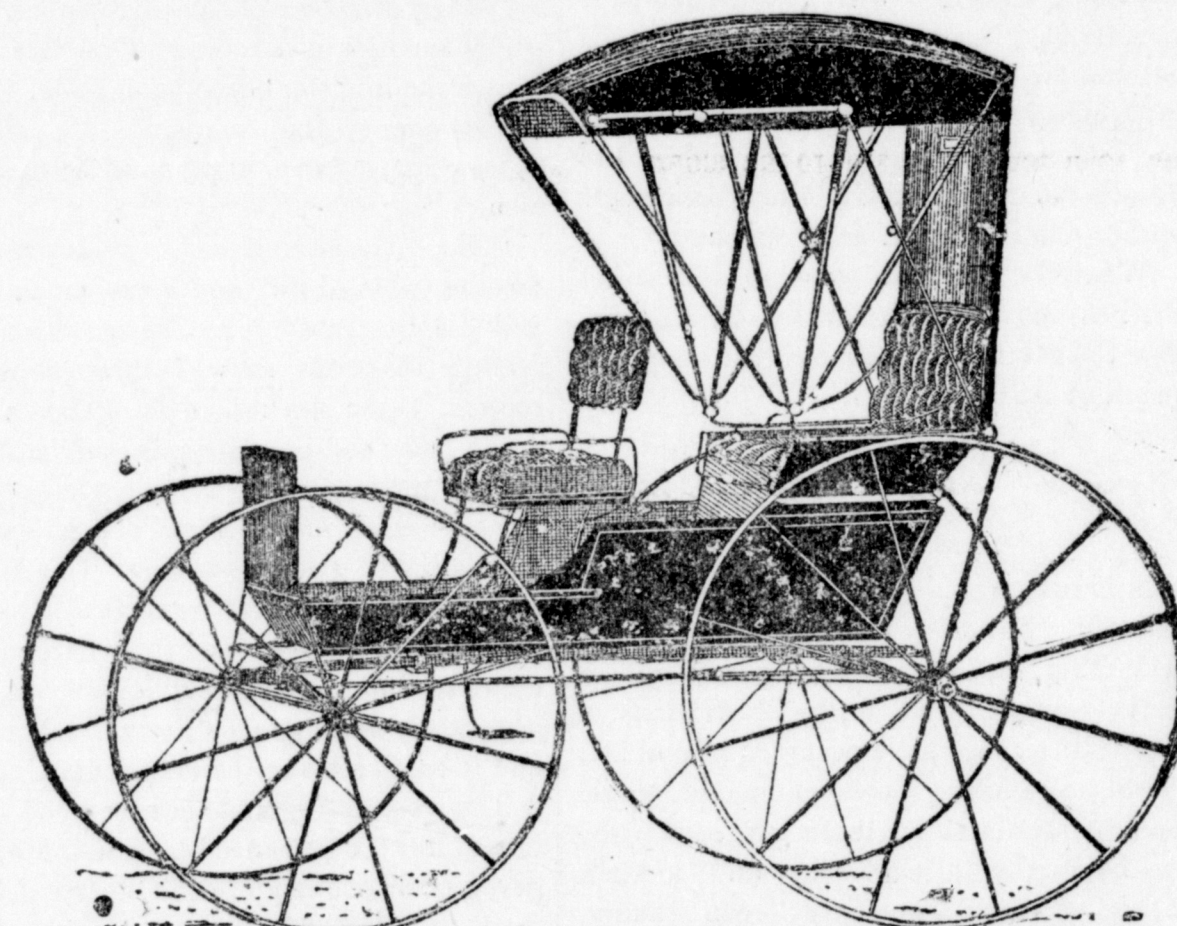
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HE KEPT HIS SEAT.

A Captain's Heroic Action was Rewarded With Promotion.

During one of the naval engagements of the late war, a sailor by the name of John Davis performed an act of bravery that has rarely been equalled. While the battle was at its height, a shell entered the Valley City, of which ship Davis was gunner's-mate, and exploded on the berth-deck, setting it on fire.

Captain Chaplain, the commander of the vessel, jumped down into the magazine, and while directing his men to extinguish the flames, passed up with his own hands the loose cylinders of powder. The fireworks on board became ignited. Rockets whizzed and blue lights blazed up in the very midst of the ammunition. The shell-room caught fire, and it seemed as if the Valley City must be blown to pieces.

John Davis, appreciating the danger, and desirous of doing all in his power to avert it, jumped up on an open barrel of gunpowder and sat down on the head,

covering it with his person as well as he could to protect it from the showering sparks.

Captain Chaplain, seeing him quietly seated while everybody else was at work, ordered him in peremptory tones to 'get down and help put out the fire.'

The young gunner's-mate stayed where he was, and replied calmly:

"Don't you see, sir, I can't? For if I do, the sparks will fall into the powder. If I get down, captain, we shall all go up!"

Notwithstanding the terrible danger, Captain Chaplain could not repress a smile, and Davis's heroic action was rewarded after the battle by immediate promotion.

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