

**ABERDEEN AND ITS FOLK:
FROM THE 20TH
TO THE 50TH YEAR OF
THE PRESENT CENTURY**

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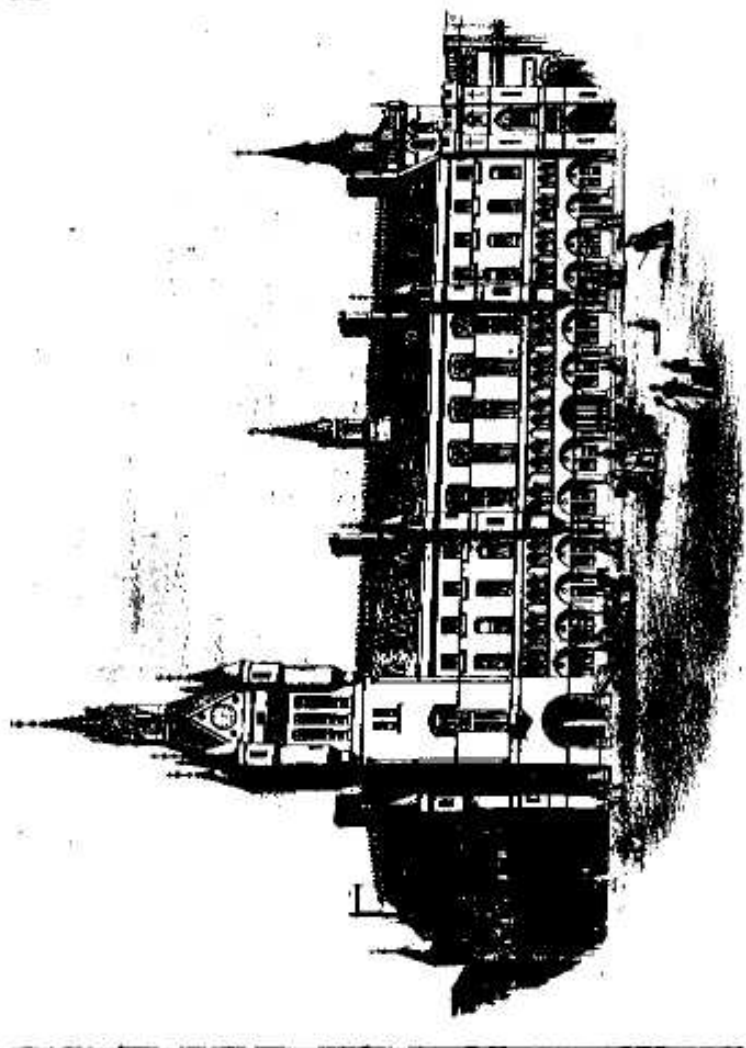
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ABERDEEN AND ITS FOLK.



D. CHALMERS AND COMPANY, PRINTERS, ABERDEEN.

Blithe Aberdeine, thou beiall * of all townis,
The lampe of beautie, bountie, and blithenesse;
Unto the heaben ascendit thy renown is,
Of vertue, wisdom, and of worthinesse;
His noill is thy name off noblesse,
Into the coming off our lusty Queen,
The wale off wealth, guid cheer, and merrinesse;
Bee blithe and blissfulle, braghe off Aberdeine.

—*The Queen's (of James IV.) Reception at Aberdeen, by
William Dunbar, the Scottish Laureate. May, 1511.*

* Brightest, from *beryl*, a precious stone.

Aberdeen and Its Folk.

CHAPTER I.

THE FAMILY CIRCLE.

Gay hope is theirs, by fancy fed,
Less pleasing, when possess'd ;
The tear forgot as soon as shed,
The sunshine of the breast ;
Their's buxom health, of rosy hue ;
Wild wit, invention ever new,
And lively cheer of vigour born ;
The thoughtless day, the easy night,
The spirits pure, the slumbers light,
That fly th' approach of morn.

Gray.

I FEEL that, to introduce my little sketches to the reader, in a manner not too much savouring of egotism, is a task "approaching to onerousness,"* and, having ventured to commence in a domain with

* The expression here quoted I once saw employed in an official report, which happened to come under my notice, by the late Mr. John Kay, teacher in the Aberdeen Prisons. In addressing the Prison Board, in this document, he designated himself as "your teacher," and being evidently fond of "fine writing," even on the most trifling details connected with the routine of his humble office, he made use of the phrase in question in rounding-off a paragraph stating the difficulty he experienced in finding anything to say more than he had already said in previous reports. The task, he averred, was one "approaching to onerousness."

so many personal belongings as that of the family circle, of whom, in days long gone by, I was a member, I may probably lay myself open to the charge of obtruding details, which, unless in rare instances, can afford interest only to those more immediately connected with the circle itself. I shall, however, go no farther than the attempt to delineate a few traits of ordinary character, and the narration of one or two every-day incidents in the "trivial round" of domestic life, as it is passed among the middle classes in my native city. I have nothing to chronicle beyond what might be related in depicting the associations clustering round many another Scottish family in this rank of life; and in this unpretentious compilation of my recollections of those to whom I was bound by ties which no time should either impair or efface, I shall withdraw the veil that, to the outer world, ought to be kept suspended over

Their homely joys, their destiny obscure,

only so far as to enable me to present a faithful outline of the "short and simple annals" treasured in my memory.

Not the least prominent character, in the picture which my recollections enable me to draw of the household, is our faithful nurse, Kirsty T——, who was in every respect a worthy type of the old-fashioned Scottish domestic servant—a class whose attachment and fidelity Dean Ramsay has so well illustrated. She deserves a grateful notice at my hand, for, as the family quiver became replenished,

she had work enough among us, and did it well. In the nursery Kirsty ruled supreme, having a delegated power (which I here testify she never abused) of applying the rod of correction. She laid down the law after the fashion of the Medes and Persians, and her decrees were never called in question by either head of the household. Her custom was to threaten offenders against her code with what, to us in the nursery, was a fate too awful to be adequately realized—the being “harled afore the judges,” by whom, clad in cocked-hat, wig, and robes, and attended by their gorgeously-arrayed trumpeters, the town is visited, in spring and autumn, when they go on circuit. Kirsty had a grandly-sounding lyric, where or how picked up I know not, which she used to repeat to us, in illustration of the dread power vested in these dignitaries—

Doom, doom for the robbers!
Call, call for the judges!
Them that's clear needs not fear
Although the judges do draw near.

To her “laddies,” when encouraging them to the fulfilment of her behests, she held out the prospect that, by obeying them, they might, some day, become either a laird or a minister—these being the two orders in the community whom Kirsty specially honoured. She was very particular in regard to the saying of our “gweed words,” especially at night, for it often happened that her hands were too full in the morning to allow her to attend so closely to this portion of our duty. Kirsty had not the faculty of tune, and her attempts to sing for our amusement were lamentably deficient in this requisite, but the

deficiency was made up by her heartiness. The songs she liked best were Allan Ramsay's "O'er Bogie," (a stream flowing past her native town, Huntly), "The Smith's a Gallant Fireman," the first line of which, "Lang, lang wad I want or I took a hireman," she rendered with great emphasis, and "Johnnie lad ?"

Johnnie's me a gentleman,
And Johnnie's me a laird,
But I wad follow Johnnie,
Although he were a caird.

And it's you, and it's you,
And it's you, my Johnnie lad,
I'll drink the buckles o' my sheen,
For you, my Johnnie lad.

Kirsty had an extensive collection of Scotch nursery rhymes and stories, some of which, I believe, have not hitherto appeared in print. Besides a number of these simple compositions given by Mr. Robert Chambers in his admirable collection, such as, "Tingle, lingle, lang tang, wha's this deid?" "The cattie sits i' the kiln ring, spinnin', spinnin'," "This is the way the ladies ride, jimp an' sma', jimp an' sma'," Kirstie had the following, which does not appear to have come under Mr. Chambers' notice :—

[Said to a child getting a ride on the nurse's knee.]

The carle raid to Aberdeen, to buy white bread,
But lang or he cam' back again, the carline she was deid,
Sae, he up wi' his muckle stick, an' gas her ow'r the head,
Cryin', Fie! rise carline, an' eat white bread!

Rhymes attached to the Christian name had a