

**BUCHAN POETRY.  
FRUITS OF  
TIME PARINGS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649409259

Buchan Poetry. Fruits of Time Parings by W. Beattie

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

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**W. BEATTIE**

**BUCHAN POETRY.  
FRUITS OF  
TIME PARINGS**



FRUITS OF TIME PARINGS.



Buchan Poetry.

FRUITS OF FINE PARINGS.

BY

W. BEATTIE, ABERDEEN.

*The Text reprinted exactly as it appeared in  
the Original of 1813.*

WITH AN

INTRODUCTION AND GLOSSARY.

ABERDEEN:

JAMES MACKAY, 41 & 43 SCHOOLHILL.

1873.



## INTRODUCTION.

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**I**N bringing this little volume before the public, it may not be altogether inadvisable to say something about the author and his work. This becomes the more necessary when we find that, although his principal poem has long been locally popular, his poems as a whole have fallen into unmerited obscurity, while the author himself has become an object of somewhat doubtful identity. No doubt one of the most influential of the causes which has led to the scarcity of his genuine productions, is the form in which they were given to the public. They were printed and published in 1813 by Messrs. Inlay and Keith, Longacre, Aberdeen, and formed the first part of a large chap book, entitled "Entertaining and Instructive Tales in two parts;" Part I., "Fruits of Time Parings, by W. Beattie." Of the man himself little can be learned now; and although many inquiries have been made in order to get as much reliable information as possible respecting his life, the little we can get is gleaned from traditional accounts of him handed down from his contemporaries to us. He was born in the sixth decade of last century, and worked during the greater part of his life as a heckler at the Gallowgate-head factory, then a thriving esta-



blishment belonging to Messrs. Young of Cornhill, and Gerrie of Heathcot. He appears to have been married, and to have lived in the Gallowgate, near the top of the Vennel (now St. Paul Street), in one of those old wooden houses, the last of which was taken down about 26 years ago. His rhyming propensity, which was of no ordinary character, soon became known amongst his fellow-workmen, and called round him a group of jovial and congenial spirits, who loved a stiff glass and a racy song. He wrote and extemporized many pieces of a satirical order—launched at individuals whose actions or general tenor of life was repugnant to the poet or his cronies—but unfortunately none of these effusions are preserved. They were, for the most part, recited or sung at the tap-room meetings in Luxemburg's Close, where his celebrated Good-wife's cap ale had charms to attract less drouthy mortals than the heckler poet. These slight reminiscences are all we have been able to collect, and it is not to be wondered at, when we remember that an entire generation had passed away after his death (about 1815), before any enquiries were instituted respecting him. Moreover, a life like his, passed in a busy workshop, presented little by which to distinguish it from the hundreds of others passed in the same work-a-day circumstances, while those among whom he moved were in general blind to the worth of the man—to them the poet was lost in the heckler.

William Beattie has often been confounded with Alexander Beattie, sometime schoolmaster at Tain. This arises from the fact that the latter gentleman published a volume of poetry in 1832 (about 17 years after the heckler died), mostly of a religious

character, but strangely enough containing *The Yule Feast*, *The Brewster Wife* (The Alewife), *The Farmer's Winter's Evening* (The Winter's Night), *The Frugal Wish*, and the *Madley*. As many suggestions have been made in order to explain this seeming plagiarism, we will give the facts on which our conclusions respecting it are based, and leave the reader to judge for himself.

Alexander Beattie was born near Inverurie about 1780, his father being the owner and cultivator of a small farm in that locality. He was educated at Aberdeen University—left for Ross-shire in 1809, and started an adventure school at Fortrose—was appointed English teacher in Tain Academy in 1812, which position he held till shortly before his death, which took place in Aberdeen in 1840. Let us now compare these facts with certain statements made in the "Yule Feast." It appears from the opening of that poem that the author went on a visit to an uncle, a farmer, in the vicinity of Inverurie ("the length o' Daviot")—and it further appears that this visit had been made shortly after 1797, as mention is made of the tailor's coat being "Camperdown"—a fabric very fashionable for a short time after the celebrated engagement of that name. From the simple facts of the two individuals bearing the same surname, and respectively publishing the same set of poems, a general presumption of kinship had arisen; but when we find, in addition to this, that at the time W. Beattie's visit was made there was a farmer, or small holder of that name, and in the locality indicated, this presumption is greatly strengthened, and seems to point to no other conclusion than that the two individuals were cousins.

As to the reasons which led to the appearance of these poems in A. B.'s volume, all lie beyond the region of human ken ; but seeing he had left Aberdeen at least three years before the original issue, and considering the limited area over which the publication would then be spread, it is quite possible he had never been aware of their seeing the light. When, however, we compare the poems as given by the heckler and schoolmaster respectively, we find greater differences than would at first sight be expected. The alterations and additions made in the copy of 1832 are so extensive that scarcely one verse of the Yule Feast is the same as in the original edition. The same remark, somewhat modified, applies to the "Alewife," and the whole scene in *The Winter's Night* (*The Farmer's Winter's Evening*) between the pedlar and the lasses is omitted, other verses and incidents being substituted. The extent of these differences, however, can only be properly seen by comparison, which we will leave to those who are curious in such matters. Suffice it to say, that where the phraseology of the original is altered, it is never improved, and that the method of expurgation applied, has been so complete, as to destroy all traces of that masculinity, which is so characteristic of the three principal poems.

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The season of jubilee, so vividly described in the principal poem of this volume, has been, from time immemorial, handed down to each successive generation, as a sort of heir-loom from its predecessor ; so that in endeavouring to trace it to its origin, we very shortly find ourselves lost in the mists of antiquity. As far as can be relied on however this feast called Jul