

**FORTHA'S LYRICS AND OTHER  
POEMS WITH A DESCRIPTIVE  
ACCOUNT OF SOUTH  
QUEENSFERRY AND ITS  
SURROUNDINGS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649759408

Fortha's Lyrics and Other Poems with a Descriptive Account of South Queensferry and Its Surroundings by Thomas Orrock

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Cover @ 2017

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**THOMAS ORROCK**

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# FORTHA'S LYRICS

## And Other Poems

*WITH A DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT OF SOUTH  
QUEENSFERRY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS*

BY THOMAS ORROCK,

FORMERLY OF SOUTH QUEENSFERRY.

Tae a' wha lo'e to sit an' read  
The hamely Scottish Doric,  
Ye're welcome tae the wee bit screed  
That's sent ye by T. ORROCK.

EDINBURGH: PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,

5 DEAN STREET,

1880.

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A. S. T. O. R. O. C. K.

A senseless few wi' haughty sneer,  
    May pass my book unread,  
And say nought but presumption here,  
    In one so humbly bred.  
But men of sense may find a gem  
    That senseless men would lose,  
So for the gem will not condemn  
    My book, nor it abuse.

T. O.



## P R E F A C E.

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THE deference due to the public in presuming to come before them as an author, seems to me to require an apology, viz., that although the *Descriptive Matter* and *Poems* have not the polish of the man of letters, or the refinement of a highly-cultivated mind, yet they may possess a something in their sentiment, or teach a moral in their aim, that may be both instructive and amusing,—may be an incentive to the young to cultivate a habit of study in their youth, which may in individual cases lead to great results in after years. Let me press this upon the attention of my youthful readers. There is nothing I regret so much as having to a great extent neglected my studies in my youthful years.

I may have done wrong in so presuming to come before the public; but whether or not remains to be seen. I have been advised to do so by a large circle of friends and acquaintances who, because they admired my pieces themselves, thought, I daresay, that every one else would do the same; but, as the Scotch proverb has it, “The proof o’ the pudding is the precin’ o’t.”

I now lay before the reader my musings on the work-stool, in the solitude of the lonely woods, in the silent glen, or in my old arm-chair when the wife and weans were snugly locked in the arms of Morpheus,—very many of them written on the spur of the moment, and hurried off to the newspapers before they were properly revised.

Therefore I solicit the reader to give my volume a fair and candid perusal. Be not too hard in your criticisms; consider the position of the writer, viz., an all-but illiterate working shoemaker; yet that any good it contains may be carefully selected, stored up, and made profitable, is the sincere wish of the author, and therein lies his chief and great reward. The reader must understand that nearly all the pieces of poetry in this volume were published in the local journals, and very many of them written in connection with South Queensferry and its neighbourhood.

The introductory matter, descriptive of Queensferry and its glorious surroundings, I hope may amuse as well as instruct.

In conclusion, there may be some ready to find fault, and hold up those faults to be laughed at,—some self-constituted protector of the public taste ready with a poisoned dart, in the form of a goosequill, to pour forth an anathema that will extinguish and silence for ever the poor presumptive sutor; to all such I would just give a quiet hint—they only expend their talents, their venom, and their ink, upon a rock.

T. O.

EDINBURGH, 20th September 1880.





## SOUTH QUEENSFERRY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS.



### I.

"In vain the reader will explore  
This book for trace of college lore ;  
My simple lays I weave, and pour  
Them out as they arise,  
Crude and unpolished from the store  
Of bygone memories."

H. SHANKS.

OF the very early history of South Queensferry little is known ; and it would serve very little purpose, even supposing I were sufficiently schooled in historic lore, to give it here. Sufficient for my purpose, then, will be to give a description of the town, and bring before the reader some of the most prominent of the grand imposing scenes which the great Architect has seen fit to lavish, with so unsparing hand, upon this corner of His universe.

With these few introductory remarks, allow me to transport the reader to the middle of the hill known as the Haw's Brae, at the point where the Forth Bridge now in course of construction begins. Here one gets a grand view of the noble Forth, so splendid on a fine summer day, when its waters are placid and still with scarce a ripple on

its bosom, that cannot fail to gratify the vision, and wrap the whole soul in admiration and gratitude to that Being who has so picturesquely laid out and decked with such varied beauty the glorious panorama of nature spread out before his vision.

When the bottom of the hill is reached, the first place that arrests the attention is the village of Newhalls, or the Haws, as it is generally termed, a short distance east from Queensferry. It was originally built in connection with the passage between the two ferries, has a good inn for the accommodation of passengers and travellers in general, and plenty of accommodation for horses; houses for the boatmen, and two or three others, constitute the whole village. This was a stirring place when stage-coaches and post-chaises were the only means of transit, before the iron horse and Burntisland passage stripped it of its glory.

During the time the coaches ran, for many years a poor silly creature, Nelly Wallace by name, attended them regularly. No matter what sort of weather, Nelly was at her post, but now, I am sorry to say, is confined to the house. She was well patronised by the passengers. Between coach hours she would amuse herself by swinging her body backwards and forwards, striking her back very hard against the wall each time, and in a way peculiar and original, singing either—

“A reel, a reel, a rowdy;  
A man’s a man, an’ a woman’s a woman;  
A man’s a man for a’ that :”

or—

“Gran’ news is come tae the toon,  
Gran’ news is carried;  
Gran’ news is come tae the toon,  
The Prince o’ Wales is married.”

Her visits to the Haws caused a good deal of annoyance to the party who then occupied the inn prior to 1870, for in that year a piece of poetry appeared in the *Dunfermline Press*, under the *nom-de-plume* of "Alpha," which was understood to emanate from the Inn. I wrote Nelly's replies.

It was here, too, that auld Will Ewing, a professional ostler, plied his avocation. He could touch his cap as neat, and draw the needful as successfully, as any that ever tried it; and could make the small supply of hay, by watering it with a certain kind of water, serve any number of horses. However, it never troubled Will's conscience in the smallest, as he seemed always happy, and kept whistling his only tune, which no other person knew, all the day long. If any gentleman forgot to remember him, he was always ready with some remark. On one occasion, when forgot, Will touched his cap, saying, "If ye lose your purse, sir, remember ye hadna it oot here." One day the servants in the inn having run out of coal, were lamenting their condition, when Will happened to step into the kitchen. "What are ye a' makin' a wark aboot?" says Will; "gang along tae oor Nell, she'll gie ye as much as ye need; she got a quarter o' a hunderweight the day before yesterday, an' can easily supply ye." On another occasion, Will, as he thought, had need to punish his eldest son; so seizing a birch, made a run after him; but the lad was rather supple for Will. Getting up on a cleft where his aged father could not reach him, he looked down on his discomfited parent, and made this very sensible remark: "Ah, Will, ye should hae bent the wand when it was green."

Here, too, in connection with the passage, I witnessed a scene I will never forget. A family, consisting of father,