

**LAYS OF THE LINE,
AND OTHER POEMS**

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Lays of the Line, and Other Poems by William Aitken

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WILLIAM AITKEN

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AND OTHER POEMS**

With Authors Compliments

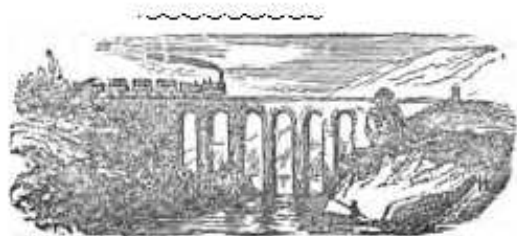
Part of
LAYS OF THE LINE,

AND

OTHER POEMS.

BY

INSPECTOR AITKEN,
ST ENOCH'S STATION, GLASGOW,
AUTHOR OF "RHYMES AND READINGS."



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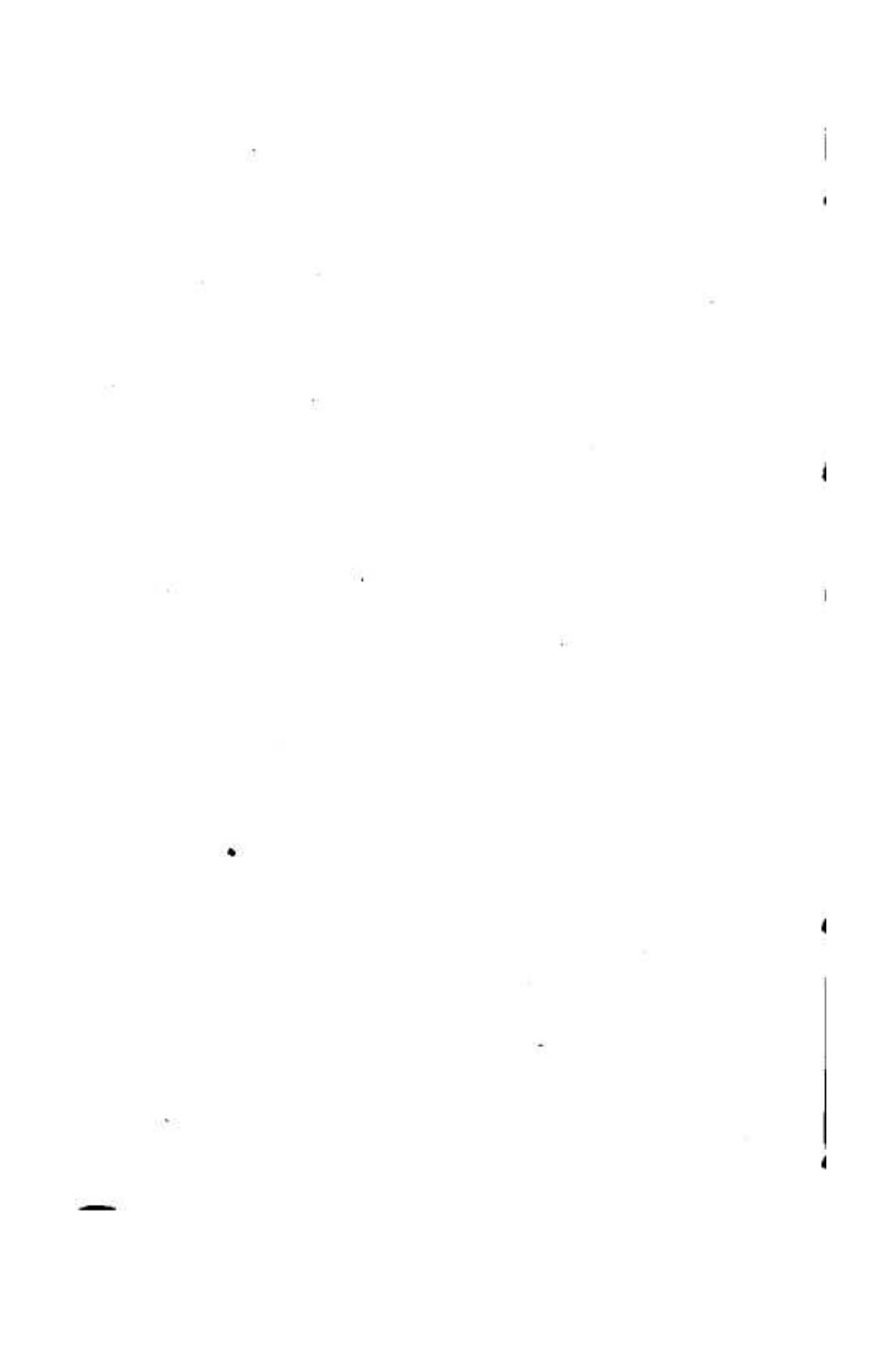
PREFATORY NOTE.

25 BROUGHAM STREET,
GREENOCK, *January, 1883.*

IN placing before my Readers this little volume of "Lays of the Line," I might venture the opinion that, of all other occupations either on land or sea, that of the ordinary railway employé is by far the most hazardous. The Railway Benevolent Institution Casualty List for 1882 shows no fewer than 125 of its members killed and 2015 injured on railways during the year, and this number, large though it may seem, gives, I am sorry to say, but a very faint idea of the total of railway workers killed and injured on the different systems during the twelve months. Almost every newspaper we lift has its railway accident of some kind or other to chronicle. These short paragraphs give, however, but scant details of the many sad cases that are occurring almost daily. Many of them have little histories of their own that never reach the ear of the general body of travellers whose very lives are, as it were, dependent on the watchfulness and care of this attentive and energetic band of workers. Keeping this fact in view, I have endeavoured, in a very imperfect way it may be, to string into rhyme a few of the more important cases that have occurred in my own experience, and which I hope may not be without some little interest to the general body of my Readers.



A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely of the author, James G. Thompson, with a decorative flourish underneath.



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LAYS OF THE LINE.

CONVICT JIM.

JIM MACDONALD, reared an arab, 'mid the
city's strife and din,
Ragged, starved from very childhood, trained in all
the arts of sin,
Sleeping on the cold stairs nightly, when he missed
a running in.

Mother, never knew he any; Biddy Burk, of whom
you know,
Toss'd him to the world one morning, suckled him
a month or so,
But the law had claims on Biddy, o'er the seas she
had to go.

Father—well, he might be called one—many a
wretch has worn the name—
Worn it only for a mantle from the world to hide
his shame—
Such a one had Jim MacDonald--father, villain, all
the same.

In a drunken midnight revel, when the air with
curse rung,
On a helpless fellow-mortal out his brutish nature
sprung;
Retribution followed quickly, tried, convicted,
sentenced, hung.

Like his father, like his mother, so was Jim for very
long,
Following in their awful footsteps, ever waxing stout
and strong,
In the arts of crime an adept, versed in every sin
and wrong.