

**THE POETICAL WORKS OF SIR WILLIAM
ALEXANDER, EARL OF STIRLING, ETC.
NOW FIRST COLLECTED AND EDITED,
WITH MEMOIR AND NOTES. IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. I**

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The Poetical Works of Sir William Alexander, Earl of Stirling, Etc. Now First Collected and Edited, with Memoir and Notes. In Three Volumes, Vol. I by William Alexander Stirling

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WILLIAM ALEXANDER STIRLING

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THE 1527-1640
POETICAL WORKS
OF
SIR WILLIAM ALEXANDER,
EARL OF STIRLING, &c.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

GLASGOW: MAURICE OGLE & CO.

1870.





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PREFACE.

IN issuing this, the first volume of a collected edition of the Poems of Sir William Alexander, the Editor has to apologize for the delay which has taken place in the publication of the work. The task of collecting for the first time, and editing the works of an old and neglected poet, is no easy one, especially when, as in the present instance, so many collations required to be made. The completion of the work will, however, be given to the public with all speed compatible with careful collation and careful editing.

As will be seen, the text of the present volume has been given from the latest editions published during the Author's lifetime, all of which bear evident marks of the most careful supervision on his part, and the variations given in the foot-notes are the most important in the earlier editions. In one or two instances, a few typographical errors have been corrected in the later text (after due comparison with the earlier), but this correction was rarely necessary.

In the volume here issued, the Editor has the privilege of placing before the lovers of our old poetry the "Aurora," and the "Elegie on Prince Henrie," two of the rarest pieces of the Author.

In conclusion, the Editor has to return his best thanks to David Laing, Esq., LL.D., the Rev. Charles Rogers, LL.D., and other gentlemen, for hints and information received during the course of the volume through the press.

GLASGOW, *October*, 1870.



CONTENTS OF VOLUME I.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY MEMOIR,	vii
COMMENDATORY VERSES,	xxix
AVRORA,	1
PARÆNESIS TO PRINCE HENRIE,	105
ELEGIE ON PRINCE HENRIE,	139
TO HIS MAJESTIE,	148
A SHORT VIEW OF THE STATE OF MAN,	149
JONATHAN,	151
THE MONARCHICKE TRAGEDIES—	
CRESUS,	189



INTRODUCTORY MEMOIR.

WHILE the Elizabethan age of literature in England was in the height of its power, literature in Scotland had sunk to the lowest depths of puerility. While the court was in Scotland, the petty squabbles between the king and the clergy, and the ambitions and jealousies of the nobles, kept the people in a condition of the greatest distress, and the country on the verge of civil war. The whole learning and talent of Scotland was enlisted in theological controversies, or engaged in furthering the objects of some powerful patron. In this state of things, poetry could not thrive, and the nation seemed content with a faint remembrance of the Makars of the reigns of Jameses IV. and V. In 1603, when the court removed to London, the domestic condition of Scotland was not improved; the kirk still continued its controversies, more bitterly even than before, while the nobility had too many new schemes of practical aggrandizement to pursue, to care to patronize or cultivate the pleasures of fancy. Charles I. proved no greater begetter than the "British Solomon" his father. England, during his reign, naturally retained and followed the impetus it had

already received, while Scotland fell more hopelessly behind.

There are two exceptions to this, in William Drummond of Hawthornden, and Sir William Alexander; but their genius was cultured more by foreign and ancient models than by the writers who had preceded them in the literature of their country, while their language was purely that of their contemporary English brethren.* Drummond has long been considered one of the classical poets, and his works have frequently been presented to the public; but the writings of Alexander, even more popular in their day, have since been totally neglected. Whether this be just or no, the reader has now sufficient evidence before him to form an opinion. Since the author issued his collected works, under the title of *Recreations with the Muses*, in 1637, his poems (and that only a part) have only once been reprinted, if we except their disinterment and quiet re-burial in Chalmers's *Collection of English Poets*, 21 volumes, 1810.†

* Among the other Scottish poets of this period are, James VI., whose works are remembered on account of the position of the author; Sir William Mure of Rowallan, author of several religious pieces, and of an elegant version of the Psalms (which has never yet been printed, though several manuscripts are known to exist), Lithgow the traveller, Sir Thomas Urquhart, Sir Robert Ayton, Murray, and a few others, only serving to make the dreariness more drear.

† Pinkerton (*Ancient Scottish Poems*, London, 1786, vol. i., p. cxxii.) mentions an edition of the *Recreations*, 12mo, 1727; but this edition, if it had an existence, has been seen by no one else.