

**ST. MARY'S FAIR,  
AND OTHER POEMS**

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St. Mary's fair, and other poems by James T. Calder

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**JAMES T. CALDER**

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# ST. MARY'S FAIR,

AND

## OTHER POEMS,

BY JAMES T. CALDER,

AUTHOR OF "THE SOLDIER'S BRIDE," "SKETCHES  
FROM JOHN O'GROAT'S," &c.

To me more dear—congenial to my heart—  
One native charm—than all the glories of art.

Goldsmith.



WICK.

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1848.

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## P R E F A C E .

IN the two longest Poems of this small volume, the Author has endeavoured to describe the principal scenes of a once celebrated Fair, and a rustic Wedding in Caithness, before the march of modern refinement had effected any great change in the social habits and customs of the peasantry in the County. These pieces, therefore, may be considered as a record of past manners; and, in this view, independently of any literary merit, it is hoped that they will possess some interest to those who love to contemplate human nature under all its varied aspects and modifications. Should it be objected by the fastidious critic that the subject of neither of the effusions is sufficiently *dignified*, the Author would merely say, in the words of a celebrated dramatic writer of antiquity—"Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto."

John O'Groat's, January, 1849.





## ST. MARY'S FAIR:

OR

THE HUMOURS OF THE MARYMASS IN THE OLDEN TIME.

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*Jecke's awa to the Fair.—Old Song.*

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### I.

Muse of the laughing eye and comic vein,  
Who didst inspire the Bard of "Anster Fair,"  
To sing its mirthful frolics in a strain,  
So quaint and humourous beyond compare,  
Grant me, an humble suitor in thy train,  
From the "Far North," with landscape bleak and bare,  
One spark, at least, of that celestial fire,  
Which glows so bright in Tennant's classic lyre.

### II.

Although, no doubt, at times a little dry,  
I ask no draught of Hippocrene from thee,  
Whose precious fount, beneath the Grecian sky,  
So full of inspiration's said to be,  
Contented quite, my charming nymph, if I  
Can get a cup of Mocha or Bohem,  
And, now and then, a glass of generous wine,  
Which is a beverage every way divina.

## III.

That is to say, when you can get it good,  
 Which is but seldom in our British isle,  
 Without adulteration of logwood  
 And other mixtures villanous and vile—  
 Which in the system generate a brood  
 Of ailments without number—such as bile,  
 Blue-devils, headache, nausea, indigestion—  
 All most distressing evils beyond question.

## IV.

Nay, so inventive are folk now-a-days,  
 And godly too—I do not mean to flatter—  
 That you can rarely to your lips upraise  
 A drop of whisky that's not spoilt with water,  
 Or burning hot with vitriol, which plays  
 Deuce with the stomach—a most serious matter ;  
 But, from our present subject of narration,  
 This—though quite true—is rather a digression.

## V.

It is the morning of the Dunnet Fair,  
 The kingly sun hath risen an hour ago,  
 In best of spirits with a gracious air,  
 No cloud of anger passing o'er his brow ;  
 His best gold crown is on—as if he were  
 Resolved this day his brightest face to shew,  
 And smile upon the gay and busy scene,  
 That soon will spread along the " Marymass Green."

## VI.

There's scarce a breath of wind on land or sea,  
To ruffle Autumn's robe of varied dye ;  
The chimney-smoke up-curling, light and free,  
In silvery column mounts towards the sky ;  
While like a living thing with voice of glee,  
The crystal mountain brook runs gurgling by ;  
And, all the wide and sunny landscape round,  
Joy seems to mingle with each sight and sound.

## VII.

Clapping his glossy pinions, Chanticleer,  
In answer to his distant brother, crows  
A note of bold defiance—loud and clear—  
Then like a gallant gentleman that knows  
His duty is to serve the ladies dear—  
Proud of his harem, we may well suppose,  
He scrapes the dunghill, furiously and fast,  
And chuckling, calls his wives to their repast.

## VIII.

Clustered along the cottage roof and eaves,  
Their loudly twittering song the starlings raise ;  
And from the elder's close embowering leaves,  
The robin and the linnet tune their lays ;  
Gabble the geese—and make for—greedy thieves !  
The corn fast ripening in the solar rays ;  
While hissing with stretched neck, the valiant gander  
Attacketh man and beast that near him wanders.