

**THE WEE STEEPLE'S
GHAIST, AND OTHER
POEMS AND SONGS**

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JOHN MITCHELL

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WEE STEEPLE'S GHAIST,
AND
OTHER POEMS AND SONGS.

BY JOHN MITCHELL,
AUTHOR OF "A NIGHT ON THE BANKS OF DOON," &c.



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TO

JOHN WILSON, Esq.,

PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF
EDINBURGH,

A NATIVE OF FAISLEY,

THIS VOLUME

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY HIS TOWNSMAN,

THE AUTHOR.

"He was delighted to find that no change had taken place on the venerable Abbey, but on turning his eyes to a different quarter of the town, he declared that he missed, with a sigh, the WEE STAIRS! that miracle of stunted architecture, so dear to the recollection of every genuine Paisley body. But, alas! the march of innovation had levelled the Wee Steeple with the dust, and silenced for ever the monotonous clank of its time-worn bell, 'yclapt the Yawner Yowls.'—*Speech of Professor Wilson, at the Jubilee dinner given to Mr. James Peddie, by his Pupils and Friends in Paisley, 11th February, 1831.*

PREFACE.

As I dislike to read a long Preface, it would be ridiculous in me to write a long one. As it is necessary, however, that something should be said in the way of prefatory matter, I shall lay before my readers the best account of St. Rollock's Chapel, so often referred to in the "Wes Steeple's Ghaist," that I have met with. It is from the pen of the late Wm. MOTHERWELL, Esq., author of "Jeanie Morrison," and many other poetical pieces of merit, and is extracted from the columns of the *Paisley Advertiser*, bearing date Sept. 20th, 1826.

"On Wednesday morning the workmen employed by Mr Macfarlane, in laying water pipes, from the Canal to his distillery in the Lonewells, unexpectedly invaded the precincts of the Dead while carrying their excavations through Castle-street. At the corner of this street they laid bare the bones of some one or two goodly personages of elder times, and shovelled forth as many skulls as might form an excellent cabinet for a phrenologist, or a meet theme whereon some itinerant Hamlet might moralize to the admiration of the groundlings. One of those "Deid powis" graces the collection of natural and artificial curiosities belonging to Mr. Robert Simm, 31, Wellmeadow. At the place where these bones were found, stood a small chapel dedicated to St. Rollock or St. Roque, to which a burial place was attached. At the dissolution of the monastery, the chapel was allowed to fall into disrepair, and it and the kirkyaird appear, from markings in the Town Records, to have been set, from year to year, to tenants, at a rent varying from three to six pund Scots. About the year 1612, it was agreed by the Baillies and Council, that St. Rollock's kirk should be taken down, and the "stones, timber, and selait thereof, bestowit upon building ane Hospitall." This was done, and out of the materials of St. Roque's kirk or chapel rose

the Alms House or Hospital for "sax pair men," which stood at the West Port. The steeple of which (vulgarly called the *Wes Steeple*,) was unadvisedly swept away in the first ebullition of some extraordinary march of mind movement among the members of the Town Council. But it is easier knocking down an old steeple than building a new one, as the present humbled crest of St. George's church to this day can testify. At the same corner of Castle-street stood an ancient Cross, which also fell a victim to local improvement. Of the demolition of this Cross, Semple, in his *Continuation of Crawford*, speaks, but of the kirk and kirkyaird in that part of the town, he appears to have been quite ignorant. Indeed, so entirely had its memory perished, that even tradition had transmogrified St. Rollock's kirkyaird into "Sandie Rock's kailyaird." The bones of the dead in that part of the town seem to have fattened the earth amazingly. The little gardens behind the houses there are quite exuberant of fruits and flowers, and in that of Mr. Robert Simm we saw with our own eyes, some gigantic hollyhocks, the shortest of which was 9 feet odd inches, and the tallest 12 feet 3 inches in height."

A number of the smaller pieces which appear in this volume have, by the kindness of Mr. HAY, a gentleman to whose good taste I have, in more than one instance, been indebted, been allowed to appear in the "Poets' Corner" of the *Paisley Advertiser*, and, of course, must have been read by many of my townsmen. With regard to the rest of the work, I beg my readers to recollect what I said in the preface to a former volume: that my highest ambition was to be reckoned respectable among the minor bards of my native land, and if I attain that, to me enviable distinction, I may proudly say that my labour has not been in vain.

PAISLEY, *September*, 1840.

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