

**RHYMES, REVERIES,
AND
REMINISCENCES**

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Rhymes, reveries, and reminiscences by William Anderson

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TO THE READER.

It may be all very well for those who assert a real or supposed right to public consideration, to dash unceremoniously into the presence of their readers, waiving all the recognised courtesies of authorship; but I fear that I, who most assuredly make no such pretensions, must c'en conform to precedent, and attempt something in the shape of preface, which may, perhaps,

Turn out a song,
Perhaps turn out a sermon.

The question, "what is poetry?" has been more frequently asked than satisfactorily answered. Poetry has been described as the language of passion, as, indeed, it often is—

The cold in clime are cold in blood,
Their love can scarce deserve the name;
But mine was like the lava flood
That boils in Aetna's breast of flame—

but poetry, also, is not unfrequently the language of the gentlest composure and resignation—

I hear a voice ye cannot hear
That tells me not to stay ;
I see a hand ye cannot see
That beckons me away—

so that to call poetry the language of passion, instead of defining it, only describes one of its qualities. It is, however, difficult to give a concise definition of poetry. I will content myself with saying that, when the imaginative writing of one individual, either in prose or verse, comes home (to use an emphatic expression) to the heart of another, that writing is poetry. It is for you to judge, not for me to say, whether this be the character of the following pages. The master minds of the present and former ages have culled the most prominent and the majority of the lesser features of nature, and left but mere gleanings to the minor bards. Shakespere, Burns, and Wordsworth, are monopolists on earth, while Milton, Byron, and Shelley, are the same among the spheres. But although the mine has been well wrought, still it is inexhaustible, and many an humble labourer on Parnassus may, from time to time (although not classed with the pioneers of literature), fall in with some gem or flower to attract the attention of his fellow-men ; so that we, the minors, must content ourselves with describing scenes and characters which have immediately come under our observations ; and, if this be faithfully done, I see no reason why we

should be denied the little merit which may fall to our
share—

Verse comes from heaven like inward light,
Mere human pains can ne'er come by 't;
The god, not we, the poem makes,
We only tell folks what he speaks.

I had begun to rhyme at an early age, as the fly-leaves of a number of books could testify; but when, in more advanced years, I began to read the works of Ramsay and Burns, I was so ashamed of my irregular limping trash, that I gathered it together and put it in the fire. I regret this rash step, as I have often since had a curiosity to know what my juvenile ideas were. My youthful productions, however, are gone, and you may think it would be little loss to the world though the older ones should follow them; still you may ask—

But why thus publish? there are no rewards
Of fame or profit which the world grows weary.
I ask, in turn, Why do you play at cards,
Why drink, why read? to make some hour less dreary.
It occupies me to turn back regards
On what I've seen, or ponder'd and or cheer'd;
And what I write I cast upon the stream,
To swim or sink, I've had at least my dream.

Numerous were the songs and sonnets which, in a more advanced age, I wrote, and presented to Ellens, and Marys, and Janes; but, as I generally gave away the original, without reserving a copy for myself, I am of opinion that these fair maidens, after having sufficiently laughed at the unlicked curb of an author, used them up

(as Slick has it) for curl papers. I do not regret their fate, however, as it is probable they could not have kept their head above water amidst the torrent of such-like mawkish trash which daily issues from the Press.

Still, although my youthful musings are gone, unlike the "baseless fabric of a vision," they have left a trace behind. And when we conjure up the recollections of our childhood, how fondly does memory revel amongst the little incidents and trifles which then appeared to us of such momentous importance. Have we not looked on a game at marbles or pitch and toss, with the same interest (though with much less bitter feelings) as the gambler who has his hundreds at stake? Have we not been excited to a very frenzy of joy at our "side" having won, or struck with deep chagrin at its having lost, a game at "shinnie" on the Denburn Green?

There is a period in the life of every man (I mean the period when the passions are strongest), when the *minutes* of life are forgotten, or, at least, but slightly remembered, as if Nature kindly drew a veil over our dawning manhood, in order to spare us the blush for many an impropriety and inconsistency we are then guilty of. Not so with the years of our childhood, every item there leaves an indelible impression, which time cannot erase, as every remarkable circumstance, at that time, of itself marks an era.

Every Aberdonian who can recollect the battle of Waterloo will also be able to remember that, about that time, a goodly number of young men rejoiced in the