

The Muse! what'er the Muse inspires,
My soul the tuneful strain admires...acorr.



The following beautiful stanzas are taken out of an old English Collection, and were written as long ago as 1650, by Sir Robert Ayton, at that time Secretary to Mary and Anne, Queens of Scotland. [Georgian.]

TO A DESERTED FAIR ONE.

I do confess thee sweet and fair,
And near I might have gone to love thee,
Had I not found the slightest prayer
That lip should speak, had power to move thee;

But I can let thee now alone
As worthy to be lov'd by none.

I did pronounce thee sweet, yet find
Thee so regardless of thy sweets,
Thy favors are too like the wind
That kisseth every thing it meets;
And since thou lovest with more than one,
Thou art worthy to be loved by none.

The morning rose, that untouched stands,
Armed with her briars, how sweetly smells;
But, plucked and soiled by vulgar hands,
Her sweet no longer with her dwells,
But scent and beauty, both are gone,
And leaves fall from her one by one.

Such fate ere long will thee betide,
When thou hast handled been awhile,
Like withered blossoms cast aside,
And I shall sigh, while some will smile
To see thy love to every one
Hath brought thee to be loved by none.

Literary Extracts, &c.

Variety's the very spice of life,
That gives it all its flavor.

AN HOUR IN THE MANSE.

[From "Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life."]

In a few weeks the annual Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was to be administered in the Parish of Deanside; and the minister, venerable in old age, of authority by the power of his talents and learning, almost feared for his sanctity, yet wistful beloved for gentleness and compassion that had never been found wanting, when required either by the misfortunes or errors of any of his flock, had delivered for several successive Sabbaths, to full congregations, sermons on the proper preparation of communicants in that awful ordinance. The old man was a follower of Calvin, and many, who had listened to him with a resolution in their hearts to approach the table of the Redeemer, felt so awe-stricken and awakened at the conclusion of his exhortations, that they gave their souls another year to meditate on what they had heard, and by a pure and humble course of life, to render themselves less unworthy to partake the mysterious and holy bread and wine.

The good old man received in the Manse, for a couple of hours every evening, such of his parishioners as came to signify their wish to partake of the sacrament, and it was then noted, that though he in nowise departed, in his conversation with them at such times, from the spirit of those doctrines which he had delivered from the pulpit, yet his manner was milder, and more soothing, and full of encouragement; so that many who went to him almost with quaking hearts, departed in tranquility and peace, and looked forward to that most impressive and solemn act of the Christian religion, with calm and glad anticipation. The old man thought truly and justly, that few, if any, would come to the manse, after having heard him in the kirk, without due and deep reflection, and therefore, though he allowed none to pass through his hands without strict examination, he spoke to them all benignly, and with that sort of paternal pity, which a religious man, about to leave this life, feels towards all his brethren of mankind, who are entering upon, or engaged in its scenes of agitation, trouble and danger.

One of those evenings, the servant showed into the minister's study a tall bold looking, dark visaged man, in the prime of life, who, with little of the usual courtesy, advanced into the middle of the room, and somewhat abruptly declared the secret purpose of his visit. But before he could receive a reply, he looked around and before him, and there was something so solemn in the old minister's appearance, as he sat like a spirit, with his unclouded eyes fixed upon the intruder, that that person's countenance fell, and his heart was involuntarily knocking against his side. An old large Bible, the same

that he read from in the pulpit, was lying open before him. One glimmering candle shewed his beautiful and silvery locks falling on his temples, as his head half stooped over the sacred page; a dead silence was in the room dedicated to meditation and prayer; the old man, it was known, had for some time felt himself to be dying, and had spoken of the sacrament of this summer as the last he could ever hope to administer; so that altogether, in the silence, the dimness, the sanctity, the unworldliness of the time, the place, and the being before him, the visitor stood like one abashed and appalled; and bowing more reverently, or, at least, respectfully, he said, with a hurried and quivering voice, "Sir, I come for your sanction to be admitted to the table of our Lord."

The minister motioned to him with his hand to sit down, and it was a relief to the trembling man to do so, for he was in the presence of one who he felt saw into his heart. A sudden change from hardness to terror, took place within his dark nature; he wished himself out of the insupportable sanctity of that breathless room; and a remorse, that had hitherto slept or been drowned within him, now clutched his heart strings, as if with an alternate grasp of frost and fire, and made his knees knock against each other where he sat, and his face pale as ashes.

"Norman Adams," saidst thou, that thou wilt take into that hand, and put into those lips the symbol of the blood that was shed for sinners, and of the body that bowed on the cross, and then gave up the ghost? If so, let us speak together, even as if thou wert communing with thine own heart. Never, again, may I join in that sacrament, for the hour of my departure is at hand. Say, wilt thou eat and drink death to thine immortal soul?

The terrified man found strength to rise from his seat, staggering towards the door, said, "Pardon, forgive me, I am not worthy." "It is not I who can pardon, Norman." The power lies not with man; but sit down—you are deadly pale—and though, I fear, an ill-living and dissolute man, greater sinners have repented, and been saved. Approach not now the table of the Lord, but confess all your sins before him in the silence of your own house, and upon your naked knees on the stone-floor every morning and every night; and if this you do faithfully, humbly, and with a contrite heart, come to me again when the sacrament is over, and I will speak words of comfort to you, if, then, I am able to speak, if, Norman, it should be on my death bed. This will I do for the sake of thy soul, and for the sake of thy father, Norman, whom my soul loved, and who was a support to me in my ministry for many long years, even for two score and ten, for we were at school together; and had your father been living now, he would, like myself, have finished his eighty-fifth year. I send you not from me in anger, but in pity, and love. Go, my son, and this very night begin your repentance, for if that face speaks the truth, your heart must be sorely charged."

Just as the old man ceased speaking, and before the humble, or at least affrighted culprit had risen to go, another visitor of a very different kind was shown into the room. A young beautiful girl, almost shrouded in her cloak, with a sweet pale face, on which sadness seemed in vain to strive with the natural expression of the happiness of youth.

"Mary Simpson," said the kind old man, as she stood with a timid courtesy near the door; "Mary Simpson, approach, and receive from my hands the token for which thou comest. Well dost thou know the history of thy Saviour's life, and rejoicest in the life and immortality brought to light by the gospel. Young and guileless, Mary, art thou, and dim as my memory now is of many things, yet do I well remember the evening, when first beside my knee, thou heardest read how the Divine Infant was laid in a manger—how the wise men from the east came to the place of his nativity—and how the angels were heard singing in the fields of Bethlehem all the night long."

Alas! every word that had thus been uttered, sent a pang into the poor creature's heart, and without lifting her eyes from the floor, and in a voice more faint and hollow than belonged to one so young, she said, "Oh! sir, I come not as an intending communicant; yet the Lord my God knows that I am rather miserable than guilty, and he will not suffer my soul to perish,

though a baby is now within me, the child of guilt, and sin, and horror.—This, my shame, I come to tell you; but for the father of my babe unborn, cruel though he has been to me, Oh! cruel, cruel indeed—yet shall his name go down with me in silence to the grave. I must not, must not breathe his name in mortal ears: but I have looked round me in the wide moor, and when nothing that could understand was by, nothing living but birds, and bees, and the sheep I was herding, often have I whispered his name in my prayers, and beseeched God and Jesus, to forgive him all his sins."

At these words, of which the passionate utterance seemed to relieve her heart, and before the pitying and bewildered old man could reply, Mary Simpson raised her eyes from the floor, and fearing to meet the face of the minister, which had heretofore never shone upon her but with smiles, and of which the expected frown was to her altogether insupportable, she turned them wildly round the room, as if for a resting place, and beheld Norman Adams rooted to his seat, leaning towards her with his white ghastly countenance, and his eyes starting from their sockets, seemingly in wrath, agony, fear and remorse.—That terrible face struck poor Mary to the heart, and she sank against the wall, and slipped down, shuddering, upon a chair.

"Norman Adams, I am old and weak, but do you put your arm around that poor lost creature, and keep her from falling down upon the hard floor. I hear it is a stormy night and she has walked some miles hither; no wonder she is overcome. You have heard her confession. But it was not meant for your ear; so, till I see you again, say nothing of what you have heard."

"O sir! a cup of water, for my blood is either leaving my heart altogether, or it is drowning it. Your voice, sir, is going far away from me, and I am sinking down. Oh! hold me—hold me up!—is it a pit into which I am falling? Saw I not Norman Adams? Where is he now?"

The poor maiden did not fall off the chair, although Norman Adams supported her not; but her head lay back against the wall, and a sigh, long and dismal, burst from her bosom that deeply affected the old man's heart, but struck that of the speechless and motionless sinner, like the first toll of the prison bell that warns the felon to leave his cell and come forth to execution.

The minister fixed a stern eye upon Norman, for from the poor girl's unconscious words, it was plain that he was the guilty wretch who had wrought all this misery. "You knew, did you not, that she had neither father nor mother, sister nor brother, scarcely one relation on earth to care for or watch over her; and yet you have used her so? If her beauty was a temptation unto you, did not the sweet child's innocence touch your hard and selfish heart with pity; or her guilt and grief must surely now wring it with remorse.—Look on her—white—cold—breathless—still as a corpse, and yet, thou bold bad man, thy footsteps would have approached the Table of the Lord."

The child now partly awoke from her swoon, and her dim opening eyes met those of Norman Adams. She shut them with a shudder, and said, sickly and with a quivering voice, "O spare, spare me, Norman; are we again in that dark, fearful wood?—Tremble not for your life on earth, Norman, for never, never, will I tell to mortal ears that terrible secret; but spare me, spare me, else our Saviour with all his mercy, will never pardon your unrelenting soul. These are cruel looking eyes; you will not surely murder poor Mary Simpson, unhappy as she is, and must forever be—yet life is sweet! She beseeches you on her knees to spare her life"—and, in the intense fear of phantasy, the poor creature struggled off the chair, and fell down indeed in a heap at his feet.

"Canst thou indeed be the son of old Norman Adams, the industrious, the temperate, the mild, and the pious?—Who so often sat in this very room which your presence has now polluted, and spake with me on the mysteries of life and of death. Foul ravisher, what stayed thy hand from the murder of that child, when there were none near to hear her shrieks in the dark solitude of the great pine wood?"

Norman Adams smote his heart and fell down too on his knees beside the poor ruined orphan. He put his arm round her, and, raising her from the floor, said, "No, no, my sin is great, too great for heaven's forgiveness; but, O! Sir, say not—say not that I would

have murdered her; for, savage as my crime was, yet may God judge me less terribly than if I had taken her life."

In a little while they were both seated with some composure, and silence was in the room: no one spoke, and the old gray haired man sat with eyes fixed, without reading, on the open bible. At last he broke silence with these words out of Isaiah, that seemed to have forced themselves on his heedless eyes: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Mary Simpson wept aloud at these words; and seemed to forget her own wrongs and grief in commiseration of the agonies of remorse and fear that were now plainly preying on the soul of the guilty man. "I forgive you, Norman, and will be soon out of the way, no longer to anger you with the sight of me." Then fixing her streaming eyes on the minister, she besought him not to be the means of bringing him to punishment, and a shameful death, for that he might repent, and live to be a good man, and respected in the parish; but that she was a poor orphan for whom few cared, and who, when dead, would have but a small funeral.

"I will deliver myself up into the hands of justice," said the offender, "for I do not deserve to live. Mine was an inhuman crime, and let a violent and shameful death be my doom."

The orphan girl now stood up as if her strength had been restored, and stretching out her hands passionately, with a flow of most affecting and beautiful language, inspired by a meek, single, and sinless heart, that could not bear the thought of utter degradation and wretchedness befalling any one of the rational children of God, implored and beseeched the old man to comfort the sinner before them, and promise that the dark transaction of guilt should never leave the concealment of their own three hearts. "Did he not save the lives of two brothers once who were drowning in that black mossy loch, when their own kindred, at work among the hay, feared the deep sullen water, and all stood aloof, shuddering and shrieking, till Norman Adams leapt into their rescue, and drew them by the dripping hair to the shore, and then lay down beside them on the heather, as like to death as themselves? I myself saw it done; I myself heard the mother call down the blessings of God on Norman's head, and then all the haymakers knelt down and prayed.—When you, on the Sabbath, returned thanks to God for that they were saved, Oh! kind sir, did you not name, in the full kirk, him who, under Providence, did deliver them from death, and who, you said, had thus showed himself to be a Christian indeed? May his sins against me be forgotten, for the sake of those two drowning boys, and their mother, who blesses his name unto this day."

From a few questions solemnly asked, and solemnly answered, the minister found that Norman Adams had been won by the beauty and loveliness of this poor orphan shepherdess, as he had sometimes spoken to her when sitting on the hill side with her flock, but that pride prevented him from ever thinking of her in marriage. It appeared that he had also been falsely informed, by a youth whom Mary disliked for his brutal and gross manners, that she was not the innocent girl that her seeming simplicity denoted. On returning from a festive meeting, where this abject person had made many mean insinuations against her virtue, Norman Adams met her returning to her master's house, in the dusk of the evening, on the foot path leading through a lonely wood; and though his crime was of the deepest dye, it seemed to the minister of the religion of mercy, that by repentance, and belief in the atonement that had once been made for sinners, he, too, might perhaps hope for forgiveness at the throne of God.

"I warned you, miserable man, of the fatal nature of sin, when first it bro't a trouble over your countenance, and broke in upon the peaceful integrity of your life. Was not the silence of the night often terrible to you, when you were alone in the moors, and the whispers of your own conscience told you, that every wicked thought was sacrifice to your father's dust? Step by step, and almost imperceptibly, perhaps, did you advance upon the road that leadeth to destruction; but look back now, and what a long dark journey have you taken, standing, as you are, on the brink of everlasting death.—

Once you were kind, gentle, generous and free, but you trusted to the deceitfulness of your own heart; you estranged yourself from the house of the God of your fathers, and what but your nature done for you at last, but sunk you into a wretch, savage, selfish, cruel, cowardly, and in good truth slave? A felon are you, and forfeit to the hangman's hands. Look up that poor innocent child, and think what is man without God. Would you give now, if the last three years of your reckless life had been passed in a dungeon dug deep into the earth, with hunger and thirst gnawing at your heart, and bent down under cart load of chains? Yet look not ghastly, for I condemn you not utterly, nor, though I know you guilty, can I know what good may yet be to uncorrupted and unextinguished your soul. Kneel not to me, Norman, fasten not so your eyes upon me; I turn upwards, and then turn them upon your own heart, for the reckoning dreadful is between it and God.

Mary Simpson had now recovered all her strength, and she knelt down the side of the groaner. Deep was the pity she now felt for him who her had shown no pity; she did not refuse to lay her light arm tenderly on his neck. Often had she prayed God to save his soul, even among the fearful solitudes of the solitudes, and now that she beheld him punished with remorse more than could bear, the orphan would have willingly died to avert from his prostrate head the wrath of the Almighty.

The old man wept at the sight of much innocence, and so much guilt kneeling together before God, in fraternal union and fellowship of a commoning. With his own fatherly arms, he lifted up the orphan from her knees, and said, Mary Simpson, my sweet and innocent Mary Simpson, for innocent thou art, the elders will give thee a token, that will on Sabbath day admit thee (not for the first time, though so young) to the communion table. Fear not to approach it; look on me, and on my face, when I bless the elements, and be thou strong in the strength of the Lord. Norman Adams, return you home. Go into your room where your father died, your knees wear out the part of the floor on which he knelt. It is somewhat worn already; you have seen the mark of your father's knees. You know, but that pardon and peace descend from Heaven even upon a sinner as thou. On none such as thou have mine eyes ever looked, in knowledge, among all those who have lived and died under my care, for three generations. But great is the unknown guilt that may be hidden even in the churchyard of a small quiet parish like this. Dost thou feel as if God-forgotten? Or, Oh! say it unto me, canst thou, my poor son, dare to hope for penitence?"

The pitiful tone of the old man's trembling voice and the motion of his shaking and withered hands as he lifted them up almost in an attitude of benediction, completed the prostration of that sinner's spirit. All his better nature, which had too long been oppressed under scorn of holy ordinances, and the coldness of infidelity, and the selfishness of lawless designs, so insensibly harden the heart they do dissolve, now struggled to rise up and respect its rights. "When I remember what I once was, I can hope—what I think what I now am, I only, on fear."

A storm of wind and rain had come on, and Mary Simpson slept in the manse that night. On the ensuing Sabbath she partook of the sacrament. A woeful illness fell upon Norman Adams; and then for a long time no one saw him, or knew where he was gone. It was said he was in a distant city, and that he was a miserable creature, that never again could look upon the sun. But it was otherwise ordered. He returned to his farm greatly changed in face and person, but even yet more changed in spirit.

The old minister had more days allotted to him than he had thought, and was not taken away for some summers. Before he died, he had reason to know that Norman Adams had repented in tears of blood, in thoughts of faith, and in deeds of charity; and he did not fear to admit him, too, in good time, to holy ordinance, along with Mary Simpson, then his wife, and the mother of his children.

Popularity.—I cannot, says Cicero, see why people are ashamed to acknowledge a passion for popularity. The love of popularity is the love of being beloved.