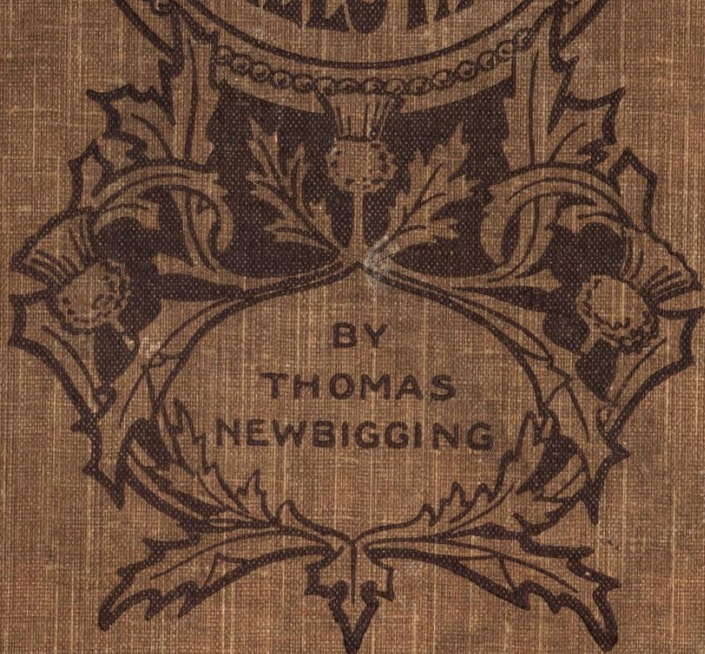


ANOOK
IN
GALLOWAY



BY
THOMAS
NEWBIGGING

GATEHOUSE-OF-FLEET.

Girthon Public School

CLASS

2nd PRIZE AWARDED TO

Kate Trainer

For excellence in German

(First Year's course)

21st June, 1912.

WILLIAM LEARMONTH, Headmaster.

A NOOK IN GALLOWAY

By Thomas Newbigging

Gatehouse-of-Fleet, N.B.
J.R. & A. Kirkpatrick.
1911

A Nook in Galloway.

O ! Gallowa' braes they wave wi' broom
And heather-bells in bonnie bloom ;
There's lordly seats and livins braw
Amang the braes o' Gallowa'.

W. Nicholson.

The province of Galloway, in the South-west of Scotland, embraces at the present day the two counties, Kirkcudbright or *‘the Stewartry ’’ as it is also named, and Wigtown or * the Shire.” In early times it was of much greater extent. It is a wide range of country, abounding in natural beauties ; full of historical, antiquarian, literary and romantic interest, and has been made known, as it well deserves to be, to the outside world by many writers: historians, topographers, poets, novelists. Amongst

10 A NOOK IN GALLOWAY.

the latter Sir Walter Scott in “ Guy Mannering,” “ The Bride of Lammermoor” and “Old Mortality,” and partially in “ Redgauntlet;” and by Mr. S. R. Crockett in his Galloway stories, notably, * “ The Raiders” and ““The Men of the Moss Hags.”

I propose to deal with only a Nook in Galloway, dearer to me than any other spot on this earth. The portion of it which I will attempt to describe is that on the south-western fringe of the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright, extending along the shores of Fleet Bay and Wigtown Bay, from the small town of Gatehouse-of-Fleet to the smaller town of Creetown, considered by many competent judges to be “the most beautiful shore road in Britain.”

The distance in length of this particular district is only twelve miles,

comprised within the parishes of Girthon, Anwoth, and Kirkmabreck. Although not a Gallovidian by birth, I lived in Gatehouse-of-Fleet (embraced partly within the parishes of Girthon and Anwoth) when a boy, bathed and fished in its bay, its river, and its streams, rambled over the hills, and through the dales and woods, and therein cut sapling fishing-rods despite woodman and keeper, howkit goorlies in its fields, in March days with other boys helped to set the windle-strae and the whins ablaze on its hillsides, gathered its wild strawberries in summer and its clustered nuts in autumn, and so drank in all the beauties of the scenery. Young as 1 was, too, I revelled in the literary and historical associations of the district, in such wise that its memory can never be effaced, and indeed

12 A NOOK IN GALLOWAY

is seldom absent, from my mind. Whatever of poetic feeling and imagination (if any) I possess, or have displayed in later life, was nurtured in the bosom of this most sweet spot, and has not suffered eclipse amidst the prosaic duties of a life of strenuous work from my eleventh year onward.

What sweet delight a quiet life affords,
And what is it to be of bondage free,
Far from the madding worldling's hoarse
 discords,
Sweet flow'ry place I first did learn of
 thee.

W. Drummond.

It is not, however, of myself that I would speak, but of the rich beauties and associations of this part of Galloway, which, in spite of its manifold attractions, is still much of a *terra incognita*.

The scenery in the midst of which nestles the small town of Gatehouse-

of-Fleet is of the most charming description. The little river Fleet winds through a vale of luxuriant beauty, embroidered with trees of many kinds. In every season of the year they are a delight to behold. Their umbrageous fulness of every shade of greenery, viewed from the higher levels, is of voluptuous splendour, and late in the year the varied tints of the leaves, from russet to burnished gold, are a ravishing delight.

Its seascapes and landscapes are unequalled. The lovely contours of the near hills as they glide each into the other, or rise in isolated peaks as though disdainful of contact with their neighbours, are enchanting to a degree ; while beyond, raising their bare backs to a height ranging from 1500 to 2400 feet, are the long ridges of Cairnharrow, Cairnsmore-

14 A NOOK IN GALLOWAY

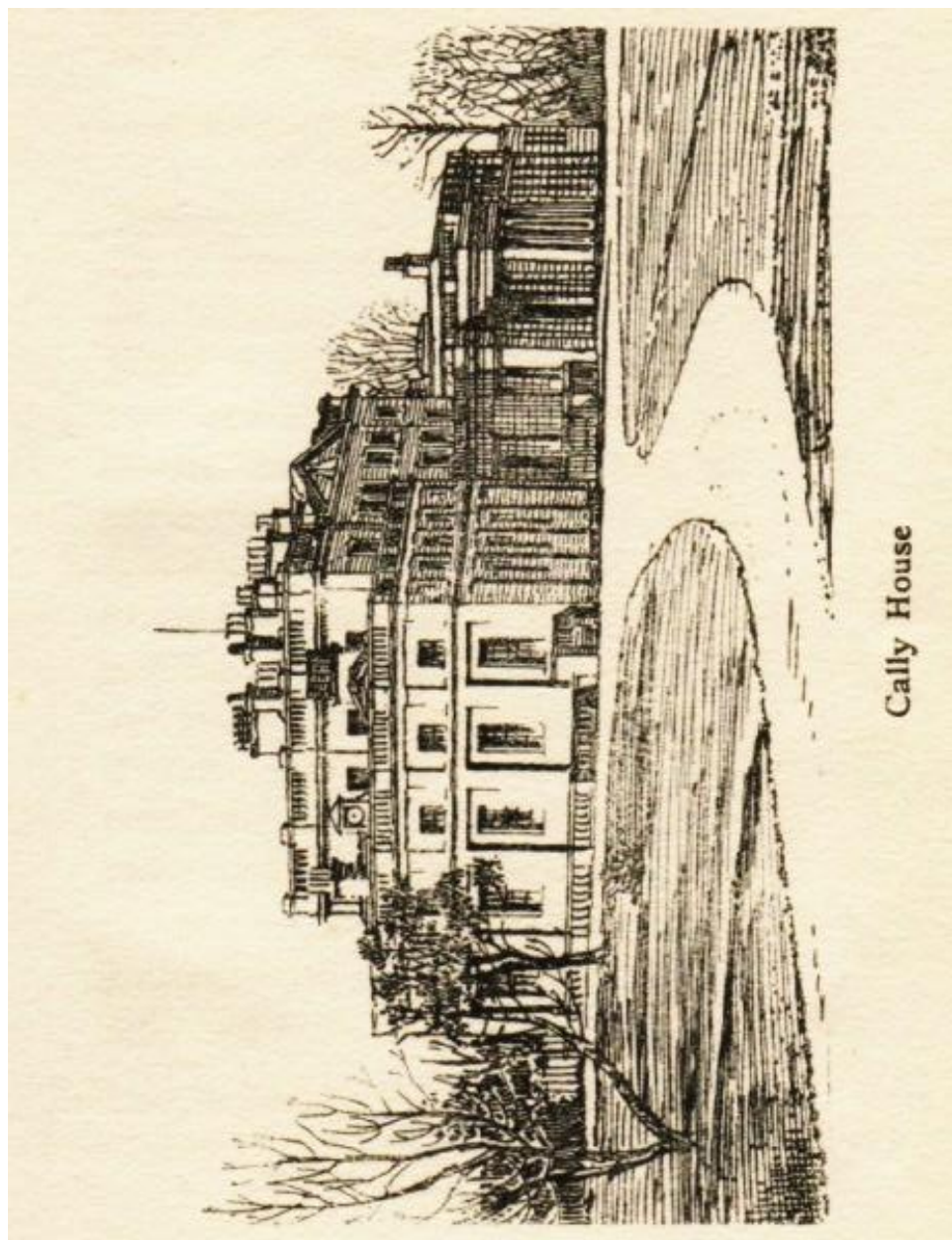
of-Fleet, and other mountain forms
of the Southern Scottish Highlands.

All the landscape—earth and sky and sea—
Breathes like a bright-eyed face
That laughs out openly.

"Add to these natural features the
mansion of Cally,¹ designed by
Robert Mylne the Scottish architect
and engineer (who, by the way, was
the designer also of the old Black-
friars Bridge and engineer to the
New River Water Company,
London), one of the finest residences
in Galloway, built of granite
in the Grecian style of architecture
and in a superb situation, with its
wide demesne and lake, and you
have a panoramic scene of beauties
almost unrivalled.

And then as to its other attrac-
tions. I have seen as many as a

¹ The name is said to be derived from
the Gaelic, "coille," a wood.



Cally House

A NOOK IN GALLOWAY. 15

score of fine salmon dragged out by net at one haul from the Fleet at ‘ Menzies Pool.’ To be sure, such a haul was rare, but smaller catches were a daily event in the season. I speak, however, from my recollection of the days of my boyhood. What the river is to-day in this respect and as a salmon and trout stream I do not know. The com- posts now extensively used in agri- culture have played havoc with many a bonnie stream.

What a splendid hunting ground, too, is the district for the botanist ! Mosses, hepaticæ, lichens, chara, ferns, and the wild flora of its woods, dales, and hills—they are all here in rich abundance. The ornithology of the district is as varied as its flora, including even the eagle which frequents the lonely cliffs of Cairns- more. In the vicinity of Gatehouse,

16 A NOOK IN GALLOWAY.

so sheltered is it from the north and east winds, the spring comes comparatively early and autumn lingers. For the same reason, and also owing to the nearness of the sea, the winters are less severe than in other parts of the Stewartry.

Not the least of its attractions (though the permanent residents might not altogether agree with me here) is its separateness from the busy outer world, being distant six or seven miles from a railway station. To be accurate, eight miles from Kirkcudbright and six and a half miles from Dromore, on the Portpatrick and Wigtonshire Joint Railways. If a line of railway were to be carried through this part of Galloway (as has often been suggested), Gatehouse-of-Fleet and its neighbourhood would become a great residential district, though the

charm of its isolation would suffer eclipse.

But let us turn to its associations, apart from its scenic and other natural features. Within the ambit of this small Nook of Galloway, from Gatehouse to Creetown, there are the ruins, fairly well preserved, of four old castles, each with an en-thralling history. These are Car-doness, Rusko or Rusco, Barholm, and Carsluith ; three of them " within sound of the surging and sobbing of the salt sea waves," the other (Rusco) more inland, over-looking Castramont and the Vale of Fleet. Besides these, there are numerous features of antiquarian interest within the limits to which I have confined my description.

18 A NOOK IN GALLOWAY

On Trusty's' hill in Anwoth are the remains of a vitrified fort, and a slab containing some curious markings. Monolithic stones of large size with strange sculpturings, the work of primitive races, and " doons " and stone circles are to be found within easy distance.

It is said that Corbreid Gald, or Galdus, or Galgacus, King of Scotland, from whom, according to some authorities, the name Galloway is derived, was slain in battle in a field at Cairnholy, near Barholm Castle, and here he was buried in the tomb which still exists, built of whinstone slabs. A slightly different account of the matter is given in Holinshed's Chronicle of Scotland, as follows :

Galdus having thus ended the warrs with the Romans, applied all his studie

¹ The name "Trusty" is supposed to be derived from King Drast who lived in the sixth century.

and diligence to advance the common-wealth and quiet state of his countrie, and lived manie yeares so highlie in the favour of all his subjects, that the like hath beene but seldom heard of ; to their greate griefe and displeasure he ended his life, more deere to them than their owne, in the 35 yeare of his reigne, which was about the 15 yeare of the empire of Adrian, the 4098 yeare after the world's creation, and from the birth of our Saviour 131, and was buried with greate lamintation in most pompous maner, and laid in a goodlie toome which was raised with mightie huge stones, having a greate number of obelisks set up round about it according to the maner. Furthermore, to the end his memorie should ever indure, the countrie where he fought last with the Romans was called Galdia, after his name, which by addition of a few letters is now called Galloway, and before that time Brigantia, as the Scots doo hold¹

¹ A claim has been made for Torhouse in Wigtownshire, as the burial place of Galdus. At this place, according to Symson, an old Galloway writer, there were three very large whinstones, sup-posed to be the tomb, surrounded by nineteen other great stones. Sir Herbert Maxwell is of opinion that the name Galloway is of Celtic origin.

20 A NOOK IN GALLOWAY.

A later and less mythical king, Edward I., looked on the scenery in this Nook of Galloway. In his vic-torious march with his army through the district after the siege and fall of Caerlaverock Castle in July, 1300, he was opposed by the Galwegians who had made their stand here ; and although the latter were re-pulsed by the superior forces of the king, the river Fleet proved the limit of his expedition. He is said to have encamped at Enrick, near Gatehouse, on the Kirkcudbright Road, where at one time existed a considerable edifice, called " Palace Yard," protected by a Moat crossed by a drawbridge, the foundation remains of which are still to be traced. Tradition also says that the

See his " History of !Dumfries and Galloway." Some historians locate the country of the Brigantes farther south than Galloway.

“ Palace’? was used as a halting place by the early James’s, Kings of Scotland, on their pilgrimages to Whithorn. A few years ago, some very old trees here were cut down—trees said to have been planted by one of the Stuart Kings.

Cardoness Castle on Fleet Bay, in Anwoth, is the nearest of the four castles to Gatehouse,
a castle huge,
Which the great lord inhabits not.

In days past it was a stronghold of much importance, first of a family named Kardenesse, who are said to have built it about the end of the 14th century. From them it passed by maftiage to the M’Cullochs, then to the Gordons, later to the Maxwells, next to the Murrays of

22 A NOOK IN GALLOWAY

Broughton, and again it has (1904) reverted by purchase to the Maxwells. It has a stirring history in the days of Galloway unrest and strife. There are weird tales associated with the castle and its different tenants. Dr. Alexander Trotter, in his interesting ““ East Galloway Sketches,” relates that “ according to tradition, the last of the Kardenesse lairds was excessively annoyed because his lady presented him with nine daughters in succession. He informed her that if the tenth child was not a son he would drown both her and her daughters, and imported a Border riever named Graham, a co-partner in robbery, and some of his caterans to fulfil his mandate if he was again disappointed. The child, however, proved to be a son, and the laird was so rejoiced that he determined

A NOOK IN GALLOWAY. 23

to have a great carnival in honour of the heir on the ice of what was called the Black Loch (for it was winter time), and impiously chose the Sabbath Day for a series of projected orgies. The laird and lady, the infant heir, Graham and his robbers, and eight of the nine daughters joined in feasting and drinking; the ninth daughter, being of a religious turn of mind, absented herself because it was the Sabbath Day. Suddenly, without warning, the ice gave way, and every one of the revellers was drowned. The pious daughter became owner of Cardoness, and, marrying one of the M'Cullochs of Myrton, carried the estate into that family." Such is the story. *Se non é vero, é ben trovato.*

The Black Loch, which is a water of very small extent, is situated about

24 A NOOK IN GALLOWAY

half a mile distant from the castle. We boys used to gaze upon its waters with a mixture of wonder and awe. We were told that the Loch had no bottom, but that, if it had, the silver cradle in which the baby was carried to the revels on the ice would be found there. And as to the “ Kardenesse”” laird himself, one might have repeated, under our breath, the lines (if they had been then in existence) :-

I doubt, I sorely doubt, John Galloway
Is "neath the oxter¹ o' the De'il this day.

The last tenant of Cardoness Castle, Sir Godfrey M'Culloch, was unfortunate in his end. Owing to family differences between the Gordons and the M'Cullochs, there was bad blood between Sir Godfrey and William Gordon then resident at

¹ Armpit.

A NOOK IN GALLOWAY. 25

Bush o' Bield (previously the abode of the Rev. Samuel Rutherford). It appears that some cattle belonging to Sir Godfrey had been impounded at Bush o' Bield, and he made his way, carrying a loaded gun, to Gordon's house to claim their release. Gordon, who meanwhile had been apprised of his coming, came out armed in like manner and met him. A quarrel ensued between the two, with the result that M'Culloch fired, wounding his adversary in the leg. The wound unfortunately proved fatal, and Sir Godfrey fled the country and was outlawed. This incident occurred in 1697, since which year the castle has been deserted and allowed to fall into decay. Some years after, he returned, and, hoping to escape recognition, took up his abode in Edinburgh. But one day when at public worship, he was

26 A NOOK IN GALLOWAY.

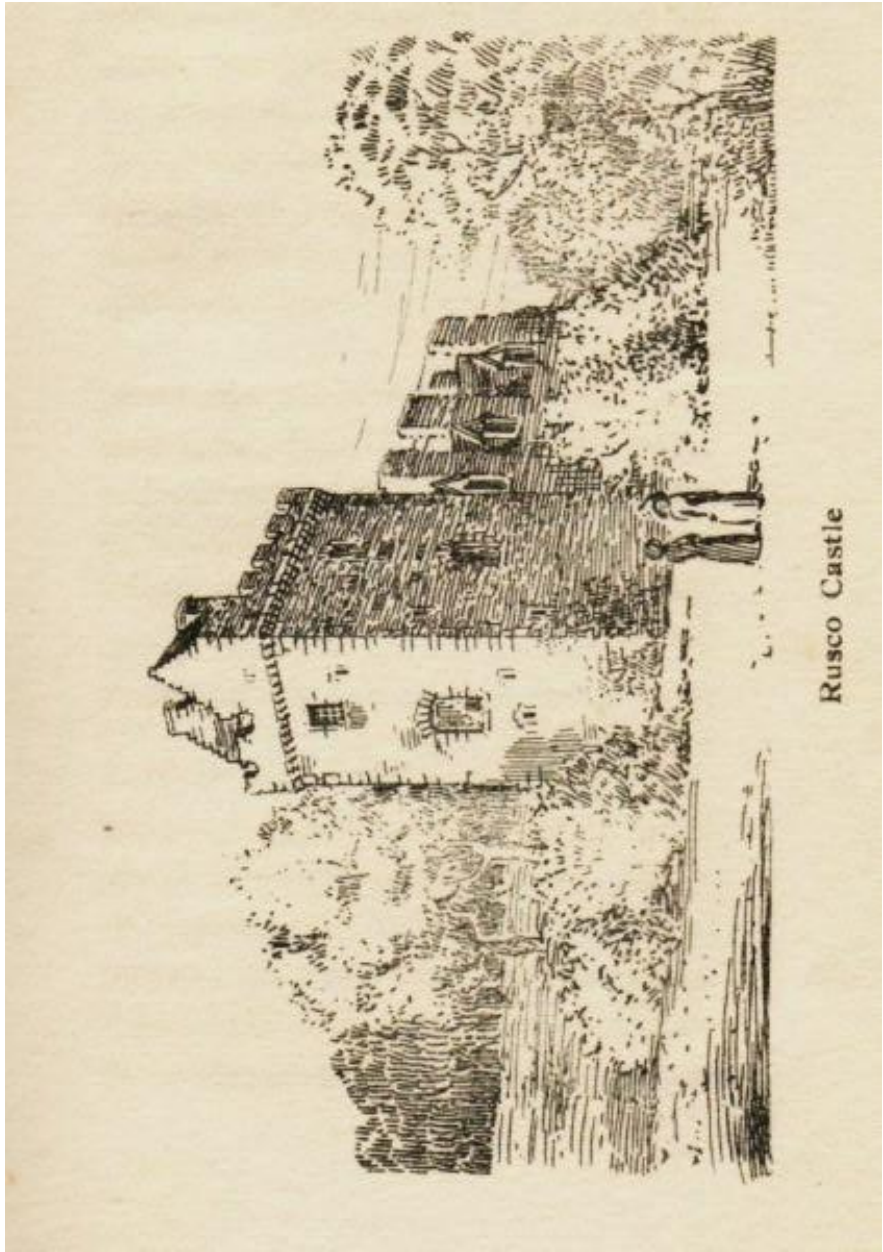
recognised by a Galloway man, who at once shouted ‘ Steik the door, there’s a murderer in the Kirk!’”

Sir Godfrey was arrested, tried and condemned to death. It is said that he was the last victim to perish on the ‘ maiden,” the Scottish guillotine.

Rusco Castle, also in Anwoth, and within three miles of Gatehouse on the Dromore Road, was, in the heyday of its pride, a residence of the Lords Kenmure, of whom Burns declared --

There never was coward o’ Kenmuir’s bluid,
Nor yet o’ Gordon’s line.

Later it passed to a younger branch of the family, the Gordons of Lochinvar, from one of whose strongholds issued forth ‘The Young Lochinvar,’ who “ came out of the West ”” the hero of Scott’s stirring ballad in



Rusco Castle

A NOOK IN GALLOWAY. 27

“Marmion,” describing how he rescued his bride, the ‘fair Ellen,’ from Netherby Hall, where, the bridal party being met, her hand was perforce about to be given away to ‘a laggard in love and a dastard in war.’”

Of old the Lords of Lochinvar
Bere dwelt in peace, but armed for war;
And Rusko Castle could declare
That valiant chiefs their ladies fair
Had sought and wooed and wedded there.

Barholm Castle, situated on elevated ground about half-way between Gatehouse and Creetown, was for some time a place of refuge for John Knox, “the Maccabeus of the Kirk of Scotland,” as John Galt styled him; the political not less than the religious reformer, who, after the murder of Rizzio in 1566, took the precaution “to pass west to Kyle.” As a matter of fact he made his way

through Kyle (the ancient name of a district of Ayrshire) and into Galloway, and found a haven of rest and security at Barholm Castle.

It is said that his signature was at one time to be seen on the wall of one of the rooms. Here he remained until after the assassination of Darnley and the eventual escape of Mary Queen of Scots from Lochleven Castle in 1568, when he fled to Geneva, having first removed his wife and children to the Castle of Rusco.

Carsluith Castle, still nearer to Creetown, on the shore of Wigtown Bay, is one of the oldest fortresses in Galloway. It was originally surrounded by a foss or trench, said to have been twenty feet wide and fifty feet deep, crossed by a draw-bridge. A legend tells that it was taken and held by Edward I., on



Carsluith Castle

A NOOK IN GALLOWAY. 29

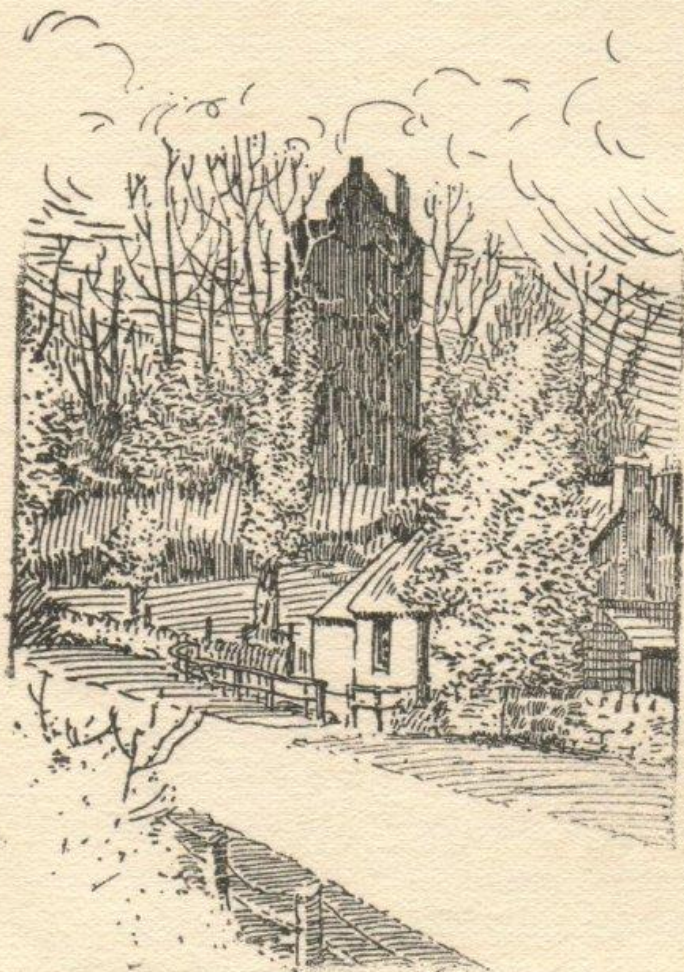
his invasion of Scotland at the end of the 13th century, and that it was stormed and retaken by Wallace and his comrades, with much slaughter of the “southern loons.”

It is also famous as being the birthplace of Gilbert Brown, the last of the Abbots of Dulce Cor (Sweetheart) or New Abbey, a virile controversialist in pre-Reformation times, and who eventually sought refuge in Paris, carrying with him the records of the abbey, which are said to have been destroyed by fire in the place where they were stored.

The very presence of these decayed strongholds awakens in the imagination, visions of a bygone age, when human everyday life was scarcely in harmony with the tranquil surrounding scenery which

30 A NOOK IN GALLOWAY

existed then as it does to-day. The Galwegians in feudal times must have been a rieving, bickering, fighting race when they needed walls of seven and nine feet in thickness in their castle dwellings to insure the safety of their persons and belongings. But these same castle walls, thick soever they were, did not prevent the more peaceful invasion of human progress which has sapped and riddled them. Nature, in kindly mood, has clothed the ruins with a mantle of greenery as though to set us the example of giving a sympathetic touch to the memory of the human lives that inhabited them. And so we may well emulate the example, for, after all, they were and we are “a John Tamson’s bairns,” a wayward family for whom all allowances must be made.



Cardoness Castle.

Their bones are dust,
And their good swords rust ;
Their souls are with the saints, we trust.

A modern song writer has essayed
in the following verses a gentler and
kindlier use for the old castle than
the blare and brulzie of battle :-

The hours are long, the hours are drear,
 And lingering daylight haunts me still ;
But soon the gloaming will be here,
 For see, the moon is owre the hill:
O dear to me her mellow beam
 When gaudy day has flown awa' ;
When faulted are the flow'rs that dream
 By Card'ness Castle's lonely wa'.
My winsome lass will keep our tryst
 To meet beside the ruin grey ;
For there wi' glowing hope imprest
 We vow'd to love as mortals may.
Dear was the place in days of old,
 When wistful knight to lady braw
His tale of love's sweet burden told,
 By Card'ness Castle's lonely wa'.
The sun has settled in the west,
 I hear the howlet's warning scream ;
The cheerful birds have sunk to rest.
 The weary lambs securely dream :
To meet my lassie dear I haste,
 And from her gaze fresh rapture draw ;
The sweets of faithful love to taste
 By Card'ness Castle's lonely wa'.

It was the same race of the Browns of Carsluith that in a later century produced Dr. Thomas Brown, the distinguished Professor of Moral Philosophy at the Edinburgh University, and successor to Dugald Stewart. An estimate of his life and work, by Professor Adamson, late Victoria (Manchester) University, is given in the Encyclopedia Britannica, in which the writer says: "The fame of Dr. Brown's lectures on Moral Philosophy, when published, surpassed even what they had attained when delivered. It is no exaggeration to say that never before or since has a work on Metaphysics been so popular. In 1851 the book had reached its 19th edition in England, and in



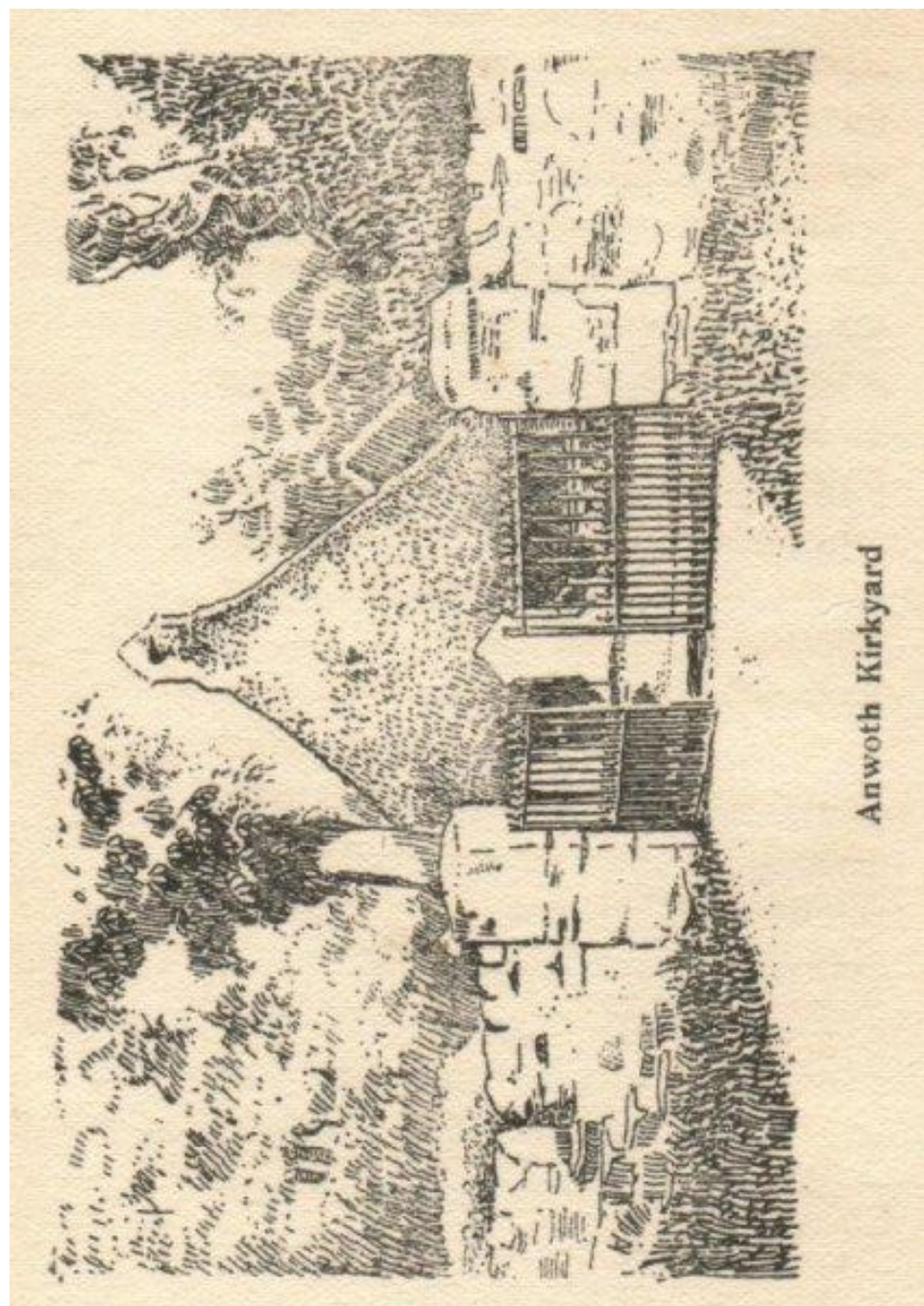
Thomas Brown, M.D.

America its success was perhaps greater.”

He was one of the celebrated coterie who in 1802 founded the “Edinburgh Review,” to which he was an early contributor. Dr. Thomas Brown was born at the Manse of Kirkmabreck in 1778 (of which parish his father was minister) and died in 1820 at the comparatively early age of forty-two. He was buried in the churchyard on the hillside above Creetown, and the tomb where rest his remains has an attraction for many a thoughtful student.

Returning to the Gatehouse end of the district, Anwoth is noted as being the parish of the celebrated Samuel Rutherford, “the saint of the Covenant,” as he has been called,

who ministered here in the troublous times of the Kirk in the days of Charles I., and Laud. His life and labours are part of both the ecclesiastical and political history of Scotland. To his deep religious fervour, as well as his literary gifts, his well-known “Letters”—first published in 1664 under the title of *Joshua Redivivus*—bear testimony. These are full of quaint words, phrases and allusions, and have become classic. Over thirty editions have been published, and new editions are still called for, both at home and abroad, translations having been made into Dutch, German and French. Dr. Grosart makes the interesting statement that “not long since a travelling friend met with two editions among the forsaken towns of the *Zuider-Zee*. It went to my heart to meet with a



Anwoth Kirkyard

copy under the shadow of Mount Hermon. In the backwoods of the Far West, the book lies side by side with the ‘ Pilgrim’s Progress.’ ”

The ruins of his Kirk, which was last used for public worship in 1827, are preserved in Anwoth Kirkyard, a burial place which for rural beauty of situation is unrivalled. Rutherford’s monument, a fine granite structure visible from most points of the district, stands on the neighbouring Boreland Hill.¹ It was inaugurated in the year 1842, your humble servant, then in his ninth year, being present at the great ceremony and having a vivid remembrance of the whole impressive scene.

¹ Boreland of Anwoth. There are several Borelands in Galloway. The name was originally spelt “ Bordland,” and signified the demesne which the lord kept in his hands for the maintenance of his table.

Rutherford was born in 1600, at Nisbet, Roxburgshire, was educated at Jedburgh and studied at Edinburgh, taking his M.A. degree in 1621. In 1627 he became minister of Anwoth parish, where his labours were abundant and fruitful. His teaching, however, was obnoxious to the ecclesiastical authorities of the time, and in 1636, at the instance of Sydserff, Bishop of Galloway, he was tried before the High Commission Court (established by Charles I. in 1634), deposed from his charge, and banished from his parish to Aberdeen. But his banishment produced an effect the opposite of what was intended.

The just man in his purpose strong
No madding crowd can bend to wrong.

Though debarred the pulpit, Rutherford became indefatigable in preaching through his immortal Letters,

the bulk of which would, otherwise, not have been written. In a letter written from Edinburgh in the course of the trial he says “ Our Bishop of Galloway, if the Commission should not give him his will of me (with an oath he said) he would write to the King.” Though not allowed to preach in Aberdeen, he had freedom of person. The comparative mildness of the sentence pronounced against him was no doubt due to the Argyle interest. In the same letter above referred to, he remarks: “ My Lord has brought me a friend from the Highlands of Argyle, my Lord of Lorn who hath done as much as was within the compass of his power.” The “ friend ” was the brother of Lady Kenmure, and became the celebrated Marquis of Argyle who was beheaded 7th May, 1661.

On leaving Anwoth for Aberdeen he thus writes under date Sept. 5th, 1636, to Alexander Gordon of Earlston :—

“The Lord is with me: I care not what man can do. I burden no man, and I want nothing. No king is better provided than I am. Sweet, sweet, and easy is the cross of my Lord. All men I look in the face (of whatsoever denomination, nobles and poor, acquaintance and strangers) are friendly to me. My Well-beloved is some kinder and more warmly than ordinary, and cometh and visiteth my soul. My chains are overgilded with gold. Only the remembrance of my fair days with Christ in Anwoth, and of my dear flock (whose case is my heart’s sorrow), is vinegar to my sugared wine. Yet both sweet and sour feed my soul. No pen, no words, no ingine can express to you the loveliness of my only, only Lord Jesus.”

Again, in 1637, writing to Robert Gordon of Knockbrenn, he says :—

“I dare not say that I am a dry tree, or that I have no room in the vineyard, but yet I often think that the sparrows

ate blest, who may resort to the house of God in Anwoth, from which I am banished.”

In 1638 he was permitted to resume his ministry at Anwoth, but, in the following year being appointed Professor of Divinity at St. Andrews he removed thither, and eventually, in 1647, became Principal of St. Mary's College.

His beloved Anwoth and his flock there continued always to occupy a warm corner in his affections, and he kept up a correspondence with friends in the district with whose names we are familiar, amongst others with Lady Kenmure, the Gordons of Knockbrenn, Cardoness and Rusco; the M'Cullochs of Ardwall; the Laird of Cally; Lennox of Disdow, and Mure of Cassencary.

The story has often been told of Archbishop Usher's visit in disguise

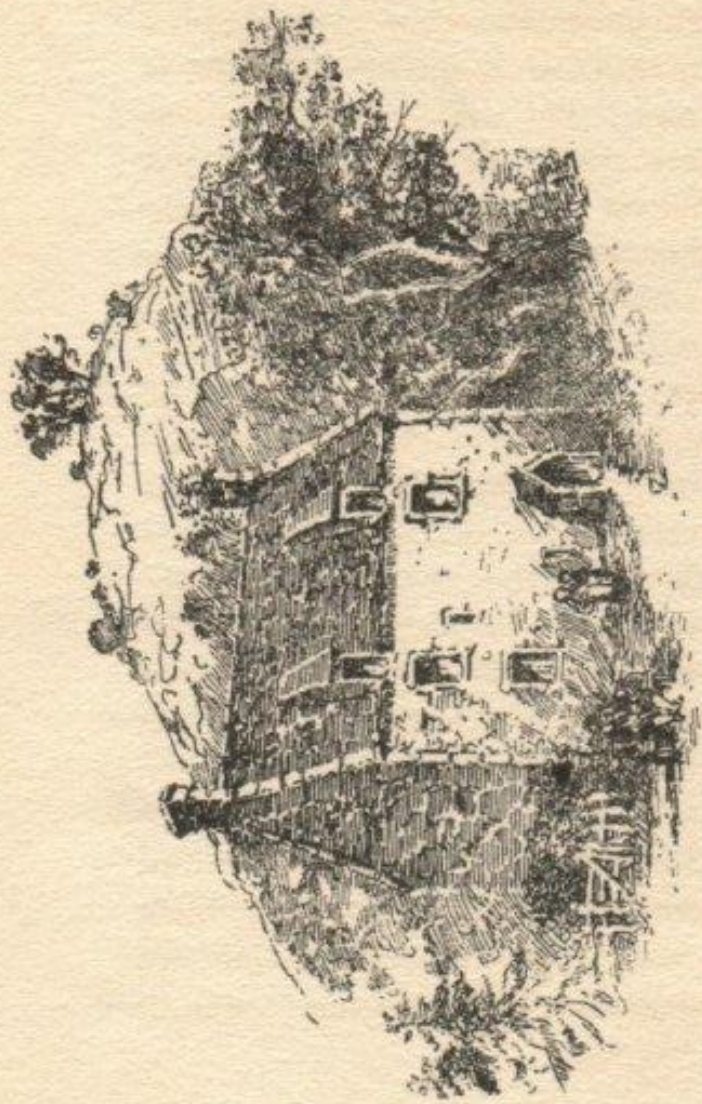
to Bush o' Bield to learn at first-hand something of the preacher whose fame had been noised abroad. He arrived as a wayfarer one Saturday night and asked for shelter which was readily granted. It is said that, the pastor being otherwise engaged, Mrs. Rutherford was catechising, as was wont, some of the parishioners who were in attendance for that purpose. The stranger sat amongst the others, and on being asked how many commandments there were, replied, eleven. The questioner corrected him, saying there were only ten, on which he quoted the words of Jesus : 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another,' making the eleventh. This and other indications led Rutherford to suspect that the stranger was no ordinary visitor. The two entered

into conversation on theological questions, and the Archbishop was so gratified with the learning, piety and urbanity of his host that he revealed his identity and the object of his visit. Rutherford was equally delighted, and eventually invited the Archbishop to officiate for him in his Kirk on the morrow, to which he readily consented, taking for his text the New Commandment of Our Lord.

Always an extremist, Rutherford came again into collision with the authorities in 1661, after the Restoration, and one of his many works, a political treatise, entitled, “*Lex Rex: a dispute for the just Prerogative of King and People,*” was publicly burnt at the cross of Edinburgh and at the gates of his own College, St. Andrews, by the common hangman, while he himself was

deposed from his office of Principal of St. Mary's and summoned to appear at Edinburgh on a charge of high treason. The summons reached him on his deathbed, and his reply was that having already got a summons to a higher tribunal he "behoved to answer that first." He died on 30th March, 1661, aged 61 years, and was buried at St. Andrews.

It has become the fashion to describe Rutherford as "a Mystic." Someone so designated him, and as there are always those ready to "follow a leader" the description has obtained currency. If by mysticism is meant "obscurity of doctrine," the term is a misnomer as applied to the Anwoth pastor. His "Tetters" notwithstanding the age of them, are as clear as noonday to present day readers. His doctrines,



Bush o' Field

whether we agree with them or not, are in nosense obscure. He that runs may read. If, again, by “‘a Mystic’ is meant ‘one who seeks for direct intercourse with God in elevated religious feeling or ecstasy,” again the name does not apply to the man. His anxieties, his deep heart-yearnings, his sollicitudes, his prayers, were, for the most part, for the people of his flock and for the Church of Christ. A Mystic is always selfish, seeking his own good rather than that of others. Selfishness is the last charge that can be brought against Samuel Rutherford. Enthusiast, yes! enthusiastic even to martyrdom. !

The house in which Rutherford dwelt when at Anwoth, called “ Bush o’ Bield,” was of considerable size and was situated on rising ground in

one corner of a field not far from the Kirkyard, the spot being still pointed out. It was unfortunately razed to the ground in 1826-7, and the stones used in the building of the New Church. “ Rutherford’s walk” is still shown in the wood behind the field.

In Anwoth churchyard, in addition to the ruins of Rutherford’s Kirk, there are many features of interest. It was, and is yet, the burial place of some of the great Galloway families, the M^cCullochs, the Gordons, the Maxwells, the Hannays. It contains also the graves of several of the martyred Covenanters, chief amongst these the grave of John Bell of Whiteside, stepson of Viscount Kenmure, who “was barbarously shot to death”

A NOOK IN GALLOWAY. 45

by command of the notorious Sir Robert Grierson of Lag in 1685. The stone is laid flat and is raised a few feet above the grave, and details the circumstances of the murder in an inscription as follows:

Here lies John Bell, of Whiteside, who was barbarously shot to death in the Paroch of Tongland, at the command of Grier of Lag, anno 1685.

This monument shall tell posterity
That blessed Bell of Whiteside here doth lye,
Who at the command of bloody Lag was
shot,

A murder strange which should not be
forgot.

Douglas of Morton did him quarters give,
Yet cruel Lag would not let him survive.
This Martyr sought some time to recom-
mend

His soul to God before his days did end:
The tyrant said ‘ What, Devil? you’ve
prayed eneuch

These long seven years on mountain and
in cleuch,”

And instantly caused him, with other
four.

Be shot to death upon Kirkconnel Moor ;
So thus did end the lives of these dear
saints

For their adherence to the Covenants.

Claverhouse himself, with his dragoons, rushed through this Nook of Galloway, carrying fire and sword amongst the children of the Covenant, and a cottage still exists within short distance of Anwoth Kirk, where it is reported he put up for the night.

The stone over the martyr Bell's grave is one of those which were periodically kept in order and the lettering renovated by the beneficent and barely requited labours of Robert Paterson, of Balmaclellan, the 'Old Mortality' of Sir Walter Scott's novel. Scott gives a number of particulars of Paterson, supplied to him by his friend and correspondent, Joseph Train. Amongst these is the following account of expenses incurred by Paterson during one of his visits to our locality. This is of interest as

A NOOK IN GALLOWAY. 47

showing the frugal habits of the man and the reasonable charges of those with whom he lodged.

Gatehouse-of-Fleet, 4th Feb., 1796.
Robert Paterson, debtor to Margaret Chrystale.

	£	s.	d.	
To drye Lodging forseven weeks	0	4	1	
To four Auchlet of AitMeal	0	3	4	
To 6 Lippies of Potatoes	0	1	3	
To Lent Money at the time of Mr. Reid's Sacrament	0	6	0	
To 3 Chappius of Yill with Sandy the Keelman	0	0	9	
		0	15	5
Received in part	0	10	0	
Unpaid	0	5	5	

“Sandy the Keelman,” it is explained, was a well-known humorist popularly called by the name of “Old Keely Bags,” who dealt in the keel or chalk with which farmers mark their flocks.

On the Gatehouse and Creetown road which winds along the shores of Fleet Bay and Wigtown Bay, are the scenes in Scott's "Guy Mannering," though the author, without committing himself, only smiled when he heard the suggestion.

Gatehouse, at one end, is supposed to be the "Kippletringan" of the novel, and Creetown, at the other, is "Portanferry." Cardoness Castle, or, what is more probable, Barholm Castle, within (according to the novel) an hour's ride of Kippletringan, is "Ellangowan Auld Place." Cassencary near Creetown is Woodbourne. The "Kaim of Derncleugh" is in the neighbourhood of Skyreburn.¹ About midway of the two

¹The old Galloway saying, "A Skyreburn Warning," signifying calamity without notice, has reference to the sudden rise and rush of the water in this burn, due to the rainfall on the Anwoth hills where it takes its rise.

towns, and down by the rocky shore of the bay at Ravenshall, is the cave of ‘Captain Dirck Hatteraick,’ ‘half Manks, half Dutchman, whole devil,’ and his companions, accessible to the curious visitor when the tide is out, but only accessible to Hatteraick with his smuggled kegs of French brandy, wine, tea, cambric, Mechlin lace and other contraband merchandise when the tide was full. At each bend of the road you may by a small effort of the imagination descry the gaunt six feet form of ‘Meg Merrilies,’ with her dark elflocks and with her long sloe-thorn staff, coming striding along. In the novel, as represented, Colonel Manering, on his return from his wanderings and warfare in the East, puts up at the hostelry, yclept the ‘Gordon Arms at Kippletrigan,’ a small but comfortable inn kept by

“Mrs. MacCandlish.” This inn is the Murray Arms Hotel of to-day. The Mason’s Lodge where the sale of the lands and estate of Ellan-gowan is stated to have taken place (see Chapter xiv. of Guy Mannering) is the substantial building adjoining the hostelry above mentioned. This, along with other references in the novel, may be taken as settling the question of the identity of the town of Gatehouse-of-Fleet with “ Kippletrigan.” It is well known that Scott visited Galloway in 1795, “ in order,” as Lockhart states in the life, “to make himself acquainted with the persons and localities mixed up with the case of a certain Rev. Mr. M’Naught, Minister of Girthon,” and doubtless he stayed at the inn in question. True, the Mason’s Lodge was not then built, but it is not unlikely that he may have paid a subsequent visit

A NOOK IN GALLOWAY. 51

to the district, seeing that his brother Thomas Scott, married a daughter of M^cCulloch of Ardwall, and looking round the town of Gatehouse-of-Fleet, he would be impressed with the appearance of the Mason's Arms Hall next door to the hostelry of "Mrs. MacCandlish," with its stone sign over the front entrance, on which is chiselled various mysterious Masonic emblems.

A still more notable event than that which the novelist describes is associated with the Murray Arms Hotel. It was here, in the room to the left of the entrance, that Burns wrote down the first rough draft of his immortal ode, "Scots wha hae." John Syme, a friend of the poet and his frequent companion, states that as they two were on their way to

Gatehouse after a visit to Kenmure Castle, on August 1st, 1793, they encountered a terrific storm of wind, lightning, and rain, whilst riding across the moors. Burns was silent and apparently in deep thought during the journey, and on their arrival at the Murray Arms Hotel, Gatehouse-of-Fleet, the poet entered the room mentioned, sat down at the table, and wrote out the ode, which he had composed on the way. Burns's own account, writing to George Thomson a month later, differs somewhat from this; but the two statements, which do not greatly differ, may be reconciled if it be assumed that the rough draft of the ode was penned as described by Syme, the accuracy of whose statement there is no reason to doubt, and that, later, it was retouched so as to assume the

present form on being sent to Thomson for publication.

John Keats, the poet, visited this ‘Nook in Galloway’ in 1818, in the course of a walking tour in Scotland with his friend Charles Brown, and was charmed with the scenery. In a letter to his brother Tom, dated 3rd July, of that year, he says: “We are now in Meg Merrilies’ country, and have this morning passed through some parts exactly suited to her. Kirkcudbright County is very beautiful, very wild, with craggy hills . . . I am now writing at Newton-Stewart, six miles into Wigtown. Our landlady of yesterday said, ‘Very few south-emers passed hereaways’.” He encloses a ballad, “Meg Merrilies,” consisting of seven verses, which he

54 A NOOK IN GALLOWAY

wrote on the occasion, beginning :—

Old Meg she was a Gipsy,
And liv'd upon the Moors ;
Her bed, it was the brown heath turf,
And her house was out of doors.

and ending :-

Old Meg was brave as Margaret Queen,
And tall as Amazon:
An old red blanket cloak she wore ;
A chip hat had she on.
God rest her aged bones somewhere—
She died full long ago !

There is no special merit in the verses, but the record is interesting. Another poet, Thomas Campbell, author of “The Pleasures of Hope,” “Ye Mariners of England,” and other well-known poems, has an incidental association with the district. It was in relation to the following circumstances that he wrote his poem, “The Beech-Tree’s Petition.” It appears that this noble tree (which, by the way, was

A NOOK IN GALLOWAY. 55

blown down in one of the storms of last winter, 1909-10) was marked by the proprietor Mr. M'Culloch of Ardwall House, (now the residence of Lord and Lady Ardwall), to be cut down, for the reason that it kept bare all the ground within its circumference. The young ladies of the house besought the poet to appeal to their father that it might be spared. The appeal was granted. Campbell's poem is sometimes confused with that other poem on a similar theme, written by George Perkins Morris :

Woodman, spare that tree,
Touch not a single bough.

Needless to say the two are quite distinct.

THE BEECH-TREE'S PETITION.

O leave this barren spot to me !
Spare, woodman, spare the beechen
tree!

Though bush or floweret never grow
 My dark unwarming shade below ;
 Nor summer bud perfume the dew
 Of rosy blush, or yellow hue !
 Nor fruits of autumn, blossom born,
 My green and glossy leaves adorn ;
 Nor murmuring tribes from me derive
 Th' ambrosial amber of the hive ;
 Yet leave this barren spot to me.
 Spare, woodiman, spare the beechen
 tree !

Thrice twenty summers I have seen
 The sky grow bright, the forest green ;
 And many a wintry wind have stood
 In bloomless, fruitless solitude,
 Since childhood in my pleasant bower
 First spent its sweet and sportive hour ;
 Since youthful lovers in my shade
 Their vows of truth and rapture made,
 And on my trunk's surviving frame
 Carved many a long-forgotten name.
 Oh! by the sighs of gentle sound,
 First breathed upon this sacred ground ;
 By all that love has whisper'd here,
 Or beauty heard with ravish'd ear ;
 As Love's own altar honour me:
 Spare, woodman, spare the beechen
 tree ¹

¹ Landor, in one of his " Imaginary Conversations " finely expresses the same ideas: " How many fond and how many lively thoughts have been nurtured under this tree! How many kind hearts

Still dealing with the poets. A few miles from Gatehouse is the hamlet of Tannymaas, in the parish of Bogue, (noted for its delicious honey), where in 1783 William Nicholson, the poet, author of “ The Brownie of Bladnoch,” was born. I have a vivid recollection of him as he appeared when approaching sixty years of age, having seen his best days.

‘Wull’ Nicholson (as he was usually named) was a “ packman ,” and tramped the country selling his wares. In his later years he fell into drinking habits, and was rarely quite

have beaten here ! Its branches are not so numerous as the couples they have invited to sit beside it, nor its blossoms and leaves as the expressions of tenderness it has witnessed. What appeals to the pure all-seeing heavens! what similitudes to the everlasting mountains! What protestations of eternal truth and constancy from those who now are earth!”

sober in going his rounds. Wull was accustomed to call at our house on the Anwoth side of Gatehouse-of-Fleet, to sell some of his small stock of merchandise and have a 'crack'? with my mother and granny (who lived with us). I remember him well, and, as a very small boy, used to sit and listen to his queer talk. At that time he was of a tall, ungainly figure with bent back, carrying a basket in which were his wares—for he had now abandoned the pack—a stick in the other hand, and often talking to himself as he trudged along. One day in the summer of the year 1842, he called rather the worse for drink, and after chatting for a time, my mother, who meanwhile, as was her custom, had given him his tea, advised him to be getting along to his home at Borgue. There was

a shrubbery along the front of our house, and one of the bushes had been broken off, leaving a short stump sticking out above the soil. Wull, in going down the three steps at the front door, missed his footing, and falling sideways his face struck the stump, which pierced his left cheek, from which the blood streamed copiously. We raised the poor poet up, I doing my small best to help, and after resting and getting his cheek dressed, he staggered away on his journey home. I _ understand that he carried the mark of the wound on his cheek to the day of his death in 1849.

Nicholson was a genuine poet. Though comparatively unlettered, and despite the hum-drum character of the packman's daily toil, he was gifted with the power of imagination in a marked degree.

He was musical in his tastes also. Both of these qualities are reflected in his poems, in the weirdness of the conception, for example, displayed in his “Brownie,” and in the musical flow of the lines in that poem as well as in his songs. He had a melodious voice which was often heard at the country merry-meetings, and he was an expert performer on the bagpipes—in-fusing his spirit into the uncanny music of that instrument.

M’Diarmid, in his memoir of Nicholson, relates that on one occasion he was discovered in the early morning in the hollow of a field discoursing the music of his pipes to a number of wild colts that frisked around him, evidently captivated by the strains; and, declared Wull, “I’ve mair pleasure in pipin’ to thae daft cowts

than if the best ladies in the land were figurin' away afore me.”” In John Faed’s portrait of the poet, (which in my opinion, hardly does justice either to the painter himself, or to the subject of his brush), he is depicted with the bagpipes under his arm.

The best known of his poems is “ The Brownie of Bladnoch ”” already mentioned, a ballad of remarkable power which has become popular far beyond the bounds of Galloway, and is justly admired for its weird humour, rugged strength and pathos.

There is a charm about the ballad that grows with acquaintance like every product of genius—familiarity by no means breeding contempt.

The telling of the story is the work of a true poet ; not a line or a word in excess throughout its whole

length. Its humour is of the finest, and slyly suggestive. What a pathetic interest one feels in poor Aiken-drum, ‘the shapeless phantom,” “the unyirthly wight,” as he pleads for work at the farm—offering to do all the labour of the fields and flocks, and for what small recompense ! only “a cogfu’ o’ brose tween the light and dark.” The ballad is too long to be given in full here, but a brief summary may be attempted

There cam a strange wight to our town
 en’,
 And the fient a body did him ken ;
 He tirlid na lang, but he glided ben
 Wi’ a dreary, dreary hum.
 His face did glare like the glow o’ the
 west,
 When the drumlie cloud has it half
 o’ercast ;
 Or the struggling moon when she’s
 sair distrest,—
 O sits! ’twas Aiken-drum.

A NOOK IN GALLOWAY. 63

And “the bauldest stood aback ”
when they looked on him; even
“the black dog growling cowered
his tail’ at the sight of the
Brownie.

“ His presence protect us!” quoth the
auld gudeman,
“ What wad ye, where won ye— by sea or
by lan’!
I conjure ye—speak—by the Beuk¹ in
my han’!”

What a grane ga’e Aiken-drum !

And so the poor Brownie, thus
apostrophised, describes whence he
comes and what he seeks—‘ Wark
for Aiken-drum.” Nothing would
come amiss; and the wages?

“‘T’se seek nae guids, gear, bond, nor
mark ;
I use nae beddin’, shoon, nor sark ;
But a cogfu’ o’ brose ’tween the light
and dark,
Is the wage o’ Aiken-drum.”

¹ The Bible.

64 A NOOK IN GALLOWAY

What better offer than that, my
masters ? One might tolerate a
servant that promised so fair even
though “the glare o’ his e’e nae
bard hath exprest.” So,—

Quoth the wylie auld wife; “The thing
speaks weel ;
Our workers are scant—we have routh
o’ meal ;
Gif he’]l do as he says—be he man, be he
de’il,
 Wow ! we’ll try this Aiken-drum.”

But the wenches skirled “ he’s no be here !
His eldritch look gars us swarf wi’ fear,
And the fient a ane will the house come
near
(Perhaps they dreaded the scaring of
their sweet-hearts)
 If they think but o’ Aiken-drum.”

And again the sensible auld wife,—

“ Puir slipmalabors! ye hae little wit ;
Ts’t na hallowmas now, and the crap out
yet!”
Sae she silenced them a’ wi’ a stamp o’
her fit ;
 “ Sit yer wa’s down, Aiken-drum.”

A NOOK IN GALLOWAY. 65

Neither did he fail to do as he
had promised and more,—
Roun' a' that side what wark was dune,
By the streamer's gleam, or the glance o'
the moon,
A word, or a wish—and the Brownie cam
sune,
Sae helpfu' was Aiken-drum.

Alas ! —

A new-made wife, fu' o' rippish freaks,
Fond o' a' things feat for the first five
weeks,
Laid a mouldy pair o' her ain man's breeks
By the brose o' Aiken-drum.

Let the learned in lore of this
kind decide what spell was between
the breeks and the Brownie, and
why from that day forth “ he was
nae mair seen.” And the further
question: What of the truth of it
all—of the veritable existence of
Brownies in general, and of this
Brownie in particular? Well, have
We not proof enough and to spare !

66 A NOOK IN GALLOWAY

Awa'! ye wrangling sceptic tribe,
Wi' your pros and your cons wad ye decide
'Gainst the 'sponsible voice o' a hale
 country-side
 On the facts "bout Aiken-drum !

And what better proof can we have
than this:—

Though the "Brownie o' Bladnoch "
 lang be gane,
The mark o' his feet's left on mony a
 stane ;
And mony a wife and mony a wean
 Tell the feats o' Aiken-drum.

B'en now, light loons that jibe and sneer
At spiritual guests and a' sic gear,
At the Glashnoch mill hae swat wi' fear,
 And looked roun' for Aiken-drum.

More convincing still :—

And guidly folks hae gotten a fright,
When the moon was set, and the stars
 gied nae light,
At the roaring linn in the howe o' the
 night,
 Wi' sughs like Aiken-drum.

Dr. John Brown, no mean judge,
is enthusiastic in his praise of the

ballad. He says: “ Shrewdness, tenderness, imagination, fancy, humour, word-music, dramatic power, even wit—all are here. I have often read it aloud to children, and it is worth anyone’s while to do it. You will find them repeating all over the house for days such lines as take their heart and tongue.”¹

Nicholson himself, on being complimented as the author of the poem, replied: “It has ae faut, an’ that an ill ane: it has nae moral.” Here, surely, he is wrong ; at least half-a-dozen excellent morals can be educed from it, not the less inculcated that they are not thrust intrusively on the reader’s attention. Indeed, the whole poem is a moral in itself.

¹ See article in Hore Subsecive : “The Black Dwarf’s Bones.”

In front of the Academy in Borgue village, a grey granite slab eleven feet in height, with sunk panel in which is inserted a bronze plate containing a portrait of the poet, was erected to his memory in 1900. His remains lie buried in Kirkandrews Churchyard, Borgue, and on the stone which marks his resting place is the line :—

“No future age shall see his name expire.”

Poor Wull Nicholson ! Galloway may think kindly of her poet. He wrote many other meritorious pieces as his published volume testifies.¹ The following song, “ The Banks of Fleet,” descriptive of our immediate district, may be given at length :—

¹ The Poetical Works of William Nicholson, with a Memoir by Malcolm Mc L. Harper. Fourth edition. Dalbeattie, Thomas Fraser, 1897.

A NOOK IN GALLOWAY. 69

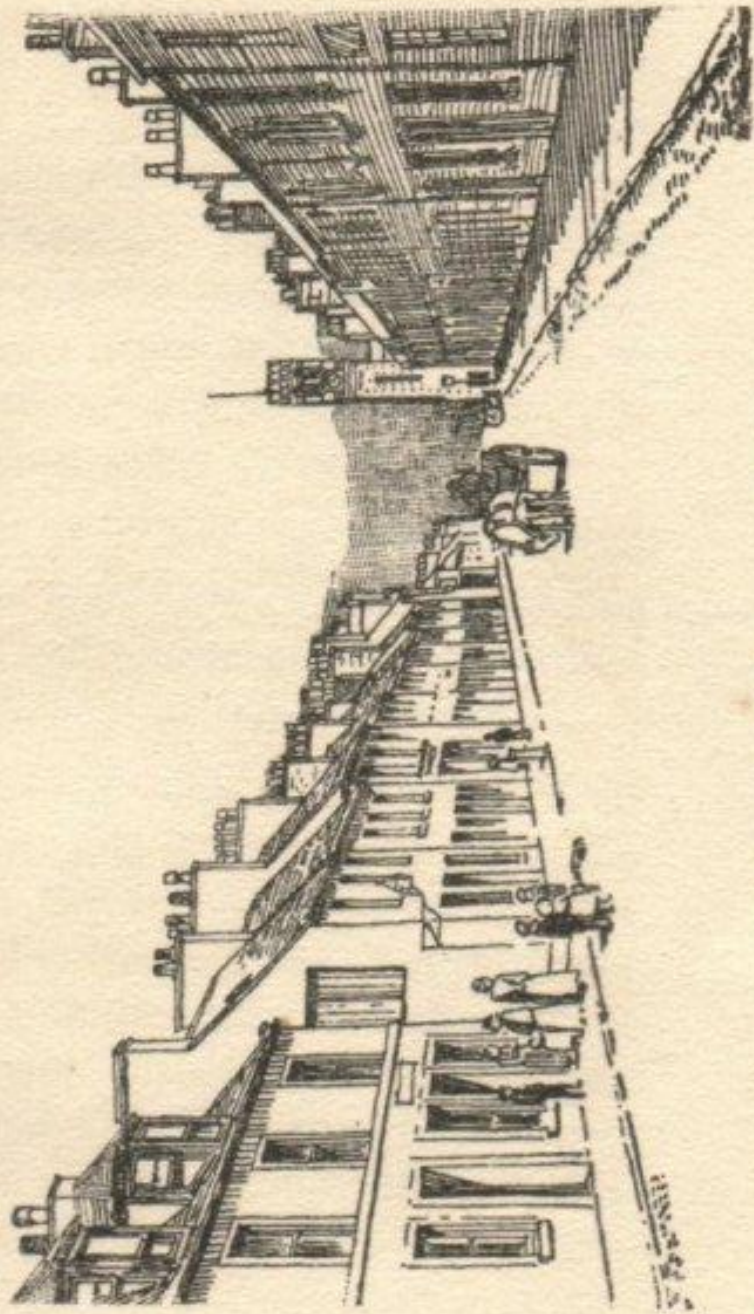
I sing the bonny banks o' Fleet,
 Where Nature spreads her various
 treasure ;
Frae fruits and flowers o' every hue,
 To berries blae, and craps o' heather.
Thy pebbled shores and sea-girt isles,
 Thy far-famed woods and views sae
 mony ;
Thy hills and haughs where summer
 smiles,
Thy strappin' lads, and lasses bonny.
Thy winding banks and flowery dells,
 With bloomin' fields around in order ;
Where commerce spreads her flowin' sails,
 Auld Card'ness tower o'erlooks thy
 border.
Upon thy banks a borough stands,
 Sae feat and healthy, few's completer ;
Gae search through Scotia's southern
 strands,
 Nane's shiel'd sae biel', nor shows
 aught sweeter,
Castramon waves his leafy locks,
 Amidst the meads where flowers are
 springing;
And shields wi' woods his furrowed rocks,
 Where lightsome birds are blythely
 singing.
The Rusco ruin's nodding grey,
 Where Gordons gay ance blythely
 ranted ;
And wild woods spreading o'er the brae,
 By Nature's ruleless hand be-planted.

70 A NOOK IN GALLOWAY.

At distance, Cairnsmuir rears his form,
The hoary snaw his haffets wrappin’;
His dark brow braves the wintry
storm—

A blue mist-bonnet co’ers his tappin’.
Fain would I sing each noble name,
Where kindness blends wi’ wealth her
traces ;
But deeds surpass the poet’s pen
As native smiles do borrowed graces.

The “borough” to which Nicholson refers in the song is, of course Gatehouse-of-Fleet. When Broughton Murray occupied Cally House in the earlier half of last century, Gatehouse was a busy, thriving town, with its copper mining, its cotton mills, its tanneries, its bark sheds and other industries and a considerable shipping trade. Even boat-building was practised more or less. I remember being witness to the launching of a schooner, the “Lady Ann Murray,” from the “Boatgreen” at high tide. This would be about the year 1840.



High Street, Gatehouse-of-Fleet.

A NOOK IN GALLOWAY. 71

Its population, too, was greatly more than it boasts at the present day; this meant brisk times for the local tradesmen, and the farmers necessarily shared in the general prosperity. They were halcyon days in the little town! Amongst such a community there were, in those long past days, quite a number of noteworthy characters.

All, all are gone, the old familiar faces !
But there are those still living
who will remember Provost Menzies
the tanner at the Boatgreen.

An honest man, close buttoned to the
chin,
Broadcloth without, and a warm heart
within.

John Stewart the master-mason
who built the Rutherford monument ;
“ Gussie ” Gordon the auctioneer ;
Hughie Campbell the village black-
smith; “ Mr.” Hopkins the leader

days of Alexander Murray of Broughton; Samuel Blyth, post-master and tanner ; Johnnie Sproat, the bellman; Lappin, the constable ; Andrew Finlay, the watchmaker, who at his death left the nucleus of a fund for the erection of the clock-tower that graces the townhead ; my friend Andrew McLean, one of the best citizens that Gatehouse ever possessed, though, like many another good man, less appreciated than his merits deserved. It was mainly by his efforts, seconded by the late Dr. Cox, that a supply of potable water was brought to the Burgh, where, previously, the only water supply was from polluted wells.

Lie gently on his ashes, gentle earth !
Last, but not least, ‘Auld John

Kennedy,” of whom the rhyme runs :—

Elizabeth and Jeanie, baith,
Little John and Tammy,
Elijah, Joe and Jenny too,
Willie, Rob and Mammy.
Long Auntie Margit,
Short Uncle Gaw,
And Auld John Kennedy
The father o’ us a’.

At the present day there is but little scope for the energies and ambitions of the young aspiring folks in this Nook in Galloway, the result being that Gatehouse boys are squandered over the wide world. But there is a strong fascination about the place for those who have spent their young days in the town or its vicinity. Its surrounding scenery and its associations stamp themselves on the memory with an impress that neither time nor change can efface. The “ Home-land ” aye seems calling them back.

A local poetess, Jeanie Donnan, has given expression to this feeling in many touching verses,¹ more especially in her “ Wullie’s Mill,” “Callin’ me Back,” and “Thochts o’ Hameland.”—

So may memory’s footsteps guide them
Through the snares aroun’ their feet,
And may God who watches oure them,
Bless the laddies frae the Fleet !

Thomas Murray, LL.D., author of the “ J,iterary History of Galloway,” a “ Life of the Rev. Samuel Rutherford,” and other works, was a native of the parish of Girthon, having been born at the hamlet of Bush, half-a-mile from Gatehouse-of-Fleet, in 1792. He received his education at Girthon School, and at the age of eighteen entered

¹ Hameland. The Poems of Jeanie Donnan. Published by John F. Brown, Newton-Stewart, 1907.

Edinburgh University. For a time he was editor of the Edinburgh Weekly Chronicle. He was one of Carlyle's earliest, and eventually one of his oldest, friends. Dr. Murray died in 1872, aged 80. Carlyle and he were students together at the University, and at the beginning and end of the terms together walked a great part of the way between Edinburgh, and Gatehouse and Ecclefechan, respectively. In some Autobiographical notes,¹ he writes: 'On arrival in Edinburgh my companion (Carlyle) and I took joint lodgings, consisting of a single bedroom, and the character of the accommodation may be inferred when I mention that the rental was 4s. 6d. per week, coals included.' In one of his letters to Murray,

¹ MS. in the possession of Mr. John A. Fairley, Edinburgh.

76 A NOOK IN GALLOWAY

under date Kirkcaldy, 28th July,
1818, Carlyle writes :—

“ Be assured, I have not forgotten the many joyful days which long ago we spent together—sweet days of ignorance and airy hope! They had their troubles too; but to bear them, there was a light-heartedness and buoyancy of soul, which the sterner qualities of manhood, and the harsher buffetings that require them, have for ever forbidden to return. . . . With most young men, I have had dreams of intellectual greatness, and of making me a name upon the earth. They were little else but dreams. To gain renown is what I do not hope, and hardly care for, in the present state of my feelings.”¹ Carlyle at that time was in his twenty-third year.

Again, from Kinnaird House
(Perthshire) 17th June, 1823 :—

“ Your letters have a charm to me independently of their intrinsic merit ; they are letters of my first and oldest correspondent; they carry back the mind to old days—days in themselves perhaps not greatly better than those

¹From ‘Early Letters of Thomas Carlyle,’ edited by Charles Eliot Norton, Vol. 1. p., 163.

now passing over us—but invested by the kind treachery of imagination with hues which nothing present can equal.”¹

Carlyle at least once visited his friend Dr. Murray at Girthon, and it is related in the ““ East Galloway Sketches,” before mentioned, that “on one occasion when visiting Dean Stanley, Queen Victoria being present, the conversation turned on beautiful scenery, and Carlyle launched into a rapturous description of the beauties of Galloway, asserting there was not in her Majesty’s dominions a finer drive than the one round the shores of the Stewartry by Gatehouse-of-Fleet. He became so excited that he edged his chair unconsciously on to the Queen’s dress train, and her Majesty, being too polite to interrupt the panegyrist

¹ Ibid. Vol. 1. p., 202.

sat quietly until his eloquence exhausted itself, and then called attention to her imprisonment, greatly to Carlyle's chagrin and the amusement of the company."

Carlyle's rapture was justified. The scenery in "fair Anwoth by the Solway" is perhaps the most beautiful in the South of Scotland ; sea, woods, hills, dales and moorlands all combine to lend it variety and charm. Of its still other attractions let the poet tell :—

On Ardwall's silver shore
 Swift runs the Solway tide ;
 On Boreland's steeps the lambkin sleeps,
 And I will to my bride.
 Fleet has no brighter face
 Than that of her I love ;
 There is no tenderer winning grace
 In all the vocal grove.
 Cairnsmore heights are bare,
 Castramont wood is green
 And Rusco's braes with flowers are
 fair
 Where my true love is seen.

A NOOK IN GALLOWAY. 79

Blow, wind, across Dromore,
Drift, snow, on Murrayton ;
Beat high, ye waves, on Kirkclaugh shore,
Where the rocky headlands frown ;
There's peace in Rusco's vale,
For, sheltered from the storm,
The cushat croons his love-lom tale,
And the farmer's hearth is warm.
Cairnholy banks are green,
Bleak is Cairnhallow hill;
Fleet rows along with merry song,
And works the labouring mill.

O, Girthon maids are fair,
And Tongland lasses kind:
On Borgue's wide shore warm hearts
galore
The wanderer will find.
But Anwoth bears the bell—
'Tis here I set my store;
No fairer form in down and dell
Than her whom I adore.
O Cairnsmore heights are bare,
Castramont wood is green ;
And Rusco's braes with flowers are
fair,
Where my true love is seen.

Among other notable characters in this "Nook" of ours was James Murray Denniston, Captain in the

Galloway militia, a native of Gatehouse-of-Fleet, born in 1769. He received his education at the Girthon parish school, where he attained proficiency in Latin and Greek. Eventually, he settled at Creetown, of which place he became Town Clerk. When the Galloway militia was quartered in Edinburgh, Captain Denniston made the acquaintance of Sir Walter Scott, at whose house in Castle Street he was a frequent visitor; and also of James Hogg the “ Ettrick Shepherd.” He was a man of versatile accomplishments, a prolific writer and poet, author of “ Legends of Galloway,” the “ Battle of Craignilder” and many other works. He attained the great age of 88 years, dying in 1857, and was buried in Anwoth Kirkyard.

John Mactaggart, civil engineer,

author of the “ Gallovidian Encyclopedia” (1824), was born at Plunton in 1791, in the shadow of the old castle of that name a few miles from Gatehouse-of-Fleet. This remarkable Encyclopedia, which reached a second edition in 1876, besides being a dictionary of words and phrases used in Galloway, with examples of their use, is an interesting and extraordinary melange of prose and poetry, folklore, accounts of manners and customs, with biographical sketches of noted Galwegians, the author himself included. All graphically told in characteristic vein, and with no little humour and egotistical display. The latter quality appears in the Introduction where he says :—

“Fearless of criticism am I, and by no means sharkish inclined for fame ; this work, intended from the beginning a present to my native country, makes me

no way afraid that it sliall soon perish ; it will be found in many a rustic library of the South of Scotland, scores of years after I am in the grave.”

The following, which is given under the phrase, ““Hie-cocket Hat,”” is a fair example of his style :—

“The first umbrella that ever was braced in Galloway belonged to a Sutor, who won’d about the Gatehouse fifty years ago; he ran allwheres through the country to display the fairly, and being at Borgue Kirk one windy day, while coming over the Kirk-style, all eyes on him, a gurl¹ came when all sail was set, and away went the tappin lift, down came the pikes clashing about his lugs, and one of them transfixed his cheek to the effusion of Crispin’s blood. O! but I glory to keek back into the days of yore, and take a laugh.”

Soon after the publication of the ““ Encyclopedia,”” Mactaggart removed to London, and here becoming acquainted with his countryman, John Rennie, the distinguished civil engineer, he was, through the influence of the latter appointed

¹ A squall.

resident engineer of the Rideau Canal-in Upper Canada. Here he met John Galt, singularly enough also engineer, administrator and author (his ““ Annals of the Parish ”” and ““ The Ayrshire Legatees,” are well known) and they became fast friends. In Canada Mactaggart made his mark in his profession, and not less so by his authorship of “Three years in Canada, an account of the actual state of the country in 1826-7-8.”” This was published in 1829 on his return to his native Galloway in broken health, due to his strenuous labours in the Canadian swamps in those early days. He died at Torrs, Kirkcudbright. on January 7th, 1830, aged only 39 years.

This Nook in Galloway has never been without its poet. The late Rev. George Murray, for a number of

years minister in Girthon Parish Church, Gatehouse -of-Fleet, worthily maintained the tradition. The little volume of poems and songs, published after his decease, contains some of his productions full of racy humour and no little charm. Professor Blackie greatly admired the love song, “The Birken Tree.”—

Whene'er the sun gangs o'er the hill,
 And shades of evening wrap the Gien,
 Ill seek the wood wi' right gude will
 Where Coom rows saftly to the Ken.
 The bonniest lass that e'er I saw
 Keeps true-love tryst this night wi' me,
 And we hae 'greed between us twa
 To meet beneath the birken tree.

I've lo'ed her lang, and ken her true—
 Right sure am I the gowden sun
 Will wander lang through heaven sae blue,
 Nor shine upon a fairer one.
 Red on the wild rose hangs the hip
 White blooms the gowan on the lea—
 Sae white's the breast, sae red's the lip,
 I'll press beneath the birken tree.

A NOOK IN GALLOWAY. 85

When I saft kisses fondly seek
 To print upon her smiling mou',
The biush may mantle on her cheek,
 Nae cloud will gather on her brow.
The silver moon will lend her light
 To see love sparkle in her e'e,
And as I gaze I'll bless the sight
 In rapture 'neath the birken tree.

As lang as wee birds tune their lay
 Frae' 'mang the broom and scented
 thorn ;
As lang as dew-drops gem the spray,
 And glitter in the beams of morn ;
As lang as wimpling bums delight
 To wind in beauty to the sea,
I'll love the lass wha comes this night
 To meet me 'neath the birken tree.

Mr. Murray died at Balmaclellan
in 1881, in his sixty-ninth year.

To-day the poetic muse finds
a fitting representative in Mr. George
G. B. Sproat, kindly and canty,
burly and big (including the great
heart of him), like the spacious
farmer that he is. A fine strain of
true poetic feeling runs through his

86 A NOOK IN GALLOWAY

published volume, ‘The Rose of Dalma Linn and other Lays of Gallowa’.”¹ The book is introduced to the reader in the following Sonnet: —

Not mine the wish to rest on lordly
 shelves,
‘Mid books that flaunt in calf and golden
 edge,
But in the home of him who trims the
 hedge,
Or the deep loam with patient labour
 delves,
Or with tough ash his gleaming hatchet
 helves.
Or drives his team along the furrowed
 ledge
Of some steep hill; or by the loch’s lone
 sedge,
Watches his sheep among the rustling
 elves.
There let my book be laid, within the
 reach
Of labour’s horny hands, and often
 sought,
With now a smile and then a tear from
 each
Who shares the cottar’s uneventful lot.

¹ Maxwell, Castle Douglas, 1888.

A NOOK IN GALLOWAY. 87

If to such scenes some solace thus is
brought,
Contented ! I no higher meed beseech.

Mr. Sproat's volume is so scarce
that a small fortune will scarcely
tempt the possessor of a copy to part
with it, and therefore I may be par-
doned for quoting part of another
poem (song), its title, " The Flower
o' the Fleet : " —

How fair are the maids on the banks o' the
Cree !

How lovely the daughters o' dark-flowing
Dee !

Yet queen o' the lowlands, in beauty
complete,

Is my lo'esome lassie, the flower o' the
Fleet.

How bright in the morning the flow'rets
unfold,

How sunny the tresses that sparkle with
gold,

How glossy the Cally woods wave in
their glee—

Yet fairer the gleam o' my lassie to me.

* * * * *

88 A NOOK IN GALLOWAY

How sprightly the spray as it leaps from
the sea

How pearly the daisies that diamond the
lea

How bright on Cairnharrow the golden
sun glows

While radiant with glory he sinks in
Repose !

Yet brighter and purer and sweeter by far
Than glow o' the mountain or gleam o' the
star

Or dewdrop and lily, in kisses that meet,
Is my lo'esome lassie the flower o' the
Fleet.

There's no' ane as bonnie—there's no'
ane as braw—

Wi' soul o' the rarest (that's better than
a') ;

There's love in her whisper, sae pawky
an' sweet—

I'll lo' her for ever, the flower o' the
Fleet.

General Walker, the last and
greatest of the Filibusters, created a
stir in international politics, both
American and British, in the fifties
of last century. Although not a
native of Gatehouse-of-Fleet, his

ancestors on the father's side belonged to that town. His father emigrated thence to Nashville in Tennessee in 1820, marrying there a lady named Norvell, and William their eldest son was born in 1824. His parents visited Gatehouse in the year 1843, bringing their son with them, and leaving him in Edinburgh at the University, where for a short time he studied for the medical profession. We were near neighbours of his aunt, Miss Walker, at Gatehouse, and I saw him on that occasion. There was nothing in his appearance to indicate the future Filibuster and General, being slim and delicate-looking. His stay in the Scottish metropolis was brief. He subsequently visited the Continent, and on his return to America he did not pursue his intended profession for any length of time, but

going to New Orleans he studied law. Relinquishing this he became a journalist, and edited newspapers both at New Orleans and San Francisco. Later, his restless disposition led him to the profession of arms, and it is matter of history that in 1853 he undertook to head a filibustering expedition into New Mexico, which proved a failure. Later again there was a revolution in Nicaragua, and Walker was invited to take a hand in it, which he did to such purpose that he shortly became General-in-chief of the army and eventually President of that State. His term of office was one long struggle with internal enemies and with the neighbouring States of Honduras and Costa Rica, and in 1860, under stress of being made captive by the insurgents, he surrendered to Captain Salmon of the

British man-of-war “Icarus,” who handed him over to the Hon-duranos, by whom he was promptly shot. So ended the career of one whose high abilities deserved a happier fate. Walker was a firm advocate of slavery, and his ambition was to found a slave state farther south that would add to the strength and permanency of slavery in the Southern States of the American Union. He was fanatically sincere in the views he held. He admired (as he said) the “wisdom and excellence of the Divine economy in the creation of the black race.” And in regard to slavery he asks whether it is not thus “that one race secures for itself liberty with order, while it bestows on the other comfort and Christianity?” It is well that his ambitions were frustrated.

Walker was less fortunate than his brother adventurer, Paul Jones, (whose real name was John Paul), the founder of the American Navy, also a native of the Stewartry, having been born at Arbigland, Kirkbean, in the shadow of Criffel, farther to the east of Gatehouse on the Solway shore. He died in Paris, and, as we all remember, in 1905, the United States Government having received permission to disinter the remains, they were conveyed across the Atlantic in great state, accompanied by a squadron of the United States Navy, and were finally laid to rest at Anapolis, Maryland.

Near to Creetown, in the parish of Kirkmabreck, is the mansion of Cassencary, formerly the residence

of Sir James Caird (now of his son, Mr. James A. Caird), the well-known agriculturist, and a great friend of the Right Hon. John Bright, who was a frequent visitor here. In his speeches Mr. Bright was wont to clench his arguments by quoting the opinion of Caird on agricultural topics. Probably, also, Cassencary had an attraction for the statesman in its close proximity to the river Cree, noted for its salmon, he being an ardent disciple of old Isaak, and an expert with the rod.

Well he could cast the line
To hook the salmon, or the speckled trout.

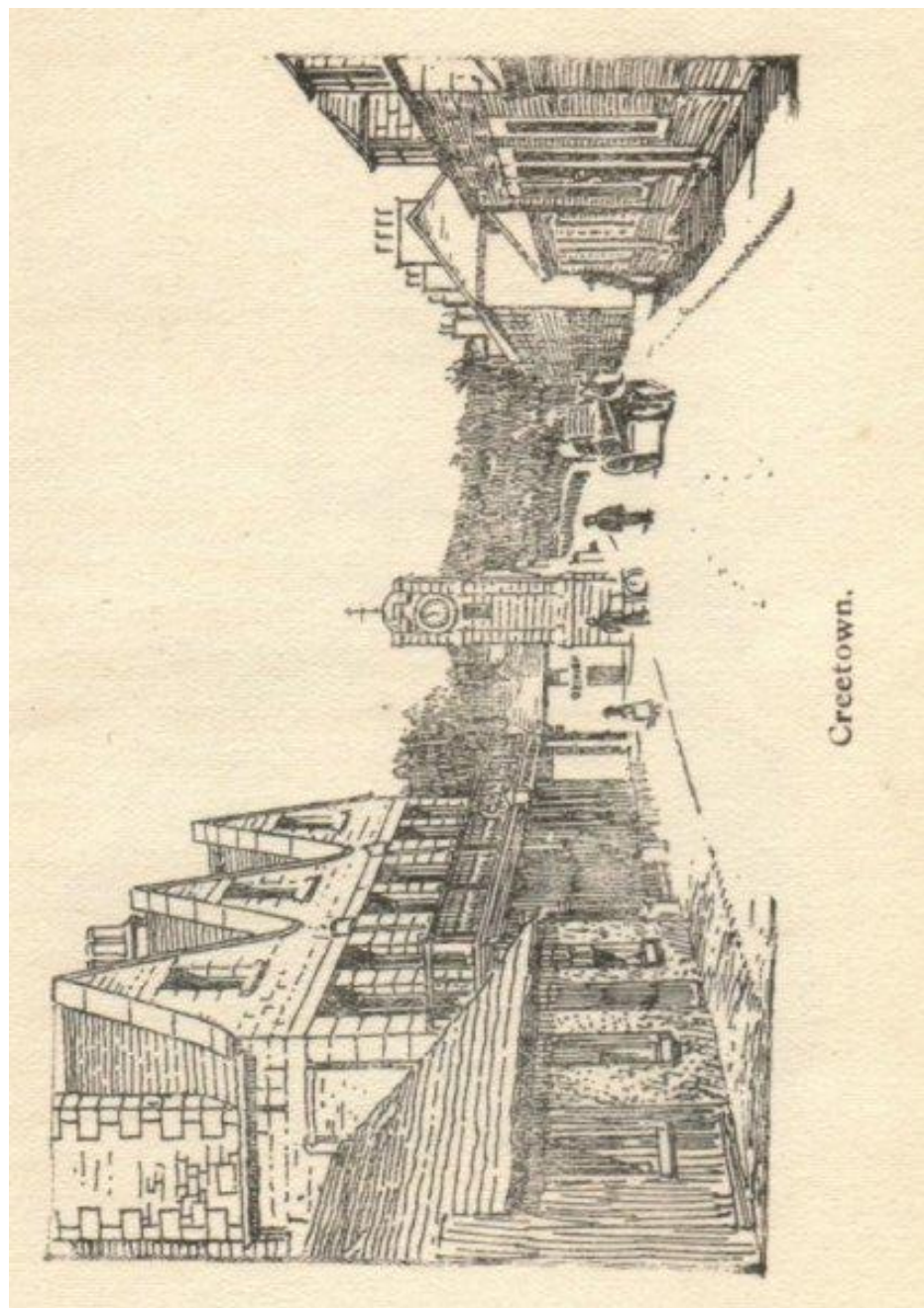
The recreation was doubtless to him a welcome relief from the turmoil of politics; though who knows but some of his great speeches were thought out by the banks of the Cree, or by one or other of the

94 A NOOK IN GALLOWAY

Galloway lochs. Like the old Piscator he might sing :—

Of recreation there is none
So free as fishing is alone ;
All other pastimes do no less
Than mind and body both possess ;
 My hand alone my work can do,
 So I can fish and study too.

Creetown is a thriving little town, due largely to the extensive granite quarries in the near neighbourhood, partly belonging to the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board. From these is obtained the granite used in the construction of the Liverpool docks, the stone being shipped from jetties in the bay. The hill scenery about Creetown is very fine, and from the high grounds a noble panoramic view of the bay, with the town of Wigtown on the opposite shore, is obtained.



Creetown.

But I began with Gatehouse-of-Fleet and I return to it. No sketch of the place and its associations would be complete that omitted to speak of the Faed family, the members of which have added to its renown far beyond the limits of Galloway. I remember Mr. and Mrs. Faed, the parents of the painters, very well. They were friends of my father and mother, and frequently exchanged visits. Mr. Faed combined the businesses of engineer and millwright and corn miller at Barlay, a small clachan on the Lochenbreck road, a little out of the town of Gatehouse on the Girthon side, and was a man of great ingenuity and resource. He died on the 18th November, 1843, aged sixty-six. Mrs. Faed (née Mary McGeoch) survived her husband twenty-three years, dying

15th November, 1866, aged seventy-six.

It is, however, of their family of five sons and one daughter that I wish to speak. I knew them ail.

The two youngest, Susan and George, were school-fellows of mine at Girth-on school. The others were older than I, and though educated at the same school had left before I became a scholar there. John, the eldest, had already gone to Edinburgh to pursue his art studies, and Thomas and James shortly followed him. William emigrated to Australia. John chiefly distinguished himself as a miniature painter, though he also produced more ambitious works. There is a fine painting of his in the Town Hall, Gatehouse. James turned to line engraving and greatly excelled at his art; George died young, but



Thomas Faed, R.A.

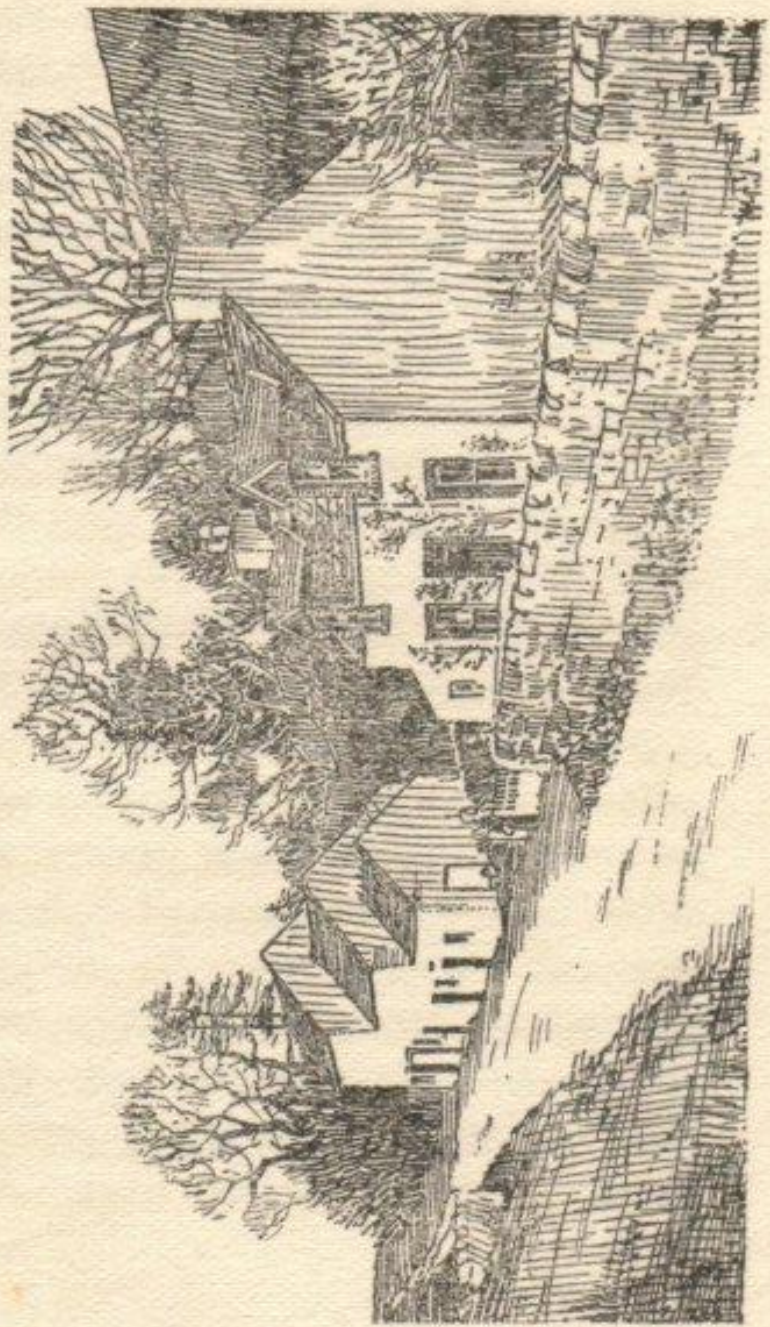
he had already evinced abilities as an artist equal to any of the others. Susan also painted and exhibited.

But it was Tom who became the great painter and Royal Academician. He was born in 1826.

At the age of twenty-three he was elected an Associate of the Royal Scottish Academy. In 1852 he took up his abode in London, became Associate of the Royal Academy in 1861, and, later, was elected to full membership; the productions of his brush being eagerly purchased, and to-day are greatly prized by their possessors. His chief subjects were of the genre description—scenes of family life in poor men's cottages in Galloway, and he depicted them with rare fidelity, and with a kindly combination of the humorous and

pathetic. It is not necessary to enumerate them; they are all well-known from the engraved and other reproductions. The originals, however, should be seen. He was a fine colourist and almost pre-Raphaelitic in his attention to detail. But other subject-pictures also employed his brush, amongst which may be named “ Highland Mary,” “Sir Walter Scott and His Friends,” “ In Time of War,” which is in the Liverpool Art Gallery, “ Faults on Both Sides,” “ Only Herself,” and others. He _ wrote verses less or more, during his career as a painter. I have some of his pieces which he sent me at different times, but I cannot say that he excelled as a poet.

In my boyhood days I was fond of fishing, as became a youth in a



Birthplace of the Faeds.

land of hills and clear streams, and was an expert hand at the sport. Many a fine speckled trout I have landed from the river Fleet. One summer evening I was busy with my rod where the Fleet makes a swirl round the foot of the “Boatgreen”—I would be nine or ten at the time—when I was suddenly caught by the ear and cuffed somewhat rudely by someone who had come stealthily behind me. Looking round, I recognised Tom Faed, then a tall, swanky young fellow, who ordered me to go off home at the risk of further penalties as a poacher—of the justice of which opprobrious epithet as applied to myself in my then occupation, I was utterly oblivious. His action is explained by the fact that his father was lessee of the fishing rights in the river. In later life Tom wrote to me and we

became fast friends, corresponding together down to the eve of his blindness, which sad affliction gradually overtook him about seven years before his death in 1900. .

There are many, very many, other associations besides its natural beauties that endear this delightful Nook in Galloway to me, but they are of personal rather than of general interest, so I forbear to refer to them. I think however, that I have said enough to justify the strong feeling of affection which I cherish for this haunt of my boyhood. I pay it a yearly visit.

The effect of this is (in the words of Mr. G. W. Curtis), to give a tone and flavour to the succeeding twelve months, as the lump of ambergris flavours the Sultan's cups of coffee for a year.