

VARIOUS



***SCOTTISH POETRY
OF THE SIXTEENTH
CENTURY***

Various

Scottish Poetry of the Sixteenth Century

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ABBOTSFORD SERIES OF THE SCOTTISH POETS.

PRESS OPINIONS.

Flodden Field, that long slope looking north-ward by the "deep and dark and sullen Till," where on a September afternoon in 1513 the flower of Scotland fell round James the Fourth, stands darkly marked on the page of history both of the Scottish nation and of Scottish poetry. It was for the North the burial-place of one era and the birth-place of another. The English billmen who on Flodden closed round the last desperate ring of Scottish spears hewed down with their ghastly weapons not only James himself and his nobles, but the feudal system in church and state, with all that sprang from it, the civilization and poetry of the Middle Ages in Scotland. The national spirit which had burst into leaf at Bannockburn was touched now as by an autumn frost, and a time of storm and darkness must ensue before the country could feel the re-awakening influences of a new spring. The mediæval world, with its charm and its chivalry, its splendour, cruelty, and power, was passing away, while the modern world was in the throes of being born.

Had James IV. lived he would doubtless have continued, firm-handed as he was, to hold in check both churchmen and nobles, and the reforms which were in the air might have taken effect like leaven, and not, as they did, like gunpowder. They might have been grafted upon the existing stem, as in England, instead of overturning it. But during the long minority of James V. the abuses of the feudal system, political and ecclesiastical, attained too rank a growth to be pruned by the hand of that king when he came of age, notwithstanding his energy and good intentions. The system, as Macaulay has pointed out, had served its purpose in the Middle Ages as perhaps no more modern

system could have done. In the feudal castles and monasteries had been preserved certain lights of chivalry and learning which, without such shelter, must, amid the storms of these centuries, have flickered and disappeared. These lights were now, however, burning more and more dimly. The corruptions of the clergy and the rapacity of the nobles outran all bounds, and between the two no man's life was safe and no woman's honour. Like other human institutions, therefore, which have outlived their usefulness, feudalism was doomed.

Renaissance was to come, not from within, but from without, and in the north the new influence took the form of a militant religious enthusiasm. Already in James the Fourth's time the war-horns of the Reformation sounded on the Continent had made their echoes heard in Scotland; and during the reign of his successor these were taken up and resounded at home with tremendous effect by the iconoclast trio, Lyndsay, Buchanan, and Knox. The new era was to be one of strife and tempest, in which the root of poesy was little likely to bring to perfection its rarest blossoms.

Goethe has said that the Reformation cost Europe three centuries' growth of civilization. So far as poetry is concerned the statement must be taken as true in Scotland to a modified extent. No one would be so foolish as to deny the immense advantages, in the purification of morals and the setting up of new fervid ideals, which the Reformation brought to the north. But it is too frequently forgotten that the era of Scotland's highest achievement in arms and in poetry was not the era of Knox and Buchanan,

but the era of Bishop Lamberton, Archdeacon Barbour,^[1] and the preaching friar Dunbar. Against the unquestionable benefits of the Reformation in Scotland must be set the fact that it not only broke the stem of the existing feudal civilization, but itself, intent only upon things of a future life, and modelled overmuch upon Judaic ideals, gave scant encouragement to the carnal arts of this world.

There is strong reason to believe that Scottish character, so far as social qualities go, suffered a certain withering change in the sixteenth century. Under feudalism, with all its faults, the country had been characterized by a generous joyousness which may be read between the lines of its contemporary history and poetry. Bruce, in the intervals of his heroic undertaking, could recite long romances of chivalry. The accomplishments of James I. as musician, poet, and player at all games and sports, are too well known to need repetition. Blind Harry was only one of the wandering minstrels who everywhere earned feast and bed by their entertainments. And the madcap court of James IV. lives in the poems of William Dunbar and the letters of the Spanish ambassador, Pedro de Ayala. All this was changed at the Reformation, and there seems to have been imposed then upon the life of the people a certain ascetic seriousness which has left its traces on the national character to the present day. Mirth and entertainment of all sorts not strictly religious were severely discountenanced by the Reformers, as tending to render this life too attractive, and to withdraw attention from the great object of existence, preparation for the tomb. The attitude of the new rulers towards poetical composition in particular may be judged from two instances.

In 1576, in the first book printed in Gaelic—Knox's *Forms of Prayer and Catechism*—Bishop Carswell, the translator, in his preface condemns with pious severity the Highlanders' enjoyment of songs and histories "concerning warriors and champions, and Fingal the son of Comhal, with his heroes." And the title-page of that curious collection, *The Gude and Godlie Ballates*, published in 1578,^[2] bears that the contents consist in great part of pious compositions "changed out of prophaine Sangis, for avoyding of sinne and harlotrie." So strongly, indeed, burned the ardour of the Reformers that for a considerable period nothing was printed in the Scottish press but what was tinged with religion in the strictest sense; and the effect of the condemnation of "profane" literature at that time is to be traced in the prejudice with which novel-reading has been regarded in Scotland almost to the present day.

There was in the air, besides, another depressing influence which must not be overlooked.

Simultaneously with the dawn of the Reformation the Scottish language began to decay. The causes of this decay are sufficiently ascertained.^[3] For the first forty years of the Reformation movement there was no translation of the Scriptures into the northern dialect. The copies used were obtained from England. Carried everywhere by the popular wave, the English book, as it was called, must by itself have done much to change the tongue of the country. Further, as the Catholic party in Scotland naturally looked for support to the ancient alliance with Catholic France, the adherents of Protestantism were forced into intimate relations and constant communication with Protestant England. In the

works of Sir David Lyndsay, the earliest poet of the new period, the influence of this connection is seen taking effect, English forms of words, like *go*, *also*, and *one*, constantly taking the place of the mediæval Scottish. John Knox was a greater innovator than Lyndsay in this respect; and the deterioration went steadily on until, shortly after the close of the century, the *coup de grâce* was given to the tongue by the transference of James VI. and his court to England. Upon that event Lowland Scottish went out of favour, and practically ceased to be a literary language.[4]

In face of these adverse influences—the decay of the language, religious disfavour, and the overturn of the ancient social system—a brilliant poetic era was not to be looked for in Scotland in the sixteenth century. The marvel is that so much was produced that had vigour, humour, and tenderness. Justice has hardly yet been done to a period which, opening with the iconoclast thunders of Sir David Lyndsay, included the compositions of the gallant James V., of “the Scottish Anacreon” Alexander Scot, and of the author of “The Cherrie and the Slae.” These Scottish singers have their own place and charm, and it has to be remembered that their work was composed while the strange silence of more than a hundred years which followed the death of Chaucer south of the Tweed was still all but unbroken.

The early period of Scottish poetry, corresponding to the heroic era of the national history, had been one of geste, chronicle, and patriotic epic, and remains illustrious with the names of Thomas the Rhymer, Barbour, Wyntoun, and Henry the Minstrel. The mediæval period, that in which the

temper of the nation changed from one of strenuous, single-hearted purpose to one of conscious reflection, individual assertion, and restless personal desire, had been the period in which, lit anew by the torch of Chaucer, and fed by the genius of James I., Henryson, Dunbar, and Douglas, Scottish poetry shot forth its most splendid flame. The sixteenth century, no less clearly marked, was a period of change. With Flodden Field and the Reformation the old order of things passed away. As the feudalism of the Middle Ages passed out of church and state the mediæval spirit passed out of the national poetry, and amid the strife of new ideals the last songs were sung in the national language of Scotland. Before the close of the century a new light had risen in the south, the brilliant Elizabethan constellation was flashing into fire, and under its influence the singers of the north were to make a new departure, and, like their kings who were seated on the English throne, were to adopt the accents of the southern tongue.

SIR DAVID LYND SAY.

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For more than two hundred years, until the appearance of Robert Burns, the most popular of all the Scottish poets was Sir David Lyndsay of the Mount. During that time more than twenty editions of his works were published; next to the Bible they were perhaps the most familiar reading of the people; and in any question of phraseology, "Ye'll no fin' that in Davie Lyndsay" was a common condemnation against which there was no appeal. Popularity is not always a sign of worth; but in Lyndsay's case its justice must be admitted. The qualities which made him popular also make him great. No more honest, fearless, and admirable figure stands out from the page of Scottish history than that of this clear-sighted and true-hearted poet, who in a corrupt age filled so many parts without question and without stain. If effects are to be considered in judgment, a great place must be accorded the man who began by moulding the mind of a prince and ended by reforming that of a nation.

The Juvenal of Scotland was descended from a younger branch of the Lyndsays of the Byres in Haddingtonshire, and is believed to have been born in 1490 either at The Mount, near Cupar-Fife, or at Garleton, then Garmylton, in East Lothian. From the former small estate the poet's father and himself in succession took their title, but the latter was apparently the chief residence of the family. There were grammar schools then established both in Haddington and in Cupar; and at one of these, it is probable, the poet

received his early education. All that is definitely known of his early years, however, has been gathered from the fact that his name appears in 1508 or 1509 among the *Incorporati* or fourth-year students of St. Salvator's College, St. Andrews. He must therefore have matriculated there in 1505, the year of John Knox's birth. Next Lyndsay's name in the register follows that of David Beaton, afterwards archbishop and cardinal, and the most formidable opponent of the Reformation in Scotland. It has been inferred from two references in his poems^[5] that upon leaving college Lyndsay visited the Continent and travelled as far as Italy. But information on the subject remains uncertain.

The next definite notice shows him attached to the royal court, and taking part in the amusements which were there in vogue. It is an entry in the treasurer's accounts on 12th October, 1511, of £3 4s. for blue and yellow taffeties "to be a play coat to David Lyndsay for the play playit in the king and queen's presence in the Abbey of Holyrood." In the same year appear the first quarterly payments of an annual salary of £40, which he received henceforth for his duties at court. The exact position which he at first filled is uncertain, but on the birth of Prince James, afterwards James V., on 12th April, 1512, Lyndsay was appointed chief page or usher to the infant. The description of his services in this capacity makes a delightful picture in the "Epistil to the Kingis Grace" prefixed to "The Dreame," and again in the "Complaynt" of 1529. The lines of the latter may be quoted—

I tak the Quenis Grace, thy mother,
My Lord Chancelare, and mony uther,
Thy Nowreis, and thy auld Maistres,

I tak thame all to beir wytnes;
Auld Willie Dillie, wer he on lyve,
My lyfe full weill he could discryve:
Quhow, as ane chapman beris his pak,
I bure thy Grace upon my bak,
And sumtymes, strydingis on my nek,
Dansand with mony bend and bek.
The first sillabis that thow did mute
Was PA, DA LYN,[6] upon the lute;
Than playit I twenty spryngis, perqueir,
Quhilk wes gret piete for to heir.
Fra play thow leit me never rest,
Bot Gynkartoun[7] thow lufit ay best;
And ay, quhen thow come frome the scule
Than I behuffit to play the fule;
As I at lenth, in-to my Dreme
My sindry servyce did expreme.
Thocht it bene better, as sayis the wyse,
Hape to the court nor gude servyce,
I wate thow luffit me better, than,
Nor, now, sum wyfe dois hir gude-man.
Than men tyll uther did recorde,
Said Lyndesay wald be maid ane lord:
Thow hes maid lordis, Schir, be Sanct Geill,
Of sum that hes nocht servit so weill.

Whatever may have been the severity of character which in other matters James sometimes considered it his duty to show, there remains as testimony to the real nature of “the King of the Commons” that he never forgot these early services of his faithful attendant.

When the prince was a year old, that is, in 1513, just before Flodden, Lyndsay was witness to that strange scene in the Church of St. Michael in Linlithgow which is related upon his authority both by Pitscottie and Buchanan, and which is popularly known through Sir Walter Scott's version in *Marmion*. On the eve of setting forth upon his fatal campaign James IV., according to Pitscottie, was with his nobles attending prayers in the church at Linlithgow when a tall man came in, roughly clad in a blue gown and bare-headed, with a great pikestaff in his hand, "cryand and spearand for the King." He advanced to James, and with small reverence laid his arm on the royal praying-desk. "Sir King," he said, "my mother has sent me to you desiring you not to passe, at this time, where thou art purposed; for if thou does thou wilt not fair well in thy journey, nor none that passeth with thee. Further, she bade ye melle with no woman, nor use their counsell, nor let them touch thy body, nor thou theirs; for, and thou do it, thou wilt be confounded and brought to shame." "Be this man," proceeds the chronicler, "had spoken thir words unto the King's Grace, the Even-song was neere doone, and the King paused on thir words, studying to give him an answer; but in the mean time, before the King's eyes, and in presence of all the Lords that were about him for the time, this man vanished away, and could no wayes be seene nor comprehended, but vanished away as he had beene ane blink of the sunne, or ane whiss of the whirlwind, and could no more be seene."

It has been suggested that the episode might be an effort of Queen Margaret to dissuade her husband from the campaign by working upon his superstition, and that

Lyndsay, through whose hands the apparition “vanished away,” probably knew more of the affair than he cared to confess. The whole matter, however, is wrapped up in mystery.

After the death of James IV. at Flodden, Lyndsay appears to have remained in constant attendance upon the young king, sometimes being styled “the Kingis maister usher,” sometimes “the Kingis maister of houshald.” It was probably in the course of these duties that he made the acquaintance of the lady who became his wife. Whether she was related to the great historic house is unknown, but her name was Janet Douglas, and from numerous entries in the treasurer’s accounts she appears, notwithstanding her marriage, to have held the post of sempstress to the king till the end of his reign. The union took place about the year 1522.

In 1524 affairs in Scotland took a turn which for a time deprived Lyndsay of his office. On 20th May in that year the Regent Albany finally retired to France, and the reins of government were assumed by Queen Margaret, who, to strengthen her position against her divorced husband, the powerful Earl of Angus, withdrew the young prince from his tutors, and placed the sceptre nominally in his hand. Angus, however, prevailed, and getting possession of the person of James, ruled Scotland in the Douglas interest for four years. Lyndsay’s opinion of the effect of this proceeding may be gathered from the lines of his “Complaynt”—

The Kyng was bot twelf yeris of aige
Quhen new rewlaris come, in thair raige,
For Commonweill makand no cair,
Bot for thair proffeit singlar.

Imprudentlie, lyk wytles fuillis,
Thay tuke that young Prince frome the scuilis,
Quhare he, under obedience,
Was lernand vertew and science,
And haistelie platt in his hand
The governance of all Scotland;
As quho wald, in ane stormye blast,
Qohen marinaris bene all agast
Throw dainger of the seis raige,
Wald tak ane chylde of tender aige
Quhilk never had bene on the sey,
And to his biddyng all obey,
Gevyng hym haill the governall
Off schip, marchand, and marinall,
For dreid of rockis and foreland,
To put the ruther in his hand.
Without Goddis grace is no refuge:
Geve thare be dainger ye may juge.
I gyf thame to the Devyll of Hell
Quhilk first devysit that counsell!
I wyll nocht say that it was treassoun,
Bot I dar sweir it was no reassoun.
I pray God, lat me never se ryng,
In-to this realme, so young ane Kyng!

Discharged from his duties, though, at the instance of James, his salary continued to be paid, Lyndsay retired to his estates, and occupied his leisure by casting into verse some of his reflections upon the events and character of his time. These, in the form of a scarcely veiled satire, with a finely poetic setting, he published under the title of "The Dreame,"

probably in 1528. In the autumn of the same year, it is believed, he wrote his "Complaynt to the Kingis Grace," a performance in which, as has been seen, he recounts his early services, and asks some token of royal recognition, declaiming fearlessly the abuses which have been practised by the recent governors of the realm, and ending with congratulations and sound counsel on James's own sudden assumption of power.

This reminder would hardly appear to have been needed by the young king. On a night in May of that year James had escaped from Falkland, and dashing through the defiles of the Ochils with only a couple of grooms in his train, had established himself in Stirling, successfully defied the Douglas power, and, though no more than sixteen years of age, had in a few hours made himself absolute master of Scotland. Among the first to benefit by his assumption of power were his old attendants. His chaplain, Sir James Inglis, he made Abbot of Culross; his tutor, Gavin Dunbar, he made Archbishop of Glasgow, and afterwards Lord High Chancellor; while upon Lyndsay he conferred the honour of knighthood and appointed him Lyon King at Arms.

This was in 1529, and the appointment marks Lyndsay's entry into the larger public life of his time. The office of the Chief Herald was then an active one, its holder being employed on frequent state envoys to foreign courts. Thus in 1531 Lyndsay was sent to the Netherlands to renew a commercial treaty of James I. which had just lapsed. Upon that occasion he had an interview at Brussels with the Queen of Hungary, then Regent of the Netherlands, and her brother the Emperor Charles V.; and in a letter still extant[8]

he describes the tournaments, of which he was spectator, at the royal court.

Again, in 1536, he was one of the embassy sent to France to conclude a marriage between James and Marie de Bourbon, daughter of the Duc de Vendôme. Negotiations in this case were all but completed when by the personal interference of James the treaty was broken off and espousals arranged instead with Magdalene, the daughter of the French king, Francis I.

The sad sequel of this romantic union is well known. The fate of the fragile young princess formed the subject of Lyndsay's elegy, "The Deploratioun of the Deith of Quene Magdalene."

Strangely enough, the Lyon Herald's next employment was, in the following year, the superintendence of ceremonies at reception of James's new bride, Mary, the daughter of the Duc de Guise. These, like the other events of the time, are fully described by Lindsay of Pitscottie, the contemporary historian. Among other "fersis and playis" they included one curious device. "And first sche was receivit at the New Abbay yet (gate); upon the eist syd thair of thair wes maid to hir ane triumphant arch be Sir David Lindsay of the Mount, knicht, alias Lyon Kyng at Armis, quha caussit ane greyt cloud to cum out of the hevins down abone the yeit; out the quhilk cloude come downe ane fair Lady most lyk ane angell, having the keyis of Scotland in hir hand, and delyverit thayme to the Queinis grace in signe and taikin that all the harts of Scotland wer opin for the receveing of hir Grace; withe certane Oratiouns maid be the said Sir David to the Quein's Grace, desyring hir

to feir hir God, and to serve him, and to reverence and obey hir husband, and keip her awin body clein, according to God's will and commandment.”[9]

A more momentous piece of work, and one more worthy of the poet's genius, was Lyndsay's next performance. In 1530, in his “Testament and Complaynt of our Soverane Lordis Papyngo,” he had already ventured with great boldness to expose the disorders of the time in church affairs. He now went further, and in the guise of a stage-play attacked with fearless and biting satire the corruptions of clergy and nobles. This play, “Ane Pleasant Satyre of the thrie Estaitis,” appears to have been first performed at Linlithgow at the feast of Epiphany on 6th January, 1539-40, when, occupying no less than nine hours in representation, [10] it was witnessed by the king, the queen, and ladies of the court, the bishops, nobles, and a great gathering of people.

As Lyon Herald, Lyndsay superintended the preparation of the *Register of Arms* of the Scottish nobility and gentry. This work, now in the Advocates' Library, Mr. Laing commends for its careful execution and proper emblazonment of the arms, as most creditable to the state of heraldic art in Scotland. It was completed in 1542.

On the 14th of December in the same year Lyndsay was one of those who stood by the bedside of the dying king at Falkland, when, overwhelmed by sorrow and disappointment, he “turned his back to his lordis and his face to the wall,” and presently passed away. The friendship between the king and the poet, which had begun in the prince's cradle-days, appears to have had not a single

break, one of James' last acts being to assign to Lyndsay, "during all the days of his life, two chalders of oats, for horse-corn, out of the King's lands of Dynmure in Fife."

The Lyon Herald survived his master about fifteen years, and lived to see signs that the reforms which he had urged would one day be carried out.

In 1546 occurred the first crisis of the Reformation. In consequence of the cruel burning of George Wishart at St. Andrews in that year, the castle there was stormed by Norman Lesley and fifteen others, and Cardinal Beaton, the prelate most obnoxious to the reforming party, was assassinated. On the 4th of August, Lyndsay, as commissioner for the burgh of Cupar, was in his seat in Parliament when the writ of treason was issued against the assassins; and on the 17th, as Lyon Herald, he appeared with a trumpeter before the castle in the vain effort to bring the garrison to terms. But whatever might be his official duties, his sympathies were clearly on the side of the reformers. Regarding the death of Beaton he wrote, probably sometime in the following year, his satire, the "Tragedie of the Cardinall"; and in May, 1547, he was one of the inner circle of those who, in the parish church of St. Andrews, gave John Knox his unexpected but memorable call to the ministry.

In 1548 Lyndsay was sent to Denmark to negotiate a treaty of free trade in corn, and with the successful issue of this embassy he appears to have closed his career as envoy to foreign courts. Henceforth he seems to have devoted himself to poetical composition. In 1550 appeared what has been esteemed by some critics the most pleasing of all his

works, "The Historie and Testament of Squyer Meldrum," a romance somewhat in the style of the ancient heroic narratives, founded on the adventures of an actual personage of his own day. And in 1553 he finished his last and longest work, "The Monarche, Ane Dialog betuix Experience and Ane Courteour on the Miserabyll Estait of the World."

Once more he appears in history in the dignity of his office as Lyon King. On 16th January, 1554-5, he presided at a chapter of heralds convened at Holyrood for the trial and punishment of William Crawar, a messenger, for abuse of his function. But before the 18th of April in the same year he had passed away. By a letter of that date in the Privy Seal Register it appears that his wife had predeceased him, and that, in the absence of children, his estates were inherited by his younger brother, Alexander Lyndsay.

Four years later the Reformation, of which also he may be said to have been the Lyon Herald, had begun in earnest. John Knox had returned to Scotland, the assassins of Beaton had received pardon, and the leaders of the new church which was to rise out of the ashes of the old had assumed the name of "The Congregation."

Such was the consistent career of the poet who, in the words of Dryden, "lashed vice into reformation" in Scotland. In high position, with everything to lose and nothing to gain by the part he took, he must be adjudged entire disinterestedness in his efforts. Patriotism, the virtue which more than any other has from century to century made the renown of Scotland, must be acknowledged as his chief motive. Of his "Dreme" one writer has said, "We almost

doubt if there is to be found anywhere except in the old Hebrew prophets a purer or more earnest breathing of the patriotic spirit." His attack, it is true, was directed, not against the doctrines, but merely against the abuses of the church, a fact which sufficiently accounts for his freedom from persecution. There can be no question, however, that but for the brilliant, burning satire of Lyndsay the later work of the reformers would have proved infinitely more arduous, and might have been indefinitely delayed. Professor Nichol[11] has compared the service rendered by Lyndsay in Scotland to that rendered in Holland by Erasmus. All great movements probably have had some such forerunner, from John the Baptist downwards. At anyrate it is certain that when Lyndsay laid down his pen the time was ripe for Knox to mount the pulpit.

During the early troubles of the Reformation the works of Lyndsay were, it is said, printed by stealth; and Pitscottie states that an Act of Assembly ordered them to be burned. Their popularity, nevertheless, remained undiminished, and edition after edition found its way into the hands of the people. The best editions now available are that by George Chalmers, three volumes, London, 1806, that of the Early English Text Society by various editors, 1865-1871, and the edition by David Laing, LL.D., three volumes, Edinburgh, 1879. The last is taken in the present volume as the standard text.

Of Lyndsay's compositions "The Dreame" has generally been considered the most poetical, and the "Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis" the most important. The former is an allegory in the fashion of Dante and Chaucer, in which, after a

prologue which has been much admired for its descriptive charm, a historical lesson is drawn from the abuse of power by rulers of the past, and the political grievances of Scotland are set boldly forth. To the latter belongs the credit of being the earliest specimen of the Scottish drama now in existence, the ground having been previously occupied only by the old mysteries and pageants, the “fairseis and clerk-playis” mentioned by Sir Richard Maitland.^[12] Technically it is neither a morality-play nor a regular drama, but what is known as an interlude: it has no regular plot, and upon its stage real men and women move about among allegorical personages. Its author, however, confined the term “interlude” to the burlesque diversions which occupied the intervals of the main action. “Lyndsay’s play,” says Chalmers, “carried away the palm of dramatic composition from the contemporary moralities of England till the epoch of the first tragedy in *Gorboduc* and the first comedy in *Gammer Gurton’s Needle*.” The work was more, however, than a dramatic pioneer; it was the greatest blow which Lyndsay struck at the vices and follies of his age, the ignorance and profligacy of the priesthood, and the insolence and unscrupulous ambition of the courtiers; and it is perhaps not too much to say of it that by its performance again and again before multitudes of all classes of the people it prepared the way more than anything else for the great movement of the Reformation in Scotland. For the modern reader, apart from its merits as a *tour de force* of satire, this work remains the most vivid picture we possess of the grievances by which the common people of Scotland were oppressed during the last days of feudalism.

“The Monarche,” a still longer poem, possesses nothing like the interest of the “Satyre.” In dialogue form, it follows the historic fashion of an earlier time, attempting to give a complete history of the human race from the creation to the day of judgment. Gloom and sadness reign throughout its pages, and notwithstanding one or two fine descriptive passages and the exhibition of much learning and sagacious reflection, it must be ranked among the less vital of its author’s works. An English version of “The Monarche,” nevertheless, was repeatedly printed in London from 1566 onwards, and a translation into Danish was published at Copenhagen in 1591.

“The Testament and Complaynt of the Kyngis Papyngo” is a composition frequently referred to. It opens with a prologue in praise of the makars, who, from Chaucer to the writer’s contemporary Bellenden, are named in order. In form of a fable—the death-bed of the king’s parrot, attended by the pye, a canon regular, the raven, a black monk, and the hawk, a holy friar—it satirizes mercilessly the vices of the clergy and the abuses of the church.

Lyndsay’s lesser productions are satires on minor subjects, such as court patronage and the absurdities of female fashions, showing their author in a lighter vein. But “Kitteis Confessioun” is another hard hit at the church abuses of the time, and the “Deploration of the Deith of Quene Magdalene” possesses interest as a picture of a royal welcome in the sixteenth century.

“The Tragedie of the Cardinall,” apart from a suggestion in the prologue, the appearance of Beaton’s ghost—

Ane woundit man, abundantlie bledyng,

With vissage pail and with ane deidlye cheir—

displays no striking poetic power. The poem recounts in detail, as by the mouth of the prelate himself, the damaging part which Beaton had played in the contemporary history of Scotland, and it ends with serious admonitions addressed respectively to prelates and to princes to avoid the abuses which were then rampant in the government of the church.

“The Historie of Squyer Meldrum” is written in a different vein from the rest of Lyndsay’s works. As has already been said, it is modelled on the gestes and heroic epics of an earlier century. The narrative is lively, with vivid descriptive passages and great smoothness of versification. “In all Froissart,” says Dr. Merry Ross, “there is nothing more delightful in picturesque details than the description of the jousts between Meldrum and the English knight Talbart on the plains of Picardy.”

It has been the habit to regard Lyndsay in the character rather of a reformer than of a poet, and it cannot be doubted that his own purpose was to edify rather than to delight. But the merit of a satirist consists, not in his display of the more delicate sort of poetic charm, but in the brilliance and keenness of his satire. No critic can aver that in these qualities Lyndsay was lacking. If evidence of power in other fields be demanded, there are, according to the estimate of Professor Nichol, passages in “The Dreame,” “Squyer Meldrum,” and “The Monarche,” “especially in the descriptions of the morning and evening voices of the birds, which, for harmony of versification and grace of imagery, may be safely laid alongside of any corresponding to them in the works of his predecessors.” But it is as a satiric poet

that he must chiefly be appraised, and in this character he stands the greatest that Scotland has produced. He remained popular for more than two centuries because he sympathised with the sorrows of the people and satirized the abuse of power by the great. In this respect he was not excelled even by his great successor, Robert Burns. For the reader of the present day the interest of Lyndsay, apart from the broad light which he throws upon the life and manners of his time, lies in his shrewd common-sense, his irresistible humour, vivacity, and dramatic power, with the consciousness that behind these burns a soul of absolute honesty. But the first value of his work, as of the work of every satiric poet, consisted in its wholesome effect upon the spirit of his age. With this fact in view it would be difficult to formulate a better summing-up of Lyndsay's titles to regard than that by Scott in the fourth canto of *Marmion*. There, by a poetic license, he is introduced in the character of Lyon Herald on the eve of Flodden, sixteen years before he obtained that office—

He was a man of middle age;
In aspect manly, grave, and sage,
As on king's errand come;
But in the glances of his eye
A penetrating, keen, and sly
Expression found its home;
The flash of that satiric rage
Which, bursting on the early stage,
Branded the vices of the age,
And broke the keys of Rome.

Still is thy name of high account
And still thy verse has charms,
Sir David Lindesay of the Mount,
Lord Lion King-at-arms!

THE DREME.

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EPISTIL TO THE KINGIS GRACE.

Rycht potent Prince, of hie Imperial blude,
Unto thy Grace I traist it be weill knawin
My servyce done unto your Celsitude,
Quhilk nedis nocht at length for to be schawin;
And thocht[13] my youtheid now be neir ouer-blawin,
Excerst[14] in servyce of thyne Excellence,
Hope hes me hecht[15] ane gudlie recompense.

Quhen thow wes young I bure thee in myne arme
Full tenderlie, tyll thow begouth to gang[16];
And in thy bed oft happit[17] thee full warme,
With lute in hand, syne[18], sweitlie to thee sang:
Sumtyme, in dansing, feiralie[19] I flang;
And sumtyme, playand farsis on the flure;
And sumtyme, on myne office takkand cure:

And sumtyme, lyke ane feind, transfigure,
And sumtyme, lyke the greislie gaist of Gye[20];
In divers formis oft-tymes disfigure,
And sumtyme, dissagyist full plesandlye.
So, sen[21] thy birth, I have continewalye
Bene occupyit, and aye to thy plesoure,
And sumtyme, Seware, Coppare, and Carvoure[22];

Thy purs-maister and secreit Thesaurare[23],

Thy Yschare[24], aye sen thy natyvitie,
And of thy chalmer cheiffe Cubiculare,
Quhilk, to this hour, hes keipit my lawtie[25];
Lovyng[26] be to the blyssit Trynitie
That sic[27] ane wracheit worme hes maid so habyll[28]
Tyll sic ane Prince to be so greabyll!

But now thow arte, be influence naturall,
Hie of ingyne[29], and rycht inquisityve
Of antique storeis, and deidis marciall;
More plesandlie the tyme for tyll ouerdryve,
I have, at length, the storeis done descryve[30]
Of Hectour, Arthour, and gentyll Julyus,
Of Alexander, and worthy Pompeyus;

Of Jasone, and Medea, all at lenth,
Of Hercules the actis honorabyll,
And of Sampson the supernaturall strenth,
And of leill Iuffaris[31] storeis amiabyll;
And oft-tymes have I feinyeit mony fabyll,
Of Troylus the sorrow and the joye,
And Seigis all of Tyir, Thebes, and Troye.

The propheceis of Rymour, Beid, and Marlyng,[32]
And of mony uther plesand stoye,
Of the Reid Etein, and the Gyir Carlyng,[33]
Confortand thee, quhen that I saw thee sorye.
Now, with the supporte of the King of Glorye,
I sall thee schaw ane stoye of the new,
The quhilk affore I never to thee schew.

But humilie I beseik thyne Excellence,

With ornate termis thocht I can nocht expres
This sempyll mater, for laik of eloquence;
Yit, nochtwithstanding all my besynes,
With hart and hand my pen I sall addres
As I best can, and most compendious:
Now I begyn: the mater hapnit thus.

PROLOG.

In-to the Calendis of Januarie,
Quhen fresche Phebus, be movyng circularir,
Frome Capricorne wes enterit in Aquarie,
With blastis that the branchis maid full bair,
The snaw and sleit perturbit all the air,
And flemit[34] Flora frome every bank and bus[35],
Through supporte of the austeir Eolus.

Efter that I the lang wynteris nycht
Had lyne walking[36], in-to my bed, allone,
Through hevy thocht, that no way sleip I mycht,
Rememberyng of divers thyngis gone:
So up I rose, and clethit me anone.
Be this, fair Tytane, with his lemis[37] lycht,
Ouer all the land had spred his baner brycht.

With cloke and hude I dressit me belyve[38],
With dowbyll schone, and myttanis on my handis;
Howbeit the air was rycht penetratyve,
Yit fure I furth, lansasing ourthorte[39] the landis
Toward the see, to schorte[40] me on the sandis,
Because unblomit was baith bank and braye[41].