# Poems and Sketches

By New Zealander



This eBook is a reproduction produced by the National Library of New Zealand from source material that we believe has no known copyright. Additional physical and digital editions are available from the National Library of New Zealand.

EPUB ISBN: 978-0-908328-86-4

PDF ISBN: 978-0-908331-82-6

The original publication details are as follows:

Title: Poems and sketches: grave and humorous

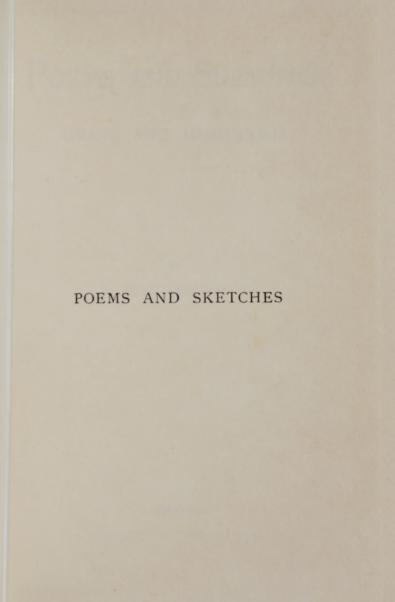
Author: Ferguson, Dugald

Published: D. Ferguson, London, England, 1907

THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NEW ZEALAND

sought from the old

- an old travelin bestelomen -



# POEMS AND SKETCHES

GRAVE AND HUMOROUS

A CARACTANDER

# POEMS AND SKETCHES

### GRAVE AND HUMOROUS

BY
A NEW ZEALANDER

LONDON
PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR

PRINTED AND BOUND BY
HAZELL, WATSON AND VINEY, LD,
LONDON AND AYLESBURY.

#### Dedication

TO

## MR. JOHN DUTHIE

WHOSE RARE GENIALITY INSPIRED THE IDEA

OF THE FOLLOWING SKETCHES

THIS WORK IS FITTINGLY INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR

THE REAL PROPERTY AND ADDRESS.

## CONTENTS

### POEMS

						PAGE
VICTORIA THE GOOD						I
THE PAGEANT AT ROTORUA .						5
THE DIGGERS						9
GLENGARRY'S TOMB						12
THREE BUSH COMPANIONS	100					15
THE BRITISH LION AND HIS WHEL	PS.					17
MEMORIAL VERSES						19
REVISITED						21
HIGHLANDERS TO THE FRONT .						24
ADDRESS TO SIR HECTOR MACDONA	LD ON	N HIS	ARR	IVAL	AT	
DUNEDIN						27
A GIRL I MET						29
THE POLEMIC						31
LAMENT FOR SIR JOHN MCKENZIE						33
ELEGY ON MR. SCOBIE MCKENZIE						36
ODE TO MUGGY						38
THE FLOWERS OF MAORILAND .						40
THE MAID OF WAIUKU						43
THE PRIDE OF THE FAMILY .						45
THE PERIPATETIC POET						47
A LADY						51

### CONTENTS

CHAP. SKEICHES OF GOSSIPTOI	V		
I. INTRODUCTORY			PAGE
II. MR. BLARNEY		•	55
III. MR. JAMES ALLSORTS .			59
IV. THE WEDDING			63
V. THE LOCAL POET			68
VI. MR. FLOGGEM		•	78
VII. THE PIG-HUNT			87
VIII. MR. BLARNEY'S TAME-PIG HUNT			95
IX. MR. BLARNEY'S GENEROSITY			IOI
DEMEROSITY			105
HUMOROUS PIECES			
THE OYSTER MATCH			III
EPIGRAM ON TWO BELLIGERENT NEWSPAPER POETS			114
THE PLOUGHMEN O!	11000		115
THE TUG-OF-WAR.	STATE OF		117
THE COUNTY MEMBER	Diav		121
THE RABBITER'S LAMENT FOR HIS DOG PADDY .	. Date		123
A BUSH PICNIC	17 9		125
THE BACHELOR'S SOLILOQUY	dgil	•	128
THE TWO MARES	300		
SINGING AND COURTSHIP	Int		131
VIEW FROM THE MOUNTAIN TOP.	•	•	134
THE SQUATTER'S PRAYER		•	137
EPIGRAM		•	140
NELLIE .			143
VERSES.			144
	-		146
A ROMANCE IN LIFE			148
OLD DAVIE KNOWLES			151
SKETCH	1230		153

# POEMS

### VICTORIA THE GOOD

- As though from out the firmament had dropped a brilliant star,
- By which men erstwhile steered their paths o'er lands and seas afar,
- Came tidings of that life's decease which, with its light serene,
- So long had shed effulgence round the name of Britain's Queen.
- The sceptre now is laid aside that, heiring in her youth,
- Was in her hand the instrument of purity and truth; Who, ere she sat down on her throne, to God in prayer bowed
- For wisdom for her lofty sphere, and had her wish bestowed.

Thus she who only wisdom asked to rightly rule always

Received as well dominion vast, and length of glorious days;

So that no king nor kaiser yet has owned such vast domain,

Nor has been matched in any age the splendour of her reign.

That grand display will long its place among earth's memories keep

When Britain's fleets in martial show manœuvred on the deep.

As though Ocean's leviathans, to grace that record day Of the ruler of their element, were wheeling round in play.

Yet 'twas not quite—which made that day so terribly of note—

Those massed battalions on land and armaments afloat,

But her Colonial Embassies—a more momentous sight—

That then foreshadowed Britain's pow'r in federated might.

For chiefs were there from every clime beneath the heavenly dome,

Not car-bound captives those, as in the iron sway of Rome,

- But representing peoples free, who despot slaves had been;
- And as their liege acclaiming proudly Britain's Empress Queen.
- In her days knowledge multiplied, and arts and commerce bloomed;
- And gospel light with widening rays the heathen lands illumed;
- With growing lustre, her life's sun made its appointed tour,
- Till clouded near its setting by the frenzy of the Boer.
- But God be praised that she survived to see those clouds unclose,
- And swift discomfiture o'ertake her late vainglorious foes,
- When great Lord Roberts rolled them up before his widespread wings
- From Paardeberg to Bloemfontein, and Diamond Hills and Springs!
- And she saw too you pageant times' dimly foreshadowed scheme,
- Of federated empire proved no visionary's dream;
- When all the stripling Colonies with willing heart and hand
- Came rallying in her hour of need, around their Motherland.

- (And those Colonial warriors soon made their name renowned,
- Both on the fiery field of strife and in rough riding round;
- Checkmating all their wily foes with ardour just as keen,
- And brooking lightly all their toils to serve their Mother Queen.)
- Thus far her Empire's weal relieved, with calm untroubled mind,
- Victoria marked her end's approach, unfearing and resigned;
- While *once* no senile weakness darkened her mind's light serene;
- But to the last she bore herself, as she had lived, the Queen.
- August the dawning of her reign, its closing—in her rest—
- As when the summer's sunset paints with gorgeous hues the west;
- Upright and pure in mind; her heart a fount of motherhood.
- Her people well have cause to mourn Victoria the Good.

### THE PAGEANT AT ROTORUA

- HA! yonder waves Britannia's flag, that arm of power bared,
- To limit whose high destiny the Transvaal madman dared;
- He in an alien land resides, an exile now forlorn; His council in nomadic flight, a spectacle of scorn.
- Proud as of wont that banner waves above you fabric chaste
- Which, raised to honour Royalty, marks Rotorua's taste;
- And shows with spoils of bosky dells a maze of arches, crossed,
- With Nikaus and fern fronds festooned, and greenery embossed.
- From every dome in proud display—their high guests welcoming—
- Float pennons gay, like blossoms shot at the approach of Spring;
- As wandering planets lesser orbs deflect in their career,
- So roving magnates lesser crowds draw in this nether sphere.

And thus attracted in the wake of Cornwall's double stars

At Rotorua, daily, crowds pour from congested cars Where tasteful trophies have been reared and nightly splendours planned

That in a land of wonders showed a town of fairy-land.

Here where of old the Maori dwelt, a stalwart race renowned,

When combating to hold their own—as Britain's warriors found—

Though dusk their skins, their hearts within—by generous measures taught—

Are white now as the Pateka's,\* with whom they sternly fought.

And gath'ring in this wonderland of geyser, lake, and spring,

Have come from far their various tribes to greet their future king;

For type now of their lot they deem in all their future gaze

That storied flag that floats above you sylvan arches' maze.

O 'twas a show of import high—a storied drama true— Prepared there for our monarch's son, an Emp'ror well might view

<sup>\*</sup> Maori designation for the white men.

Those thousands of a lusty race, assembled from afar, To indicate their native might by feats of mimic war.

And in that wide arena by a mighty crowd hemmed in, The sunshine's splendour still enhancing more the warlike scene,

Throughout that day, in swift relays, were seen then to advance

Their cohorts at the charge to act the dreadful battle dance.

The sudden spring, the lifted spear, at the weird chanted call;

The hoarse response, the mighty tread, so sternly rhythmical;

The rolling eye, the lolling tongue, the horrible grimace,

Well pictured the war fury of a strong, courageous race.

Rehearing thus in peaceful guise their once feared battle gage,

When warfare to the knife they dared 'gainst Britain's rule to wage,

They so their loyal purpose to their monarch's son disclose

That all its boding terrors now are but for Britain's foes.

And well might he whose station high is next unto the throne

Have cause for pride, if reading true, that drama's pregnant tone,

That showed there a resource of pow'r to guard with sleepless care

This frontier of that empire vast that owns him sovereign heir.

For what foe might unharmed escape who durst in grips to face

The dauntless Anglo-Celtic and intrepid Maori race? Those now are one, the mem'ries of old feuds laid wholly by,

And to one land bound by like ties, for it to do or die.

### THE DIGGERS

AUSTRALIA in the golden days
When Fortune shed resplendent rays
And none of want were sensitive—
Those were the times when men could live.

When thousands from the old lands hived, 'Twas then the fittingest survived; And sturdy forms and bearings bold Were qualities that fully told.

And men of courage in the sway Of factions had the biggest say; Whose promptness in upholding law Made the unruly stand in awe.

Not those the days when social grades Obtained by artificial aids, That checks on action free entailed, And rogues by tricks of law prevailed.

Deep bronzed beneath the sultry clime And all the people in their prime, The cabbage hat and blouse were then Insignias of the flow'r of men. Then workers, stern iconoclasts,
Boldly withstood the moneyed castes;
And each—how humble e'er his sphere—
Himself deemed the vicegerent's peer.

A man was then—whate'er his grade— Or social sphere—or work or trade— With all his native ardour warmed; And by no modes or cliques conformed.

The teamster with his sounding lash, The stockman in knee-boots and sash, The bushman, all were in their kind Proved men of mark and force of mind.

Will Fate yet for Australia deign Such days, such flow'r of men again, Her barren wastes be cultured grounds To make advance by leaps and bounds?

How well if Providence in shares Had meted out our parts and theirs; And with our thrift enhanced their pow'rs, And all their stern resolve made ours.

And can we deem in lesser lays
To celebrate those heroes' praise,
Who braved the perils of flood and frost
In Maoriland's terrific coast?

Those dauntless ones in thought I view, Their burdened rugged ways pursue, With gripped hands fording streams breast high

And forced from midnight floods to fly.

Now searching mighty Clutha's course When in her onrush from her source Upon her sands were roughly cast The golden spoils of ages past.

Or where 'neath daily dripping skies Dense vapours from the mountains rise, And jungle hills chaotic piled Are cleft by rivers roaring wild.

There hosts in daring manhood's pride
The elements and toils defied
And in wild reefs and lone seaboards
From Nature wrenched her golden hoards.

And by their strong impulsion stung Soon townships into cities sprung, And utter sylvan solitudes To thriving cultured neighbourhoods.

### GLENGARRY'S TOMB

(Nolan the poet, attracted by the single word "Glengarry" on the headstone of an obscure grave in the Dunedin cemetery, his stirring lines of sympathy roused some patriotic gentlemen to more fittingly mark the spot, where a long illustrious line had so haplessly terminated. This was satisfactorily accomplished under the auspices of Dr. Gordon Macdonald, to whom the following memorial verses have been in consequence respectfully inscribed.)

For the last Glengarry goodly
Is this monumental pile;
Yet the wordly cynic rudely
Whispers, "Was it worth the while?"

At the question straight comes o'er me
The entrancement of the seer;
And a high scene opes before me,
And the pibroch fills my ear.

And the tartan tints that vary
Mark the badge of many a clan;
But the bonnets of Glengarry
I see foremost in the van,

While the wonted mode of battle All but makes my spirit shout With the slogan and guns' rattle, And the onset and the rout. Thus my spirit, like the phœnix
Rising from its funeral pile,
Gives the answer to the cynic's
Query, "Was it worth the while?"

This is not a man we honour

Who might have his share of blame;
But in him we prize the owner

Of a proud historic name.

This the name that has been reckoned
Daring emblem of the Gael,
That in fight was never second
At the signal to assail.

That was it that at Culloden
Was, as wonted, to the fore,
When Drumossie's Muir was sodden
With the gallant clansmen's gore.

That was it that won fresh splendour In Houg'mont's terrific fight, Whose heroical defender Foiled Napoleon's utmost might.

So when asked to name the proudest Of that storied roll of fame, Wellington ascribed the loudest Tribute to Glengarry's name. Vain the halo of such story
Of a proud and martial race,
To revive its fading glory,
Or arrest grim Ruin's pace.

Seeking 'mid New Zealand's prairies Fortune's favour to reclaim, There the last of the Glengarries Found a grave without a name;

In his fallen fortunes slighted,
Fit type of that gallant race
Whose brave deeds their land requited
With like exile and disgrace.

Men of stature and of terror,
As those owned who felt their might;
And when won from ways of error
Bulwarks for their country's right.

Yet they who in every battle
Bore so well their country's cause
Were forced to give place to cattle
By that country's selfish laws.

### THREE BUSH COMPANIONS

I SING of three maidens who live in the bush,
All winsome and blooming, in 'midst of their teens;
And soon it must come, there will be quite a push
Of chaps chasing after those sprightly young queens.
At church and week meetings—both morning and
eve—

All those young fellows, sure, will display much ado For perfect devotion, but rather believe Devotion for Ella and Esther and Prue.

For Ella's engaging, with sweetness and grace,
And a charm in her lithe form invariably lies;
While her constant bright smiles light her nice
modelled face,

And brighten the depths of her pure azure eyes.

And Talent has printed its stamp on her brow,
And Fancy has brightened her mind with its view.

So Ella appears, and you may picture now
The gentle companion of Esther and Prue.

But Nature in Esther's attractive sweet face, I'm sure, in the work of her hands herself prides, With the mould of that figure of willowy grace And those eyes of dark lustre where Cupid resides; While smartness and neatness with those charms combined

Show Nature's perfection—a maiden that's true—And in this sweet portrait the dullest may find
The handsome companion of Ella and Prue.

And Prue's taking manner the Muse loves to trace—
She only can fittingly make me construe—
Those auburn-tinged tresses, with kind-looking face
Ever bright with the light of two eyes of deep blue.
So mirthful in manner, and tidy in dress,
With coquettish manner, so piquant to woo;
And so as the Muse has with touches express
Limned Ella and Esther, she thus pictures Prue.

### THE BRITISH LION AND HIS WHELPS

OLD Kruger I guess at Pretoria
Rues now—at this change of the tide—
That the Mana <sup>1</sup> of good Queen Victoria
He had in vainglory defied.

For the Lion he deemed—with long storing Munitions—he could hold at bay, 'Mong the mountains he now can hear roaring, While rapidly coming his way.

Who at first from the toils he confronted Had wounded, retired. Yet the more Resolved, and for his end undaunted; Then at once, with a terrible roar,

On a new point of vantage had landed, Ere his movement the enemy saw; And Cronje, so lately high-handed, Laid—a suppliant—under his paw.

Now his roaring in menace of battle

To Kruger brings qualms of affright,

That his mad pride induced him to grapple

With the Lion of Britain in fight.

<sup>1</sup> In Maori signifies the power of a chief.

17

French illustrates his bounding in choler; Lord Roberts his wisdom and might; His courage is noted in Buller, His endurance in Powell and White.

Lyddite shells are the roar of his fury,
The bayonet points are his claws
That in his foes' flesh he will bury—
And marking his terrible paws

Are the Gordons' and Guards' noble column, Or Irish and Welsh Fusiliers, Charging on in magnificent volume, The welkin resounding their cheers;

Or the horsemen with emulous glory
Trampling down those Republican loons,
The Scots Greys, so renowned in war story,
And as famed Inniskilling Dragoons.

Like the Lion sire too, the brave Freelanders—
Those all are his fully grown whelps:
Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders—
In his need most efficient helps.

Let the eagles and bears their best try on,
With envious screechings and yelps;
They will not scare the old British Lion,
Flanked with her confederate whelps.

### MEMORIAL VERSES

Last of a stalwart race, such men
As won for Highlanders their fame,
Well may I this meed to him pen
To keep in fragrancy his name.

My lot in far-off lands to range
From youth to age, and brought back here
In time, by Fate's ordainment strange
To be a bearer of his bier.

And as my thoughts will backward trace
To when youth's time with light was clad,
Appears his chiefly with each face
Whose kind looks always made me glad.

And well the brother he admired
May in this mournful tribute share,
Who in my breast the flame inspired,
That for him still is glowing there.

That firm-placed step and form alert,
With mind superior to the crowd,
The hand in every act expert,
Make me in thought still sadly proud.

Long time the grave has been his place, But now brought vividly to mind By him—the last of that strong race— Just to the same weird spot consigned.

God's peace with both, whose past love proved Such hopes within them were instilled.

The uncle whom my boy's heart moved—

The sire for whom it ever thrilled.

### REVISITED

AND have I viewed once more the banks of the Crinan?

And gazed upon memory's sunlit Lochfyne?

And seen on my way the green braes of Kilfinnan,
My school happy holiday scenes of Langsyne?

And once more I've heard mid those scenes of my childhood

The cry of the muirhen that mem'ries stirred fast;
While the voice of the cuckoo—afar in the wildwood—
Appealed to my soul like a voice of the past.

How unchanged seems to me—now age-stricken and hoary—

Those loved scenes of my youth, with their memories blest;

Still fringing the east are the woods of Kilmory,
While dark Auchendarroch spreads off on the west!

Surrounding its calm bay, so pleasing when flooded, As ever, Lochgilphead in half-moon is ranged.

The same streets and square, with so few houses added,

And green that we played on. Life only has changed.

And of all those young hearts then so buoyantly beating

At school task and play bout my emulous peers, How few now remain to respond to my greeting, And those sadly marred with the ravage of years!

But those gallant others to earth's quarters scattered,
Though Fortune awaited a few o'er the wave—
What word tells of those who with ardent hopes
shattered

Are lying unknown in their sea-sundered graves?

Some frenziedly dared with a demon to grapple—
Fearing not in their mad pride his menace to dare—
Till by his strangling hands—ere long in the battle—
Hurled, maddened and crushed, to their graves
in despair.

O hide from my mem'ry that record of terror
How he, the true-hearted, the gifted and suave,
Left blind in fatuity, whelmed in his error!
His human freight shuddering at night in the
wave!

Still in those fair scenes that my boy's passion nourished

The sway of the landlord puts freedom to shame;
For tracts where the sons of a stalwart race flourished
Here but pasture now sheep, or are coverts for
game.

Woes wait for that land that to Mammon surrenders
The sacred birthright of the race of the soil,
That lacking in dire need its native defenders
Must helpless succumb to the foeman a spoil.

### HIGHLANDERS TO THE FRONT

(WRITTEN FOR THE GAELIC SOCIETY OF DUNEDIN)

In times of yore, when nations strove
With little scruple for the right,
Impelled but as their passions drove,
And owned no other law than might,
A hardy race in tartans dight
All down the ages bore their brunt;
And dauntless in unequal fight
Came still victorious to the front.

And when in time one flag unfurled
O'er Celt and Saxon proudly flew;
And Britain singly braved the world,
And held her own, and conquered too;
Through all that warfare's stern ado,
In every action, as of wont—
From Fontenoy to Waterloo—
The Highlanders were in the front.

And still we find that record high
Our kilted regiments maintain,
When Piper Milne fell at Dargai,
And Stewart in the Soudan slain;
And thus, if on the height or plain,
Still foremost in each bloody hunt,
They prove where glory is to gain
That Highlanders are in the front.

And so in peace—the strength of will
That of a stalwart race the source
Was of their feats invincible—
Still moves them in each art's resource;
And with the ardent virile force
Imbibed from the maternal fount,
Where wealth or honour points the course
Still Highlanders are in the front.

And we may see in our young land,
With fabric framed to banish crime,
What impress deep the Highland hand
Has made there for such end sublime.
The grand old Doctor's <sup>1</sup> fruitful time,
Macandrew's <sup>2</sup> patriotic wont,
Attest how fully in our clime
The Highlanders were in the front.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The late Rev. Dr. Stuart, of Dunedin, honoured by all classes and sects.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The late James Macandrew, formerly superintendent of the province of Otago, and greatly respected for his political ability and patriotic zeal.

Behold your chief,¹ who well may claim
Distinction for such purpose grand;
Who, once poor and unknown to fame,
Is now a power in the land;
Whose measures for her welfare planned
May well evoke the honest vaunt
That 'mongst our Senate's chosen band
A Highlander is in the front.

O Highlanders, proud is your fame!
Then ever set it to your seal
The high ideal Highland name
To make your standard of appeal;
And for this with unswerving zeal
Let nothing your devotion blunt,
To show in truth and honour's weal
That Highlanders are in the front.

Sir John McKenzie—since deceased—who initiated the present excellent system of land laws in New Zealand. He was knighted a month before his death by the Prince of Wales—then Duke of Cornwall.

# ADDRESS TO SIR HECTOR MACDONALD ON HIS ARRIVAL AT DUNEDIN

(WRITTEN FOR THE GAELIC SOCIETY, OF WHICH SIR HECTOR WAS AN HONORARY MEMBER)

ILLUSTRIOUS sir, whose name is linked
With deeds of high heroic fame
And martial chivalry instinct,
Born of the race from which you came;
The which the more exalts the case
Of our exultant Gaelic corps,
That such name to our roll adds grace—
A thousand welcomes to our shore.

In fields of blood, who has not heard
Of the high conduct thou hast shown?
That every Scottish heart has stirred
At deeds that swelled their land's renown.
The glorious march to Kandahar;
The shame of sad Majuba Hill;
The fury of the Soudan War
Have each shown thy resolve and skill.

Of our historic themes elate

We Highlanders are wont to be;
Yet in our country's mighty State

More than a fraction what are we?
And so when gallant deeds, as wont,
Britannia's bravest sons declare,
We glow, when noting well in front
The Highland patronymic there.

As from the ranks on India's strand
Rose strong McBean to place and fame;
And vested with supreme command
Was marked Macpherson's honoured name.
And grand Sir Colin Campbell—proud
Was Scotia of such a son—
And now Macdonald, as endowed,
Will surely prove as loved a one.

And, sir, your proud compatriots, we
Will ever treasure your renown,
In fond expectancy to see
Your actions yet new laurels crown.
E'en now each heart with pleasure throbs
In reading of those actions back;
As Ireland boasts of glorious "Bobs,"
So Scotland prides in "Fighting Mac."

### A GIRL I MET

O SWEET was the maiden I met on my travels, Whose image Time scarce from my mind will efface; And bright is the vista that Fancy unravels, As I muse on that picture of innocent grace.

Yet 'twas not her beauty so much as her sweetness
That showed doing good was a joy on her part;
Those flashes of humour, like light in their fleetness,
That lit her kind eyes up, which most took my
heart.

As lithe and erect as a sapling bush maple,

Her figure seemed emblem of feminine grace;

And healthy and pure as a rosy-cheeked apple

The expression that reigned in her sweet blooming face.

Like outbursts of sunshine in mountain and valley,
Erst gloomily shrouded with vapour and rain—
Then thrilled at her presence—there tempted to dally—
Fond fancies that brightened my spirit and brain.

To swains living near, what occasion of danger,
In hearts daily tortured with lovelorn alarms,
Must there be from one who, a passing stranger,
So deeply could move with the view of her charms!

But well shall that one be with fortune requited,
Though otherwise haply obscure and unknown,
Who such goodness and brightness and sweetness
united

Will have the sole right to call his very own,

### THE POLEMIC

- IN a Canterbury borough town resides a certain notable
  - Who in all-round contradiction is a master of defence;
- And in that cranium of his, 'tis a mystery inscrutable,
  All the topics and the figures he has managed
  to condense.
- His tongue with constant wordy strife is agile in delivery
  - Of those details the charge of which he makes his special pride,
- And keeps for proofs to overthrow his foes beyond recovery
  - News cuttings and statistics and the Bible by his side.
- In scriptural buffoonery his method Ingersollian

  Shows the master that he emulates, or aims to do
  at least,
- Who through domains of Sacred Writ a conqu'ring Napoleon
  - Went vapouring and rioting, till *chawed* up by a priest.

His humour, rich in cavilling, is at its best when blasphemous,

Perverting scriptural narrative, to scout its sacred theme;

The Newtons and the Faradays, and other worthies as famous,

Who owned the Bible, were as fools, but wisdom dies with him.

His syllabus trends variously to other than his business—

A social economist of all sorts of abuse-

Championing the quarrel of the Boers in wonted cussedness,

His super-Christian morality always so profuse.

Just step into his premises, and you'll find there a civil man,

Intelligent and affable; but put him to the test

With anything debatable, and you would think the devil then

With a mania of virulence him suddenly possessed.

# LAMENT FOR SIR JOHN MCKENZIE

(WRITTEN FOR THE GAELIC SOCIETY OF DUNEDIN OF WHICH HE WAS CHIEF)

Bow, Clansmen, bow your heads in grief While pours the pibroch's saddest wail In fitting requiem for the Chief, Who was such honour to the Gael.

Yet not to ye alone confined
Is grief for his untimely loss,
Whose fame was borne on every wind
To each land 'neath the Southern Cross.

And by each frugal settler's hearth—
Far as Zealandia's bounds extend—
Is breathed a tribute to his worth,
Who to their welfare was such friend.

Think proudly, Clansmen, that the name
Of your loved Chief—not sole confined
To printed records of his fame—
Is with Zealandia's strand entwined.

33

As the adventurous mariner
Athwart some newly sighted shore,
Assigns from thence—his name to bear—
Some cape or bay or mountain hoar,

'Tis thus in Cheviot's fertile downs,
Where homes to growing comfort haste;
And a well-cultured landscape crowns
What late was but a pasture waste.

In that bold scheme, so wisely planned,
To future ages will go down
His memory fragrant in the land,
While flourishes McKenzie town.

He well outlined his noble scheme— So daringly, so wholly new— So that whoe'er would follow him Might easily its scope pursue.

With such politic vision far,
'Twas sad to leave his task undone;
A leader in progressive war,
Who fell in fight with harness on.

His steps were in no shifting sand,

To wash out with the foremost wave;

But deeply in the solid land

His path was marked unto his grave:

# LAMENT FOR SIR JOHN MCKENZIE 35

Who from a shepherd's low degree
Ascended Honour's topmost height;
When at his home beside the sea
The king's son called and dubbed him knight.

## ELEGY ON MR. SCOBIE MCKENZIE

OTAGO mourns in "sad surprise"
Another of her favourite sons,
Whom she was fondly wont to prize
As one of her most gifted ones.

For Scobie—genially renowned—
The scholarly, the bright and suave;
Endowed with gifts of state profound,
Well may she mourn such early grave.

His fluent oratory, men

To his own high convictions swayed;
And essays from his facile pen

Nature's unlaboured grace displayed.

His party's hope, yet loved by all; The flashing sallies of his wit Th' imbroglios of the Senate hall With humour's kindlier spirit lit.

Matched 'gainst his rival of like name, Now his companion weird in doom, To whom a title only came In time to ornament his tomb. That contest stern of powers proved
Otago watched with strange regard:
As doubting 'twixt two sons beloved
To which her preference to award.

In both alike she fondly prides,
Whose final exits from her scene,
Where they served on opposing sides,
Was made with scarce a month between.

And if Sir John his mark has set Deep in Zealandia's either isle, Shall gentle Scobie she forget, With talents yet more versatile?

Ah, ill our fair young land can spare Such gracious friend to Poesy; And to him now with heartfelt care The muse inscribes this elegy.

#### ODE TO MUGGY

(SUGGESTED BY AN ENGLISH FRIEND'S ODD USE OF THAT NAME, UNDER THE IDEA THAT IT WAS THE SCOTCH OF "MAGGIE")

> So gentle, winsome, kind, and good, In the young bloom of womanhood, Adorned alike in form and mind. With grace to charm, and sense to bind; Formed to inflame Love's fervid tale, When passion's pang the cheek will pale; Accosted "Muggy," what a shame By such a term her to defame! Since naught less forecasts in her case Of muggy weather than her face; But rather more, if anything, Of a bright balmy morn in spring In whose expanse of azure hue A cloud or speck one cannot view. Then for her let the thoughtful muse A title more befitting choose, That straight would to the mind convey A picture of her air and way;

With every attribute and grace That pleases, in her form and face, Her dark brown hair and cheeks of bloom. Contrasting well, like light and gloom; Her changing blush and sprightly ways, As Fancy warms, or Humour plays; Her figure slim, yet trim and lithe; Her manner mild, yet arch and blithe; Her soft-toned voice's accents kind, That show the feeling heart behind; The blue eyes showing love and trust; The rosy lips; the modelled bust. Say what term with explicitness May all those various charms express? Not "Muggy," then, in any case, But rather should be "Sunny Face."

#### THE FLOWERS OF MAORILAND

- THROUGH Maoriland a shudder thrilled, as shot athwart her star,
- Which long had beamed in tranquil peace, the lurid cloud of war,
- That signalled how her manhood's Flow'rs—as at the gates of hell,
- Defending their entrusted post—so gloriously fell.
- Yet still a glow of noble pride allays their country's pangs
- At thought of what they there achieved—that ev'ry record bangs—
- Who, holding the position that their leader's foresight planned,
- Showed to the world what type of men they were in Maoriland.
- Upon the war-path Kitchener at once his force uncoils
- To sweep with wide converging lines the Boers within his toils,

- Who swift to Condalama spur, where there the pass command
- One hundred men intrenched, but those the Flow'rs of Maoriland.
- Seven hundred Boers came surging on, in fiery Botha's lead,
- A thousand steers before them lashed in furious stampede;
- The veldt reverberates to their hooves: who durst such onset stand?
- That ordeal dread bore fearlessly the Flow'rs of Maoriland.
- The wild irruption roused at once to arms that dauntless few,
- Untried in arms, but to their blood and race traditions true,
- As from a rock begirt with flame, brought sudden to a stand,
- That bovine billow shivered from the Flow'rs of Maoriland.
- As smites the blizzard hail the corn, that is in ruin laid.
- So rang from that undaunted band the deadly fusillade:

- And 'mong the maddened herd in front, or Boers on either hand,
- Its billet found each bullet from the Flow'rs of Maoriland.
- No boggler then among them there; for as each hero fell
- A comrade's swift avenging shot rang out his fitting knell.
- Oh, as a spectacle of war, 'twas terrible and grand To see that Boer horde scatter from the Flow'rs of Maoriland.
- Rear the memorial for the dead; the living cherish well,
- Who, when that midnight avalanche of battle on them fell,
- Sustained its awful brunt with such unfaltering eye and hand,
- As through the world has now renowned the Flow'rs of Maoriland.

#### THE MAID OF WAIUKU

(PRONOUNCED AS WAIOOK)

Somewhere beyond Auckland, that picturesque city,
Past Manukau Heads—in an out-of-way nook—
At the top of a narrow romantic and pretty—
Is a quiet sleepy township, its folks style Waiuku.
Fine healthy and breezy,
Its prospect would please ye;

And there resides Lizzy, The Maid of Waiuku.

Attractive and pleasingly moulded her face is, With candour writ on it like words in a book; And modelled her figure as one of the Graces, And sweet taking ways has the Maid of Waiuku.

For charming young Lizzie
Half the lads are love-dizzy;
Such winsome girl is she
The Maid of Waiuku.

With sweet oval features, and fair glossy tresses;
And blue eyes lit up with a bright laughing look,
Her manner the pleasingest spirit expresses;
So charming and sweet is the Maid of Waiuku.
With figure the snodest
And sprightly and modest,
She'd charm e'en the oddest
Of men at Waiuku.

For the house—where at table she waits—in the evening

The billiards are left, and the bar is forsook;

For the young men find pastime now much more enlivening

In courting and mashing the Maid of Waiuku.

So bright she's in wonted;

And one she enchanted

With this song has vaunted

The Maid of Waiuku.

### THE PRIDE OF THE FAMILY

The hand in woe is lifted,

The head in anguish bowed;

The beautiful, the gifted,

Is lying in her shroud.

Speak not one word against her, Let no blame pass your lips; Forbear, ye proud, to censure A mind in half eclipse.

For stainless is her record

That may by all be viewed;
A spotless life unchequered

Save in its modes of good.

The daughter of a peasant,
Who highest honours won,
Without a help adjacent
To stimulate her on,

The mountain was her nurs'ry,
She flowered amid the wild;
Her patronage the burs'ry,
For which she bravely toiled.

Presume not, then, to blame her; But for her nipped career Drop rather, as you name her, The sympathetic tear.

And taught by spirits noble

To realise their blow,

Be sharers in their trouble

Whom it has brought so low,

Overwhelmed for her thus riven
So sudden from their side,
To whom their charge was given,
Whose gifts made her their pride.

Then do not harshly con her
For what made Conscience nod;
But place the sod upon her,
And leave her with her God.

### THE PERIPATETIC POET

OF dwellers in township and camp—
As varied in moods as professions—
An old poet cove on the tramp
Desires to record his impressions.

Of sorts and conditions of men
His travels have made him a student;
From such a rich theme for his pen
To refrain, though he would, yet he couldn't.

Oh, the thought is exceedingly droll,

How diversely he has been treated;

If by civil folk on the whole,

Some bumptious, perverse, and conceited.

From the snob with his lip on the curl, On view of his muse's effusion; To the surly remark of the churl, The instant of its bare allusion.

At times as a person of parts

By a courteous gentleman fêted;

By another, of stingy deserts,

As a book-fiend ill-naturedly rated.

Some purchasing, even with thanks,
His volume—quite eager to know it;
Some—as but the mildest of cranks—
In pity regarding the poet.

The Bible free giving commends,
So oft he fared well with the preacher;
And kindly in literature's ends
Whiles found too the scholarly teacher.

The butcher—coarse-grained from his trade— Was hopeless; and just take his voucher, Of some teachers it might be said Their calling were fitter as butcher.

Much handling of cash for its gain

Makes seemingly some minds to hanker;

Which doubtless may serve to explain

His frequent ill speed with a banker.

But Nature, of whimsical use, Not always displays signs generic; So he whiles found a banker profuse; And whiles too a close-fisted cleric.

But kindness is found in all trades, From the artisan to the mercer; And gen'rous minds in all grades, If 'mong Jacks-in-offices scarcer. Men's converse at all times declares
The ultimate trend of their habits;
Alexandra's topic was "shares"
In Cambrians chiefly 'twas rabbits.

With folk of such practical views
A poet could scarcely gain credit;
The scope of whose ideal muse
They'd scarce understand, if they read it.

To those who in that way are built—
Much proner to grabbing than giving—
What yields most material result
Is reckoned the chief end for living.

But vague and intangible themes
In lyric, or poem heroic,
The fancies of dreamers of dreams,
They view with the mood of the Stoic.

Where Nature in altitudes heaved,
A grandeur terrific exhibits;
And splendours each lake, interleaved,
To that panorama contributes;

Throughout all that wild scenic clime

He journeyed with volumes well freighted,
Seeking buyers; while with the sublime

His fancy delightedly sated.

A pedlar, in sooth, of his verse,

Though little regarding his function;
Each day's added gains to his purse,

For this proving a salving unction.

Thus faring each day on the way,
Each night, as it fell, finding lodging—
Not always commanded for pay—
Yet, all the same, free and ungrudging.

Sometimes amid Comfort's o'erflow— In Luxury's lap fairly seated— And in sheets and pillows of snow, His bed with a warming-pan heated.

Again, with few blankets to spare,
Spread down on a plain wooden settle,
Made welcome to that and the fare,
Advised by the steam singing kettle.

Now in verse, not wholly sublime— Nor yet either quite a farrago— I've sung how a dealer in rhyme Adventured through Central Otago.

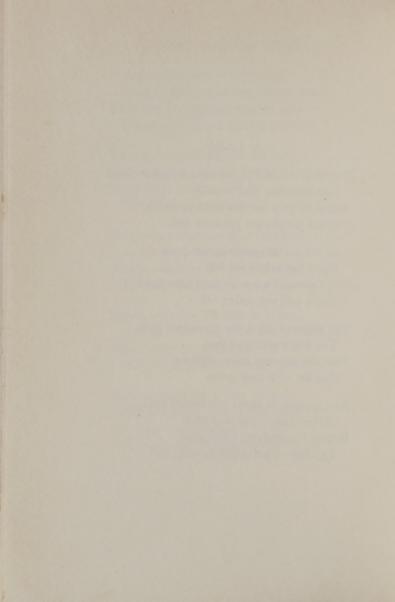
#### A LADY

THOUGH clouded hopes have from her cheek Conduced the rose to chill, And with grey her fair locks to streak, Grace haunts her presence still.

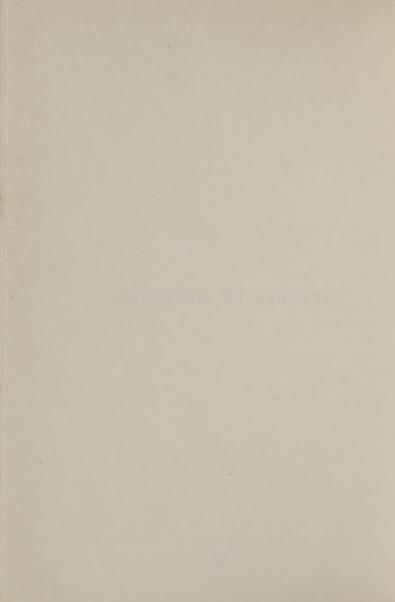
And yet ere disappointments keen Upon her bright life fell, What graces hers must then have been Those still remaining tell.

The cultured mind, the mannered pose,
The finely moulded face,
That the superior mode disclose,
She fits with easy grace.

And, gazing on those soft brown eyes, Where Love's abode is seen, Within me straight, I feel arise The sad "what might have been."



SKETCHES OF GOSSIPTON



#### CHAPTER I

#### INTRODUCTORY

UPON a summer's day, some little time ago, I was enjoying a ramble among the defiles of the rugged hill country that bounds-with sharp declivitiesthe line of horizon between Milton and the Taieri Beach, when I suddenly stumbled upon a quiet little township snugly situated, where a wild precipitous ravine—the course of which I had been unwittingly exploring-at once expanded out into a wide fertile valley. I have said that I had been unwittingly exploring this ravine, for, to say the truth, I was unconscious of any deliberate intention of directing my steps to any particular direction, being so little cognizant of my proximity to the township in question that up to that time I had not even heard of the existence of such a settlement thereabouts; and, indeed, I doubt very much whether a reference to Mackay's Almanac would enlighten one on that point either. The place is so utterly sequestered, as it were, from the view of the outer world, though in such close proximity to it, that there is small marvel

of its having escaped the eagle eye of even the enterprising editor and proprietor of that magazine of local and general information.

It would seem that this place had been an isolated settlement of Old Identities\* long ere the Otago goldfields had been dreamed of. And although some of the original settlers had been subsequently infected by the gold fever, by far the greater number -canny Scots all-had evidently made terms with contentment, and jogged along ever since in the sober routine of plodding industry, growing for their own consumption cereal and root crops in their enclosed fields, and running a few sheep on the neighbouring hills. The remnants of the original party, or, so to speak, of the founders of the settlement, are now represented by a few grey-haired men and antiquated but kindly-looking dames-all in the various stages of failing decrepitude - getting gradually thinned by the Grim Mower, to add to the population of the quiet cemetery, the white palings and sad monuments of which may be seen glistening in the sun from a convenient eminence.

The young men, as they grow up, wander away to the adjacent districts in quest of shearing and harvesting operations; and what ready money they bring back seems to form the chief fund of current coin in the township.

<sup>\*</sup> Sobriquet, in ridicule of their conservatism, bestowed by the Australian diggers on the early Otagons.

Although, as the crow flies-or would, were such a bird there-the distance from Gossipton to Milton cannot exceed six miles (for I am sure that I could not have been rambling over four hours when I chanced upon it), the only available track between the two places, that winds through tortuous gullies, must be at least double that distance. So that how the place came to be discovered at all, in the first instance, is a mystery to me. Up this road a waggon -several times a year-comes laden with supplies for the Gossipton natives, and that is all I know about it. But though so much secluded from the outer world, I soon found that Gossipton formed a world in itself, enjoying a sustained importance with local celebrities, as the Hannibals, the Cæsars, and the Napoleons had celebrated with their achievements the world at large; and the which achievements were but as proportionately greater than those of the others as the world they were enacted on was greater than the Gossipton world.

Taken on the whole, they seem a peaceable, unsophisticated community, guileless of fraud, and on whose doors are no locks. But as Nature—that ever refuses to run in straight lines or exact circles—will assert itself in the bizarre modes of humanity, that when controlled from breaking into outright immorality will be certain to find outlet in some eccentric proclivities of character—harmless in themselves—yet, when associated with the spirit of mischief,

bearing just as much resemblance to the works of the Old Enemy as to be stigmatised as evil, in a place where nothing of a more pronounced character of that kind troubles the inhabitants. Thus it seems with the quiet folk of this sleepy little township. While delighting in maintaining a high tone of morality, yet between them and absolute perfection there seems to be but one trifling failing—to wit, an irrepressible curiosity to know more than rightly concerns each one's individual business. In a word, every one appears to feel an amazing interest in prying into his neighbour's affairs!

Having spent some time in their midst, during several cross-country visits to their township, I have designed to present, from time to time, the fruits of my observations in a series of sketches, the which—if I am able to do anything like justice to my subject, as marking the persistent and amusing efforts of the Gossipton natives in the laudable and time-honoured custom of each one loading his own wheelbarrow—may not prove uninteresting to the general reader.

#### CHAPTER II

#### MR. BLARNEY

IN imposing upon myself the task of delineating the manners of the inhabitants of Gossipton, I find myself in some danger of being convicted of an anomaly at the outset, when in contrast with what I have already mentioned of the primitive simplicity of their habits I am now about to describe an order of things that will appear to be at considerable variance with that statement.

The critical reader must, however, bear in mind that about the date of my introduction the community of Gossipton might be said to be in a kind of transitory state, and slowly emerging from their hitherto contented simplicity of existence to a gradual attention to, and conformity with, the requirements of more fashionable usages. I have already referred to the periodic migrations of the robust youths of the place during the shearing and harvesting seasons. Now the frugal habits of those young men becoming corrupted by their observation of a more liberal system of living in the places of their travels, they

return not only—as I have already stated—with pockets stored with the chief means for the supply of the coin currency in the district, but with minds impregnated with tastes for the more liberal circumstances of life they had witnessed in the course of their vocations. It is needless to say that those tastes scarcely accorded with those of their early training. By such analogy it can be easily understood how barbarous nations have been successively debauched from their original hardy habits of virtue by their intercourse with more civilised, and consequently more dissolute, neighbours.

I believe it to be an axiom of social economy that there can be no institution without the previous correlative of its necessity. That, in fact, the necessity has been the institution's occasion. But I am now taking upon myself the responsibility of deliberately -in one instance at least-excepting from that truism, and affirming, on the contrary, that the reverse can-nay, does-occur; so that instead of an institution being occasioned by its necessity, the idea of the necessity is in reality suggested by the view of the institution. The instance I now particularly refer to is that of a shaving and shampooing saloon. For the sake of perspicuity I will slightly digress from the thread of my subject in order to illustrate my argument by example. Referring to America, for instance, does any one imagine that the prevalent mode there of dressing the beardcharacteristically known as a "Yankee shave"originated from any sense of oppression or inconvenience by the subjects of a superfluity of hair, so that this feeling suggested the necessity of the barber's saloon? Not at all, as I will make quickly clear to the mind of any unbiassed person. First, we must admit, reasoning à priori, that the mere requirements of hair-cropping would necessitate the trade of barbering. Allow, then, some of those barbers-i.e., professors-to be gifted with genius and enterprise, and located in some prosperous gold-mining town, where money was no object-as literally so in Californiawe at once see the inevitable result in the expansion of mere hair-cutting shops into spacious premises. luxurious with lounges, and magnificent with mirrors. Imagination at once pictures the entrance therein of a native, raw-boned and hirsute, for the original specious object of having his long, elf locks reduced by some inches. Swaggering with a sense of the importance of dollars easily acquired, and as prodigally parted with, the interior of the gorgeous establishment gratifies his sensuous imagination. He guesses such enterprise should be encouraged. But how? His moustaches are not to be thought of. He then suddenly imagines that a peculiar arrangement of the beard would impart a more decisive and determined aspect to his physiog. Hence to a barber's finesse and the moneyed importance of a gold-digger are due the institution of the "Yankee shave," instead

of a previous necessity being the cause of the spacious establishment for its primal idea's fuller elaboration.

And now, to return from this digression to the person who was in reality its occasion—in my desire to account for the presence of such an establishment in this place—I will at once introduce to my readers my esteemed friend, Mr. Jack Blarney, the proprietor of a large shaving and shampooing saloon in Gossipton, and situate at the head of its main and only street. In the pursuance of his duties, soft soap is an article that forms Mr. Blarney's principal commodity; and this, I can assure my readers, Mr. Blarney does lay on his customers with no sparing hand.

But as Mr. Blarney's character—a perfect original—exhibits many peculiar traits, all worthy of portraiture—which to do anything like justice to would take up as much time and space in this introductory essay as might endanger its interest—I will in the meantime content myself with this prefatory notice of my friend's distinguished talents, and trust by occasional touches to this outlined sketch to gradually bring out all the parts of his versatile genius to the mental vision of my readers.

Therefore, as this chapter has attained to a respectable limit, I will reserve for my next the task of noticing Mr. James Allsorts, who, next to Mr. Blarney, occupies the most important public position in Gossipton.

# CHAPTER III

## MR. JAMES ALLSORTS

MR. JAMES ALLSORTS, whom I promised to devote this chapter to, is a person somewhat advanced in years, although as yet with but little indications of that honourable badge of maturity—grey hair.

He is of an appearance somewhat tending to corpulency, sanguine complexion, and that settled contemplative look generally resulting from a course of successful speculation and good living. With Mr. Blarney he lives on terms of the closest amity. So intimate indeed are the relations subsisting between those two that the premises that Mr. Allsorts occupies-being but a continuation of the building that Mr. Blarney's saloon is opened in (Mr. Allsorts is a produce merchant himself)-have been accommodated for the greater facility of their converse with each other. For this laudable end the partition originally separating the two shops has been removed, so that the whole tenement now presents the appearance of one great store, with two separate and utterly anomalous departments. Thus one end represents the crowded and confused aspect

of a well-stocked grocery, redolent of unctuous hams and savoury cheese; while, in singular contrast with this vulgar and somewhat greasy state of things, the other end is resplendent with all the fixings of a fashionable hair-dressing saloon. And there Mr. Blarney, in all the pride of his art, can be constantly seen soft-soaping some unpromising customer, while Mr. Allsorts, at his own end, is pursuing his own more commonplace calling of weighing out groceries, or selling articles of apparel.

But an invidious rumour obtained currency among the Gossiptonian gossips—the phrase, by the way, seems singularly tautological—that Mr. Allsorts had other and more obvious reasons besides his professed admiration for Mr. Blarney's social and intellectual qualities for cultivating such close terms of intimacy with him. The fact was-so the rumour ran-that Mr. Allsorts, a man of profound sagacity, had not failed to note the enervating effects of Mr. Blarney's soft soap upon the minds of the subjects of it, who, on those occasions, yielded themselves to the pleasurable sensations produced by his dexterous manipulation, until their features, relaxing to the utmost stretch of placability, proclaimed an utter helplessness of will and surrender of habitual caution. It was upon those occasions that Mr. Allsorts was credited with seizing upon the happy moment of doing profitable business, by holding up some of his wares-a pair of boots, for instance-before the eyes of the individual operated upon-being victimised, rather, one would more aptly term it under the circumstanceswhen he then contrived not only to sell the article at once, but to obtain without demur whatever price he chose to put on it, when, but for the influence of Mr. Blarney's operation, the article in question might be left to moulder on the shelf; for all the people in the township do say that Mr. Allsorts keeps the most indifferent stuff, and that his charges are really exorbitant. Yet he sells them, withal-a fact that apparently gives colour to the suspicion that Mr. Blarney's soft soap has something to do with the matter. Certain it is, when the latter gentleman chances to be absent on his own private affairs, that Mr. Allsorts' business suffers a sensible slackness; while he himself seems dull and uneasy, as one who feels that some of the constituents requisite for his full complement of spirits were lacking. But no sooner does his eye catch the returning tall and slightly puffy figure and jolly countenance of his bonhomie friend than his own clears visibly, like the sun when freed from a passing cloud; while his business almost instantly, and just as perceptibly, begins to brighten up.

The manner in which those worthies advanced their mutual interests was usually initiated by Mr. Blarney in this wise. On any one stepping in, he advanced to him, and, addressing him in his wonted off-hand style, would inquire: "Well, Mr. Snooks,

what can I do for you to-day?" Upon the party modestly disclaiming any necessity for either poll or shave, Mr. Blarney would rejoin: "Well, you look rather dusty; you had better allow me to give you a shampoo." "The best thing out for your health," hereupon Mr. Allsorts would chime in—the suggestion of course being artfully insinuated in his (Mr. Allsorts') own interest all the while.

But to see Mr. Blarney in his glory is when he is shampooing the ladies; for he shampoos, i.e., soft soaps, them also. Their peculiar weakness of nature rendering them the more susceptible to insinuating influences occasioned them to yield themselves more completely to the enjoyment of the exquisite titillation of Mr. Blarney's address, their sweet blushing faces all the while irradiated with delighted smiles. But during this operation Mr. Blarney's appearance is something to behold. Standing at arm's length from the fair subject whose head he is delicately manipulating, he moves round about her, with his puffy figure drawn to its full height, and his hat slightly to one side, his airy manner plainly intimating to the casual observer, "Pooh, sir, this is not the first time I have walked round a young lady."

It would appear, indeed, that walking round young ladies' hearts as well as their heads was a practice at which Mr. Blarney was no novice, it being generally believed that this was the true secret of

his sudden conquest of Kate Dewdrop, the belle of Gossipton, and to whom it was said he had popped the all-important question, when receiving, under his hands, a more than customary soft-soaping dose, until she was thereby rendered utterly incapable of denying him anything. And in this way he managed to carry her off from a crowd of baffled and envious competitors, who thereupon all indignantly protested against Mr. Blarney being permitted to use soft soap with the ladies at all.

## CHAPTER IV

#### THE WEDDING

WE had a wedding in Gossipton lately. In itself, this would be but a trivial occurrence for comment. In connection with that event, however, there has arisen no small discussion among the Gossiptonians, so that on passing over the incident without marked notice I should be scarcely justified in claiming to give a correct account of the various influences that ripple the daily life of this quiet community. Mr. Blarney was not invited. Considering the deserved popularity of this gentleman, and his influential position, as owning the chief business in the township, such an omission on that account alone was sufficiently extraordinary. But when, in addition, it is recollected that among Mr. Blarney's many rare qualities his peculiar forte, from his exuberant flow of genial spirits, for insuring the success of festive gatherings, had been so generally acknowledged that no ball or wedding in the place had been as much as dreamt of being initiated, without the supposition of Mr. Blarney presiding over the occasion, it must be owned that such neglect of him in the present instance was not more marked than it was seemingly purposed. The cause for this slight arose, it was judged, from an old-standing feud on the part of Mr. Greely, the bride's father, whom Mr. Blarney had at one time unwittingly offended, and which the spiteful old man still vindictively remembered. All—that is all who, like Mr. Blarney, were not invited—prognosticated that the wedding ball would be a failure, as there was none there to fill Mr. Blarney's wonted place of M.C. for such an occasion.

Since Mr. Blarney's advent to the place, this honorary office had been gracefully filled by him on every festive occasion. Until then, when the unsophisticated villagers were still in the darkness of primitive barbarism, the would-be disciples of Terpsichore were wont to solace their festive desires with uncouth reels and obstreperous strathspeysthe great point seemingly aimed at in the execution of which was the noisiest hammering on the floor with their thick-soled boots, the exuberant natives having the fond idea that they were thereby displaying their sense of the true excellence of dancing by such emphatic rapping out of time to the notes of the music. The vigorous swinging about also that they subjected their young lady partners to during this process gave one the idea that those yokels' notions of feminine grace presupposed a considerable accompaniment of bone and sinewy development to enable them to take their parts with tolerable consistency in such breath-trying exercises. Mr. Blarney's advent, however, put a summary stop to all such unruly recreation. To use his own emphatic utterance, he set his face against all such senseless "bullocking." Under his energetic auspices waltzes, polkas, and quadrilles were soon initiated. In these labours he was ably seconded by the shearer youths before-mentioned, and who had been themselves instructed in the mysteries of those genteeler evolutions by other shearers, in the various woolsheds they had been engaged at. For it is seldom, where a number of men are congregated, that among them there are not some musicians. Especially is this so among a crowd of shearers, who, in sooth, are in general men of more active habits than are to be found with other working classes. Thus, although the labours of shearers are of a particularly fatiguing nature, these withal are not always sufficient to deter some irrepressible spirits among them from closing the evening with exercises on the light fantastic toe.

In this way the young rovers from Gossipton had frequent opportunities of learning to tread the intricate mazes of the fashionable dances of the day. They then actively co-operating with Mr. Blarney in his interesting work, a training school was at

once opened, to which the latter very kindly gave his evenings; and ere the first winter of Mr. Blarney's settlement in Gossipton had passed, all the young ladies of the place, and a large majority of the young men, had been so thoroughly instructed in the new system of dances that the old style became quickly obsolete, and only to be referred to in terms of disgust. Mr. Blarney, of course, in virtue of his acknowledged superiority of abilities, held the undisputed office of Master of Ceremonies on every occasion; for the duties of which office he. both in knowledge and deportment, was simply unrivalled. And allow me to say that to view Mr. Blarney in his full unclouded greatness was to see him then. I never saw him on such occasions but I seemed to be looking upon a great man in an unsuitable sphere. And it required but little stretch of imagination to disentangle myself from my surroundings, and to realise in Mr. Blarney's action and deportment a presentment of Napoleon in the midst of his troops, in the crisis of some great battle, now issuing his orders-rapid, clear, and peremptory. or as the spell of his immediate presence seemed necessary to stimulate his men, disappearing at the head of his charging squadron among the surging masses of the enemy, to reappear again at his former post of commanding observation with unruffled majesty of demeanour. In such happy coincidence of appearance did it seem on those occasions with Mr. Blarney—at one time with the orders promptly and clearly enunciated of "Right," "Left," or "Ladies' Chain," as the case might be—directing the general movement of the dancers, now seemingly commingling in a confused mass, now wildly dispersing in fugitive parties round the room; then Mr. Blarney, with attention suddenly given to his own partner, disappearing with her amid the giddy vortex of the wildly agitated throng, to reappear next moment with unruffled mien at his former post, dictating with calm authoritative tone the consecutive order of the dance.

Yet after all these acknowledged services to the district, it had actually come that a party, and that, too, a wedding party, was to be assembled without the presence of Mr. Blarney to preside over its management; but such is human nature. Some wretched old grudge, the remembrance of which had long since passed from Mr Blarney's frank and generous mind, but that evidently rankled in Mr. Greely's unforgiving heart, was the cause of this grave breach of courtesy on his part to Mr. Blarney, to the great grief of all the young ladies invited; and who, even in the height of their prospective glee, seemed inconsolable at the thought of not having their idolised M.C. to enhance their enjoyment by his artistic superintendence of the festive scene.

In Mr. Blarney's saloon—into which a considerable number of neighbours had dropped to discuss the event—great was the commotion regarding it. Every one confidently prophesied the ball's utter failure. "There is no one there capable of managing such a thing," one man emphatically remarked—to which truism all the others heartily assented. The evening wore on to the specified hour for the commencement of the ball, and numberless were the conjectures regarding its conduct. So positive indeed were some that the whole affair would prove a farce that Mr. Blarney at length consented to stoop to the seeming indignity of peeping through the keyhole of the door of the barn in which the wedding was being celebrated, to ascertain by actual observation if such were really the case.

"Of course you all know that no motives of mere vulgar curiosity induce me now to violate the rules of propriety, by thus seeking to pry into the conduct of any assembly, as I am influenced in my action by an artistic feeling only to see if they are going through their performances in any kind of style," was Mr. Blarney's dignified protest on his consenting to take this ordinarily derogatory step.

"Oh, certainly, Mr. Blarney," all assented in a breath; "we all know you to be superior to all mere petty ideas. But do go and see how they are getting on; for we feel sure they are making a mess of it."

And so Mr. Blarney set out for Mr. Greely's barn; and, curious to know how the adventure would terminate, I followed at some little distance behind. Now,

without seeking to depreciate Mr. Blarney's artistic love, I could not avoid conjecturing in my own mind whether a more natural desire had not inflamed his curiosity to such seeming irrepressible pitch, as it was known that Miss Katie Dewdrop was one of the invited quests; and I was disposed to question if Mr. Blarney were so proof to a commonplace feeling of jealousy as to make baseless the doubt that it had something to do with his apparent anxiety about the progress of the ball.

We soon reached the barn where the entertainment was being held-Mr. Blarney first, and a young scapegrace, of whom more anon, following; and I at a still safer distance behind. Arrived at the place, Mr. Blarney at once glued his eye to the keyhole of the door of the barn, from which proceeded strains of music and sounds of dancing. As the door's threshold was reached by two steps, to command the keyhole more conveniently Mr. Blarney, with one foot projecting behind him in the air, bent his head down, and, fixing his eye at the keyhole, became suddenly absorbed and motionless. To the young man behind, Mr. Blarney's position in this fashion appeared so deliciously suggestive that the temptations to act upon the idea it conjured to his mind was irresistible. Suddenly, seizing hold of the string attached to the latch, he gave it a pull; and as the door flew open, and its sudden yielding to the weight of Mr. Blarney's body naturally impelled him forward, he-that is, the facetious youth-gave such a push to the broadest part of Mr. Blarney's body as sent that artistic gentleman sprawling over the uppermost doorstep into the middle of the room. where he eventually fell at his full length right at Mr. Greely's feet just as the old gentleman, with thumbs hooked in the armholes of his vest, was in the act of giving utterance to a heavy paterfamilias joke on the suppleness of the young ladies' legs, who had just concluded a spirited dance. The amazement of the company at the sudden appearance of Mr. Blarney, projected into their midst in the grotesque shape of flying Mercury, may be better imagined than described. Old Mr. Greely appeared to be literally petrified at the incident. As for Mr. Blarney, the involuntary cause of all this emotion, had he been any less self-possessed man than he was, he, I presume, on recovering his feet, would have slunk out of the room.

But Mr. Blarney was no ordinary man. Rising coolly to his feet, as if the manner of his humiliating entrance had been merely the result of a casual stumble on his own part, and brushing the dust from his trousers while speaking, he said:

"How do you do, Mr. Greely? I see you seem to be getting on very well. I just thought I would take a walk over and see how you were doing. There's nothing like enjoying yourselves. No, thank you, Mr. Greely, I would rather not."

All this was spoken in a most free and easy manner, as if Mr. Blarney knew himself to be in the midst of his best friends, instead of, in fact, being in a most undesirable position. Upon Mr. Greely the effect of it all was indescribable. In view of Mr. Blarney's consummate assurance, Mr. Greely seemed actually to have exchanged circumstances of position; and in the confused feeling that it was he, himself, who must be in the wrong, was immediately made conscious of a feeling of shame in neglecting to invite Mr. Blarney to the marriage party. Hastily seizing a bottle of spirits, on the hint conveyed in Mr. Blarney's last sentence (who had spoken as if Mr. Greely had indicated an intention of offering him-Mr. Blarney-a glass of such refreshment, which Mr. Greely certainly had not), he now begged Mr. Blarney to do the young couple the favour of drinking their health. This Mr. Blarney graciously consented to do: but he was far too wise to accept of the further invitation to spend the evening there. So, in keeping with the idea he wished to impress upon Mr. Greely that notwithstanding his singular mode of entry, his visit had been an intentional one, he, wishing them all good evening, and bowing affably to the ladies, withdrew.

But when he was outside, and came up to the young man who had so nearly disgraced him, and who was still laughing and sniggering in high glee at what he deemed a capital joke, he did go on dreadfully at him to be sure. The names he applied to this youthful joker, and the manner in which he swore at him, were something appalling. This seems to me to be one point in which eminent and commonplace men discover a similar disposition—*i.e.*, when their wonted equanimity of temperament is in any way disturbed, they just ease themselves by swearing.

## CHAPTER V

#### THE LOCAL POET

As an agent for news, he's as good as the mail; And his budget he deals out wholesale and retail; Just step down to the place where this great man resides, And you'll get all *the facts*, and a few more besides.

THROUGH that strange associative faculty by means of which a certain theme may be vaguely looming in our mental vision, while we are unconscious of any particular curiosity regarding it-nay, even when our musings may have wandered off in an entirely different direction-I found myself one evening, as I went to spend half an hour-having nothing else to do-in Mr. Blarney's saloon, unconsciously humming the above lines. And it was only on suddenly rousing from my mental abstraction, I took notice that the words I was repeating were a fragment of a poetical photograph by a certain local rhymer, whose daring, or impudent genius, had soared to the height of attempting to caricature even Mr. Blarney. Poor fellow! he little imagined with his watery effusions that instead of being respected as a man of superior parts by the hardheaded and desperately prosaic natives of Gossipton, they merely, with good-natured superiority, regarded him as a quiet, harmless sort of a fellow, with whose compositions they could allow themselves to be amused—when not too busy; but whom, as compared with themselves—if indeed the idea of such a comparison ever entered their minds—they concluded as being decidedly inferior.

I cannot avoid pausing here to indulge in a little quiet speculation on the effects that the different constitutions of people's minds have in moulding their individual characters. As in the instance of buildings, according to the uses designed for them, are the glazing arrangements proportioned for the admission of light into their several interiors. But whilst the houses of the poor are merely constructed with no more windows than are sufficient for keeping their interiors free from darkness, the mansions of the wealthier classes, on the other hand-over and above the normal requirements for this object-have, in their architectural designs, windows for the express purpose of enhancing the building's beauty. Hence are seen bay and oriel windows that at once enlarge the scope of landscape view, and ornament the edifice.

Let us then assume the example of a dwellinghouse as a type of the human mind in which the imagination is postulated, as the window through which outer objects are rendered intelligible to the brains within. According, then, as this imagination is enlarged, the different chambers should be proportionately illuminated with the pure light of intelligence—brightened by experience—that clarifies the judgment of the fogs of ignorance and prejudice.

But alas for the happiness of my analogy! That will not bear further stretching to rules of practice, however well it may seem in theory; for the corresponding advantages of the subjects will not upon proof be found to keep pace with each other. For although it follows that the more windows there are the less darkness there must be in the house's interior, it by no means follows that the more of imagination there is to admit of the light of reason into the brain, the less liable the individual will be found to err in judgment. Although the mansions from which on all sides beams of sunshine are seen scintillating and dancing on the window-panes scarcely admits of darkness being possible within any of its apartments, yet in the case of the individual whose flashing imagination is ever darting out beams of creative genius, that fairly seem to dazzle the more sober minds of practical people. how often do we find the most lamentable darkness and purblind views of the details of worldly business, the chambers of that department of the brain seeming, in fact, to be so many lumber-rooms of chaotic rubbish! 'Tis true the means for light may have been organised, and as well developed there

by Dame Nature for transmitting it, as into any of the other functions. Yet are they, from a long course of disuse and want of furbishing up, become, as it were, so foul with the dust of inattention, or musty with the cobwebs of crotchets, that what little light of common sense does manage to filter through them is of so foggy a nature that it is only by careful groping that the bearing of any matters stored therein can be ascertained with any certainty. So that unless he is wise, and looks out for a good housewife to keep this department of his mind properly attended to, with her more methodical management, the improvident genius is in serious danger of coming quickly to grief.

But again, there are minds with just that much of imaginative light allotted them as enables the individuals to accomplish their matter-of-fact purposes with thoroughness, without having any to spare to concern themselves with objects aside from those of their own worldly advancement. As—to return to my illustration—we might suppose in the instance of a worldly-minded old farmer's house, the windows of which look directly on the fields, where the servants may be seen at work, which is all the purpose such a man can imagine any necessity for windows, save in the further equally requisite object of admitting the needed light for carrying on the culinary and domestic arrangements of the interior. Such a man as this finds it impossible from his very

nature to appreciate windows designed for the mere beautifying of a house. To his prosaic mind baywindows are just so much wasted glass, if not open to the greater objection of rendering a house less secure against storms, by so much of it being constructed of such fragile material. And, indeed, to sum up my argument: I believe there are beings of such grossly prosaic nature that when looking over the side of a pigstye they regard the grunting immates as but so much animated pork, which they seem in imagination to be already masticating, and never once appearing to consider to be sentient creatures, subject to pain, and sensitive of enjoyment-after their own piggish feeling, it is truebut which is none the less enjoyment to them -creatures of intelligence, in fact, which, if left to their own inclinations, would discover some discrimination in the selection of their food; which also, although to our eyes, of dirty habits, would be found to regulate these by equal discrimination also. This any one can readily prove by throwing an armful of clean straw into a dirty stye, when he will see how quickly piggy will appropriate it for his bed, or by offering him at the same time the choice of wholesome or putrid food, and noting which he will more readily prefer. All this not only proves a pig to be a sentient creature, amenable to kind treatment, and with a certain amount of reflectionif to a less extent than the horse or the ox-but

also that any one who merely regards him as so much pork getting ready for the table, and hence undeserving of sympathetic treatment, to be no better than a pig himself.

Having thus, I trust, satisfactorily made out my case about imaginations, I will return from the long digression I have been tempted into almost from the outset of this chapter—I was going to spend a half-hour at Mr. Blarney's saloon, you remember—I should like to make a few additional remarks about that same rhymer whose lines originally drew my mind aside from that purpose, when I will again resume the thread of this unquestionably interesting sketch.

To return, then, to the poet, if such I may term him, he is what the Gossipton wiseacres credit him to be—a quiet, harmless sort of fellow. Yet whether the form of the windows of his imagination have to do with it or no, yet certain it is that as regards worldly wisdom he seems to be shockingly purblind. If not altogether in genius, there is at least one point in which he certainly does discover some affinity to the traditional attributes of the poetic fraternity—that is, in the doubtful merit of being miserably poor. For one who has so long sojourned in the various colonies, and was contemporary with the discovery of so many startling goldfields, it is indeed something wonderful to think what consistency in wrong-headedness he seems to

have continually manifested to evade every possible means of bettering his condition amid such tempting opportunities. It would indeed seem as if his career had been the result of deep premeditated study to avoid all inducements to worldly progress. Wherever any such field was discovered in the course of his travels-and these were continuous-with that field's prospects he could not be persuaded to turn aside to acquaint himself, the unvarying phrase with which he expressed his disbelief in those rumoured goldfields being "it was only a hoax." But in gravitating towards out-of-the-way corners of bush back-blocks, where life could be passed in useless obscurity, the perseverance he discovered in finding such places out was simply amazing, travelling with swag on his back over arid plains, and undergoing such distress of thirst as would have made an interesting chapter in an explorer's memoirs. It was on such occasions that his erratic genius brought to light his possession of an unvielding grit, less than which, more judiciously applied, has given cause for many a self-made man's retrospective complacency. And all this expenditure of misdirected energy, to be simply rewarded by the privilege of following after the tails of flocks of venerable ewes-or more adventurous wethers-beguiling the heavy hours the while with the perusal of inane novels, while stretched under umbrageous gum-trees during the sweltering noons of Australian summers! And, fittingly appropriate to such dreary routine, a calico tent or bark-roofed hut—the table and bunks also of bark—fulfilling all the requirements of a habitual abode, when his ration fare, if plentiful, was of unvarying simplicity, tempered with coarseness.

To this person I took it upon myself one day to address some words of advice touching his folly in taking such abstract views of life. "My friend," I said, "why waste your time with these unprofitable rhymes of yours?" He was then, I understood, in the midst of an elegiac composition on a dead dog. "Would it not be much wiser to bestir yourself to a consideration of the imperative duties of life, and to strive to realise some sort of useful sphere to engage yourself in, instead of being content to keep drudging about in the manner you are doing? Pray who do you think seriously regards those verses, to the composition of which you give such time and pains, and are at such expense in stationery and printing?" He had printed several ballads privately. "People just glance through them, cast them aside, and immediately lose all further thought of both you and them. Take my recommendation, sir, and give your time and means to better purpose if you have a desire for any solid respect in this world. Place," I emphatically said, "one pound upon another; and invest rather in a pig, sheep, or goat. Buy or rent a piece of ground; and there build, and sow, and reap. Let your spare pounds and shillings be

represented by calves and poultry. Assume, instead of your wonted look of dreamy abstraction, a keen business or even money-grabbing expression. Instead of poetic visions, let your mind be absorbed by plans for the best mode of growing turnips. On the merits of literary questions be totally ignorant; but be wise on road and land-board matters. Marry some cockatoo's daughter with some cows for her dowry, or, better still, a section of good tussock land. Let your stockyard, knee-deep in dung, be the practical witness of your prosperity. On Saturday and market nights frequent the company of hardgristed cockatoos-smoking and nobblerising, if you will-discoursing of grain, stock, and other strictly farming topics. Let the cleaning out of your stockyard be your congenial employment in wet weather, rather than in unprofitable reading of fanciful books. My friend," I said in conclusion, "if you follow this advice, you may make some headway in the world, besides securing the substantial respect of all around you as a man of shrewd sense, which regard for you at present they certainly have not." With these words I left him.

### CHAPTER VI

### MR. FLOGGEM

I REMEMBER many years ago, when but a youth, and at that time, as a matter of course, a novel reader of the genus omniverous (for the which mental pabulum I would, however, here state thatpalled to repletion-my appetite is now decidedly epicurean), finding my raw wits suddenly involved in a puzzling labyrinth on commencing a new work of Fenimore Cooper's, the name of which I now forget. I was proceeding to read this book in my wonted skipping style over the opening sentences, that I supposed to be the customary prologue or introductory preamble to the circumstances of the narrative following, into the main current of which narrative I felt anxious to dip at once, without further explanatory matter that I expected to understand as I went along. Well in this exceedingly jaunty fashion I had swiftly negotiated the first paragraph, when I was brought to a dead halt by the abrupt intimation that in this brief interval of unscanned narrative the hero had been in imminent peril of drowning. As this

had been the first indication I had of the existence of this amiable personage even in print, the effect of this intimation was to occasion me to instantly retrace my eye-steps over the foregoing dozen or so skipped lines, to discover how there could have been ambushed, as it were, in such brief narrative matter, so great a circumstance of danger to the life of one concerning whose very personality I had not even seen a hint of there. Yet though I read, and reperused each line carefully; though I suspiciously scrutinised every word for its latent meaning, lest they might have borne some ambiguous construction in reference to this mysterious heroor the occasion of such startling introduction on his part-to all this dark mystery no clue could I find

The tale opened with a hero speaking for himself in the first person singular, and referring to his imminent danger in a cold bath, from which he apparently had had a narrow squeak. But how that darned hero came to be in such a predicament, or who even he was himself, anyhow, not a word of explanation was there to show.

It was some time afterwards when light dawning upon my nonplussed faculties discovered to me the secret of this sphinx-like riddle; although even then I felt somewhat indignant at such unworthy claptrap for sensational effect. This novel, the first paragraph of which had so greatly mystified me, was but the

sequel to another in which the half-drowned hero had first seen the light in print. Therefore the thrilling circumstance with which the former had so mysteriously opened had been the startling catastrophe with which the other had closed. And by such doubtful means of mere claptrap sensationalism had this crafty author and profound student of human nature calculated on the probability of the excited reader dashing down the unsatisfactorily finished novel, and rushing to the nearest bookseller to secure its sequel, to learn the ultimate fate of the hero, thus, in the reader's imagination, heartlessly left struggling in imminent peril in the deep waters.

The illustrious precedent of Fenimore Cooper should be a sufficient apology for my own late action in abruptly concluding my last chapter without a word of reference to the subject of its commencement. I began with the statement of an intended visit to Mr. Blarney's saloon, when I suddenly diverged into a long digression, apologised, and ended in another. But while fortified by Mr. Fenimore Cooper's action in thus trifling with the patience of my readers, be it remembered also that I have not presumed to put them in the same agony of suspense as Mr. Cooper did with his. Possibly I may not have the like privilege of genius and popularity as that illustrious author to be permitted such liberties. Be this as it may, I contend that I have not abused the reader's patience

to the same sensational degree, inasmuch as at the break of my narrative Mr. Blarney was not left in the reader's imagination hanging between life and death, as was the case with Mr. Cooper's hero. In my last chapter I only deferred the description of my visit to his saloon. And although my readers who, I am sure, must now be greatly interested in all the details of Mr. Blarney's wonderfully blended character, might have had cause for temporary disappointment, still they were not made needlessly alarmed or kept in anxious suspense by the thought of his personal safety being in any way jeopardised. Now all this in itself must be a matter of satisfaction in respect to one in whose welfare we are in anywise interested. And with those explanatory remarks, I will now resume the thread of the description I had intended to give of my visit to Mr. Blarney's saloon.

Upon my entrance, then, on that particular evening, I found the premises more than usually crowded with visitors, all deeply attentive to an animated debate between Mr. Blarney and Mr. Floggem, the district schoolmaster. This Mr. Floggem was in sooth an old-fashioned sort of pedagogue, of a kind, quietgoing manner, who often on evenings came to purchase some tobacco from Mr. Allsorts, and read the daily newspaper that he usually found lying open on the counter. The chief reason, however, that brought him there was his enjoyment of a chat

with Mr. Blarney, with whom, indeed, he frequently became involved in controversy, as both those gentleman-from their differently constituted natures -seemed destined to look at almost every subject from entirely opposite standpoints. The question of the present controversy was politics-a subject in which Mr. Blarney, from his speculative and pushing nature, took a very high range indeed, so much so that in the opinion of quiet, conservative Mr. Floggem, he seemed to outstrip the limits of sober probability, and even of constitutional morality. With this latter idea, indeed, the discussion of this evening seemed very much in point. Mr. Floggem, in the course of his conversation, had asserted his implicit faith in the political conscientousness of Messrs Macandrew, Stout, and party. Not only that, but he even contended, in the instances of upright statesmen, that politics and honesty could be maintained in grooves parallel with each other, without either principle needing to traverse the course of the other, both of which statements Mr. Blarney instantly challenged, ridiculing the one and scouting the other.

"Honesty," said he, "is all very well for fools or old women, but any man who has seen anything of the world knows better than trust too much to that exceedingly elastic principle. The best way to keep a man honest is to give him no chance of cheating you. Look out for yourself, and suspect

everybody; that is my motto. As for politicians being regulated by conscientious motives only, that is all bunkum. In my opinion, there is not one among them but with whom interested motivespresent or contingent-have a wonderful effect in determining what, in his eyes, are the measures requisite for the country's welfare. They, as it were, regard the matter through the medium of their own spectacles. And as for Messrs. Macandrew and Stout's integrity of motives in the question,"\* added Mr. Blarney sarcastically, "I might have some faith in that idea were I assured that they were not desirous of identifying with the welfare of the provinces their own ambition for fame and power. Let us for argument's sake suppose Provincialism to be the best form of government for New Zealand; and, for my part, I candidly believe it to be so, for more rapidly developing the whole colony's varied resources; but this is not the point. Would Mr. Macandrew be content to forego further ambition for the chief post in the province, were such pledge on his part made conditional for the possibility of provincial Governments' continuance? Or, on the understanding that this system could only be secured for Otago by Mr. Robert Stout consenting to resign all hopes to a future snug billet in its Executive Council, would that red-hot

<sup>\*</sup> The abolition of the provincial Governments, shortly afterwards affected.

Provincialist's views, think you, suffer no sensible modification in such a condition of perfect disinterestedness regarding the matter? Strikes me very forcibly, sir, they would do so most deucedly. I am just demonstrating in this way how much political enthusiasm, stripped of interested circumstances, is worth. Not that I would insinuate any deliberate consciousness of interested motives in the instance of either of these gentlemen. As far as political honesty can go, they are well enough, I daresay. Yet to judge from their political speeches one would think them to be in a perfect agony over the crisis, as if they deemed that in the abolition of provincial government the country were impending on ruin. And doubtless they persuade themselves it is so. For why? They are looking at the matter through their own spectacles. It is simply astonishing," said Mr. Blarney, striking the table with his fist in the energy of his declamation, "what an altered aspect any subject displays when viewed through one's own spectacles.

"Now there is Julius Vogel again—that is one who bears out my idea of a thorough man of the world, and a true politician. In smart speculative talent, I suppose that man has not his equal on this side of the equatorial line. He is a thorough go-ahead man who sticks at nothing, and when one thing fails tries another. As to fine ideas about political honesty and unselfish patriotism, I don't

suppose he concerns himself much about them; and why should he? Everything with him simply means business; and in a business manner—pure and simple -he took the best measures for the country's progress, and he succeeded, while he looked after number one at the same time. And quite right too-more fool he to let patriotic considerations hamper his own interest. And so when he saw he had reached the end of his tether in money borrowing, and that, instead of being able to dazzle the people further with brilliant schemes and lavish expenditure, there was danger of his being hauled over the coals, when the public shoe began to pinch, I admire the masterly tact he displayed in contriving-even in the midst of a Parliamentary Session -to resign the Premiership, and get himself appointed to the snug billet of Agent General in London, in the room of the late Dr. Featherstone. That's what I call one way of feathering one's own nest, and a very sensible way too. I would do it myself if I had the chance."

### CHAPTER VII

#### THE PIG-HUNT

NOT the least noticeable of the Gossipton worthies for strongly marked individualism is Mr. James McTartar, who owns, in the close neighbourhood, a quarry for the supply of monumental stones. He is of a size several inches above that of ordinarily well-built men, and powerfully proportioned to his height, with features firm, as though hewn from granite, and embellished with bushy red whiskers. In view of his wonted profusely sulphurous mode of discourse, he might well be characterised-in antithesis to a famous scriptural character of like tastes for venery—as "a mighty hunter before the Devil." He is simply indefatigable in his wild-pig expedition-fair weather or foul-when any lapse in his necessary duties permits the slightest opportunity for his indulgence in this absorbing pastime.

Between Mr. McTartar and Mr. Blarney there subsists, in spite of the latter's singularly contrasted refined sphere of action with the materially coarse one of the former, a strong bond of sympathetic union. To the uninitiated, this sympathy seemed at first the more

perplexing from Mr. McTartar's wonted obnoxious manner of expressing himself about all whom he designated the soft-fingered gentry—a term with him inclusive of all the easy professions, as bankers, lawyers, clergymen, and downwards to that of which Mr. Blarney was so conspicuous an ornament. But a great writer, Mrs. Beecher Stowe, has placed upon record that mind, like water, always finds its proper level. Thus quickly did Mr. McTartar—at first disposed to regard Mr. Blarney with supine contempt, as following a calling he deemed utterly effeminate—find in that gentleman, who first fixed his attention by his conversational smartness, and afterwards excited Mr. McTartar's respect by his exuberant energy—a mind fully equal to his own.

For shortly after the date of their first meeting with each other, Mr. McTartar made request of Mr. Blarney, though with some dubiety regarding the other's concurrence therewith, to accompany him in a projected pig-hunt; that, to his utter surprise, Mr. Blarney not only promptly agreed to, but with his wonted energy in all he undertook displayed such ardour and resolution in the chase as afterwards occasioned Mr. McTartar to swear by all things horrible that next to himself Mr. Blarney was the best pig-hunter he had ever seen.

From that time Mr. McTartar was a constant visitor at Mr. Blarney's saloon, where he might have been regarded as almost a deferential listener to Mr. Blarney's eloquent disquisitions on the topics of the day.

On one of these evenings it chanced, when only Mr. McTartar and myself were present with Mr. Blarney in his saloon, and while those two gentlemen were discussing with great animation one of their pig-hunting topics, that Mr. McTartar startled me by the sudden proposal that I would join them in their projected pig-hunt on the following morning. This kind offer I was in the act of declining with a smile, when Mr. Blarney, with his wonted energy, promptly seconded Mr. McTartar's motion, and, refusing to take a denial, swept, so to speak, all my objections off their feet with the resistless force of his stronger volition.

To one of my quiet habits of life, the proposed undertaking, involving for its success such arduous output of physical force, was utterly unsuitable. Following the mild calling of an insurance agent, my somewhat attenuated figure, with longish pedal appendages, and spectacles resting on a considerably outstanding Roman nose, however in unison these might be with my methodical duties in my own snug office, I had some cause for fear they might not possibly appear to like advantage toiling through the rugged gullies, or clambering up the ferny spurs frequented by the wild boar.

Having at all times, however, a strong curiosity to pry into the mysteries of the arcana of Nature, of the which I deemed hunting the wild pig to be no unimportant item, I acceded to the proposal, being, besides, charmed by the glowing tints with which Mr. Blarney's vivid imagination invested the scene. Therefore I took the rifle that Mr. Blarney there and then handed to me, calmly smiling in the confidence of the effectiveness with which I would acquit myself in the use of it. Next morning we were afoot for the hill betimes. The experience of arduous toil that immediately befell me, I need say little about. While Mr. McTartar with his long strides kept easily ahead, Mr. Blarney with wonderful pace—considering the seeming puffiness of his figure -kept just behind his shoulder. But it took all my efforts, while profusely perspiring, to keep from falling hopelessly behind. Suffice it, however, now to say that after about two hours of this toilsome paceto me at least-the sudden barking of the dogs admonished us that a pig had been brought to bay, and which, on a nearer approach, we discovered in midst a clump of lawyer-bush. A gaunt black savagelooking brute he was, to be sure, with white gleaming tusks, that he ominously gnashed with an accompanying groan, as he kept moving round to face the dogs, as they menaced either side of him. "Now is your chance for winning your spurs as a pighunter, Mr. Frobisher," cried Mr. Blarney excitedly. "Go on forward, and blaze away at him. Aim straight, and don't miss him, or he won't miss you."

Mechanically obeying this arduous injunction, though distinctly conscious of a tremulous sensation, I advanced for about a half-dozen yards, then came to a pause under the boughs of an unusually large cabbage-tree. This I was induced to by the action of the pig that, as if divining my intention, faced me, while emitting a warning groan and accompanying gnashing of tusks, seemed to menace my further advance towards him. This proceeding startled me not a little. Singularly enough-without any consciousness of my actions-I at this moment became aware that a branch of the cabbage-tree was within reach of my hand. While thus irresolutely hesitating. at once the loud harsh voice of Mr. McTartar rang out, "What the sulphur are you standing there for-like a --- " (I omit the odious comparison)? "Why the sulphur don't you fire, and be sulphured to you?" But even while in the act of raising-with a somewhat shaky hand-my rifle to my shoulder in obedience to this disrespectful objurgation, with one terrific "Wouff" the pig came like lightning straight for me. What followed I state not as I remember, but as I acted. Of that dreadful moment. memory retains only one thought, viz., the impossibility of taking a true aim ere the pig was upon me. Reason then gave place to instinct, that, oblivious of the rifle's proper function, constrained me to use it as a missile, which, with the energy imparted by desperation, I hurled at the pig-the rifle exploding

from the shock; while with equal energy I clutched and swung myself on to the bough above me, and none too soon, as my knee driven up almost to my nose admonished me of; and my deeply indented boot-sole from the savage monster's tusk, afterwards on inspection, certified of my narrow squeak from mutilation and perhaps death. How I reached that bough, I cannot tell; but once landed there, reason at once resumed her throne, when I was immediately made aware of the ridiculousness of my appearance by the yells of my companions below, "Hold me, Mr. Blarney, or I'll tumble!" exclaimed Mr. McTartar, who seemed the more helpless of the two in finding breath to speak. "Good gracious, I'll bust," shouted the latter in reply, and immediately exploded into another prolonged peal of ringing laughter. Eventually they both lay down and rolled on the ground as, after each pause from exhaustion, their minds took a fresh conception of my extraordinary action.

So ended my first and last pig-hunting expedition a theme that has afforded no end of jocularity to the Gossipton humorists ever since.

# CHAPTER VIII

#### MR. BLARNEY'S TAME-PIG HUNT

As a fitting sequel to the former chapter, descriptive of the ridiculous circumstances in connection with my adventure with a wild pig, this one is to show how Mr. Blarney acquitted himself in a mistaken hunt after tame pigs. It was in this wise the matter happened. Mr. Blarney, in the course of a visit to a friend in another district, was-in company with that friend -driving in a buggy, when a passer-by gave them intelligence of wild pigs having been sighted shortly before up on the spur above the road along which they were then proceeding. Fired at the thought of game like this in such close proximity, Mr. Blarney darted a searching glance along the course of the spur indicated. Sure enough his quick glance instantly detected a black gaunt-looking sow with a half-grown litter at her heels. The hunter's instinct at once called into action all Mr. Blarney's energies, and, possessing himself of a butcher's knife that somehow happened to be in the buggy, he was, with one bound, over the side and on the ground. Summoning after him two exceedingly pugnacious bull terriers, that usually accompanied him, and leaving his friend in the buggy, Mr. Blarney at once proceeded to scale the steep ferny face of the spur, which, in spite of his puffy form of figure, he did with surprising speed. Gaining the top, he at once hounded his dogs on to the sow (that had meanwhile regarded his approach with stolid indifference) with such encouraging words as, "Hold him, Turk! Stick to him, Tiger!" And well did they prove their titles to their truculent names, as each dog promptly seized the astonished sow by either ear, so that instantly setting up a hideous squeal, she turned about, and fled with her affrighted progeny. Mr. Blarney, brandishing the butcher's knife excitedly, wildly followed; his staunch dogs, though dragged along, never once relaxed their death-hold of the sow's ears. This exciting chase, however, was brought quickly to a termination by the sudden appearance, on their rounding a small rise, of a small farm steading, into the vard of which the victimised sow instantly darted, while at the house door stood the farmer and his wife, flanked by as many dirty, ragged children as the sow was with measly little pigs. Here was a mess, truly! For Mr. Blarney now painfully realised that what he had been so ardently hounding as the lineal descendants of Captain Cook's imported porkers turned out to be in reality the live stock of a poor farmer.

But at no time was Mr. Blarney's wonderful fecundity of resourcefulness more strikingly exemplified than in this trying and truly delicate crisis. Taking in the situation at a glance, he at once, with imperturbable countenance, though somewhat failing breath, called in his dogs. "There, that will do, Tiger. Come to my heel, Turk," he exclaimed in a calm commanding tone, that his dogs at once obeyed. "Good morning, sir," he continued to the farmer. "I thought I would hunt your pigs home; they were playing the deuce in your neighbour's cornfield over there. Have you any tobacco?" The last query, to account for his conspicuously flourished butcher's knife, was simply admirably conceived.

Now, such is the force of simple unblushing assertion in paralysing even the most vigorous reason, for the time being, that the farmer's intended indignant interrogatory regarding such treatment of his pigs fell literally still-born from his lips; and, mechanically putting his hand in his pocket under a dim sense of obligation to Mr. Blarney, handed him part of a cake of tobacco. Nor until that fertile-minded gentleman was half-way down the hill—that he lost no time about—did it dawn upon the farmer's confused intellects, that not only was there no agricultural farm within three miles of his own, but that, the season then being midwinter, consequently the stranger's yarn about corn, his innocent and greatly injured pigs were accused

of destroying, had been a *sulphurous* lie. If, however, thoughts of a shot-gun came into his indignant mind on his full realisation of this flagrant enormity, Mr. Blarney's celerity of recession had by then put him beyond range.

## CHAPTER IX

#### MR. BLARNEY'S GENEROSITY

A FEW weeks after the occurrence of Mr. Blarney's adventure with the cockatoo's pigs, I was sitting in the temporary office I had opened in Gossipton, and writing out a further chapter for these sketches, in which another incident illustrating an additional phrase of Mr. Blarney's many-sided character would be told and commented on in my wonted pictorial way. I may here say that Mr. Blarney was in the habit of reading those sketches on their weekly appearance in the columns of the *Advertiser*, expressing at the same time a very favourable opinion of their literary merits, and with great candour admitting the truthfulness of remarks on the salient points of his own and the characters of the other Gossiptonians up to then illustrated.

I had, however, proceeded but a little way with my new chapter when Mr. Blarney suddenly entered my office, and, his quick glance taking notice of the nature of my engagement, he remarked with his wonted brusqueness of manner, "Oh, Mr. Frobisher, I think we have had enough of Gossipton by now. Of course," my ingenious friend added with the most charming egotism, "I know it is all true that you say about me. But I don't want to be bothered with people fussing about to make my acquaintance, that the publication of your articles, regarding my superior abilities, is beginning already to draw here from the town. A little of that is all very well; but a fellow gets tired of too much of it. Now, for a change of the subject, I have been thinking of something that should be just in your line, who can handle your pen so well." To this frank compliment I, of course, could only bow. "There is that fellow Toot, the poet," proceeded Mr. Blarney; "you know, I believe, there is really something good in those verses of his, although he is such a softy in his way, and never seems to get along at all, for he has hardly any money to do anything for himself. Now, I was thinking, if his poems were published for him, the sale of them might give him a good start at something that may make a man of him. So you can begin by writing a form for printed prospectuses, stating the object, and giving the price of each volume at five shillings. Every house about here will take one, I know; and I will take fifty copies\* myself. But in the first place, I would like you to go carefully through all his pieces, and have only the very best of them printed. For, I suppose, like many other young poets, he will have written a lot of rubbish as well as good pieces."

I felt my heart absolutely glow at this proof of the innate goodness of Mr. Blarney, by such an extraordinary offer to insure the success of the purposed publication and consequent profit for its author. As for the poet himself-upon this project for his sole personal benefit being submitted for his approval—the wide-opened eyes of astonishment, the stammering out of effusive thanks, the general expression of inane delight at the bare possibility, under any circumstances whatever (even the foreknowledge of pecuniary loss to himself-how much more now than when with an almost certainty of procuring him profit!), at the beloved creations of his fancy being set before the public in attractive book form were all assuredly sufficient evidences of his enraptured assent. As for Mr. Blarney's stipulations for my necessary services for guaranteeing the respectability of the published matter, need I state that they were given with hearty willingness?

Well, after my judgment had been conscientiously exercised in the perusal and weeding of Mr. Toot's MS., in which task every spare hour of my days and nights for a fortnight had been employed, I found that in the reserved pieces were almost an equal quantity of a grave and humorous character. And simple as Mr. Toot looked, the latter abundantly showed that he had a conception of playful and even grotesque humour, with the power to make his feelings on such subjects shared by his readers.

But when all was done, and the reserved MSS. sized and numbered, we were forced to own that the whole in print would make a volume of disappointing slimness. But just as Mr. Blarney was in the act of suggesting that the volume's size could be easily increased through a less vigorous mode of excision, a better thought struck me that, on my instant communication, caused that usually self-possessed gentleman not only to look slightly foolish, but to give utterance to what I could almost have called an undignified snigger. The thought that I communicated to Mr. Blarney was that a better way to make a more respectable-looking volume would be to incorporate among Mr. Toot's poems my own famous sketches. This would also afford the reader a more pleasing variety of matter. Therefore it was the sudden prospect of the publications in such permanent form before the public of his own great merits that had almost overthrown Mr. Blarney's wonted look of superiormindedness, as, in like manner, a strong dose of flattery instantly cause to totter from his face the flimsy mask of dignity of a merely commonplace man. However, my idea was instantly adopted, and Gossipton Sketches were, in the order for publication, placed between the serious and humorous poems of Mr. Toot. But in this present edition there may appear among the former several pieces bearing evidence of a date long subsequent to that of the original publications.

# HUMOROUS PIECES

## THE OYSTER MATCH

- BREAK, O Muse, thy listless slumbers, and in thy most thrilling strains,
- Flowing in majestic numbers, sing the triumph of the swains
- Who in sturdy self-reliance in their own superior pith Each one had, in proud defiance, dared a stake to prove it with.
- There are some men formed by Nature o'er their fellows far to tow'r,
- With minds of gigantic stature, and parts of surpassing pow'r.
- Some on fields, and some in cloisters, thus have made their names renowned;
- Doubtless, too, in eating oysters, proofs of greatness may be found.
- The grand day—marked a red letter—with preparatory fast,
- Saw each doughty champion eater there to test his pow'rs at last.

- Void of victuals, both their stomachs then were hollow as bamboos;
- Guess, when those had reached their climax, they were packed up to their flues.
- As to work then fell the couple, fast as any watch could tick,
- O'er each lubricated thrapple the molluscs went sliding slick;
- Never faster nuts stuffed monkey in his throat's capacious pouch,
- Or with chopsticks ever Chinkey gobbled rice, so I can youch.
- But with carefulness pathetic, lest he might be too soon cloyed,
- With an opportune emetic one himself again made void;
- Loudly laughed then in derision his opponent at the act,
- While his maw with quiet decision he methodically packed.
- Laughed he while the people wondered as the oyster heap succumbed
- Beneath his fork, till o'er a hundred lay within his maw entombed.

- Number one still bravely struggled, but the fight was soon too sore,
- Nathless his emetic boggled by the time he reached fourscore.
- Still—to desperation driven—helplessly he gaped and shook,
- Till, forced down, another seven fairly left his stomach *chock*.
- In the contest beaten dirty, one may judge what pangs he felt:
- By a handicap of thirty, his opponent won the belt.
- Scenes like this 'tis that rouse hearty a community's applause,
- When e'en the defeated party's honoured in so bright a cause;
- Then henceforth when actions toasting—worthy of our doughty sires—
- Ever be the name of Boston coupled hon'rably with Dy'rs.

# EPIGRAM ON TWO BELLIGERENT NEWS-PAPER POETS

To ascend the hill Parnassus,
Once there went a pair of Asses;
But finding climbing too much bother,
They stood braying at each other.

### THE PLOUGHMEN O!

JUST resplendent was the day
For the Ploughmen O!
And in gallant like array
Looked the Ploughmen O!
While their well-groomed horses shone
In their brave caparison
With their tails red ribbons on
By the Ploughmen O!

Soon the teams were all employed
By the Ploughmen O!
Till the field was corduroyed
By the Ploughmen O!
And the while they lightly joked
Till at length, when all unyoked,
To the spread that for them smoked
Sat the Ploughmen O!

O the meats of all sorts put
To the Ploughmen O
O the sweets that followed suit
For the Ploughmen O!

O the tanks of foaming beer That gave quickly token clear Of confusion mid the cheer Of the Ploughmen O!

Then in complimental mood
To the Ploughmen O!
All the work the chair reviewed
Of the Ploughmen O!
When one ploughman rose in ire
And, with face inflamed as fire,
Said the chairman was a liar,
O the Ploughmen O!

Then at once in wild uproar
All the Ploughmen O!
Rose as one man on the floor
O the Ploughmen O!
And the tables over crashed,
And the delf in pieces smashed,
And with chairs each other bashed,
O the Ploughmen O!

But repentance came next day
To the Ploughmen O!
Where in threes and fours they lay
O the Ploughmen O!
While they rose up from the floor
With their bodies bruised and sore
And not one could tell what for,

O the Ploughmen O!

# THE TUG-OF-WAR

Should Homer sing the siege of Troy
And Sparta's themes of martial joy
Continually be rung;
And any show cause to debar
Why Gossipton's brave tug-of-war
Should also not be sung?

Although now somewhat out of date,
Yet even now 'tis not too late
To sing their just renown
Who all resolved to stand the test
Which furnished food for muscle best,
The Country or the Town.

They mustered up, a chosen band,
Each with his captain in command,
To make the matter sure;
And David, for the country lads,
Saw fair betwixt the rival squads;
And for the township, Dewar.

### POEMS AND SKETCHES

118

Upon the latter's side took post
All there for stature noted most,
With whom no fools might cope;
There raw-boned Mulville took his stand,
And sinewy Mears with iron hand
Took firm hold of the rope.

And Paterson, strong-chested, came,
And more than here is space to name,
With merriment and noise;
But all the countrymen grew pale
When Washer threw into the scale
His twelvescore avoirdupois.

Yet some were there inclined to jeer
That over-much Colonial beer
Did all the townsmen puff;
And gave them small chance in the toil
With the brave tillers of the soil
Whose palms were hard as buff.

They mustered quickly to the call
And stepped into their places—all
Who for the country stood.
Sturdy McDonald from the plain,
Whose raw bones well could bear a strain;
And Knowles with palms of leathery grain
From hewing in the wood.

And John McFarlane from the mill,
There Paterson opposing still,
Who pulled 'gainst each with all the will
Of men of rival crafts.
And Tom and Alick from their ploughs,
Both well set up with bones and thews
And staunch as Clydesdale draughts.

Athletic Beattie, wiry Bell,
Who at the wrestling stood and fell;
Each party numbered ten,
Who on the rope at either end
Stood ranged, and ready to contend,
All strong and lusty men.

Thus motionless they stood prepared,
With sidelong gaze and shoulders squared,
Each man firm as a bolt,
When instant, as the signal rung,
Like death the opposing parties hung
In the tremendous holt.

They swayed and shogged, yet stoutly held,
While loudly the spectators yelled,
Like boys let loose from school;
And as each party seemed to gain
Their fellows heartened them amain
With "Pull, ye tigers—pull!"

Yet still the rustics slow prevailed;
Vain Washer's pond'rous strength availed;
And George Mear's nerves of steel,
Who still such doughty efforts made,
Till 'gainst the whole momentum stayed—
The friction grazed his heel.

Like bullocks floundering in a bog,
With laden dray or vast tree-log,
So looked the Town's proud peers
Till o'er the line—fair on their hams—
Their rivals hauled them meek as lambs
'Mid loud derisive cheers.

O Gossipton! go hide thy head,
For now thy glory's in the shade;
Then never "blow again."
For hardy pith and sturdy thews,
Indurated by toilsome use
'Mid sun and wind and frost and dews,
The Country rears the men.

# THE COUNTY MEMBER

THE farmers of Cornstook seem blank with despair,
The road to the station all out of repair;
While he whom their votes at the polling placed dux,
To forward their interests, those now but obstructs,
With a fal fal de diddy, and a fal diddy dey.

When the contract was out, and the gravel hole picked,

He arrested the work with his strong interdict; With winter at hand for their mud fallow road, He refused of his gravel even one barrow-load, With a fal fal de diddy, and a fal diddy dey.

Though voters may cavil, and ratepayers bawl, In the council what ever does he do at all? It proves but how little those clodhoppers guess In pulling the ropes can be done by finesse, With a fal fal de diddy, and a fal diddy dey.

Ah, it's little they guess at their quiet little games
As the Gossipton member his neighbour for James
In his actions insures him his weighty support;
For similar habits move birds of a sort,

With a fal fal de diddy, and fal diddy dey.

While our former member showed his lack of brains By his duties discharging with business pains, For this invincible member was destined the feat To flout his constituents, and still keep his seat, With a fal fal de diddy, and fal diddy dey.

When the weal of the public—though some here may rail—

With his own private int'rest are laid on the scale, Is't a marvel, I ask, that our member should deem His that of the public, should make kick the beam? With a fal fal de diddy, and fal diddy dey.

Though voters deny, I will bet a new hat
Our county must flourish when a squatocrat
Can the weal of the public just lay on the shelf,
And make use of the council to answer himself,
With a fal fal de diddy, and a fal diddy dey.

# THE RABBITER'S LAMENT FOR HIS DOG PADDY

O MUSE, lend thine inspiring strain, That often calms our sorrows moody, When deeply smarting from the pain Of a lost friend, if beast or body.

For deep those points of worth I rue
In him that's dead, and many had he;
Though but a brute, the friends are few
I'd grieve for as I do for Paddy.

His only thought was my command,
As at my heels he followed steady,
Or sped off as I waved my hand—
With ways so wise, and will so ready.

The kind expression in his face,
In all his ways, his style in any,
Showed—though not of the human race—
He had as much good sense as many.

No dog at hunting him could slog,
Nor half his tricks go through so funny;
Take him in all, he was a dog
I'd not have parted with for money.

Upon the hill, the wild boar lank
That strove with him soon found his daddy;
The trout below the river bank
With his sharp tooth quick gaff would Paddy.

But now the faithful dog is gone.

Through bush and fern and flax koraddi,
When oft he bunny pounced upon,
No more will follow me poor Paddy.

Well man may rue the hapless fate
That with each ill connects a lady;
'Twas this that led him to the bait
That soon in death laid faithful Paddy.

### A BUSH PICNIC

Away with your public-houses and drinking;
But to make of Christmas a right festive scene
There is no better method to my way of thinking
Than in the nice picnic we held on the green.

A few neighbours' farm wives concerted together
For one day to give Care a sheet wholly clean,
To get up a picnic, and vied with each other
In providing the goods for a spread on the green.

In a charming bush glade, quite sequestered and cosy, Where the trees overhung with their deep leafy screen,

There boys bright and healthy, and girls fair and rosy, Romped, raced, jumped, and frolicked like mad on the green.

Yes, there was assembled a kind social party,
The good wives all smiling, each neat as a preen,
Who bustled about, so good-humoured and hearty,
As they dealt out the dainties bespread on the
green,

There were jellies and plum cakes and tarts in abundance—

There was no need that day for one soul to look lean—

Rhubarb and curds; but avoiding redundance We feasted like princes that day on the green.

Then quick followed laughing and jesting and singing—

The lasses with skipping-ropes going it keen—
The children so tidy, in merry groups stringing,
Like flocks of young lambs, as they played on the
green.

Ah, me! 'twas a scene for the Muse's inspiring—
The lassies so blooming, so tidy, and clean—
As I gazed upon them—each inly admiring—
I could have hugged them all round, but for fair shame, I ween.

But the names of those fair ones, how can I bring in, My brief space forbidding details more to glean, Save only that all joined the sweetest in singing "My Nannie's Awa" as they sat on the green?

As the glades of the forest re-echoed the chorus

The tuis seemed silent from envy and spleen;

Their own strains then fairly left mute and inglorious,

By such notes far excelling them all on the green.

A Christmas my bosom more truly rejoicing, I knew not the like in the years that have been; And long in my mem'ry will it prove enticing That charming bush picnic we had on the green.

# THE BACHELOR'S SOLILOQUY

Where boldly shutting in the view
The mountain is seen, stern and gloomy,
Steep towering like a rampart blue
O'er Cornstook's plain so rich and loamy,
Where late was but a tussock waste;
And now the fruits of sturdy toiling
Are seen in meadows richly grassed,
And sheltered homes with plenty smiling.

A bachelor of rusting years—
One of the many round there stirring—
Who in their duty to their peers,
The female ones, need sadly spurring,
He, when one eve his toils did loose,
Pressed by a feeling strange and stilly,
Beside the fire sank deep in muse
Pending the boiling of his billy.

The room with litter sadly strewed,

The dishes lumbered on the table,
In tidying too plainly showed

He took less pains than with the stable.

# THE BACHELOR'S SOLILOQUY

129

At length our musing bachelor
First moved, and then by good luck muttered
(Else would the Muse behind the door
Have been aware what thoughts he uttered):

"This is a sorry kind of life
For any sort of Christian body;
The man who'd be without a wife
Has far less gumption than a cuddy.
For he who but himself concerns
Is but a cipher, straight to lump it;
But, howe'er poor—with wife and bairns—
In this world's scheme one still is somewhat.

"If e'en alone, 'mid Eden's flowers,
Was scarce deemed good enough for Adam,
Who seeming pined amidst its bowers
Till he was duly paired with madam,
Then how much greater is the sin
With me, who have all day to puddle
'Mong beasts, till I at night come in
And find things in a bigger muddle?

"Then what holds me at once to quit
A state so utterly disgusting?
Enjoying life it is no whit;
It's simply mis'rably existing.

Now there is Cursty down the plain—
Though some may dress more flash—they're fewer

Who, clean as she without a stain, Are fit to hold a candle to her.

"But they who have in younger days
With Cupid's favours idly dallied,
Acquire with years such cranky ways
As are with love not easily tallied.
But a bright fire when one came in;
A wife's kind smile—more to enhance it:
If that's a change, it's such a one
So good that I might well durst chance it.

"Or when I down would seat myself,
How would the thought content you, laddie?
A toddling, curly headed elf,
Upon your knee, and lisper'd 'daddy.'
With well-kept clothes, and nice-cooked food,
And a nice cup of tea when thirsty:
By Jove! the picture seems so good,
I'll pause no more—here's off for Cursty."

# THE TWO MARES

BLINKBONNIE was a mare of fame— No hack of common breed— Whose taper limbs and shapely frame Betokened strength and speed.

But still besides her was a steed
Who yielded palm to none
For shape of grace or pow'r of speed—
Her name was Jenny Linn.

To ride Blinkbonnie, Billy Brine Came on a stated day Set for the rival mares, while mine Was backed by Bobby Reay.

The starter gave the signal sound, When, foremost to begin, Blinkbonnie led off with a bound Pursued by Jenny Linn.

Like greyhounds stretching to the plain—With their prey well in view—So, chafing at the tightened rein,
The mettled coursers flew.

Yet still, as on they madly rush,
The space grows less between;
Till Bonnie's tail just seems to brush
The nose of Jenny Linn.

The sportsmen all their stakes prepare; Some heavy odds lay down On Blinkbonnie, the bright bay mare; And some stake on the brown.

Now gradually convening close, The two mares seem as one; Now gradually the white-tipped nose Appears of Jenny Linn.

By this the race so sorely tried
Obtained a furious rate,
When the brave mares—still side by side—
Were fairly in the straight.

And in their stirrups rising high,
The riders now were viewed;
And seen both whip and spur to ply
To make their places good.

While pressing in on either side
The wildly surging crowd—
As interested in the ride—
Their comments shouted loud.

"Well lifted, Bill! Give her the whip!

The bay mare's bound to win!"

"Come—two to one—I'll take you up!

I bet on Jenny Linn."

On to the goal with thundering stride
The foaming coursers came;
Their snorting nostrils opened wide;
Their eyes like coals of flame.

The winning-post like lightning streak
They passed; loud waxed the din.
The well-tried race by half a neck
Was won by Jenny Linn.

## SINGING AND COURTSHIP.

It just seems amazing, I wot,
What crowds of young people, for singing,
At nights travel up from the flat,
And through the dark forest come swinging,
Such ardour for singing church praise,
A puzzle appears, till they scatter;
When to one then—intent on their ways—
A sudden light breaks on the matter.

Through that bevy of lassies and lads
At once then a quick motion ripples;
When they, who arrived there in squads,
Are noticed returning in couples.
Each lassie, by preconcert clear,
Is by some fellow there and then tackled;
When soon drawn so close they appear—
One would think, each to each one was shackled.

Though with rain pouring down in a flood,
And the night boding wild with fire-flashes;
Through frost, sleet and snow, and deep mud,
None fails to turn up to the classes.

But each on the close straight displays
That this seeming ardour so keen is
Not so much for worship and praise
As it is for the worship of Venus.

For Dick, as he leaves the church door,
Is seen pairing straight off with Minnie;
And Willie, with best foot before,
With dashing air mashing fair Jeannie;
And Joe, with his two yards of length
And ardour that ne'er seems to vary,
Is seen—a sheer tower in strength—
Like a moving tow'r convoying Mary.

No marvel—with such positive
Tastes earthy—to church 'sociation
They all such a wide offing give
Each fortnightly meeting's occasion.
However surprising, you know
The zeal of those godly young fellows
Can only be kept in a glow
When Cupid is plying the bellows.

When Tom may his favour advance
With the plump, comely demoiselle Annie;
And Jack hunt his ghost of a chance
With the young skittish coquettish Nanny;

And Bob stick to Lizzie, enthralled
By the glamour of her witching glances;
While Jim, by prim Jessie installed,
Finds night every charm more enhances.

Such cluster of bright laughing queans
Displayed then in view is surprising;
Almost all in their sweet blushing teens,
Red-lipped, cherry-cheeked, and enticing,
Seeming much like a covey of quails
By sportsmen for their plumpness rated;
So swains at their petticoat-tails
Trudge weekly with zeal unabated.

But Maggie, amid the gay push
For her absent lad seeming ill is;
And some one I know in the Bush
Is spooning and mooning for Phyllis.
Well, what then, and if that be so,
Should this cast a slight on a fellow?
Since the poet himself, as things show,
Has an eye on the coy, fickle Bella.

## VIEW FROM THE MOUNTAIN TOP

To what high thought and sense profound Straight doth the contemplation waft me As on the view I gaze around From this stern mountain's summit lofty!

There south is seen, beyond the plain,

The broken hills where nestles Lawrence;

And east the course where to the main

The Clutha rolls her mighty torrents.

Beneath is Cornstook's loamy plain,
Where morning casts the mountain shadows;
And further over it again
The view shows fertile downs and meadows.

And in the west—there winding seen—
The river most resplendent shimmers;
While like a silver thread between
Each streamlet in the sunshine glimmers.

While far beyond those—faint and blue,
With hoary mount and savage valley—
Are places crowding in the view,
To name which, time would fail me wholly.

While deeply musing on those themes, That tell of Nature's passing grandeur; The contrast shows how vain the schemes Of man's attempts of copied splendour!

There Gossipton's near houses loom
Within the view, like rabbit-hutches;
And Burnside's more pretentious home
From here in prospect—more, not much—is.

Yet far beneath this rugged wild

Among the trees you little fountain
There brightly gleams, as if she smiled
While gazing on her native mountain.

From here in philosophic view,
What fruits of patient toil are spreading,
That sturdy thrift with pride points to
In verdant field and ample steading!

And I, who to this point have come
Through heedless years, still bootless go it,
Allowed in half disdain by some
The doubtful compliment of poet.

Since then, in striving with the throng,
My pow'rs appear quite unavailing.
I fain would seek those peaks among,
Where I might build a cosy dwelling;

Where I my thoughts would shape and plan—Beyond the rack of this world's worry—
That might—though an unprospered man—
Transmit my name to future story.

Yet Nature's dame, who ne'er can thole
With puny man's too great presumption,
Neglectful of my flight of soul,
Would quickly cure my lack of gumption.

For with her hurricanes of snow
She soon would smother my poor bigging,
Till, glad to slither down below,
I would be after such a wigging.

Then rather let me seek some nook
Upon the plain, and live sequestered;
Nor with such mooning 'bout Fame's book
Let my head more be fashed and pestered.

How vain the thought to get such grace Within the roll of Fame's bright muster, Whose rhymes are scarce permitted space Of print within the local *Buster!* 

# THE SQUATTER'S PRAYER

O HAVE mercy on the squatter,
May he still in fortune thrive!
For the poor man's case, what matter,
Though o'er him should "ruin drive"?

What are all the paltry matters,

That can make up their requests,
In comparison to squatters'

More important interests?

We must have our family carriage;
And for towns our fancy drags;
Portions for our girls in marriage.
What have they got but their swags?

Still enlarge Thou our position,
With Thy blessing make us full;
Keep our stock in prime condition;
Keep the price up of our wool.

And at shearing-time may plenty
Hard-up shearers then appear!
So that we—to please more dainty—
May more proudly domineer.

O confound their union wholly!
Send confusion on their fights
For their so-called rights—what folly!
What have they to do with rights?

They who now give cheek so hateful Have more reason to feel small; And, indeed, feel even grateful That we notice them at all.

Rights? What rubbish! If they knew it,
That those all are ours is flat—
To keep them down knuckled to it—
They to have quiet speech at that.

Then for our high privileged order—
Of the country the *elite*—
O do Thou enlarge the border,
As for such is only meet.

May the land for the requirement Of our fast increasing stocks, And our more secure environment, Be let us in ample blocks!

So this world, a scene of pleasure, Still will be; and when we *croke*, In the next world, for like measure, May we be allowed to look!

## POEMS AND SKETCHES

142

For e'en heaven, we fear, if lacking Stock and wool, in wonted scale, And the power of poor men sacking, Soon its glory would grow stale.

## **EPIGRAM**

(SUGGESTED ON A GIRL-FRIEND'S PERIODIC PER-SISTENCE IN CUTTING OFF HER HAIR)

It is plain that some ladies but slightly admire Paul's rapt apostolical unction,
When, in words the Spirit was deemed to inspire,
He gave the emphatic injunction—

When writing of matters of social propriety—
Of a woman's hair being her glory;
But now by the dictum of Fashion's variety,
It appears he was telling a story.

#### NELLIE

'Twas an evening in spring, and the violet and pansy Already were peeping in garden and green, As through the lone forest, with reins to my fancy, I pensively wandered, enjoying the scene.

While sweetly in tune with the brook's pleasant murmur

The lintie's and fantail's clear trills in my ear, Were sounding in concert, and fuller and firmer The white-throated tui's notes echoing clear.

Yet it was not the scene or the notes of the tui

That mostly impressed then my deep musing brain,
Within whose recesses a vision of beauty

Alone by its spell swayed my thoughts' busy train.

But oh, for the gift of a Burns or a Shelley

To picture that vision in colour that warms!

That my eyes that day met, as they fell upon Nellie

All in her bright heyday of sweet blooming charms.

With soft jetty tresses in thick glossy cluster, Curled o'er her white forehead, and cheeks blooming rich;

With bright laughing glances in eyes of dark lustre, And lips seeming formed to tempt and bewitch.

So sweet, and so ruby, as red-currant jelly,
In fancy enamoured, ecstatic to press,
Sure Nature for Love's true ideal meant Nellie
With form to attract and a mind to impress.

With figure so rounded, so tall, and so lissome,
A laugh, like the tui's notes, ringing and clear;
What pillow could equal that soft heaving bosom,
A fond heart when weary, to solace and cheer!

Though others may deem me love-blinded and silly, I heed not; for dear to my Muse's fond gaze Are Beauty's sweet graces, that, potent in Nellie, Have fondly awakened this song in her praise.

## VERSES

(WRITTEN ON A NOTE OF INVITATION TO AN OLD MAIDS' PICNIC)

THANKS, dear ladies—lassies bonnie—
For your gracious *invite*,
That to me, than gift of money,
Yielded more supreme delight.

If last year, in verses crusty,
I expressed my sense of spleen
When I slighted felt—yet trust me—
Where the thought then galled most keen,

Was such strange, unlooked-for spirit From that sex, who, loving pure, I had ever made a merit Their good graces to secure.

And my spirit therefore laden
With such thoughts of treatment curt,
From you Gossiptonian maidens,
Much your bard's keen feelings hurt.

For in all my frequent wanders
Through the island marking keen,
'Mong Otagons and Southlanders,
I would ne'er admit I'd seen

With you Gossiptonian lassies—
Freshly blooming, sweet and fair,
Blythe and smart, and straight as rashes—
Other lassies to compare.

So, you see, the cause is patent
For yon verse of caustic form;
Stung by proof of contempt latent
In those whom I'd praised so warm.

But I now accept the token
Of your invitation note,
Telling plainly, as if spoken,
Of your friendship's kindly vote.

And to show that I've repented In that then I did you wrong, I return it supplemented With this penitential song.

## A ROMANCE IN LIFE

- WHO has not heard those news of late, with which the air seems freighted;
- Our Masher's nose is out of joint, his fondest hopes are blighted;
- His prospects, once so bright and fair, are now o'ercast and dreary;
- Life's light for him has changed to gloom since he has lost his dearie.
- The brightest pleasures cannot last, for time is ever gliding;
- And with the hours so quickly gone, man loses time in chiding.
- The girl whom our beau deemed his own has left him for another;
- For the fairest flow'r, if not watched well, will soon begin to wither.
- Joe Limejuice, a stout Cornish youth, who lately crossed the ocean,
- Has borne the object clean away of our beau's heart's devotion;

- For Joe's a lad both strong and tall, in features quite commanding,
- And when his "bell topper" he puts on, his looks there's no withstanding.
- So Katie found out to her cost, as the heart began to flutter;
- With teeming thoughts her mind was charged, and words she dared not utter.
- Joe met sweet Katie first at church—to see her was to love her.
- He bent his bow, the shaft went true, the struggle soon was over.
- When evening shades began to fall, those lovers fond are wand'ring,
- With arms entwined, and heads bent low, o'er future day-dreams pondering;
- They fondly search each other's eyes, their inmost thoughts beholding,
- And find—enraptured—as they gaze, fresh beauties still unfolding.
- Each careless word and tender glance, with miser care is hoarded;
- While every vow and promise fond with kisses are recorded;

- Through dewy fields and by-lanes green, those turtledoves are cooing;
- What flooding rapture must be theirs, with such assiduous wooing!
- And now, Sir Masher, get you hence, for here you are not wanted,
- For you've got turnips from the girl of whose love you once vaunted.
- For Katie now regards you not; her happiness you hinder;
- And so to cure your love-sick heart your best plan is to wander.
- But ere you go take this advice, of which be not forgetful,
- And for the future see you shun the womenkind deceitful:
- Regard you not their modest looks, nor heed their baby faces;
- The worst deceit too oft is screened by these alluring graces.

# OLD DAVIE KNOWLES

(COMPOSED WHILE WORKING AT A THRESHING MILL)

WITH mischievous spirit—somewhat in a pet—
For blunders of manner so constantly set,
My temper, thus, strangely, the queer whim consoles
Of sketching the portrait of old Davie Knowles.
While the snort of the engine and hum of the drum
Smoothly range in their places my thoughts as they
come;

While mischievous fancy suggestions outdoles To make the "cap fitting" for old Davie Knowles.

With beard patriarchal, and knowing physog,
What a contrast is seen 'twixt the man and his dog,
That ever before him so cockily jogs—
He the tallest of men, it the smallest of dogs!
All the kids in the street, to his figure well used,
Call out to their mates—at the sight quite amused—
As down there at evenings he leisurely strolls
With the "pup" at his heels, "Here comes old Davie
Knowles.'

Whatever his work, he is ne'er at a loss;
But o'er his surroundings decidedly "Boss";
Still calm and unruffled in all sorts of plight,
And in every opinion somehow always right.
In a sharp-pointed answer, not once known to fail,
Alike though its humour be racy or stale;
For as birds go in coveys, and fishes in shoals,
So crowd the odd sayings of old Davie Knowles.

Not averse to a "nip," and much loving his "smoke," Yet not more so than is his strong taste for a joke, Whose dry caustic humour, on his luckless friends—Small concerned how they like it—he freely expends. And 'tis something to see—with one thin in the skin—With what kind persistence he will rub it in; The most teasing of men, and best natured of souls Throughout all the district is old Davie Knowles.

### SKETCH

OF the Gossipton worthies the wontedly brightest
Is one who in figure's by no means the lightest,
Yet whose ideas of life are so happily chosen;
He has a flow of good spirits, would do for a dozen.
At each festive meeting, and spree on the plain,
He presides, as a sort of a High Chamberlain;
For such is his forte for good-humour and spouting
That no local gathering seems perfect without him.
And such beau with the ladies, few with him can cope
At that eloquence called by the vulgar soft soap;
Till, their soft hearts beguiled by his bowing and sighing,

Each one just believes for herself he is dying.

Whate'er they will do when this great man gets
married

I can scarcely think else than their peace will be harried.

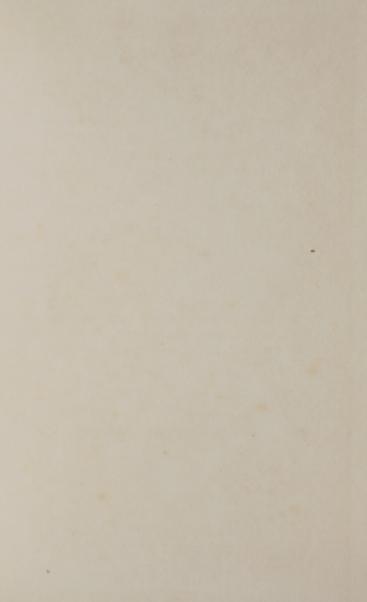
For how can they ever have fun at a spree If wanting the wit of their darling M.C.? The bare thought, I'm certain, must be a heart-breaker Of probably losing this pleasing love-maker. So dear are his ways to their hearts— this a fact is—

153 II

If merely for keeping their flirting in practice
In gathering news he's as good as the mail;
And his budget he deals out wholesale and retail.
Just take a walk down where this young man resides,
And you'll get all the facts, and a few more besides.
With fair hair and blue eyes, not o'er troubled with
thought,

And who seems with hard work by no means overwrought;

A foe to dull care, he counts grieving a folly,
And, to keep up his motto, looks constantly jolly.
Or if pressure of business should e'en his brow furrow,
Just wants a good snooze to be all right the morrow.
With good living easy, with good temper mellow,
And, taken all through, by no means a bad fellow;
So cajoling in treaty, yet so hot in a barney,
Need I say I refer to the great Mr. Blarney?



NZC 828 FER 1907



, aprilia de la proposición dela proposición de la proposición de la proposición dela proposición dela proposición dela proposición de la proposición de la

filetetetetetetetetet.

1907

NZC 828 FER