

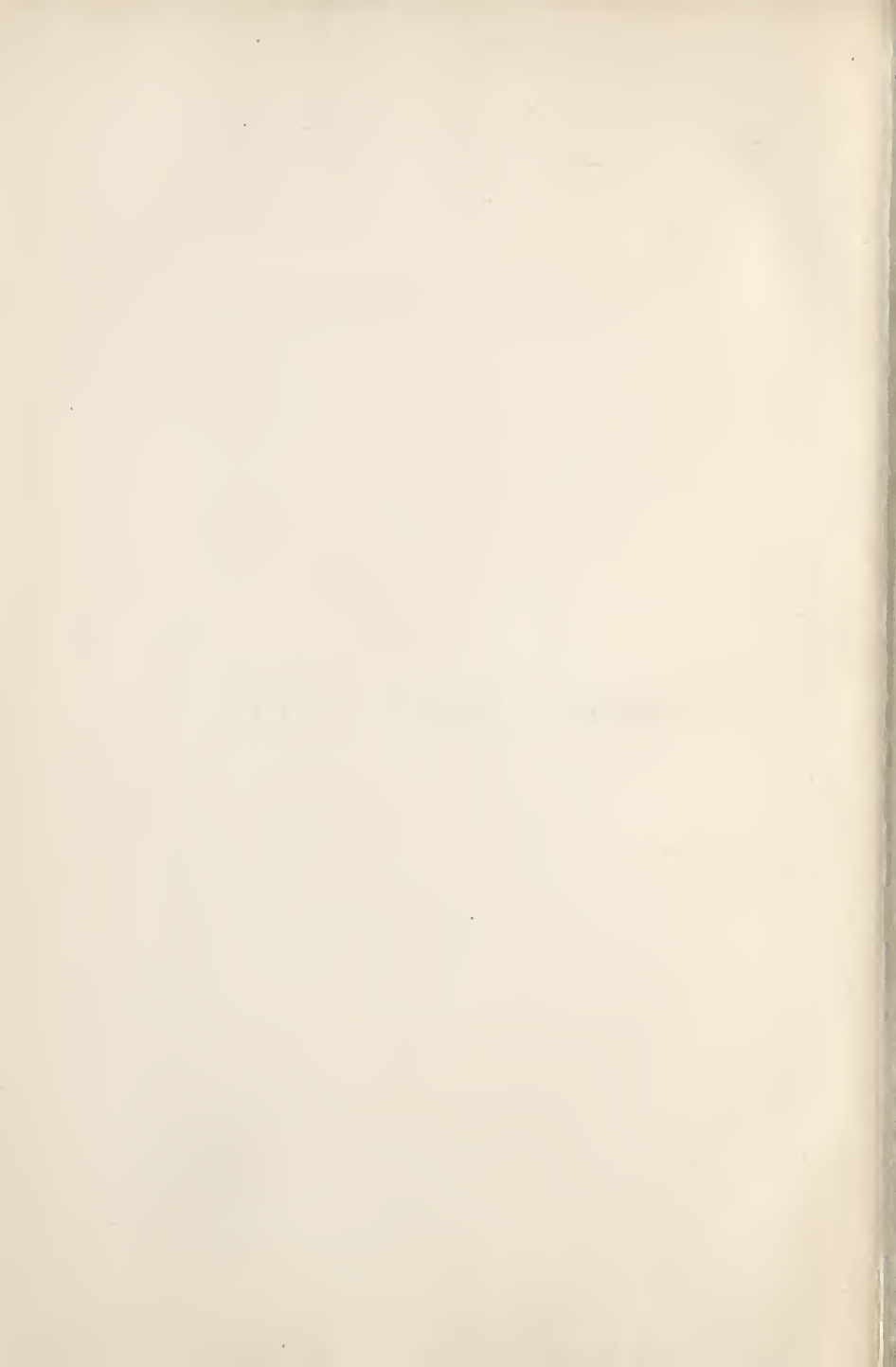
MEMOIR OF
ROBERT URQUHART

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MEMOIR OF ROBERT URQUHART.





Your very truly
Robert Ingham

MEMOIR
OF
ROBERT URQUHART.

BY
ALEXANDER CLARK,
*Author of "Reminiscences of a Police Officer," "Sketches in the Kingdom
of Mar," "Notes by the Way," &c.*



ABERDEEN:
ALEXANDER MURRAY, 216B UNION STREET.

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P R E F A C E .

IN a second time soliciting the approval of the public as an Author, I beg most sincerely to return my cordial thanks for the patronage accorded to my last Brochure, "The Reminiscences of a Police Officer." It is with no little satisfaction that I recur to its success. Being but of local interest, it was marvellous to find that 2000 copies were sold out in about eighteen months. An amusing incident which came under my own observation during the early time of its sale in the city is worthy of record. A certain dealer in "second-hand" had picked up a copy *cheap*; and whether he wished to depreciate the matter, or *rile* the author, ticketed the article at a *groat*. His neighbour, who had had a good sale for several months at 6d., observed the bait, and sent a "laddie" for the wonderful value, which he re-sold at the published price in half-an-hour!

The subject-matter of the present small vol., which I have done my best to bring out in accordance with the taste and character of him whom as a boyish comrade, and in after life a sincere and valued friend, I have attempted to portray, required a different, and to me much more congenial association of ideas than the former; and I believe that, in writing the Memoir, my own feelings and sentiments have been, as it were, "consecrated."

Robert Urquhart's desire to do good could be only understood by those to whom at times he unbosomed himself, and it was to me a strange phenomenon that often he did this when we were alone, and that too without any attempt on my part to draw him out. There is a material want in the "Memoir" regarding an early influence which should have been recorded, and my readers will, I am sure, forgive me for alluding to it in the Preface. I refer to the Rev. James Paterson, late of the United Secession at Wateridge Muir. I shall take the liberty of quoting from a former MS., a reference to his Life and Work, and I do this with the greater confidence that it received a very high eulogium from Mr. Urquhart on its appearance in the *Free Press*.

"The Rev. James Paterson, so long minister of the United Secession Chapel at Wateridge Muir, whose remains lie in the churchyard of Cluny, was a man whose usefulness and worth will long be remembered. He was the equal, if not the superior of Dr. Kidd, as a Hebrew scholar, even by the Dr.'s own admission. What a treat his lectures were to the intelligent portion of the small congregation to which he ministered. Yet his learning, honesty, and truthfulness in his expositions cost him dear. Master of the idiom as well as the text, he often gave different readings of the authorised version; and, young as I was, when it was my privilege to hear these, I can recollect with what delight I heard his connection of sacred with ancient history,

of which I had been an enthusiastic reader. This did not suit the bigoted and narrow-minded of his flock, who used to say, 'They liket Mr. Paterson vera weel, gin he wad only lat the Bible aleen.' Consequently, they, with a sprinkling of *Aul' Lichts*, who used, some of them at least, to walk from Bandoddle to Aberdeen, weekly, to hear the Rev. Mr. Primrose, got up an opposition, and a supply of preachers was obtained monthly from the synod of that body, while the chapel at Wateridge Muir was denuded of half its never-very-numerous members, some of these too being the wealthiest of their number. I have often thought, what must have been the feelings of the learned and godly man when he saw the result of his candour and faithfulness, with a large and increasing family, whose requirements were more than even his former stipend could well support, yet deserted by those for whom he had been toiling, and for whom the rich stores of his learning had been poured out from week to week? He never faltered.

"How lovingly he instructed and cherished the young who flocked to his Sabbath evening services and Bible class, and I could point out, even now, a good many of those who never joined the *Seceders*, who owe to his teaching their success in life, as well as the consolations of that Gospel of which his ministry and life was such a consistent and noble example."

Mr. Urquhart was an attendant at his Sabbath evening lectures and school, until he came to Aberdeen,

and I have often heard him speak of the influence for good he received at that early period. In meditating upon the strange vicissitudes of human existence, I may be allowed to remark that, the fact of having been spared to write and publish a "Memoir of Robert Urquhart," which I have done with the full consent and approbation of his nearest relatives, appears to me to be the strangest incident in a not uneventful life. Of its truthfulness I feel confident, but whether its literary merits are such as to ensure approbation, the public are the sole judges, and to their verdict the Author now leaves the issue.

I beg most cordially to thank the editors of the three papers who so readily granted me permission to reprint their articles on the occasion of Mr. Urquhart's sudden death. My thanks are also due to Mr. William Cadenhead, for the same liberty with his feeling and manly stanzas. Impromptu though they were, they are valuable as showing how highly Mr. Urquhart was respected even by those who were opposed to his general policy in public matters.

THE AUTHOR.

The following incident, which only occurred to my memory after the Memoir was in type, I feel assured will not be objected to—at least—by my juvenile readers, although placed rather awkwardly in the copy.

I once heard of a decent old farmer who, on being

asked by a neighbour what sort of a servant a certain youth was, gave his opinion in the following sentence—“Ow, he’s nae an ill worker, but he’s neither gweed tae cat nor dog.” I need not say that the subject of this Memoir was the very opposite. One *bonnie* spring morning, in the latter end of April, just before the *big loons* left the school, as we were going along the face of the Barmkin, some one of them pointed out a young rook, with its parent, “which,” he said, “we could easy tak. He knew this by the manner in which the young one alighted—instead of spreading out his tail like a fan to steady his body, it went up with a jerk, and young Mr. Corbie played a somersault.” We determined upon a chase. I don’t know if Robert set out with the foremost, but I recollect well that after the whole pack were blown, of seeing him—I think I see him yet—with his peaked brown cloth jacket, and tight fitting corduroys—he was a handsome boy—far up the face of the hill, hot in pursuit, with his arm stretched out, his hand almost touching Master Rook’s tail, who, every time as he touched “*terra firma*,” found the greater difficulty in again rising, till at length, amid the cheers of his comrades, Robert came down the hill carrying his prize. We got some twine, and I recollect Robert took his own garter, which was soft, and fixed it to one of the crow’s talons. We selected a place where a large boulder had been taken out in a young plantation, and having tied the twine to a young larch, presented the captive with some pieces of crumbs upon a flat stone,

until our return journey, when he was carried home with us. Robert rightly elaimed the rook, and carefully fed and trained him. After being in eaptivity for the summer, the creature became so domestiated that he was allowed to go at large with one wing cut.

He would follow Robert anywhere, but was peculiarly fond of getting into the barn. As next spring came round, he appeared so tame that it was not thought necessary to elip one wing as formerly, and on several oocations he would leave, but always returned at night to roost in a tree in the eornyard. Whether he had met with one of his own kin, but of opposite sex, nobody could say, but at all events his roost was empty, to which he never returned. One day, early in March, two or three years after this, I had oocasion to pass where Robert was ploughing in a field where turnips had been. It was one of those bright sunny afternoons which sometimes occur at that season, when the light is clear and shining, and when the rooks are to be seen following elose in the furrow, their blaek silky coats glittering and glancing in the sunbeams, as they pick up the worms from the newly-turned earth. In their eagerness they will sometimes be almost among the ploughman's feet. Robert was not one to attempt with "murdering pattle" to destroy the creatures that were, while feeding, conferring a benefit on the agrieulturist, and I think the rooks had an idea of his clemeny. When he neared the end of the furrow, as I approached, he took up several of the reptiles and

pitched them at the covey in rear. I stood back and watched the proceedings. A considerable number of the birds came near him, but there was one who actually jumped up and took the creatures out of his hand, nor was he afraid when I came close up.

“You don’t seem to know our old friend,” he said. “It’s surely not him, is it?” “It’s just him,” he answered, “but for all his tameness, he won’t allow me to handle him. Poor fellow, I would not deprive him of his liberty again for any money. That’s just him,” he added, “but I doubt he would heat me at a race to the woods of Skene to-night.”



MEMOIR OF ROBERT URQUHART.

IN undertaking to write and publish a Memoir of the late Mr. Robert Urquhart, I must confess it to be an attempt somewhat above my erudition. I am of opinion, however, that many of his personal friends and acquaintances who remember him in the place of his birth, as well as his numerous friends and fellow-citizens, among whom he lived so long and wrought so energetically, will be pleased to have a lasting souvenir of a character so remarkable and loveable, and believing that I knew more of his early career, and indeed of his whole life, than any one now living, I have undertaken the task "*Con Amore.*"

Mr. Robert Urquhart was born at Tillydaff, Midmar, in the month of July, 1814, and had a few months previous to his death entered his 64th year. I do not know if his birth was registered, but that this is about correct, I have no doubt,

for often have I heard his mother, and my own, counting the difference in our ages, and have a special recollection of his being nine months my senior, my own nativity being stated by both to have been the 26th April, 1815. Robert was the third son of the second marriage. His father, Mr. John Urquhart, who was farmer in Tillydaff for many years, was remarkable for one trait of character, viz., his sound judgment in selecting his partners of the opposite sex, Janet Fyfe and Mary Fowler were both whole-hearted kindly Christian women. I knew the former only by report, but that was of a sweet savour—specially among the poor—and as I knew her family intimately, these were good proof of her amiability and kindness of disposition. Her eldest son, the late Mr. Alex. Urquhart, two of whose sons are still on the farm, was perhaps the most generous and warm-hearted man in the parish. Here is a sketch of him from a former effort—“Another stone records the age and death of Mr. Alex. Urquhart, late farmer in Tillydaff, one of the most genial and affectionate men I ever knew. How his hearty ringing laugh used to enliven a winter

fireside ; he was too a shrewd man of business, and his judgment and advice at roup or market was often solicited, and cheerfully and honestly given ; the hospitality of his house was proverbial, his benevolence being heartily seconded by Mrs. Urquhart, who still survives to mourn her bereavement."

The late Baillie John Urquhart was the second son of the first marriage, and was the second Dissenter elected as a Councillor in the city. His upright and honourable conduct in that capacity led his fellow-councillors to promote him twice to the bench, where his humane and Christian character was most useful and highly appreciated. "A feather shows how the wind blows," and Baillie Urquhart's sympathy with the poor unfortunates who came before him, took a practical shape, when he had, according to statute and evidence to amerce them in a fine, with imprisonment as a result in case of non-payment, he invariably made enquiry into their circumstances and character, and if he thought there was the least chance of reform, he would call upon the sergeant of police before they were sent through to the jail, see the

culprits personally, and after a few words of advice and sympathy, pay the fine, and set them at liberty. In some cases it produced reformation, and in many it led to respect for the law and its administration. I have a very distinct recollection of his coming out to Tillydaff shortly after his marriage with Miss Hall, who was his cousin. Two incidents helped to fix it in my memory—the first was that his pockets were filled with sweeties, which were by him liberally distributed among the youngsters, of which there were nearly a score on the town loan on the Saturday evening. I think this was in 1822. The second incident is the more vivid of the two, and was the following—he had driven out in a gig, leaving Aberdeen early in the morning of Saturday, on the Sunday, after having been to hear the Rev. James Paterson at Wateridge Muir, and after dinner, himself and his bride drove quietly up to the Lurg to call on his eldest sister Mary, who had been shortly before that married to John Scott. The good folks of Tillydaff were greatly offended, and his conduct was censured even by his own relatives.

“He ocht till a rested on the Sabbath—an’ yokin’ a horse an’ gig an’ drivin’ throu’ the country wasna santifein’ the day as it sud be.” No matter that his sister was the only one of the family but himself, who had left the parental roof, nor that she had given her hand and heart to the man of her choice, nor that John was her nearest in age in the family, and had to leave on Monday to attend to his business in town, and might not have another opportunity of seeing his sister and her husband for years. What were all such considerations when weighed against such a spirit of Judaic sacredotalism. Religion! what anathemas have been pronounced in thy name! Mr. John Urquhart proved in after years that he was neither destitute of its precepts nor practice, by the interest he took in his sister and brother-in-law’s family, whose success and comfort he kept steadily in view.

I must here devote a few sentences to the history of the youngest of the first family, were it only to disprove the poet’s assertion that the “course of *true* love never did run smooth.”

I think it was in the year 1818 that Robert

Brown was horseman at Tillydaff, Ann Urquhart was, I think, two years his junior. Subsequent events, however, proved unmistakably that at that time they had plighted there early troth.

A better matched pair was never wed, and the wonderful story is that they lived nearly twenty-two years seeing each other only at chapel, and that no one ever knew or suspected the betrothal. Soon after leaving Tillydaff, Robert Brown, whose father rented a small holding in the parish of Birse, applied himself to cutting up the timber, which had reached maturity in the forest, and I have often heard it stated by old hands who wrought near them at the same industry, that with Robert Brown as topsman, and Andrew Reid as pitman, their stroke could be distinguished from all others, the up-draw being scarce audible, while the down stroke was clear and ringing, the result being that the two cut up a greater number of feet, and made better deals than any other pair of sawyers, and as they wrought by measure, the advantage was their own. From cutting up the trunks, Mr. Brown soon came to trade in the commodity, buying and selling, with the additional value and profit of

his labour, until about the year 1827, when he rented the farm of Wateridge Muir, after the Rev. James Paterson resigned his lease. Time wore on, the lease expired, and Mr. Brown having mortally offended Duncan Davidson, who was factor on the estate, by telling said gentleman on an election occasion that his vote was his own, and that he would only give it to whom he pleased—had to flit. At same time the chapel was demolished, and no doubt factor and laird supposed that dissent was crushed. It has however survived them both, and still flourishes in the locality, the second place of worship, much improved, having been built since the ruthless demolition of the original.

The best part of the story remains yet to be told. Bankhead, then on the estate of Kebbaty, and one of the finest farms in the district, fell like a willing bride into Mr. Brown's arms. By his able management it was soon in excellent order; and as he was still without a gudewife, some of his neighbours began to twit him upon social occasions—his reply to their advice to be looking out for a wife, was couched in true Scotsman phrase—"What would you think now were

I to tell you that I had such a person looked out before some of you were born." Meantime, let me pay a tribute to her who was his choice. A neater or more beautiful young woman than Ann Urquhart was not in the parish. Her couthy, kindly disposition, was her great ornament ; but beyond all, her early christianity, which "grew with her growth, and strengthened with her strength," endeared her to all with whom she came in contact. But it may be asked, how was she employed for such a lengthened period? Perhaps the survivors of the late Baillie John Urquhart's family could tell something of her labours of love.

She used to come out to Tillydaff in the summer months, and during week days, was as hard a worker as any servant girl in the house ; and in the evenings, was frequently a kindly and welcome visitor at the cottages of the crofters. I can recollect her coming from chapel when I was but an urchin, and when tired she would take my hand, and that for a week after I would feel elevated. Who could have looked into that sprightly happy face, without being the better

for the kindly glance in return? Many began to wonder why one so attractive and vivacious was never being wed.

Young preachers who came by invitation from Bandoddle to Tillydaff to spend a few days, left in admiration, but I fear, also in despair. Having been there as a herd laddie, I used to be questioned about her acquaintance, and was sometimes amused at their surmises. She kept her own counsel. I have often thought, that neither husband nor wife perhaps ever realized the dream of young and passionate love, even on the bonny braes of Bankhead; but they did better, they realized what their duties to God and their fellow-creatures were, and faithfully performed them, and they were blessed in their deed. I feel a melancholy satisfaction in penning these sentences, as a tribute to the memory of Mrs. Brown, who, in her youthful days, was such a kind and ministering spirit to my long and severely-afflicted mother.

I do not know if phrenology has yet been recognised as a science in the land of its birth, but of one thing I am certain, that even Sir

William Hamilton could not have looked upon Robert Urquhart's mother's face and head without a feeling of reverence and respect—the finely arched and well-expanded brow, the warm and kindly expression of those quick clear eyes, and the sympathetic tone of that loving voice, told at once that Mary Fowler, or Urquhart, was no ordinary woman. Her acts of usefulness and unwearied benevolence were the best proofs of the qualities of her being. She was above the usual standard of her time and sex in education, and this she turned to good account in the neighbourhood. Wherever sickness, or injuries by accidents, or scaldings happened, she was there, and as she had considerable experimental skill in lotions and salves, she prepared these in her own laboratory, and administered them with her own hands. I am quite certain that, in spite of all her efforts to equalize her affections, Robert was her favourite, and as he loved her with a passionate fondness, she must have had a great influence in moulding his character.

Having, when two years of age, been sent to live with my grand-parents at Kirkvillie, Skene,

and not returning until four years after, my recollections of Mr. Urquhart date from 1821. He had, however, before that time, made his mark in the family. There was a little house built to the south gable of his father's, and by collecting some stools which had been washed on the square on Saturday, he got up to the *easin*, and seizing hold of the thatch, scrambled up to the riggin', and when the servants came out from breakfast there he was perched upon the roun' lum, crowing like a cock—of course he was speedily taken down; but such a desire for climbing had his first successful feat engendered, that there was not a building, with the exception of the two dwelling-houses, but he had scaled, and on one occasion he was found perched on the top of the mill course. In one of his scrambles in the barn however, he came to grief, having fallen from the loft one of his legs was broken, but which I never knew so well had it been set, and so patient was the young sufferer that no person could have supposed that he had met with such a mishap. It however effectually cured him of the climbing mania.

I may here mention, that all the residenters

in the town proper, were "Seceders," a name which has become less a reproach now-a-days, as their numbers have considerably increased—they were not however exactly of the same sect. In two cases husband and wife took different sides. The one adhering to the religion *presently professed*, while the other declared it was *only presently permitted*. Nevertheless they lived in amity, and held the cardinal doctrines of Evangelicalism in common. One feature of their religious belief was in harmony entirely, namely, that as professing Christians, they were in the sight of a common father equals—there was no caste—the farmer and cottar's son met on equal terms at school, at church, and at play. As neither rail nor tramway has yet opened up the country to pleasure parties, I may be pardoned in attempting a description of its physical features. Both farm houses of Tillydaff then stood on the north of the wooded height, near the west corner of the Barmkin, while three of the finest looking fields faced the Hill of Fare to the south—a portion of these was sub-let, and the little place was called the Bents, near which the second new

steading is now built. A cart road runs along the south side of the Barmkin, leading past Upper Mains of Echt, which is connected with another running north and south, once the grand route for cattle droving. I have myself seen it covered for days after Aikey Fair and its *et ceteras*.

There was only a small portion of the Barmkin on the south side planted in those days, and the road leading from Hillside to the Cultain Hillie—an out-post of the Barmkin—was just a beautiful terrace. The old castle of Midmar was seen with fine effect “navelled in the woody hill,” Beblair, with its rich pasture and corn fields, Tillyronach, with its neat cottages and well-to-do tradesmen, whose trim patches of land stretched up towards Hillhead, where the brothers Morgan then improved and beautified the well laid out fields. The ancient Druidical Circle at Whitestone, the bottom of the vale stretching to Sunhonnie, which again met Millahole, with its finely wooded surroundings covering the sides of the Hill of Fare, formed one of the quietest and most pleasant prospects one could have wished to look

upon. The growth of the wood on the south face of the Barmkin has now nearly obscured the pleasant vista.

I make no pretensions to scientific geological knowledge, although I have read and studied a good deal of the learned theories and arguments on the subject, from which I am fully convinced that glacial action was the natural cause of the formation of the hills and glens of Scotland—and I am further of opinion that, the quiet valley which I have attempted to describe will yet be one of the most interesting spots on this side the Grampians, inasmuch as its opening to the flat vale of Echt appears to have been once the efflux to the ocean. It is not wanting either in historical records; and but for the ruthless ravages of modern improvement, there might have been one at least worthy of preservation, in the shape of a large cairn, raised by the hands of devoted and admiring followers over their fallen chief, on the Cultain, but whether he was Celt or Scot history saith not, but his stone cist, and what had been sword or spear was found in the centre of the huge cairn when it was sacrilegiously carted

out to build dykes by Forbes of *Eight*, who used to allege that Duffus & Co. had made him Forbes of *four*. Had the ancient and honourable family who now possess the lands of Dunecht been sooner in possession, the "Devil's Cairn" would still have been there. How we scholars used to look and fear as we passed by the foot path across the hillie to school. A legend being in vogue, that Aul' Clottie gathered the stones on the Barmkin in his apron, when the strings gave way as he was coming down to sow them on the plain—*Monkis Obscurantis*. For the benefit of Mr. Milne, and the School Teachers' Union, who wish to revive the *ad vitam aut culpam*, standing of that learned and useful body, let me relate two instances of its working in the "good old time." I will only mention the parishes. The first my native parish Midmar. From the year 1819 to the year 1824 there were not more than half-a-dozen scholars attending the parish school, and had not the Dominie got a kirk, this might have continued for twenty years. In the other, the parish of Skene, when the late Rev. Mr. M'Kenzie was promoted to the manse, he left the

school full to overflowing. This occurred in 1825, and his successor had not been in possession above six months, until the attendance had dwindled to that number of scholars, and this continued, with slight variation, until the eventful summer of '43, when, as the Rev. David Simpson of Trinity Church observed, the old razors were furbished, *ad vitam aut culpam*, reigned supreme for eighteen years. In both cases the parents upheld venture schools at their own expense.

It was in the year '21 that the youngsters of Tillydaff were withdrawn from the parish school of Midmar, and sent to that of Echt, then taught by the late Mr. William Malcolm. I have already spoken of the heathery terrace along the face of the Barmkin, and the fine vista of the quiet glen. The foot-path which then led over the Cultain Hillie, and down upon Old Echt, the nearer way, as one came in sight of the Howe of Echt, was like the opening of a panorama. To the right, the Kirktown, the long and level parishes of Peterculter, Drumoak, and part of Banchory; to the left, the bonny braes of Affloch, in Skene; and farther than our young vision could reach,

immediately in front we were told that the wonderful city of Aberdeen was to be seen through a spy glass from the top of the Barmkin, where the Picts were once encamped, and had pipes laid from the Hill of Fare which conveyed water to the encampment, until their enemies got the *historic Mare* which was fed three days on dry corn, and having been let loose on the face of the Barmkin, where not a drop of water was to be found, danced and pawed above the pipes, when of course they were uncovered and cut—when the Picts had to shift their quarters, and were assailed by the Scots, and utterly routed. Such was, and I suppose such is still, the traditionary lore, of the district.

I could not introduce the early career of Robert Urquhart in a more vivid or pleasing manner, than by stating that for three summers he and myself were the sole occupants of the school road above described. I think, however, before doing so, I might show, that from his earliest days he had the qualities of mind and heart which fitted him, and were recognised by his associates as giving him, the right to rule. The

following colloquy between two anxious mothers, the substance of which I recollect as distinctly as when it occurred: one being Mr. Urquhart's mother, the other my own, will illustrate this. Mrs. U.—“Weel Jean, wisn't a bonny nicht the streen, an' sic clear meen licht, an' there wis sic a collection o' bairns i' the corn yard.” Jean—“I won'er ye didna sen' them hame an' our seener.” “Weel, woman, ye see they were so happy, an' it was sic a fine nicht, I thocht it wid a been a sin to meddle wi' them as lang's they waur deein' nae ill; an' O, woman, they war happy, I couldna help wonderin' what was to come o' them in after days, peer things, there wis naething i' their heads but fun, an' they did tak it oot. I stood at the door mair than half-an-oor an' watched their proceedings. It wis strange that in a' their plays they had an umpire; but I never heard his voice. It wis Rob, will we dee this, or will we dee that. Rob, what are we gaun to play at neist? I listened wi' great attention, but I never heard Rob's voice; but I wite, she said, laddie, addressing me, I often heard yours. Was it not strange, she added, there were plenty there older than him,

but I never heard their names referred to." Jean—O Mrs. U., "he's a wise laddie." Mrs. U.—"I, an' a sly, bit there's ae thing, he is not quarrelsome—but O he's sly."

But if our walk to the school of Echt was pleasant and picturesque, our return journey was not less enjoyable. The "bonnie glen" on the left was seen from the face of the Barmkin, even with better effect than in our morning walk, and after passing Hillside, Benachie, with the champagne portions of Monymusk, Cluny, Kemnay, and Inverurie, through which the Don flows, was then, and is still more so now, as fine a landscape as one could wish to look on.

I have since seen Benachie from all the points of the compass, and have been specially delighted with the view of the romantic and fertile district where the "Gadie rins;" but for a picture of the Ben—where I have no doubt the rush of the German ocean was for ages beaten back—give me that from the place of my birth, the site of the old *toon* Loan or the bonnie Canty park above it. That others have admired the same view though not exactly from the same

standpoint, the following anecdote which I have often listened to, will prove. The late Rev. Dr. Corbet, of Drumoak, and the Rev. James Paterson, late of Wateridge Muir United Secession Chapel, had been fellow-students, and the former thought it no ecclesiastical offence to pay a friendly visit to the latter, even in the early years of the present century. The two learned divines had taken a stroll on the west side of the wood of Cairndae about sunset, when the then youthful Mr. Corbet broke out in powerful panegyric upon the beauty of the scene, declaring that above all things he would wish to see the orb which was then descending in such a halo of glory, rise again; and he, Mr. Corbet, to survey the scene from the top of Benachie. "And what," said Mr. Paterson, "is to hinder you—you can reach the summit easily in three hours, and Mrs. Paterson will give you as much in your pockets as will bring you back. You can reach the boat at Monymusk before dark, get up the hill on the west ridge, and be at the highest peak long before sunrise—take my plaid with you, my dear sir, and I shall be looking for you in the morning for an early breakfast."

The young enthusiast caught the idea, and was off in no time. His dissenting brother looked longingly for him to breakfast. The morning was beautifully bright, but there was no sign of the way-farer. At length, about eleven a.m., a rather crest-fallen, though stalwart youth appeared twixt Littletown and Cairndae. Mr. Paterson hastened to meet him, but ere he could get out a word of welcome, Mr. Corbet broke out, "O my dear sir, we're but common clay aifter a'! I was at the top by one a.m., and what a fine cool breeze, and how I did enjoy it wrapt in your plaid. I knew there were only two hours until I should feast my eyes on the glorious sight, to obtain which I had wandered so far. There was not a cloud in the sky, and I sat watching Orion and the Pleiades, lovely in their modesty; but thinking how soon their effulgence must pale before the light of the Lord of day. I was enraptured, and sat wondering and gazing now to the heavens and again to the earth, and inwardly despising all the spiritless thousands who were then in profound sleep, because they could not spare one night to come and behold such a

sublime and wondrous sight as was just about to break on my exultant vision. I leaned back, my dear sir, and my head rested on a tuft of dried grass—I saw the streaks of the unerring bow faintly appear, I was dreamy with joy; but, alas! alas! my dream ended in a sound and refreshing sleep, from which I only started up at half-past six a.m. We're bit common clay, Mr. Paterson, common clay aifter a'!"

In the summer of '22, Robert Urquhart and I entered the same class, and sat near each other, and what has often appeared to me strange, neither at our lessons nor on the school road did we ever quarrel. While in the reading and spelling classes I was mostly at or near the top, Robert was seldom far from the foot, and I have a most distinct recollection of his hesitancy as he read, and how deeply I sympathised with the trouble his lessons gave him, and it may be I even piqued myself on my superior talents, which were often praised by the teacher. I was shortly doomed to have my imaginary superiority lowered. We got slates and "Gray's" on the same day. He withdrew to a corner by himself, which he ever after

kept, and ere I got through vulgar fractions, he had finished Gray, and was nearly through with Hamilton. He had, however, the benefit of three years longer at school than I, two of which were under Mr. Mortimer at the school of Midmar, where he mastered mensuration and land surveying so well, that, having obtained a chain and assistant, he measured and mapped his father's farm so completely, that he could tell how much seed each field required, how much manure, and how many days' labour for ploughing, harrowing, and harvesting. It was no doubt in such active and persevering efforts that were laid the germs of his engineering skill and aptness in figures which were so generously and at such sacrifice brought into requisition for the benefit of his fellow-citizens, in carrying out the sewage system in Aberdeen, while acting as chairman of that department, when a member of the Police Board.

I cannot resist the wish to give a few incidents of the pleasant summer days we spent together when going and returning from the school of Echt. We were alone, and in the fine weather,

although we left school at four p.m., we seldom reached home before seven, sometimes nearly eight. Our respected fathers resolved to enforce stricter discipline, and agreed to take it in turns to come in search, and chastise us for lingering on the way. When old Tillydaff's turn came, he merely made a run as if to catch us, and a great noise, with threats, when we ran past him, and made the best of our way home; but when my parent made his appearance, although no doubt he was deputed to punish the pair, he took care to exercise discipline only on myself. The temptation of playing marbles and other frolics had taken such a hold on our nature, that we could not resist it, and at last we were allowed to take our own time, our mothers remarking that surely hunger would have an influence—our forenoon lunch was restricted for that purpose. Even this had little effect, and I well remember the feeling of wonder and pleasure we both experienced when, after playing at the *bools* on the bonnie foot path which led over the Cultain Hillie, we would stretch ourselves on the grassy plot near its top, where the short

heather bell and the natural white clover were abundant—a very paradise for *sheep* and *bum-bees*—and looking, and listening to their active exercise and weird music which filled the sunny atmosphere in a sultry afternoon, we felt almost enchanted, and, but for the cravings of nature, I verily believe we would have remained till darkness came on. One incident I remember well which was characteristic of my comrade's turn of mind. We had been allowed a couple of days leave from school, to assist in tramping the hay sows at Tillydaff, and we enjoyed it. We carried a bottle of milk to school for our forenoon's *piece*, and, of course, brought it home empty. On arriving at a small stream, Robert proposed that we should try whether water would tramp like the hay, upon which he filled the bottle to the mouth, put in the cork, and taking a flat stone began the tramping process, when out flew a piece of the glass near the neck. "Now," I said, "see what ye've deen, weel baith be licket." "O never mind," said he, "I'll just tell my mother that I have proved that water winna tramp." I have often reflected that this little incident was a

proof of his enquiring practical intellect, as well as its nobility, for he took the whole blame, and his mother was not offended when he related his experience in hydrostatics.

It was in this summer that Robert's unselfish and generous conduct attracted my attention to such a degree that I could have never forgotten it. We were both anxious to get to the top of the Hill of Fare, and managed our point by volunteering to assist in setting the peats. His elder brother and a female servant, along with himself, set out as a working party, while my sister and self accompanied. His brother knew the *lair*s, and when we arrived near the top of the hill we set to work. A large quantity of his father's peats had been set up previously, but ours' had never been touched.

In a few hours the three finished their task, and I remember well when they did so, Susy Gibb hurrahed and jeered us for being behind, assuring us that ere we got through the "tod wid tak." Susy and James Urquhart set off for home; not so Robert. He came across, and setting to work, not only helped, but his presence

and kindness so cheered us, that in a much shorter time than we thought of, we too had all the peats on end. But his kindness did not end with this. He had been at the hill before, and knew a nearer and much nicer foot path down to the Lurg, where his sister, Mrs. Scott, lived. So, he leading, we had a most enjoyable ramble, and often a tumble among the heather ; and his sister, Mary, was so delighted to see him and us, that, after supplying us liberally, she remarked that "the hill made hungry folk." She asked us to remain, and make ourselves happy, and tell the folk at home that it was Mary Urquhart who kept us. Her genial kindness, and the thought of such a story as we would have to tell when we got home, made the afternoon one of the happiest I ever recollect spending. Robert seemed himself so pleased, and his kindness appeared ever after to me so unselfish, that I could never have believed him capable of doing an unkind action.

Our journeys home from school were not always pleasant. In the winter of '23, on a Friday afternoon, began a snow-storm, the like of which has not visited Scotland since—not even

that of '38. There were a good many besides us at school in winter, and as we neared the ridge of the Cultain, the drift met us like a great cloud of smoke, but we also met much-needed assistance. Two men-servants from Tillydaff, with plaids and shawls, made their appearance, and but for their assistance we would never have reached home. Robert and myself were wrapt in one, and we held firmly together and trudged on; but ere we reached Mr. Donald's house at Hillside, we were completely exhausted. After getting some refreshment and warmth, we set out the nearest way over the dykes and across the "Blue Fauld," where the gale and drift caught us so unmercifully, that had not Harry Dan, who took special care of us, we being the youngest of the flock, could never have weathered the blast. What a profound sleep had fallen on me that night, for on awaking next morning I had for some time a feeling as if every thing around me was new, and on going by eut tracts over to the farm steadings, found the squares were filled to the easings. There have been, and perhaps there still are, *weather* prophets. I have

a very vivid recollection of two of the genus, and also of the fulfilment of their predictions. One was a respected neighbour,—farmer of Upper Muir—but which was then profanely called the *Doup*. I never heard whether George Galashan adhered to the Ptolemaic or Copernican systems, but I well remember that a few days after the heavy storm, he announced that there would be “*nae richt fresh* for ten weeks.” Four days after there came a slight thaw, and *Doup’s* prediction was questioned; but it only continued for about twenty-four hours, merely softening the surface of the snow, when a most intense frost set in, and it was nearly eleven weeks ere a genial freshness came. Many a talk there was of *Doup’s* ten weeks, and their fulfilment was eagerly longed for. The other was my own grandmother, by the mother side, and I think she gleaned her knowledge in forecasting the weather from Ptolemaic tradition, and her own observation. What I am about to relate of her prediction took a firm hold of my imagination and memory, and it had a most remarkable fulfilment. She made all her calculations from the positions and influence

of the planets, according to the time of the moon's change, and quarterly filling and waning. I was at my grandfather's as servant in the spring and summer of '26. It was a lovely spring and seed time. There was a slight fall of snow when most of the seed was in, but no rain, and after the snow melted the briard "came away" beautifully; but the days in May were scorching, and during the nights there was not a drop of dew. Lizzie Sheriffs was well known as a "weather wise" in the parish of Skene, and I remember as she and self were going to the congregational chapel at Blackhills, the farmers, as they met her in coming to the parish church—for several Sundays—used to put the question, "Na, Lizzie, fan are we to ha'e a shower?" to which my respected grandma would say, with a hum of commiseration, but with most implicit assurance, "Yeel nae get a drap till the latter end o' August," at which they would raise their hands, and, in a deprecating tone, exclaim, "Ye'er seerly nae saries." By the time the month of June was nearly done, they merely hung their heads as they passed us, while she would say,

“Waes me for the puir beasts.” It was the 14th of August ere a shower fell, in all the country round, sufficient to penetrate the surface, while from Kirkvillie to Aberdeen there was not a field of oats but the pickle was choked in shooting, except one small spot which had been reclaimed from the moss, and sown at the back of the House of Brodiach.

Our road to the school of Echt, although considerably elevated by the snow fall, was quite passable, as the snow became, after frost had set fairly in, as hard as a barn floor. Some youths about Hillside had improvised a novel sensation by dragging the upper leaf of the barn door to the top of the Barmkin, and sitting thereon, started it down the declivity, when they rushed like an avalanche to the bottom. Sometimes they got scattered, but no harm occurred—they were merely left sprawling on the surface, while their sleigh rushed on. One Saturday afternoon, James Urquhart, who rose to be chief engineer on board the Rear Admiral’s ship in the Baltic during the Crimean war, Robert, my eldest brother, and I, got leave to try our luck at a

run down the snowy pyramid. I may mention that the altitude is 900 feet. We had no difficulty in obtaining the upper leaf as a sledge, and I remember the key was in the lock, and that it had a bowl ring to which we fastened a long rope. I was put first, being the shortest, Robert followed, my brother came after, and James Urquhart brought up the rear. We had a stiff pull up the snowy ridge, but at length nearly reached the top, whereupon, seating ourselves upon the door, and grasping each other firmly, those in rear shoved off, and away we went. We little dreamt what was before us—there were hollows and ridges on the surface of the snow, and as our sleigh rose over these, it received an impetus which sent it round as if it had been in a whirlpool, and we were scattered—sprawling and rolling—while the vehicle which should, and would have carried us to the bottom safely, could we have maintained our equilibrium, went rushing down the steep incline, causing the crystals on the surface to rise in its route like a mist of glittering pearls. Each gathered himself up as best he could, and gazed after the barn door

as it rushed to the bottom. We followed, and seizing the rope, began to drag it up to its proper destination. After getting as far as the path which led to the farm, Robert made us stop, and addressing us, pointed out that the boys of Hill-side who had successfully careered down the hill, would laugh at us for having failed, and that there was no doubt they had met with a similar experience, although they had not told us about it, and added, that he would undertake, with the rope fixed in the bowl of the key, and lashed round us, that we would keep our seats, adding, with great force, that we could only be thrown off at the worst, and he was sure neither of us was hurt. We all agreed to make a second trial. After ascending for a considerable distance, we got tired, and resolved to start downwards. Robert chose a place at one of the ridges formerly alluded to, and shooting out the bolt of the lock, he wound the rope round it, making a hitch, then his elder brother and mine sat back to back in front, while he and I sat in rear. There were two bars on the back of our sleigh, and the rope was passed between them ; the two

in front wound it round their middles, and grasped it tightly ; I did the same ; and, at Robert's dictation, seized hold as it rose from the key-ring. He then wound it round his own body, and secured it with a hitch on the space between the two front files—both these were his seniors, but they gave way to his plans, and obeyed implicitly his orders. Leaning to one side, with his foot as a paddle, he set the sleigh in motion—on we went, gathering speed every yard. I can recollect the feeling of that moment now as vividly as when I was in the rush. As we crossed a ridge, the sleigh would go round, as stated above, and a feeling of sickness would for a moment ensue ; but we held together, and as we dashed down again in a straight line, there was a feeling of exultant freedom and novelty, which made one imagine that he had actually obtained a new and never-dreamt-of power of locomotion—shooting Niagara could be but a common place affair in comparison. At all events we kept our seats, and such was the impetus of our conveyance, that we had half way reached “ Johnnie Haa's o' the Buss,” ere we came to a halt.

It may seem a little incongruous, but the whole scene recurred to my mind on reading Baillie Hugh Ross' remarks regarding Robert Urquhart, viz., "that he always felt strengthened and confident at the Council Board when Mr. Urquhart took the same view of a question as himself." Strange that he had an equal influence on his companions when a boy. Few of those who knew him intimately in after years could have supposed that from twelve to sixteen he was the most daring in athletic feats amongst us, some of which required a great amount of calculation and firmness of nerve. I have mentioned the wooded height, and the Canty park which rose up from the farm steading, southwards. We used often in the *gloamin* to meet and run an old cart wheel ring up in the dusk, by the side of the wood, to the top of the bonnie green park where it was longest and steepest, and setting it off so as it would land in the square between the farm houses, revel with delight as it altered from a steady run, to bound with increasing velocity as it rushed on where the soft dung-heap and high barn-wall generally brought

it to a halt. On such occasions, Robert would make me hold it on edge while he ran down a short distance, I then ran after it as long as I could keep up. And what do my readers think was Robert's greatest pleasure? It was to run beside it, but a little in front, and when it began to bound, to throw himself on his back and see the circle of iron bounding over him, and I have seen him spring up, run before, and perform the same feat three times ere it got to the bottom. I was neither clumsy nor deficient in courage, but would never have dared to try such an experiment, and used to ask him what made him so fond of such a dangerous project, he told me that he had an indescribable pleasure in calculating the spot where the rise would take place; but specially in seeing the ring leap harmlessly over him. Our rather dangerous sport however was brought to a peremptory stop. On one occasion we had taken our alignment too far to the right, the consequence being that instead of the ring landing in the court-yard, it struck on the hard road between the two farm houses, and rising with a tremendous bound, crashed through

a three-barred stile between the young guid man's stable, and a byre which was built at the gable of the high-walled barn ; it then careered down two fields, the stone fence of one being levelled for several yards, and only called a halt when it reached the bottom of the Laighs. It was not broken, and we were compelled to bring it all the way from where it fell, and a hard pull we had, and put it in the cart-shed, where an interdict was duly served.

At the risk of seeming egotistical, I will here state that, a few years since, having in the way of business travelled through the greater part of the parishes of Cluny, Midmar, and Echt, I sent a few papers descriptive of their physical features, and also allusions to former residents and incidents, to which the editor of the *Free Press* gave the title of " Random Sketches in the Kingdom of Mar." A short time after their appearance, I met Mr. Urquhart on the street, and after mutual enquiry of other's welfare, he said " Well S——, I must congratulate you on the papers which have lately appeared in the *Free Press*, regarding our native place and its inhabitants." " Now tell me,"

he said, "does it cost you much time and study to write them, because there are some of them perfectly artistic, and I know what is more, they are, as regards facts, truthful." "Well, no," I said, "I just wrote them as they rose up in my memory through a long vista of years." "Well," he said, "it's most extraordinary, when reading them, I was brought back as it were to boyhood, and all its scenes and circumstances rose up before me—incidents, and actings, which I had entirely forgotten. You must have an extraordinary memory," he added, "but I suppose you would have more difficulty in solving a mathematical problem." "Ah," I answered, "Robert, that's entirely in your line." I felt at that moment that I was more than compensated for any little time and trouble I had spent in writing the *sketches*, and shall here quote one picture which he particularly praised. Time has, however, I doubt not, ere now denuded the wood of Tillydaff of most of its then pleasing and poetic features. "One Saturday evening I had obtained leave to visit Tillydaff to see my parents, and get clean underclothing. It was early in May, and on Sunday morning, after

breakfast and family worship, I took a walk to the wood, about a hundred yards from the 'clay biggin,' where I had spent many a happy hour. The morning was misty, but warm, and as I neared the plantation, the curtain was rising. The tapering buds of the fir, and the feathery fur of the larch, were glancing with the crystal drops of dew, while the feathered songsters of various hues, and plumage, made the grove ring again with their mingled, yet cheerful notes. As I approached, they flitted from bough to bough, which sent a spray of diamonds dancing as they fell in the morning sunbeams, now bursting forth. I never recollect of feeling such an elevation of mind. What were the 'fall and original sin, and all the miseries in this life' to me at that moment? I saw around me a world of beauty, and heard the beautiful creatures on the wing, and on the branches, singing and rejoicing, and was satisfied they were happy, and was almost voluntarily about to join the chorus, when I heard a cough, and the 'reddin' of a throat' behind me! I could not mistake. 'What do you mean, sir,' said my father, 'to go out

wandering in the wood on the Sabbath day? Go home and read your Bible till church time.' I would as soon have thought of disobeying a mandate from heaven as that voice; but with its tones, all my dreams of innocence and happiness vanished. The 'fall, and all the miseries of this life' again closed around me, and for many long years I could never bear to think of religion but as a principle opposed to every thing of love and beauty that I saw around me in creation."

I once heard an Englishman in England lecture on Burns, and while he both praised and appreciated his writings, in speaking of the bard's advice to his "young friend," severely censured the following half stanza—

"Conceal yoursel' as weel's ye can,
Frae critical dissection;
But keek thro' ev'ry other man,
Wi' sharpen'd sleet inspection."

I do not know if Robert Urquhart ever read the lines in his youth, but this I know, that never a young man more fully carried out the poet's admonition in practice. He did it not for the purpose of taking undue advantage of others,

but for keeping himself safe from being outwitted, and he had a particular delight in laying innocent little plans, in his boyhood, to prove whether his surmises were correct. On one occasion I was in his father's house of an evening, he was then, though no more than fifteen, chief man on the farm. His father said, "Weel, laddies, we maun gang to the barn, an' dight up the tails. Ye'el come wee's." I assented. They had been winnowing corn, and on the left hand, as we entered, there were a good number of "bow seeks" full. We had not met for at least twelve months, and as we used to be very nearly matched in a trial of strength, Robert was anxious to put me to the test. His father entered the barn first, carrying a lantern, I followed, and bringing up the rear, Robert seized a saek, throwing it flat in the floor. "Ow, laddie," said his father, as he took out the lamp, "fat wy i' the warl his the seek faun ower?" "Tut, never mind," was the reply, "S—— 'll soon fit it, I's warrant him." I saw through it in a moment. It was a great feat with us youngsters when we were able to fit a "bow seek," and could not help admiring the

cunning displayed, for I was convinced that he wished to put me to the proof. I managed to put it on the perpendicular.

I have said that all the folks in Tillydaff *proper*, were *Seceders*; but there were a worthy couple at Muiryfold *Scottice*, Meeryfaul, who adhered to the Aul' Kirk—they had a numerous family. Peter Mackie, and Katie Mathieson were a worthy working pair, and had their croft as a sublet from the Aul' gudeman. Peter was come of a generation of pipers, and could play dance music as well as Highland marches. With what feelings of wonder and delight have I listened to his tuning and trying his bagpipes in the *gloamin* previous to attending, as musician, at some wedding or harvest home. I had no doubt when reading in after years the stanza—

“How in the noon of night, that pibroch thrills
Savage and shrill! But with the breath which fills
Their mountain-pipe, so fill the mountaineers
With the fierce native daring which instils
The stirring memory of a thousand years,”

that Lord Byron was a poet.

Peter, like many more in his circumstances at

that period, added something to his weekly earnings—he was a contractor—by doing a little in the distilling line. I have myself assisted in carrying water to fill the Fleck tub. As his family, who were numerous, and of both sexes, grew up, they contracted friendships, and in the autumn of '29, after the Spate, there was an ale drinkin', and a dance at Muiryfold, to which a few of the young folks in the neighbourhood were invited. Some were farmers' sons, others were farm servants. None of the servants nor sons at Tillydaff or Hillside had the honour of an invitation. On the night in question, when these should have been retiring to rest, they were missed, and Robert was not at home, the consequence being that auld Tillydaff set out in search, and as Peter was his tenant, came boldly into the house to inspect, but neither son nor servant were there. He then went out about the whins and wood which grew close to the house, calling out, and making a search. This put the inmates on their mettle, and they set a watch in case the enemy should make an assault, which was not suspected to be of an outrageous character, but was intended only to prolong rather than

interrupt the dance and festivities. The intention of the jealous swains may perhaps be best described by the following stanza, the production of a local bard, who was among the besiegers :—

“ In had’n awa the auld gudeman
 Frae seekin’ o’ his son,
 The lads they wad a’ be’nd the door,
 An’ nail’d the windows doon.

Refrain.

When their ale was new, my boys,
 When their ale was new—
 They’ve gotten as muckle’s gart them min’,
 Because their ale was new.”

But ere the auld gudeman got home, his son had quietly returned, and there was not then a suspicion of the plot. The native bard, however, celebrated the affair by no fewer than five songs, and I have heard them all sung to various old airs—some of them were witty, and hit off the characteristics of the visitors so graphically, that the country side was in an uproar of fun at the expense of the parties depicted. The following was so characteristic of the appearance and bearing of a youth who was present, that it deserves a place—

“ An’ Charlie Meston he was there,
An’ he gaed sic a loup,
His heid it strack the cupple bauk,
An’ he fell on his doup,
When there ale, &c.”

The loup was so likely to occur when Charlie was under the influence of the music, the ale, and specially the lasses—as the reel was substituted for the strathspey—that no one who knew him could doubt that the incident was at least probable. Especially as the bauks in Peter’s domicile were bare, and of no great altitude. The reason of the young folks of Tillydaff not being invited was, I have no doubt, for fear of offending the Seceders’ ideas of propriety, and I believe the young folks were, if not offended, somewhat jealous, and the idea of doing a little harmless mischief had suggested itself. I got the whole history of it from one of the party, who told me that they were well prepared, that as there were but three windows, three of them had each a strong nail, and gimlet, and that it was arranged that, when the dance was in full swing, they were to creep slyly to the lowest sash

and secure it from lifting—without noise—the windows being heavily screened they could not be seen—another who had a stout rope and strong bar was ready to secure the door. I had a suspicion who it was that had organised the plot, and even put the question, but all I got for an answer was, “Well, would it not have been rare fun to have seen some one of the party putting out his head at Peter’s kitchen lum?—they could have got out nowhere else.” Being well acquainted with Katie, and having called when passing, I introduced the subject, by repeating some of the stanzas, when the kindly mother said, “Weel, I widna care’t a flee for a’ their sangs an’ clavers, if they hidna said oor ale was *new*. It wis nathing o’ the kin’, there wis never a better brewst within my door, an’ it wis in fine *sessen*.” The meaning attached to the chorus by the neighbours, and no doubt too by the bard was, that the new ale and the peristaltic motions in the dance, had produced an aperient effect upon the imbibers.

Time wore on ; every person, *sibb* or *framed*, loved Robert Urquhart. He was so obliging and

so witty, and withal so agreeable, that old and young blessed him as he went and came. I saw him frequently at chapel, or when I called at my father's house, and at length he confided to me his intention of leaving for the city. The first time he did so, I was much struck with his manner. When we had met previous to this, we used to recount our boyish pranks with great glee, and enjoy the rehearsal; but, on this occasion, I could observe a marked change on Robert's appearance—his voice, from being shrill and clear, had become strong and rough—his whole manner was changed, and while he was with me as frank and kindly as ever, I felt as though he had taken a different character, and that he was not, and never would again be the same being. I actually felt awed in his presence, which I had never done before. Soon after, he left for Aberdeen, and what a regret there was at Tillydaff. His father declared that nothing would keep him when once his mind was made up, and his mother was inconsolable—I recollect calling over to make enquiry, and asking her what Robert was to follow after? Her answer was

rather complimentary, and I have often drawn some consolation from it when I have met with depreciating rebuffs—"Weel," she said, "laddie, if ye dinna ken, I'm sure there's nae ane about the toon can tell ye, for I believe he told you more of his mind than ony ither body about the placee."

. This happened early in the spring of '32, so that at his death he had been upwards of forty-five years a citizen of Bon-Accord. He was for a short time clerik with the Messrs. Hadden, and was much esteemed by the youthful and energetic Mr. Gavin Hadden, Jun., whose sudden death in '41 cast such a gloom over the city, and proved such a loss to the long-established firm. I saw him for the first time in town when he was clerik to Mr. Alex. Urquhart, coffee and spice merchant, 115 Union Street, who was no relative, but such was his regard for his young assistant, that he bequeathed to him his business, and I rather think his stock-in-trade. It was shortly after this that the firm of J. & R. Urquhart was started, and Robert was well known as one of the best selectors of teas in town. I have often

heard it stated that he was repeatedly offered a very tempting salary by some of the largest importers to go up to London as a "Taster." There was one part of the business, however, for which he had little relish, and in which he never succeeded, viz., travelling as salesman, and he had an utter contempt for the truculent tricks of some in the trade. I am pretty certain it was that feeling which specially prompted him to get at the production of the articles he intended to make merchandise of. Few know with what patience and perseverance he prosecuted his aim.

I have been told by those who had the best means of knowing, that his manipulation of figures was such, that when a large quantity of wood was bought, he could tell how many gross of matches it would produce, the exact cost of labour, and net profit to the firm. No wonder if such a concern flourished under his management. It may not be considered complimentary to the electors of the first ward, but it is a fact that he only obtained a seat at the Police Board in consequence of the death or resignation of one who had beaten him at the poll. This happened in

'56, and I recollect when calling to congratulate him, he stated, in his own quiet way—"Deed, I don't think there is much cause for congratulation, considering the way it came." If I mistake not his admission into the Council was similar. There was no portion of Mr. Urquhart's public life, that I, who knew him intimately, admired, so much as his adherence to Mr. J. W. Barclay as his leader in the Council. In judgment and experience he was certainly Mr. B.'s equal, if not his superior; but in education, and specially in oratory, so necessary for public life, he was deficient. What the citizens of Aberdeen once possessed in having such men as their councillors, had they listened to their counsel, can be best ascertained by the loss the community has sustained by their own apathy at a critical juncture. Men like Mr. J. W. Barclay, and Mr. Robert Urquhart, and such opportunities as were in the grasp of the Municipality in '69, may not occur again in a century! I was present in the Council-room when the provost, baillies, and other officials were elected, and never heard a severer, nor more dignified rebuke administered

to a party organ than when proposing Mr. Leslie for provost. Mr. Urquhart said, "I cannot sit down without expressing my regret, that the leading organ of the party, who have opposed Mr. Leslie, and those who act along with him, has continued in its last issue to stir up and intensify that bitterness of party feeling, which, it has, I regret to say, all along done its best to foster. I feel it exceedingly disappointing, and greatly to be regretted, that a paper of such standing and such pretensions should lend itself with an unfairness rarely paralleled, to stir up class against class, widening the breach—too wide already—betwixt the rich and the poor, the employers and the employed. I trust that we have seen the last now of this kind of unhallowed warfare, and that both inside and outside the Council where we must differ, we shall have only fair and manly criticism, and such as will not interfere with kindly feeling and hearty co-operation in every thing that we believe to be for the good of the city."

Why Mr. Urquhart lived a bachelor I could never understand. I knew that a "bonnie sonsie



lass" in the country was at one time deeply enamoured, but whether he returned the feeling, I knew not. I have also heard that a lady in town was spoken of, and that not many years since; but whatever was the reason of his celibacy, it was not his want of admiration of, nor devotion to the sex; although not demonstrative, he was capable of deep emotion and intense feeling. It was a treat to see his nieces come into the warehouse in Schoolhill, and as he lived long in family with his brother, I could believe that by them he was almost worshipped. In his own business matters he was at times a little unpunctual, having been for upwards of twelve months in his employment, I have had proof of that. When getting goods ready for train or steam-boat we were frequently all but outshipped—on such occasions he lent a willing hand, and I used to consider myself repaid for the hurry-scurry, by watching the neatness and despatch with which he manipulated parcels and packages.

While he was not demonstrative in giving, I do not think there was ever a feasible scheme for the benefit of mankind brought before him, that

he did not materially assist with his means, and to those in which he had full confidence, he contributed largely, both of his time and money. I believe I am not far from the truth, in stating, that most of Mr. Urquhart's capital was realised within the last ten or fifteen years. The result of his practical intelligence and persevering efforts had from that time begun to yield handsome returns, and he was not the man to lose sight of the realising of independence. I believe that if he had lived ten years longer he would have been among the wealthiest, as he was certainly one of the worthiest citizens of Bon-Accord.

In the sketches to which I have formerly referred in speaking of the place of his nativity, I remarked "that *that* same Hillside Farm had already given to Bon-Accord two baillies, and might yet present her with a provost." How certainly the prediction would have been fulfilled, my readers are well aware. Had Robert Urquhart lived, and been in health for three years longer it is almost certain he would have been the head of the Council, and there is as little doubt

that he would have filled the civic chair so as to benefit his fellow-citizens, and with credit to himself. In his sudden death, the citizens sustained a severe loss, but his relatives in town and country have sustained one that is irreparable, and I cannot but think that these will have reflections upon the importunity of the electors. It is a well known fact that Mr. Urquhart had no ambition to again enter public life ; he had previously served the public faithfully for seventeen years, and but for the excitement of the election struggle, and his own peculiar position, he might have been yet spared to them for some years. I saw him in Broad Street a few days after the announcement of his candidature—and it is no after thought—the very words of *Ailsie Gourlay* in the *Bride of Lammermoor*, rose to my lips. I saw him once before, in '69, when the election crisis was upon us, and could not help admiring the firm step, and buoyant appearance of my old school-fellow ; but on the last occasion his step was less elastic, the frame was bent forward, and the countenance was so pale, that I feared the result.

While sympathising with his numerous friends and relatives, I do not grieve for himself; he was so constituted that to have lain for months, or even weeks, would have been to him insupportable. Like one under whose ministry he sat for years, he was, as it had been, translated. I do not claim, however, even for Robert Urquhart, infallibility.

In the course of my reading, which has been rather fragmentary, I have often judged of the genius of a writer in depicting character, by referring his or her descriptions of such, either real or ideal, to some individual with whom I was intimate, and have generally found it to be a good test of the writer's power and popularity. For instance, I had no hesitation in believing in the truthfulness, as well as the pathos, of the writer who drew *Uncle Tom's* portrait, because I had known, in one at least, the same singleness of mind and readiness to bear other's burdens, and I had as little doubt of the truth of her picture of Tom Gordon and his cruelty to his coloured brother, from what I had witnessed when such passions were aroused in men in

somewhat similar circumstances, whose skins were alike, but not their rank, which is just another name for caste.

There is one portrait of character drawn by our own *Master Limner*, which has always appeared to me as *his* master-piece ; and strange as it may appear, he seems to have been compelled by his own sense of justice, and love of country, to fill it in, while attempting to pourtray—what will not political leanings do ?—a Hero, in the person of Claverhouse, well known to his own times as a cruel, vindictive, and mean spirited tool of one of the most dissolute and despicable governments this country has ever endured. I refer to the incomparable tale, *Old Mortality*.

The first time I perused it, which was in '32, there was not a feature brought out in the exciting story but I could fill in, in imagination as true, in the firm belief, that if my young friend had been before the same blood-thirsty tyrant in the Castle of Tillietudlem, he would have acted the same part as is ascribed to "Henry Morton."

I would recommend all who may have imbibed a portion of the spirit of Jingoism, to peruse

carefully the speech put into the mouth of the "Bloody Clavers," in his reply to the intercession of Lord Evans, a speech which, although dressed to suit a thrilling passage in a romance, is none the less true to experience, and completely reveals —by the magic power of the Great Wizard—the utter hopelessness of militarism, giving liberty of thought or action to any people. It is interesting to reflect that Sir Walter Scott's works have been translated into most of the continental languages, and that although himself a Tory in politics, he has put words and sentiments into the mouths of characters as a means of illustrating the times and manners of which he wrote, calculated to endear liberty, scathe and scorn oppression, and specially to vindicate the sacred right of conscience in the worship of God. Verily! "the pen is mightier than the sword." It would appear at the present time as if even Prussia and Russia too, were beginning to realise this.

This reminds me of an affair which happened in the Midmar library, regarding the introduction of Sir Walter's novels. A certain farmer, who was a member, had two servants, who were

brothers, the elder was like the farmer, bitterly opposed to *novels* being allowed into the catalogue. A great muster of members assembled, and their admission was voted by a decided majority. In consequence of his hearty support, the younger brother secured the tale of *Old Mortality* as soon as the copy came to hand. He began to read it, and so much was he absorbed, that he even ventured to take the volume into the kitchen and read it after meals. It was at the time of turnip hoeing. The farmer, who was a worthy man, and did his own overseeing—by example—was constantly with the workers a-field; one afternoon he went amissing, and every one wondered “fat on earth could hae come ower the gudeman—had he been taen suddenly ill?” The hours passed, six p.m. came, and the hoers went home to supper. The novel-reader, after supper, looked for his volume, and questioned the cook—at length the gudewife spoke out, and said, “Weel, laddie, if you want it, ye maun just gang ben to the room to your maister; he took it up as ye gaed oot; he gaed ben the hoose wi’t, an’ he’s never spoken a word since. I took my tea beside him, bit he never lookit up altho’ I set his afore him.”

One of the most learned and powerful preachers this century has produced, in introducing his sermon on "Elijah," states, "That it has been observed of the holy men of scripture, that their most signal failures took place in those points of character for which they were remarkable in excellence." When reading through that discourse, I was much struck with its truthfulness, both in regard to my own experience, as well as what I had observed in others. Speaking in phrenological phrase, if there were any two qualities of mind which were specially active and prominent in Robert Urquhart, they were those of cautiousness and firmness, and yet, these were the means of leading him to take a side in a very delicate and serious matter, which, I am certain, he ever after regretted; and the strangest thing of all, as it appeared to me at the time, was that in doing so, he did myself a severe injustice.

The matter was one entirely depending upon evidence, and as I had satisfied myself that both he and those who took the same side must soon be undeceived, I waited for the denouement. That came sooner and in a more explicit manner than

ever I had anticipated. Shortly after this we met, there was no mark of confession apparent in his mien, nor was there triumph in mine ; but there was a kindly feeling of mutual reconciliation in both, and I believe that the little tiff made us faster friends than ever. It was no small satisfaction to my mind, that the last time I ever spoke to him, which was in Diamond Street, about two months previous to his death, he seemed more interested in my own, and family's welfare than ever I recollect, and was much more communicative than I ever observed him. He even hinted at his own likelihood of becoming rich, but quite in a joecular manner. We spent nearly half-an-hour together, and his dry humour and remarks so much reminded me of our boyish days, that I felt as if that time had but recently passed, and I suspect his feelings were much akin, for, when parting, I received a very hearty shake of his hand, and a "good-bye, just now"—little dreaming "'twas our last." I passed the Queen's Statue in going along Union Street, homewards, where, like "Ahimaaz," I saw a great gathering, but knew not what it was. I had had

enough of mobs officially long before—yet the stillness of the crowd surprised me. How quickly tidings spread. Upon reaching my own house, the sorrowful news was the first I heard. I do not exaggerate when I state, that so far as my observation has extended, no such profound feeling of sorrow and sympathy was ever evinced at the demise of any citizen. The *Free Press*, and I believe the *Journal* also, paid tributes to Mr. Urquhart's worth. The editor of the former appeared to me to write as deploring the loss of a confiding and much valued friend. The sketch of his life and character in the *Free Press*, from the pen of Dr. Robson, appeared to me marvellous in accuracy, but specially in the just appreciation the writer had formed from his short acquaintance of the striking excellencies and peculiarities of his subject. I had the sorrowful satisfaction of viewing the remains of my loved school-mate fitly arrayed, where indications were not wanting, that loving hearts had guided loving hands. To see the form and features of one whom I remembered as the young athlete, the vigorous youth, and the cautious man, made me realise

the solemn truth from the pen of the eloquent preacher to whom I have formerly referred, when he says, "That even in the death of a Christian, he is not the victor, but the vanquished—and that the last form in which a Christian gets the victory over death, is by means of his resurrection."

Funeral obsequies may be grand and municipal, or national honours to the departed have been, no doubt, at times bestowed upon men of questionable virtue. I have myself witnessed such pageants, both in military and civil society, but when I saw the Town's Officers with the City's Banner-rolls, covered with erape, standing on each side of the door, at 3 Golden Square, the assembly of the Town Council, and the ministers of religion of all denominations, as well as the very pith and marrow of the business men of the city, I felt that after all such manifestations have a meaning, and that when such men as Baillie Urquhart was, are honoured, there is a reflective influence stimulating those who are witnesses. I must not forget to mention the large concourse of his own workers, as well as those from other public works, who, in their breakfast hour and

working costumes, thronged the Square, and followed the mournful cortege along Union Street. So well they might, I question if so true and intelligent an advocate of their rights and privileges remains to maintain them. I must confess I was somewhat astonished when reading the report of the Building Company lately started, under the ægis of the co-operators, to find that a certain portion of their number moved to substitute the name of Hunter, for that of Urquhart Road, which had been agreed upon at a previous meeting. The good sense of their worthy chairman soon gave the quietus to that ingrate proposition; and Mr. James Hunter, in doing so, and in the manner in which he rebuked the ill-timed attempt to offer adulatory incense, raised himself in the estimation of all whose esteem is worth having.

It will be a lasting and fitting tribute to one of their own number, for Mr. Urquhart was a close student, and a most laborious worker, and whatever he put his hand to, he delighted in doing it well. For over forty years he had thought and laboured ever wishing to do good in

a quiet and unostentatious manner ; well knowing that without guidance and control, society could never progress, but at the same time firmly opposing every attempt either in civil or ecclesiastical matters which had the least tendency to benefit one class at the expense of another. There could be no better proof that his influence for good was fast gaining ground, than the fact that even in the roustering demonstrations of the Second Ward, his presence preserved order, nor was he at all adverse to allow, when chairman, as he often was, the rather rough humour of the electors full play. It was only when it became coarse that he checked the ebullition, and even then he preserved his composure. "Take him all in all, we shall not soon see his like again." As stated at the outset of this sketch, although well knowing my inability to do his life and character justice, especially in a literary aspect, I yet felt anxious at least to do something to preserve and perpetuate the memory of one whom I loved sincerely, and whose virtuous life was worthy of loving record. Knowing that no other person knew his early life so intimately, I

felt in undertaking the task, that it was an attempt at least to "honour one to whom honour was due," and it may be that this small but affectionate record may outlast more substantial monuments of his existence. I heard a very general regret expressed, that his remains were taken to the country, and cannot help thinking that they should have been deposited in St. Nicholas Churchyard. Generations will pass ere he be forgotten, and hundreds, I am well sure, who knew his worth, would have visited the spot, and recounted his virtues to children's children.

It was in Bon-Accord where his youthful prime and matured manhood were spent, and there too, that his chief interests were centred. His dust now mixes with those of his forefathers' in the Graveyard of Tough—a quiet spot, in a quiet glen—waiting the time depicted by the Poet as he sings of the "Kingdom of the ransom'd just"—

"Then thy mount Jerusalem
Shall be gorgeous as a gem ;
Then shall in the desert rise,
Fruits of more than paradise.
Earth by angel feet be trod,
One great garden of her God !"

And now, does any one ask how such a beautiful and lovable character, so stern for right, so forgiving to the erring, yet so patient and wise, had been formed and perfected? Methinks I can supply a sufficient answer.

Mr. Urquhart was for several months, in '37, severely afflicted with a slow lingering fever, and after his recovery I received, when abroad, a kind and most interesting letter, describing his sensations during his long illness, in which all his former life was represented to him as not only worthless, but positively sinful, and he also gave me a very circumstantial account of my own appearance in the vision, telling me at the same time that while he in no way blamed me, he now believed that Christianity was the truth of God, and that all in view of the infinitely just law were in a state of condemnation. A doctrine which he had always doubted before.

Like the great historian of the Reformation, he believed that man could point to the time when God was in the world in the fashion of man, and that he died to save sinners, even the chief.

Like the beloved Apostle, he could say, " We know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ." To him, this was the true God and eternal Life. This was the secret of Mr. Robert Urquhart's pure and useful life.



APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

“ IN THE MIDST OF LIFE WE ARE
IN DEATH.”

From the *Aberdeen Journal* of 9th November, 1877.

It is happily seldom that the public are startled by the simultaneous appearance of the same name in the records of life and the records of death for one and the same day. The contrast and the calamity so sudden and painful would in any case be sad enough ; but they are especially so in the case of a public citizen so active and faithful in the discharge of his public duties as Mr. Robert Urquhart has been for many years. Mr. Urquhart was present at the yesterday's meeting of the Town Council, at which the newly-elected Councillors, of whom he was one, intimated their acceptance of office. At the yesterday's meeting of the School Board he likewise—as will be seen from the report—took his usual active part in the business through a long sederunt lasting about three hours. He was to all appearance in his usual health—no flagging interest was visible, no symptom of weakness ; but sad to say, before three hours after he left the meeting he was no more. It is but too probable that the last few weeks' excitement had brought to a crisis some fatal ailment of which he himself had been unconscious.

The little rift within the lute
That by-and-by will make the music mute

had with him as with many more done its work when least expected.

The sudden removal from his place among us of a man who held so prominent a position in the city has excited one profound sentiment in the mind of his fellow-citizens. During the last few weeks he had been in the very heart and heat of a warm contest in which he was doubly concerned as the Chairman of the Land Company and the candidate of his party for the Provostship. In that contest we have taken, as our readers are aware, our full share in opposition to Mr. Urquhart. But it was an opposition into which no personal feelings or considerations entered. Neither then nor in the past when we have had occasion to oppose his party and their policy, partly out of different views of local interests and partly on political grounds, has our public opposition to the politician abated in any way our personal respect for the man. Mr. Urquhart's high character, his great business ability, and the unwearied industry evinced by him in the affairs of the city were all beyond question; while his equanimity and unvarying good temper were such as redeemed, in so far as he was concerned, the heat of dispute from the littleness of personal acrimony. In these qualities he was in some respects peculiar, and to them was probably owing the great measure of good feeling that subsisted between him and his party opponents. An example of this may be seen in the circumstance and the manner of his proposing for re-election last week the Dean of Guild, who was one of his stoutest adversaries in the contest then going on, and to whom he was one of the strongest opponents in the last Guildry Bill.

These circumstances indicate a peculiarity of character that it may be difficult to analyse; but it is one on which a kindly and genial light is shed by the steadfast and strong attachment of Baillie Urquhart's oldest personal friends and of the members of his party. The former had little occasion to seek a public expression of their sentiment; but we have seen it

manifested in many ways. The latter was sufficiently indicated by the support that Baillie Urquhart has invariably received at the municipal elections—down to the election of Tuesday, when no doubt the great bulk of those who voted for him hoped to see him chosen Chief Magistrate of the city at this day's meeting of the Town Council.

On that matter we do not choose to dwell. The return of Provost Jamieson settled it otherwise, under any circumstances, for reasons that we mentioned at the time. But amid all the heat of party feeling that these elections have engendered, there will be but one sentiment throughout the city, and one entertained by few more sincerely than by Provost Jamieson, now that all the further possibilities and ambitions of an honourable life have been barred so sadly and suddenly by the one dread hand that their is none to gainsay. The Council will meet to-day at two o'clock ; and perhaps it was little expected yesterday that the meeting would be a harmonious one. Alas that the harmony should be brought about in so sad a way, at so great a loss to the city. To-day there will be but one feeling—the sorrow for a common loss—the loss of a good citizen, a good man, and a sagacious Magistrate, always prepared to take his share of public duty, and one who, whatever we might think of his conclusions, was regarded by friend and adversary alike as animated by an honest purpose, even when mistaken, and whose views on any subject that he discussed were well matured and formed on a sound acquaintance with his subject. If the excitement of the contest has tended to shorten so useful and busy a life, the cost is far and away too heavy. It has turned into a tragedy the local drama of the last few weeks. For however much or however little the events may be connected, they will not fail to be associated in the public mind—not in reprehension but in regret—in the solemn close of a sudden burst of little passions and small animosities in which the deceased gentleman himself, notwithstanding his prominent position in the

contest, we believe, participated as little as any one concerned. He was simply the representative of his party, the best man that they could bring forward, and one who had many claims on the community, which those of his colleagues who opposed him will be the first to recognise. From us the small tribute that we offer here is due as marking the distinction between the criticism of public acts and opinions, and the consideration due to personal worth and public virtue. The feelings engendered by the differences of the day are happily less acute than they once were. They do not prevent just discrimination, nor do they blind men's eyes to those qualities that, like the silent depths of the sea, are untroubled by the passing storm.

SUDDEN DEATH OF MR. ROBERT URQUHART.

From *Daily Free Press* of 10th November, 1877.

WITH the deepest feelings of sorrow and regret we have to announce the sudden and altogether unexpected death of our townsman, Mr. Robert Urquhart. The sad event, of which we can scarcely yet trust ourselves to speak, occurred on Thursday night at eight o'clock, while Mr. Urquhart was on his way to attend a private conference of the Town Council, with a view to the selection of the civic office-bearers for the year. He had just been present at a meeting of the newly-elected Councillors who support his public policy, and the gentlemen together had arranged as to what their joint action should be as to the appointments about to be made by the Council. In the light of what subsequently occurred it is well to state that Mr. Urquhart at this meeting—which was held in the cham-

bers of his election agent, Mr. D. Stewart, advocate, 83 Union Street—informed the gentlemen present that while he would heartily give his services in the ordinary work of the Council, he would not allow himself to be put forward for any office, because, if he did so, he would have to resign his membership of the School Board, which he was deeply interested in, and which he said he would prefer to retain. At the close of the meeting, Mr. Urquhart complained to his friends of an acute pain in the region of the heart, from which he had suffered more or less during the afternoon, but from which he had been partially relieved after dinner. He was not looking very well, and heavy drops of perspiration were observed on his forehead. Some of the gentlemen suggested that he should allow them to get a small drop of brandy for him, and that was done, but no one present imagined that there was the slightest cause for anxiety or alarm, and indeed Mr. Urquhart himself passed the matter off in his usual pleasant and jocular manner. He swallowed a single mouthful of brandy, and thereafter he took up his hat and prepared to follow his friends to the Council meeting to which he had arranged to drive in a cab. All had by this time left, save Mr. Urquhart himself, Mr. Tulloch, and Mr. A. S. Cook—the last-named gentleman having been present at the meeting by invitation. Mr. Tulloch and Mr. Cook went downstairs first, and Mr. Urquhart followed, at the distance of about a flight of steps behind. When the two first-named gentlemen were in the centre of the outer lobby they heard the sound of a fall and a low moan, but owing to there being no light in the passage, they could not see what had occurred. Mr. Cook rapidly groping along the lobby in the direction of the moaning sound, which still feebly continued, found Mr. Urquhart, who was lying on the floor at the bottom of the staircase, having seemingly fallen first on his knees and then upon his right side. Mr. Tulloch quickly got a light, and went for medical assistance, while Mr. Cook supported Mr. Urquhart's head on his knees, loosening his

collar and necktie, and opening the breast of his shirt. Dr. F. M. Moir speedily arrived and got the body carried upstairs to Mr. Stewart's office, where it was also seen by Drs. Beveridge, Urquhart, Jackson, and Wight, all of whom were in almost immediate attendance, but, alas! to no purpose. Disease of the heart was unanimously stated to be the cause of death.

The members of the Town Council had just met for the purpose above indicated, and had proceeded some little way with the business when the melancholy news was carried to the Town-House by Mr. Tulloch, who had gone thither expecting to find one or more of the medical members of Council present; and on the fatal nature of the attack being ascertained the meeting at once broke up. The sad news fled like wild-fire over the city, and by the time the body was removed to Mr. Urquhart's residence in Golden Square, the street was crowded with groups of people anxiously inquiring into the particulars, and never have we heard a more general or stronger expression of profound regret on the occasion of the death of any citizen within recent years.

Robert Urquhart was a native of the parish of Midmar. His father occupied the farm of Tillydaff, held by relatives of his at the present time. While still a youth he followed his elder brother, the late Baillie John Urquhart, to Aberdeen, serving an apprenticeship as a clerk, we believe, in Messrs. Hadden's works. He thereafter entered into partnership with his brother as a tea merchant, John Urquhart also carrying on a successful drug business. He may be said to have first really entered public life in 1857, when he became a member of the old Police Commission. As a Commissioner of Police he served continuously for eight years, representing the First Ward for half of that time, and the Second for the other half. In 1865 he entered the Town Council, under the Provostship of Sir Alexander Anderson, sitting for the Second Ward. He was appointed Master of Guild Brethren's Hospital at the date of his election, and in no long time thereafter was elected to the

office of Magistrate on the lamented death of Baillie William Paterson. In 1868 he was again returned to the Council for the Second Ward, under provost Nicol, and was then elected Second Baillie. In 1871, when the new Municipality Extension Act, carried out under Provost Leslie, which amalgamated the Police Commission with the Town Council, came into operation, rendering an election of the entire Board necessary, he was once more returned for his old ward, and was then appointed to the office of First Baillie, which he continued to hold till the expiry of his term in 1874, when he retired from the Council, and has not since held public office.

We have thus a period of no less than seventeen years continuously devoted to the service of the town, at two of its chief Boards. Of the character of the service given it is impossible to speak too highly. From the very outset it was the habit of the deceased to make himself master of the duties he had to perform, and to perform them honestly and conscientiously, sparing himself in no personal trouble to ensure their efficient execution. In the various large undertakings carried through during his long term of service he invariably took his full share of labour; the new Harbour Act; the Waterworks and Police Act; and the Municipality Extension Act were measures with the carrying out of which he was connected. And, after the passing of the second of these Acts, he, in November, 1866, on the retirement of Baillie Bothwell from that position, was appointed Convener of the new Sewerage Committee. A new system of sewerage for the town had to be carried out under the Act, at a cost of some £50,000, and the responsible charge of the committee entrusted with the superintendence of the work, involved very onerous duties. It is but bare justice to the deceased to say that, having accepted those duties, he performed them faithfully and efficiently, and greatly to the advantage of the citizens, though at a large sacrifice to himself of time and labour, quietly and ungrudgingly given. Apt at figures, and possessed of a decided mechanical turn, he was at

pains in his leisure time—often during the silent hours of night—to master the details necessary to an intelligent knowledge of the important work going on, and was thus able to hold close counsel with the engineer, Mr. Anderson, to follow his plans accurately, and to support him wherever necessary in arranging practical details. He retained the convenership of the Sewerage Committee after the amalgamation of the two Boards, and up to the time of his retirement in 1874. In point of fact, the whole active work connected with the laying out of the sewerage system of the town was carried out under his superintendence as convener of the committee; and, when we say this, it is not too much to add that, measured by its money value, the service of those eight years, so cheerfully given, would have been amply worth having, though in place of being given free, it had been paid for by a handsome yearly salary.

As one of the promoters of the Municipality Extension Act, Mr. Urquhart was an original member of the Corporation Gas Committee, and, as such, took a large share in the arrangement of matters when the Gas Works became the property of the Municipality—a measure which has materially benefited the citizens in the reduction of the price of gas. He held a seat at the Board of the Infirmary and Lunatic Asylum, and both as a manager and on some of the principal committees, rendered much useful and efficient service. He was for several years president of the Mechanics' Institution, and has all along taken a great interest in its working and success, as, indeed, he did in the work of education generally. Some seventeen or eighteen years ago, he, in conjunction with the late Mr. John Marshall, set on foot the first match work established in Aberdeen. The match work and provision work subsequently undertaken by him, employ between them a large number of workers, in whose welfare he always exhibited a lively interest, taking special care from an early period to see to the educational wants of the young amongst them. At the first election under the Education Act he became a candidate for the Aberdeen

School Board, and, though not successful then, was readily welcomed to the Board at the second election. Nor was Mr. Urquhart's interest confined to secular education. In the congregation of St. Nicholas Lane United Presbyterian Church (Dr. Robson), of which he had long been an honoured member and leading office-bearer, he took an active part personally in the work of Sabbath School teaching.

When the City of Aberdeen Land Association was proposed, Mr. Urquhart was one of the leading promoters, and on its establishment was appointed Chairman of the Association. In that capacity he had, we believe, by his sound judgment and business ability, earned the entire confidence and respect of his fellow-directors.

In speaking of Mr. Urquhart's public career, it is impossible to avoid some reference to events that immediately preceded its close. He had been thought of as a man whose services and ability well entitled him to aspire to the highest honour the citizens have it in their power to bestow. It was with very considerable reluctance that he allowed his name to be mentioned in that connection ; and when ultimately his conviction of duty to the party to which he belonged led him to consent to be nominated for the Town Council, it was, we know, with no petty desire to scramble into the office of Provost. The very opposite. Its responsibilities, as his most intimate friends are well aware, were what he would but too gladly have shrunk from. Having once made up his mind to stand as a Councillor, he viewed the contest with the greatest possible equanimity. How well his claim to the position for which he had been named, and which he was not destined formally to fill, has been vindicated in the community, the unprecedented number of votes recorded for him on Tuesday last and the returns in the other wards of the city have once and for ever registered. After the contest had been ended he was in the best of spirits concerning the result ; and if any one thing in the least annoyed him during its continuance it was the discreditable

attempt made in a certain quarter to impute to him unworthy motives—an attempt, unfortunately, not the first of its kind emanating from the same source ; for, so long ago as 1871, we find Mr. Urquhart, when standing as a candidate for the Council, complaining of similar treatment, which, to use his own words, he could not “otherwise characterise but as untruthful slanders,” an expression which, as coming from one of his calm and cautious temperament, who had served his fellow-townsmen so well, ought surely to have conveyed a lasting rebuke.

In reviewing the public career of the deceased, the remark is natural that no one possessing his quiet firmness and force of character could hope to follow out his honest convictions without awakening occasional opposition. His opinions were quite decided, and they were intelligently and conscientiously as well as consistently held. When he first came publicly before the constituency he avowed himself a Liberal, holding views which some might be disposed to regard as in the nature of Radicalism ; and while he claimed to act independently, it was possible they might consider him “a little obstinately independent.” The opinions he then expressed on leading local questions were precisely the opinions he held and acted on to the end. Of his strong good sense, soundness of judgment, and business capability, no one, friend or opponent, could doubt. By those to whom he was known in his quiet private life Mr. Urquhart was held in terms of almost affectionate regard. Unassuming, straightforward, and sincere, there was, along with a placidity of demeanour that seemed not easily moved, a hearty geniality, and true appreciation of the humorous. He was a steadfast and faithful friend, a judicious and trustworthy counsellor, and where he could do good, either by work for others or such a use of his means as seemed called for, he was ever ready. In many of the benevolent institutions of the city he had long taken part ; and his loss to the Church generally with which he was connected, as

well as to its poorer members, will be deeply felt. Pure and upright in life, he was a man of genuine religious feeling and belief ; and interested in all that concerned Christian progress at home or abroad.

As may be recollected, the deceased's elder brother, the late Baillie John Urquhart, died very suddenly while attending a meeting of Committee of the Lunatic Asylum six years ago. It is a circumstance worth mentioning perhaps that his father was rather suddenly cut off, and also his brother, Mr. James Urquhart, engineer, who died in London some eighteen months ago. Mr. Robert Urquhart was sixty-two years of age at his death, and was never married.

SUDDEN DEATH OF MR. ROBERT URQUHART.

From the *People's Journal* of November 10, 1877.

ONE of the most startling instances of the uncertainty of life that ever occurred in Aberdeen it is our painful duty to record to-day, and the sorrow thus caused is made doubly poignant by the thought that the gentleman who has been so unexpectedly taken from us, was a citizen who has not only given faithful and arduous service to the community in the past, but one who was looked upon as eminently qualified to fill the highest civic position that could be bestowed upon him. Mr. Robert Urquhart, whose death we are called upon to lament, had several engagements on Thursday evening. Having been returned as one of the representatives of the Third Ward at the municipal election on Tuesday, he was requested in the usual way to attend the customary private meeting of the

Town Council for considering as to the appointment of Magistrates and office-bearers, and before eight o'clock, the hour fixed for the Council gathering, he had to confer in the office (No. 89 Union Street) of Mr. David Stewart, advocate, his election agent, with a number of the newly-elected Councillors and others who support his public policy. One purpose of this conference was to consider what joint-action should be taken in regard to the filling up of the vacant offices in the Council, and it is interesting to note that Mr. Urquhart informed the gentlemen present that, while he would heartily give his services in the ordinary work of the Council, he would not allow himself to be put forward for any office whatever, because if he did so he would have to resign his membership of the School Board, which he was deeply interested in, and which he said he would prefer to retain. Just as the meeting was being concluded, Mr. Urquhart complained to those sitting next him, of a sharp pain in the region of the heart, telling them that he had felt it in the forenoon, but had been almost free of it from dinner time till then. He was not looking well, and some of the gentlemen suggested that he should take a little spirits, but no one had the slightest thought that there was any reason for anxiety regarding his condition. While some brandy was being obtained, Mr. Urquhart chatted away in his usual happy manner, and continued to do so after he had taken a mouthful of water in which some of the liquor had been mixed. He then prepared to follow his friends to the Council meeting, all having left Mr. Stewart's office by this time, except Mr. Urquhart, Mr. A. S. Cook, and Mr. Tulloch. Mr. Cook and Mr. Tulloch went down stairs first, Mr. Urquhart being about one flight of steps behind them. While they were in the centre of the lobby leading from the foot of the stair to Union Street, the gentlemen named heard the sound of a fall and a low moan, but the want of light prevented their seeing what had occurred. Mr. Cook made his way back at once, and in groping at the

place from which the moaning proceeded, he found that Mr. Urquhart had apparently dropped upon his knees at the foot of the staircase, and had then fallen on his right side. Mr. Tulloch quickly procured a light, and ran off for medical assistance, while Mr. Cook supported Mr. Urquhart's head on his knees, at the same time loosening his collar and necktie, and opening the breast of his shirt. While Mr. Cook was thus engaged, he felt Mr. Urquhart give a kind of convulsive gasp, and then become still. Death had taken place without Mr. Urquhart having uttered a single word, or given any sign of consciousness during the few moments that elapsed after he was found lying at the foot of the stair. Dr. F. Maitland Moir soon arrived, and under his direction the body was carried upstairs to Mr. Stewart's room, where it was seen in the course of a few minutes afterwards by Dr. Beveridge and Dr. Wight (who came from the Town Hall at the call of Mr. Tulloch), Dr. Urquhart (nephew of the deceased) and Dr. Jackson, who was Mr. Urquhart's usual medical adviser. Nothing could be done by any of them, and all concurred that the fatal result was attributable to disease of the heart.

Within a brief space of time the intelligence of Mr. Urquhart's death spread over the city, causing a most painful sensation, and eliciting spontaneous expressions of regret and sympathy. A considerable crowd gathered in Union Street, and followed the body while it was being conveyed to the house of the deceased in Golden Square. The members of Town Council separated without concluding their deliberations when they learned that Mr. Urquhart was dead.

Robert Urquhart, who had reached his sixty-third year, was born in the parish of Midmar, where his father was tenant of the farm of Tillydaff. He came to the city early in life, and was for some time engaged as a clerk in the office of Messrs. Hadden & Sons, Green. Between thirty and forty years ago he entered into partnership with his brother, the late Baillie John Urquhart, the firm carrying on business at Schoolhill, as

tea merchants. About eighteen years ago he joined the late Mr. Marshall in working a chemical light manufactory in Jopp's Lane (the first work of the kind in the North), and the firm had also an establishment for preserving provisions. Mr. Urquhart having for many years been at the head of both of these concerns. When the City of Aberdeen Land Association was organised between two and three years ago, he was appointed Chairman by his co-directors. In all these undertakings, Mr. Urquhart displayed shrewd practical wisdom, unflinching integrity, and a capacity for mastering details which proves of immense value in one, who, like him, had also the power of rapid generalisation, and of determining how principles could best be applied to secure the advancement of the work upon which he was engaged.

In public as in private life, Mr. Urquhart was active and zealous in the discharge of the duties which lay to his hand. He entered the Police Commission as a representative of the First Ward, in 1856, and he continued at that Board (being returned latterly by the Second Ward) till its amalgamation with the Town Council, in 1871. For many years, both in the Commission and in the Police Department of the Council he was Convener of the Sewerage Committee, a place of great trust and great labour, and one in which (as he stated at the Third Ward meeting on Monday week) he had to suffer estrangement from some of his friends in consequence of his determination to show no partiality or favour, when the interests of the city were entrusted to his keeping. He also took an active share in the promotion of the plan for securing to the town its present water supply. In 1865 he became a member of the Town Council, and such was the esteem in which he was held, that he was at once appointed to be Master of the Guild Brethren's Hospital. He was raised to the Magistracy as Second Baillie in 1868, and after being a year without the golden chain, was appointed First Baillie in 1870, an office which he continued to hold till his retirement

from the Council three years ago. His labours as a member of our chief Municipal Board must be fresh in the minds of most of our readers. He was a leading member of the party of progress, whose action in seeking to secure the Torry farm estate for the town was so amply justified by the decision of the Court of Session. The building of a bridge over the Dee by means of the Bridge of Don Fund, and the carrying out of other important improvements, were also planned by Mr. Urquhart and those who acted with him. His opinions as to charitable mortifications were keenly controverted, but his views were often misrepresented, and seldom fairly examined. He desired that each generation should care for its own poor, and he certainly set a noble example in this respect, his private benefactions being as unstrained as his means would allow. He had much to do in connection with the passing of the Act for extending the municipal boundaries, amalgamating the Police Commission and the Town Council, and acquiring the Gas Works for the Corporation, and his exertions as Convener of the Gas Committee laid the foundation of the success which has attended the work of that body ever since. In view of all those public services, it need not be wondered that a very large number of the citizens deemed it becoming to request Mr. Urquhart to be nominated as a candidate for the Provostship, and the state of the poll in all the Wards on Tuesday affirmed ample evidence that their action in this respect had met the approval of the great majority of the community.

Not alone by good municipal government did Mr. Urquhart seek to advance the interests of his fellow-citizens of all classes. In the management of the Mechanics' Institution, the Royal Infirmary, and Lunatic Asylum, and several other public Institutions. He was a sagacious counsellor, and his wide sympathies and personally acquired knowledge of the inner life and feelings of those whom these Institutions sought to serve, rendered his advice almost invaluable. No proposal was ever set before him for the material, mental, or moral

improvement of the people, which did not receive his most careful consideration, and his hearty support, if he thought it fitted to accomplish the purpose desired. All who had such proposals to submit, found him a ready listener, and well acquainted with what had already been attempted, either in Aberdeen, or elsewhere. One of his latest contributions to work of the kind indicated, was his becoming a pretty large shareholder in the Aberdeen Cafè Company, whose aim is to establish a public-house without drink. He aided several of the Societies started with the view of providing better house accommodation for the working classes, and only the other week, took part in the formation of the Aberdeen Co-operative Building Company. In fact, his whole character was unselfish, and he delighted in work which benefitted others rather than himself.

As he was before the public, so was Mr. Urquhart in private life ; ever willing to do a good turn ; ever desirous of helping the needy ; ever kind and considerate to all. He early became attached to St. Nicholas Lane U.P. Church, in which he held office as elder and Session-Clerk, and to whose funds he was a most liberal giver. For some years he has acted as Superintendent of a Mission Sabbath School organised by that church in the Shiprow district, and he was either seriously engaged, or out of town, if the teachers did not find him at their head. He was a genial companion, the treasures of a mind well stored from varied reading and close observation, being constantly drawn upon to enrich his conversation or increase the knowledge of his friends. He scorned meanness, and at times his tall and somewhat drooping figure would be drawn up, and his eye would flash as he denounced actions savouring of self-interest or of opposition to the public weal. He was not a ready speaker, but his words carried with them the weight and conviction which are ever accorded to those who are known to be in earnest.

For a man such as Robert Urquhart, an end like his

seems at first thought to jar and disturb our sense of what is right and fitting. We want to see such men glide quietly into old age with honour, love, obedience, troops of friends. But is it not better that they should work out rather than wear out? And better that they should be taken away before their strength becomes too feeble for their energy, and their power of working becomes less than their will prompts? Certainly Mr. Urquhart has gone from us while his strength was unabated, and his anxiety to spend and be spent in serving others was unimpaired. On Tuesday he went to Edinburgh and took part in the reception of Lord Hartington, as one of the representatives of the Aberdeen Liberal Association. He returned home on Wednesday, and on the day of his death he was as active as at any period of his life. At noon he attended a meeting at the Town Hall, and formally accepted office as a Councillor; at three o'clock he was at the School Board, to which he was elected last year; in the evening he was meeting with his friends and preparing to attend the Town Council meeting when the summons came which called him to the higher home prepared for those who, like him, constantly strive to do their duty in serving God and serving man. His last words were of peace and goodwill; and he leaves a memory that will long be fragrant, and an example that should stimulate us to noble deeds, springing from that high sense of Christian morality and honour which constantly characterised the public and private aims and work of Robert Urquhart.

THE LATE MR. ROBERT URQUHART.

From *Daily Free Press* of 12th November, 1877.

IN nearly all the churches in the city suitable reference was made yesterday to the lamented death of Mr. Urquhart, and in the congregations of the denomination to which the deceased citizen belonged, special notice was taken of the sad event. In every case the highest testimony was borne to the purity of life, honesty of purpose and motive, sincerity and faithfulness in the discharge of duty, which characterised Mr. Urquhart, as well as to his Christian piety, and to the interest that he displayed in the promotion and progress of every good work.

ST. NICHOLAS LANE U.P. CHURCH.

At the forenoon service in this church, of which Mr. Urquhart was for many years a leading office-bearer, Rev. Dr. Robson, the pastor of the congregation officiated. There was a large attendance, and throughout the service the congregation seemed to be much affected. After devotional exercises, Dr. Robson briefly addressed the Sabbath School children who were present, from the words, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." He wished them to remember three things in connection with this text—first, that all must die sooner or later; second, that only they were blessed who died believing and trusting in the Lord; and third, that the sure way to attain this bliss was to give their hearts unreservedly to Christ. In pointing out the uncertainty of life alike to young and old, he said that last Thursday evening he was in a humble home trying to comfort a family sorrowing for the death of a dear child, and when he came out to the streets he found a whole city mourning the

death of a great man. The Rev. gentleman then discoursed from Hebrews vi. 12—"That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." The preacher, in expounding the passage, pointed out that slothfulness in various forms was the chief hindrance to Christian progress, and to the attainment of the glorious promises held out to those who by faith and patience might inherit them. In conclusion, Dr. Robson said—This text I chose with special reference to this being the first day of the week of prayer for young men, as fitted to convey a lesson to them. But there could be no more suitable exhortation to all of us, mourning the loss of one who, whether as a private citizen, a church member, or a public man, seemed not to know what it was to be slothful, but carried into everything he undertook a faith and patience that showed sincerity of conviction and assurance of ultimate triumph. I will not now attempt any delineation of the life or estimate of the character of our departed friend. The wound is too fresh, the void in the heart too aching in all of us to make that suitable. The sorrow that has found such universal and spontaneous expression is the best testimony to what he was. Seldom has there been an outburst of feeling so sudden and so generous. Walking last Thursday night through the dark streets of the city there seemed some unusual stir. An expression of consternation and sorrow from a passer-by fell on the ear like the presage of the cry at midnight. On inquiry as to the cause, the reply, "Baillie Robert Urquhart is dead," fell like a knell on the heart. Hurrying on in the darkness we came on a great crowd looming darker still, whose silent waiting, or suppressed utterance of deep feeling, indicated that we had come to the place where death had laid the mighty low. Entering the house and passing to the room pointed out, there we saw him, the object of a city's mourning, lying on the floor of the room where a few minutes before his voice had been given for peace and amity, for the avoidance of party strife, and the discussion of every question affecting the

public weal on its own merits—his eyes closed as in sleep, his lips met with a calm smile, as if sealing with everlasting peace, the peace which he had counselled on earth ; no stain on his garments save one on each knee, showing that on them he had fallen, like the Christian warrior in Noel Paton's great picture, *mors janua vitæ*—Death the gate of life. Many of our foremost citizens who had looked up to him for advice and guidance, and who a short time before had been listening to his counsel, were standing around looking on with feelings too painful for utterance. It seemed to me about the grandest death that man could die. I could not but think of him as a trusted leader who had fallen in the battlefield, and around whom his chiefs were gathered, inspired by his death, assuredly not to forsake the fight, but to press on to victory for those principles for which he had fallen, by those same weapons which he had always used, and which he died in commending. Going from there into more than one house I witnessed scenes of sorrow over which the veil must here be drawn, which let me know as I never knew before what a true friend he had been to the friendless, what a stay he had been to the helpless, what cause he had given to the widow and the orphan to bless him. And coming into this place to-day, need I say what he has been to this church? Does not the sense of bereavement which we one and all experience bear the best witness to that? In anything that needed to be undertaken in connection with the congregation, the first question that rose to the mind of each was what he would think of it, with the assurance that if the cause was good, he would take an interest in it, and that, if he took an interest in it, it would almost surely succeed. Now he is gone : he can no more undertake for us the responsibility, do the work, give the help, he once did. The void, the bereavement seems greater than we can bear. But let us remember that it is the Master who has called the faithful servant to his rest and his reward. Let us lay to heart the lesson He gives us in removing him from us. Is it not this, that we may

not lean on any arm of the flesh however true and strong ; that we must learn to place our confidence only in Jesus Christ ; the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ; that we dare not shift on to other shoulders the responsibility, the work, which we can undertake, and which God has required that we should undertake ? Let us listen to the solemn call which his death addresses to each of us. Is it not to step into his place and do our best to fill the void he has left, to resolve, each so far as depends on each, that nothing on which his heart was set shall fail because his life has failed ? Then shall we show our true respect and love for him. Is this not a solemn call to you young men—aye, and men advanced in life, too—to be a follower of him as he was of Christ ; not to be slothful, but followers of him who through faith and patience has inherited the promises ? A good worker has gone to rest : let that be a call to each to try to do the work that he did ; a liberal giver has departed : let that call on each to unselfish sacrifice such as he made ; a wise counsellor is silent : let that call on each to attend thoughtfully to all things that concern the prosperity of the Church in order to be able to counsel wisely therein. If then we hear his voice, though silent, still speaking, his very death will be changed to a blessing. Like Samson of old, he will have accomplished more for us in his death than in all his life.

Rev. David Beatt officiated at the evening service, and preached a sermon appropriate to the occasion from Revelation ii. 10, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

ESTABLISHED WEST CHURCH.

Rev. J. Park, minister of Trinity Established Church, who conducted the services in the Established West Church yesterday forenoon, in concluding his sermon, referred to the death

of Mr. Robert Urquhart. He said his loss as a public man was lamented by all who knew him. All who were acquainted with him enjoyed his counsel and his help. He was not in a position to pass any eulogium upon his name, because he had not known him personally, but he had been told by those who were familiar with him that he was a man wholly conscientious, faithful to duty, and the discharge of all work committed to his care. And now his sudden death spoke with peculiar power. He had fallen asleep to take his rest from the work at which he had so incessantly laboured, and his death reminded them that the night cometh when no man can work.

BLACKFRIARS CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

In Blackfriars Congregational Church, last evening, the Rev. J. Vickery, in the course of his sermon, said—And while I am upon this subject (the duty of cultivating a sobriety of thought in religious and political life) I cannot forbear alluding to an event which has created, during the past week, a very deep and widespread regret among the citizens of this city. I refer to the death of one of our leading citizens. I have been in the habit, as many of you know, from time to time of contending that no intelligent realisation of the Christian idea of life is possible which leaves out the discharge of our political duties ; and it seems to me that the deceased gentleman, whose loss is deplored to-day by men of all parties, was in some respects an embodiment of that intelligent discharge of Christian duty which I have so often endeavoured to enforce. I had only a slight acquaintance with the late Mr. Urquhart, and therefore cannot speak with that exactness and authority which intimacy alone can give. But the public life of our public men in some respects is open to all of us to judge. And I can only join my regrets to those of many others, that we have lost at

a time, when we are not particularly rich in such men, a wise, thoughtful, and upright public servant, a party leader and politician it is true, but one who imported into the party movements with which he was connected, that moderation of temper, and that honesty of purpose, which, wherever realised, lift our political contests into a wholesome and invigorating atmosphere. Such men are unfortunately too rare among us. The union of the Christian temper with large political sagacity is sadly unfrequent. And in proportion to its rarity, will ever be the strength of our regrets when we are called upon to deplore the loss of one who exhibited these qualities in so high a degree as did the deceased gentleman.

SONNET ON THE SUDDEN DEATH OF
EX-BAILLIE URQUHART.

THAT he took other ways to gain his end
Than I approve of, I at once confess ;
Yet I don't deem the city's loss the less.
He was a man whose every thought did tend
Towards the great public weal. His life was pure ;
His faith fix'd on the " anchor firm and sure."
We doubtless need such men as him we've lost
To balance things. But, O ! fierce party strife
Has now become obstreperous ! What life
Can bear its rough abrasion ? Let us try
The city's motto to make too its boast !
And, looking on the dead, say with a sigh,
Peace to thy manes ! What is party fight
To thee now, in the land of love and light ?

XI

