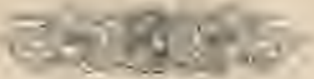








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The History Explained:

OR,

HOW THE EAST KIRK TOOK FIRE.

BY

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AUTHOR OF THE "SCALD."

ABERDEEN:

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As two poems on the same melancholy subject as has called forth the following lines have already appeared, the issuing of a third from the press may not only seem superfluous, but may be attended with pecuniary loss to him who has had the boldness to venture on bringing it out; yet, although born somewhat out of due time, and the smallest of the "Three Children of the Fire," the Publisher is not in the least apprehensive of the fate of this his foster child, which will be very unlike its true parent, indeed, if it does not manifest elegant scholarship, true appreciation of nature, and poetic genius of no mean character.





THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED;
OR,
HOW THE EAST KIRK TOOK FIRE.



How art thou fallen, child of mystic eld,
Whose age-hid birth our earliest sires beheld ?
Crowned with a diadem of golden years,
No more thy tower its splendid front uprears ;
Breeze-haunted spire, how low thy noble brow !
House of my God, where is thy glory now ?

In dreams I see thee as thou once hast been,
Unharm'd by flame or time, a granite queen ;

Among thy minarets in light appear
Doves nestling fondly, angels fluttering near.
Like him, whose sightless orbs in slumber closed,
Fancy their power has but a while reposed ;
With strength renewed, to drink heaven's light,
they seem ;
Joyful he wakes—'twas but a pleasing dream,
And all is darkness, lighted but by pain ;
So I awake, and seek for thee in vain.

The darkness falls; oh, that it ne'er would light,
With the fierce blaze that shall arise to-night !
Around the Kirk, where frequent mourners weep,
In peaceful death the mouldering bodies sleep ;

The outside crowds pass hurrying to and fro,
And the huge spire smiles calm on all below.

Uprises high the swelling sound of praise,
Soft music blending with the Psalmist's lays ;
While softer still, throughout the airy hall,
Responsive ring the echoes from each wall.
Close to the roof, on cherub pinions, rest
Hosts of the sons of God, in glory dressed ;
Well pleased, they listen to the mortal song,
And join the chorus as it moves along.

When all seemed peace to spirit and to man,
Who can declare how the dread work began ?
No mortal hand was there to fire the pile,
No envious fiend with scorching demon-smile ;

But, half-unconscious to the world around,
A cherub listened to the harmonious sound ;
The roof-hung lights but half-attention claim,
Until at length his pinions touch the flame,

Then, like a bird that rushes at its cage,
With feeble wing, but with a giant's rage ;
So he a moment flutters wildly there,
Till his co-spirits lift him to the air !
Aloft they soar, while flame their brother shrouds,
And swiftly quench it 'mong the distant clouds ;
Then burst, with lightning speed, heaven's golden
bars,
And bathe him in the Milky Stream of stars.

'Tis done. No warning cannon yet has boomed,
But henceforth Kirk and Tower to fall are doomed.

The tidings fly like shuttle through the woof ;
Bushes of fire seem planted on the roof :
Why on these bushes do ye water throw,
Since, with your watering, into trees they grow ?

Honour to him, with martial ardour fired,
Who, 'gainst that foe, to scale the wall aspired ;
Who, on the ladder, in the fierce pell-mell,
Climbed as a man, but as a hero fell.
Honour his comrades—danger they defied ;
Honour to all—and tears for him that died.
Stern Aberdeen, fair daughter of the Dee,
Comfort his widow—his, that died for thee.

Brighter and fiercer glare the rising flames,
Those demon-steeds that mortal seldom tames.
Gather, ye crowds, to see these coursers prance,
As in the visions of some weird romance.
They come, they hurrying come, from far and near,
With the wild cry of sorrow-stricken fear ;
As when in awe, from ether's utmost bound,
The summoned angels hear the trumpet sound ;
When those fair hosts that hailed the Wond'rous
 Birth,
Shall gaze astonished at the blazing earth ;
So round that fire-wrapt pile the swaying crowd
Gathers on myriad feet, and groans aloud.

See now the windows how they gleam so bright,
As if the flames looked out to mock the night ;
Brighter and fiercer shoots the flame on high,
As if it sought to kiss the distant sky,
Opening its arms in hot, impassioned glee,
And the sky blushes in its modesty.

Dost thou not mark how thick about the town,
The darkness gathers with unearthly frown ?—
Dull, airy ghosts, that press and pant and reel,
Like the weird forms that round a madman wheel.
Spell-bound, at Zion's fierce victorious foe,
All nature gazing, shudders in her woe.

'Mid roars of flame and crashing timber's fall,
'Mid woman's wail and man's despairing call,

Hark! from the steeple chimes the deep-voiced bell,
Thundering those iron tones we love so well ;
Nine times that mourning tongue resounds aloud
Its knell above that fiery, blood-red shroud ;
In turn the Muses raise a doleful cry,
Shrieking in every stroke their agony.

But save the tower,—oh, save the spire at least
No! even there the flaming demons feast.
They, with fierce, grimy jaws and mocking groans,
Devour its flesh and pick its very bones.
They leap triumphant in the midnight air,
And shout and revel in the Kirk's despair.
One fiend, astride upon the pointed spire,
With proud hand seeks to set the stars on fire.

How queenlike stands the tower and bears it all !

Nor bends her head—or bends it but to fall.

How her heart aches ! her every hope is fled,

And scalding tears pour down of boiling lead.

Burn, burn thou fire ! lay low that royal brow !

Discrown that head, for who can save it now ?

Bright fire-flakes fall, like the dread falling stars

That yet shall hail earth's last and bitterest wars.

She yields, she yields ! nor once for mercy calls ;

Royal she stood, and like a queen she falls !

The morn awakes ; it seeks God's Granite Bower ;

Like rising maid, it longs to know the hour ;

But now no longer chimes the deep-voiced bell,
Thundering those iron tones we loved so well.
Dead walls, burnt beams, ashes and trampled sod,
Declare where once had been the house of God.
But, hark ! I hear, and oh ! it soothes my care—
An angel singing in the morning air :
With wing restored, he chants in ecstasy,
O infant Phœnix, what thou yet shalt be ;
But let Devana spare nor time nor cost,
Till thou shalt be more than thou ever wast.







