

From the Examiner.

WILLIAM THOM.

Rhymes and Recollections of a Hand-loom Weaver.
By WILLIAM THOM, of Inverury. Smith and Elder, &c. &c.

In these *Rhymes and Recollections* the recollections are of the most importance. The rhymes are to be read with interest and not without admiration; there being an earnest truth in them which shapes itself into words of beauty; a cry of real suffering which has broken into song. But what for its own sake the world has first to attend to, is the fact of the suffering.

This is told in Mr. Thom's recollections; with what unaffectedness and strong natural feeling, the reader will shortly judge. "It is no small share in the end and aim of the present little work," it is said in the preface, "to impart to one portion of the community a glimpse of what is sometimes going on in another; and even if only that is accomplished, some good service is done." Nay, it is the best service done; and we wish to help to do it. In the more active sympathy of each with all, we see the only chance of happier and safer days for every "portion of the community."

William Thom was a weaver employed in the village of Newtyle, near Cupar Angus, some few years since, when a sudden manufacturing distress in Dundee silenced, in less than a week, upwards of six thousand looms. He was reduced to a pittance of five shillings a week; himself, his wife, and four children.

"It had been a stiff winter and unkindly spring, but it passed away, as other winters and springs must do. I will not expatiate on six human lives subsisted on five shillings weekly—on babies prematurely thoughtful—on comely faces withering—on desponding youth and too quickly declining age. These things are perhaps too often talked of. Let me describe but one morning of modified starvation at Newtyle and then pass on.

"Imagine a cold spring forenoon. It is eleven o'clock, but our little dwelling shows none of the signs of that time of day. The four children are still asleep. There is a bed cover hung before the window, to keep all within as much like night as possible; and the mother sits beside the beds of her children, to lull them back to sleep whenever any show an inclination to awake. For this there is a cause, for our weekly five shillings have not come as expected, and the only food in the house consists of a handful of oatmeal saved from the supper of last night. Our fuel is also exhausted. My wife and I were conversing in sunken whispers about making an attempt to cook the handful of meal, when the youngest child awoke beyond the mother's power to hush it again to sleep, and then fell a whimpering, and finally broke out in a steady scream, which, of course, rendered it impossible any longer to keep the rest in a state of unconsciousness. Face after face sprung up, each with one consent exclaiming, 'Oh, mother, mother, gie me a piece!' How weak a word is sorrow to apply to the feelings of myself and wife during the remainder of that dreary forenoon!"

The limit of endurance seemed to have come. He went to Dundee and pawned "a last and most valued relic of other days;" purchasing with the pawnbroker's ten shillings what is called a "pack" of saleable matters to be carried by his wife, and some small merchandise of second-hand books for himself. So furnished they left their miserable dwelling with four weary and fretful children; tramping the more miserable wayside for three days in the face of sour east winds and rain, and meeting only with human beings forlorn and starving as themselves, till the weakness of the poor mother and children brought them to a pause. "Jean was sorely exhausted, bearing an infant constantly at the breast, and often carrying the youngest boy also who had fairly broken down." It was the night of the third day, and there seemed no resource but to lie down and perish, when a large farm-house came in view, and the father hurried down from the road to implore shelter. The comfortable housekeeper refused it. "What! in the storm? in the night? Let pity not be believed." It is indeed difficult to believe, when we read such statements as these.

"I pleaded with her the infancy of my family, the lateness of the night, and their utter unfitnes to proceed—that we sought nothing but shelter—that the meanest shed would be a blessing. Heaven's mercy was never more earnestly pleaded for than was a night's lodging by me on that occasion; but 'No, no, no,' was the unvarying answer to all my entreaties.

"I returned to my family. They had kept closer together, and all, except the mother, were fast asleep. 'Oh, Willie, Willie, what keepit ye?' inquired the trembling woman; 'I'm dootfu' o' Jeanie,' she added; 'isna she waesome like? Let's in frae the cauld.'—'We've nae way to gang, lass,' said I, 'whate'er come o' us. Yon folk winna hae us.' Few more words passed. I drew her mantle over the wet and chilled sleepers, and sat down beside them. My head throbbled with pain, and for a time became the tenement of thoughts I would not now reveal. They partook less of sorrow than of indignation, and it seemed to me that this same world was a thing very much to be hated; and on the whole, the sooner that one like me could get out of it, the better for its sake and mine own. I felt myself, as it were, shut out from mankind—enclosed—prisoned in misery—no outlook—none? My miserable wife and little ones, who alone cared for me—what would I not have done for their sakes at that hour! Here let me speak out—and be heard, too, while I tell it—that the world does not at all times know how unsafely it sits—when despair has loosed honor's last hold upon the heart—when transcendent wretchedness lays weeping Reason in the dust—when every unsympathizing onlooker is deemed an enemy—who THEN can limit the consequences? For my own part, I confess that, ever since that dreadful night, I can never hear of an extraordinary criminal, without the wish to pierce through the mere judicial view of his career, under which, I am persuaded, there would often be found to exist an unseen impulse—a chain, with one end fixed in Nature holiest ground, that drew him on to his destiny."

The wretched man scrawled a note by the "gloamin' light" and carried it to a "stately mansion hard by." But "the servant had been ordered to take in no such notes, and he could not break through the rule." On return to his perishing family he found a serving-man standing by them and giving what assistance he could. "It is always so," he says; "but for the poor, the poorer would perish."* This good fellow helped them to a common farm-house.

"The servants were not yet in bed; and we were permitted a short time to warm ourselves at the bothy fire. During this interval the infant seemed to revive; it fastened heartily to the breast, and soon fell asleep. We were next led to an out-house. A man stood by with a lantern, while, with straw and blankets, we made a pretty fair bed. In less than half an hour, the whole slept sweetly in their dark and almost roofless dormitory. I think it must have been between three and four o'clock when Jean wakened me. Oh, that scream!—I think I can hear it now. The other children, startled from sleep, joined in frightful wail over their *dead sister*. Our poor Jeanie had, unobserved by us, sunk during the night under the effects of the exposure of the preceding evening, following, as it did, a long course of hardship, too great to be borne by a young frame. Such a visitation could only be sustained by one hardened to misery and wearied of existence. I sat awhile and looked on them; comfort I had none to give—none to take; I spake not—what could be said—words? Oh, no! the worst is over when words can serve us. And yet it is not just when the wound is given that pain is felt. How comes it, I wonder, that minor evils will affect even to agony, while paramount sorrow overdoes itself, and stands in stultified calmness? Strange to say, on first becoming aware of the bereavement of that terrible night, I sat for some minutes gazing upwards at the fluttering and wheeling movements of a party of swallows, our fellow-lodgers, which had been disturbed by our unearthly outcry. After a while, I proceeded to awaken the people in the house, who entered at once into our feelings, and did everything which Christian kindness could dictate as proper to be done on the occasion. A numerous and respectable party of neighbors assembled that day to assist at the funeral. In an obscure corner of Kinnaird churchyard lies our favorite, little Jeanie."

We cannot conceive a more affecting relation than that. Every word carries with it the assurance of simple unexaggerated truth.

In a breaker of stones on the road this appalling misery found its next patron and assuager. He bought a book for fivepence halfpenny, and would have bought a flute which poor Thom was possessed of. But the stone breaker's earnestness reminded Thom of the uses of this flute, and, like Goldsmith, he was able to beg his way by the help of it into better times, until, at the town of Inverury, he settled down once more to his loom. He had thus struggled back into decent means of

* The poor man alone,
When he hears the poor groan,
Of his morsel a morsel will give.

Well-a-day!—HOLCROFT.

existence, when his wife died. "Jean, the mother of my family, partner of my wanderings, un murmuring sharer in all my difficulties, left us as the last cold cloud was passing." It seems to have been this sorrow that stung the poor fellow into song. He afterwards described his loss in sending to a friend some verses he had written on it.

"Enclosed is one piece written about two years ago, my wife lately before having died in childbed. At the time of her decease, although our dwelling was at Inverury, my place of employment was in a village nine miles distant, whence I came once a fortnight, to enjoy the ineffable couthiness that swims around 'ane's ain fireside,' and is nowhere else to be found. For many months, we knew comfort and happiness—our daughter Betsy, about ten years of age, was in country service, two boys younger still, kept at home with their mother. The last Sabbath we ever met, Jean spoke calmly and earnestly of matters connected with our little home and family—bade me remain a day or two with them yet, as she felt a foreboding that the approaching event would be too much for her enfeebled constitution. It was so. She died two days thereafter. On returning from the kirkyard, I shut up our desolate dwelling, and never more owned it as a home. We were but as strangers in the village, so the elder boy and I put over that night in a common tramp house. A neighbor undertook to keep the other little fellow, but he, somehow, slipped away unobserved, and was found fast asleep at the door of our tenantless home. Next morning, having secured a boarding-house for him, (the youngest,) I took the road to resume labor at the usual place—poor, soft-hearted Willie by my side—a trifle of sad thinking within, and the dowie mists of Benachie right before me. We travelled off our road some miles to the glen where Betsy was 'herdin.' Poor Bet knew nothing of what had happened at Inverury. Her mother had visited her three weeks before—had promised to return with some wearables, for winter was setting in fast and bitterly. The day and very hour we approached her bleak residence *that* was their trysted time. She saw us as we stood on the knowe hesitating—ran towards us—'O whaur is my mither? foo is nae she here? Speak, father? speak, Willie!' Poetry, indeed! Poetry, I fear, has little to do with moments like these. Oh, no! When the bewildering gush has passed away, and a kind of grey light has settled on the ruin, one may then number the drops as they fall, but the cisterns of sorrow echo not when full—hence my idealized address to Willie was written long after the event that gave it existence. With feelings more tranquil, and condition every way better, it came thus—

The ae dark spot in this loveless world,
That spot maun ever be, Willie,
Whaur she sat an' dauted yer bonnie brown hair,
An' lithely looket to me, Willie;
An' oh! my heart owned a' the power
Of your mither's gifted e'e, Willie.

There's now nae blink at our slacken'd hearth,
Nor kindred breathing there, Willie;
But cauld and still our hame of death,
Wi' its darkness evermair, Willie;
For she who lived in our love, is cauld,
An' her grave the stranger's lair, Willie.

The sleepless nicht, the dowie dawn,
A' stormy tho' it be, Willie,
Ye'll buckle ye in yer weet wee plaid,
An' wander awa wi' me, Willie;
Yer lonesome sister little kens
Sic tidings we hae to gie, Willie.

The promised day, the trysted hour,
She'll strain her watchfu' e'e, Willie;
Seeking that mither's look of love,
She ne'er again maun see, Willie;
Kiss aye the tear frae her whitening cheek,
An' speak a while for me, Willie.

Look kindly, kindly when ye meet,
But speak nae of the dead, Willie;
An' when yer heart would gar you greet,
Aye turn awa yer head, Willie;
That waesome look ye look to me
Would gar her young heart bleed, Willie.

Whan e'er she names a mither's name,
An' sairly presseth thee, Willie,
O tell her of a happy hame
Far, far o'er earth an' sea, Willie;
An' ane that waits to welcome them—
Her hameless bairns an' me, Willie.

These are simple, earnest lines, with a manly pathos in them. "Shepherd's pipes, Arcadian strains, and fabled tortures quaint and tame," this poor man has as hardly earned the right to laugh at, as the great Burns himself: and only of what he knows and feels he tells us in his verse.

Something he had sent to an Aberdeen paper, attracted the notice of a benevolent Scotchman, Mr. Gordon, who sent the writer five pounds. It arrived opportunely—distress having come again to the loom—"on a cold, cold winter day, when we sat alone, my little ones and I, looking on the last meal procurable by honorable means." Mr. Gordon afterwards put some questions to the humble poet, a few of which, with their answers, the reader will thank us for extracting.

"*What was you bred to?*" Born in Aberdeen, the son of a widow unable to keep me at home idle, I was, when ten years of age, placed in a public factory, where I served an apprenticeship of four years, at the end of which, I entered another great weaving establishment, 'Gordon, Baron & Co.,' where I continued seventeen years. During my apprenticeship, I had picked up a little reading and writing. Afterwards, set about studying Latin—went so far, but was fairly defeated through want of time, &c.—having the while to support my mother, who was getting frail. However, I continued to gather something of arithmetic and music, both of which I have mastered so far as to render further progress easy did I see it requisite. I play the German flute tolerably in general subjects, but in my native melodies, lively or pathetic, to few will I lay it down. I have every Scotch song that is worth singing; and, though my vocal capability is somewhat limited, I can convey a pretty fair idea of what a Scotch song *ought* to be.

"So much for *'acquirements.'*" You next ask my *'age and state of health?'* I am *forty-two*—my health not robust but evenly; a lameness of one leg occasioned by my being, when in infancy, crushed under the wheel of a carriage. This unfits me for work requiring extra personal strength; and, indeed, it is mostly owing to little mechanical appliances of my own contriving, that I am enabled

to subject the more laborious parts of my calling to the limits of my very stunted bodily power.

"*'The number and age of my family?'*" Three: Elizabeth, aged ten and a-half years, William eight, and James five. My wife died in childbed, last November; my girl does the best she can by way of housekeeper; the boys are at school. I cannot spare the lassie, so she gets a lesson at home.

"*'Description of my dwelling?'*" I occupy two trim little garrets in a house belonging to Sir Robert Elphinstone, lately built on the market stance of Inverury. We have everything required in our humble way—perhaps our blankets pressed a little too lightly during the late severe winter, but then we crept closer together—that is gone—'tis summer now, and we are hopeful that next winter will bring better things. *'Means of Living?'*—employed, seven or eight months yearly, in customary weaving—that is, a country weaver who wants a journeyman sends for me. I assist in making bedding, shirting and other household stuffs. When his customers are served, I am discharged; and so ends the *season*. During that time, I earn from ten to twelve shillings a week, pay the master generally four shillings for my 'keep,' and remit the rest to my family. In this way, we moved on happy enough. Ambition, or something like it, would, now and then, whisper me into discontent. But now, how blest would I deem myself, had I my beloved partner again, and the same difficulties to retrace. I eke out the blank portions of the season by going into a factory. Here, the young and vigorous only can exceed six shillings weekly. This alone is my period of privation; however, it is wonderful how nicely we get on. A little job now and then, in the musical way, puts all right again.

"I had nearly forgot that you ask me whether I possess *'Good common sense, as well as poetical ability?'*" Well, really, sir, I cannot say—most people erect their own standard in that matter, and, generally, award to themselves a pretty fair share; and few are found grumbling with the distribution. I have looked, as closely as my degree permitted, upon man; his ways and his wishes; and I have tasted, in my own experience, some of life's bitterest tastings; hence I have obtained some shrewd glimpses of what calls common sense into action, and what follows the action wherein common sense has no share."

This was three years ago. We cannot very well trace his subsequent history. He seems to have been brought to London by his kindhearted patron, but for no very intelligible reason. He is now at his loom, again, in Scotland, and, we fear, again neighbored by distress. "Amid the giant waves of monopoly," he says, at the close of his recollections, "the solitary loom is fast sinking. Thus must the lyre, like a hencoop, be thrown on the wrecking waters, to float its owner ashore." A desperate venture: but let us say of the little volume, since it has momentous service of this kind to discharge, that the reader, who can spare so many pence for so many rhymes, will do well to spare them in this instance. Mr. Thom is not a prodigy, but he is a true man; and any hand that helps to lift him up, will strengthen and honor itself in the doing it.

Here are two further specimens of his poetical quality. The first, the most fanciful subject in the little volume: the second, of that sterner stuff which gives it greater value.

THE LAST TRYST.

This nicht ye'll cross the bosky glen,
Ance mair, O would ye meet me then?
I'll seem as bygone bliss an' pain,
Were a' forgot;

I winna weep to weary thee,
Nor seek the love ye canna gie;—
Whaur first we met, O let that be
The parting spot!

The hour just when the faithless licht
O' yon pale star forsakes the nicht;
I wouldna pain ye wi' the blicht
Ye've brought to me.

Nor would I that yon proud could ray
Should mock me wi' its scornfu' play;—
The sunken een and tresses grey
Ye maunna see.

Wi' sindered hearts few words will sair,
An' brain-dried grief nae tears can spare;
These bluidless lips shall ne'er mair
Name thine or thee.

At murky nicht, O meet me then!
Restore my plighted troth again;
Your bonnie bride shall never ken
Your wrangs to me.

A CHIEFTAIN UNKNOWN TO THE QUEEN.

Auld Scotland cried "Welcome your Queen!"
Ilk glen echoed "Welcome your Queen!"
While turret and tower to mountain and moor,
Cried "Wauken and welcome our Queen!"

Syne, O sic deray was exprest,
As Scotland for lang hadna seen;
When bodies cam bickerin' a' clad in their best—
To beek to their bonnie young Queen.

When a' kinds o' colors cam south,
An' scarlet frae sly Aberdeen;
Ilk flutterin' heart flitted up to the mouth,
A' pantin' to peep at our Queen.

There were earls on that glitterin' strand,
Wi' diamonded dame mony ane;
An' weel might it seem that the happiest land
Was trod by the happiest Queen.

Then mony a chieftain's heart
Beat high 'neath its proud tartan screen;
But one sullen chief stood afar and apart,
Nor recked he the smile o' a Queen.

"Wha's he winna blink on our Queen,
With his haffets sae lyart and lean?"
O ho! it is Want, wi' his gathering gaunt,
An' million of mourners unseen.

Proud Scotland cried "Hide them, O hide!
An' lat nae them licht on her een;
Wi' their bairnies bare, it would sorrow her sair!
For a mither's heart moves in our Queen."

It was the fashion, some years ago, to patronize the poetry of housekeepers, butlers and dairy-maids; and a very unwholesome fashion it was. We do not want more people to write: people that can read, are more sorely wanted. It is, however, no wail of neglected genius raised in this book of Mr. Thom's, but a cry that more nearly concerns us all. Is the deeply-seated disease, from which it comes, to be left forever without a remedy? Is the near and neighborly concern for each other's comfort and happiness to be only from the poor to the poor?

Very earnestly do we hope that the pathetic history we have taken from this humble little volume, may help to indicate the necessity of some practical answer to such questions. We are glad, as well as grieved, to think that the picture it presents to us is not of rare occurrence. The same patience, good sense, strong human feeling, and quiet manful endurance, are daily tried in the same extreme distress. And for the single desperate swimmer that gets to land, even drenched and bare-footed as this poor Thom appears to be, how many sink forever. Let not our readers fancy it too dreadful to think of. With fair play allowed—not generosity, not charity, not indulgence of any kind—but with bare and dry fair play, would it be possible that their fellow-creatures could perish thus? Let them think of it.

From Punch.

THOM, THE WEAVER POET OF INVERURY, VERSUS SCOTLAND.

THE Scotch press is even at this time hardly silent on that great national ceremony—mingling of triumph with self-humiliation—the Burns Festival. Scotland, however, is repentant Scotland, and will sin no more. Let us test her sincerity. Let us try the honesty of her sighs and groans at the banks of the Doon, by the activity of her sympathies at Inverury. Let us, if we can, discover the real amount of her affection for the dead Ploughman, by her tenderness towards a kindred, if a lesser, spirit—the living Weaver. In fine, let us see how Scotland—enthusiastic, genius-loving Scotland—stands towards Robert Burns, deceased, and William Thom, living and suffering.

It is obvious that our limits compel us to be brief. Otherwise, we would reprint the whole of Thom's story, written, as much of it is, in the very tears of domestic anguish. We must confine ourselves to brief extracts. William Thom is a hand-loom weaver; he is a native of Aberdeen, and was born in 1800. He lived with his family at the village of Newtyle, when, some years since, he was left to struggle on five shillings a week.

"I will not expatiate," he says, "on six human lives subsisting on five shillings weekly—on babies prematurely thoughtful—on comely faces withering—on desponding youth and too-quickly declining age."

With no employment, he pawned "a most valuable relic of better days" for ten shillings, with which he bought a few books to trade with. He and his family then left their breadless home. They travelled three days.

"Sunset was followed by cold, sour east winds and rain. The children becoming weary and fretful, we made frequent inquiries of other forlorn-looking beings whom we met, to ascertain which farm-town in the vicinity was most likely to afford us quarters. Jean was sorely exhausted, bearing an infant constantly at her breast, and often carrying the youngest boy also, who had fairly broken down in the course of the day."

Thom, we should have premised, is a cripple. When seven years old, his ankle and foot were crushed beneath the carriage of the Earl of Erröl, Lord Lieutenant of Aberdeenshire. No pleasant thought this, to the Earl, we should imagine,

when he heard—for as a Scotchman, of course, he has heard—of the multiplied miseries of the *unasisted* poet. But to proceed: Thom seeks shelter at a “comfortable-looking steading,” but is denied the hospitality of an out-house and straw.

“I returned to my family. They had crept closer together, and all, except the mother, were fast asleep. ‘Oh, Willie, Willie, what keepit ye?’ inquired the trembling woman, ‘I’m dootfu’ o’ Jeanie,’ she added; ‘isna she waesome like? Let’s in frae the cauld. ‘We’ve nae way to gang, lass,’ said I, ‘whate’er come o’ us. Yon folk winna hae us.’ Few more words passed. I drew her mantle over the wet and chilled sleepers, and sat down beside them. My head throbed with pain, and for a time became the tenement of thoughts I would not now reveal. They partook less of sorrow than of indignation, and it seemed to me that this same world was a thing very much to be hated; and, on the whole, the sooner that one like me could get out of it, the better for its sake and mine own. I felt myself, as it were, shut out from mankind—enclosed—prisoned in misery—no outlook—none! My miserable wife and little ones, who alone cared for me—what would I not have done for their sakes at that hour! Here let me speak out—and be heard, too, while I tell it,—that the world does not at all times know how unsafely it sits—when Despair has loosed Honor’s last hold upon the heart—when transcendent wretchedness lays weeping Reason in the dust—when every unsympathizing on-looker is deemed an enemy—who THEN can limit the consequences? For my own part, I confess that, ever since that dreadful night, I can never hear of an extraordinary criminal, without the wish to pierce through the mere judicial view of his career, under which, I am persuaded, there would often be found to exist an unseen impulse—a chain, with one end fixed in Nature’s holiest ground, that drew him on to his destiny.”

He is no common man who writes thus. However, to finish this terrible narrative. The wretched family obtain admittance about eleven o’clock at the farm-house of John Cooper, West Town, of Kinnaird, and were led to an out-house.

“In less than half-an-hour, the whole slept sweetly in their dark and almost roofless dormitory. I think it must have been between three and four o’clock when Jean wakened me. Oh, that scream!—I think I can hear it now. The other children, startled from sleep, joined in frightful wail over their dead sister. Our poor Jeanie had, unobserved by us, sunk during the night under the effects of the exposure of the preceding evening, following, as it did, a long course of hardship, too great to be borne by a young frame.”

The child is buried—the family wander on. One night they arrive at a lodging-house at Methven. Thom is required to pay sixpence for the accommodation; the rule of the house being payment before the parties “tak’ aff their shoon.” This demand induces Thom to have recourse to his flute. He leaves the lodging with his wife:—

“‘A quarter of an hour longer,’ said I, ‘and it will be darker; let us walk out a bit.’ The sun had been down a good while, and the gloamin’ was lovely. In spite of everything, I felt a momentary reprieve. I dipped my dry flute in a little burn and began to play. It rang sweetly amongst the trees. I moved on and on, still playing, and still *facing* the town. ‘The flowers of the forest’ brought me before the house lately mentioned. My music raised one window after another.”

His music touched the hearts and pockets of the Methven folk.

“There was enough to encourage farther perseverance; but I felt, after all, that I had begun too late in life ever to acquire that ‘ease and grace’ indispensable to him who would successfully ‘carry the gaberlunzie on.’ I felt I must forego it, at least in a downright street capacity.”

After a time, trade revived a little—he got tired of “this beggar’s work”—and settled at Inverury:—

“Nine months after our settlement here,” he says, ‘She died—Jean, the mother of my family, partner of my wanderings, the unmurmuring sharer in all my difficulties—left us, too, just as the last cloud was passing, ere the outbreak of a brighter day. The cloud passed, but the warmth that followed lost half its value to me, she being no partner therein.”

In 1841, Thom sent a poem, *The Blind Boy’s Pranks*, signed “By a Serf,” to the *Aberdeen Herald*. The simple beauty of this poem attracted the attention of Mr. Gordon, of Knockespoek, one of those men of true heart who wait not until genius shall become churchyard clay, ere they can feel for its past agonies. This gentleman became the fast friend of Thom, and has stood by him until the present time. Thom is now at his loom at Inverury. “Alas! for the loom though,” he says, “amid the giant waves of monopoly, the *solitary* loom is fast sinking. Thus must the lyre like a hen-coop be thrown on the wrecking waters, to float its owner ashore!”

We have no space to quote any of Thom’s poems. They possess great natural grace and tenderness; though their dialect will prevent their popularity on this side of the Tweed. For which good reason, Thom more especially belongs to Scotland; it is the more *her* duty to foster him.

Be it understood, that in the above we have made no discovery. Two years ago the narrative was published in Scotland; nay, it adorned the pages of *Chambers’ Journal*—a work peculiarly addressed to Scotch sympathies,—and what has Scotland up to this time done for Thom? Why, in the words of a correspondent, “Scotland, with but few exceptions, has felt proud and sorry, and has given a return of *nil!*”

But the time is not yet come. In some eight-and-forty years, perhaps, there may be a Thom Festival. A descendant of Errol’s Earl—of the family whose carriage made a hopeless cripple of the poet—may honor the solemnity with his presidentship; a Professor—some Jupiter from the great Saturn—may discourse

“Like that large utterance of the early gods!”—

and all be jubilee and gladness. Then may the weaver’s house at Invertyle be visited—*then* may the roadside where the mother watched her dying infant be deemed consecrated ground—the flute on which the poet played for meals and shelter, a priceless relic! Wait eight-and-forty years, William Thom, and such glory shall be yours. For the present, starve. It is cheaper—thinks economic Scotland—to give bays to the dead, than bread to the living.

It has been insinuated that—*vivâ voce*—we called the Burns Festival, a “hollow humbug.” We have no recollection that such a phrase ever escaped us. If, however, Scotland continues to neglect the weaver of Inverury, we shall no longer doubt the hollowness of the late festival, as a national demonstration. Add every Scotch coronet to that of Eglintoun—let Professor Wilson—

“Was that thunder?”

No: we can name Professor Wilson, and the heavens still be tranquil! Let Professor Wilson, we say, utter the eloquence of all Olympus,—why, even then, with Thom neglected, we would most unhesitatingly pronounce the words attributed to us, and in the very teeth of Scotland groan, “HOLLOW HUMBUG!”

But no, Scotland will do otherwise; she will be genial, generous towards the weaver of Inverury. She will sympathize with his wants, she will be proud of his genius. Yes, in the case of William Thom a miracle will be worked; for he will find that he “*can* gather figs of Thistles.”
