

Mauchline

Its History

And Associations

By H J Steven 1897

Retyped By Irene McKenzie 2003
Reset By ayrshirehistory.com 2004

Contents (original page numbers)

	Page
Pre-Reformation - - - -	1
Post-Reformation Ecclesiastical History	8
Civil History - Post-Reformation -	15
The Church - - - -	22
The Churchyard - -	29
Robert Burns - - - -	39
Village Customs, Stories, etc., -	46

MAUCHINE

Pre-Reformation

What parti-coloured patchwork is the history of a nation! Here is brightest red denoting victory and joy, there the dim grey of dule and sorrow, now the pure white of a generous action, and again the deep black of national sin. What confusion there seems, what unfitting contrasts! And yet, through it all, there is a straining for order, a strong purpose in the work, and overhead a divinity to shape the ends. The grand purpose in all the struggles of our Scottish nation, in all its wars and rumours of wars, its successes, its failures, even in its aggressive and internecine warfare, was a striving for liberty-liberty of the nation, religious and personal liberty. Like the refrain of a long, long song, it sounds, now faintly, now loudly, through the history of many centuries. Sometimes the din of battle, loud-screaming egotism, or the crunching heels of license drown the syren voice, but in the nation's quieter and better moments the sweet voice of liberty nerved the arms of her sons for the fight, and men accounted their lives but nothing for the glory of their fatherland, and as they died they flung their life purpose, like Douglas's heart, forward. Dynasties came and went, changes manifold arose, even religion changed her garments, although the soul which looked from her earnest eyes was ever the same.

From Baal worship and Druidism to Christianity was a long step. From the simple, earnest Christianity which fell like dew upon a parched land, to the Church, great and mighty, increased in goods and having need of nothing, lying like a mighty incubus upon the people, draining the country of its riches and assuming control both in this world and the next, was an even more momentous issue. But, again, a new era dawned upon the people, and we in our day reap the benefits of all the long struggles of our forefathers. The Druids, with their horrid rites, doubtless had their use. Men learned from them that this life was not everything - there was a Deity to be propitiated. Columba, with his pure doctrine, was as a saint from heaven. His was the little leaven which, by and bye leavened the whole lump, and the era of monks and priests which it produced has left us many traces of its one time usefulness and beauty.

We shall glance at Mauchline in the long-gone days. Out of the dim, cloudy history of the past Mauchline first rises before us twelve centuries ago. The Cruithne had come over from Ireland to disturb the inhabitants of the sister island, and the Britishers rose against them, defeating them at Mauchline in 681. Many centuries passed, and Scotland, through much tribulation, was ever marching on to freedom. The "sore saunt to the croun," David I., ascended the throne in the twelfth century. David was a man of culture for his day and generation. He had married an English wife, and had spent much of his time in England. England was in a more advanced state of civilization than Scotland, and David resolved to do his best to bring his country up to the same standard. He had also spent much time in the Norman Court, which was more refined than that of Scotland, and much less sombre. David had seen both in France and England how that the clergy exercised a humanising and elevating influence upon the people, and their monasteries were the nurseries of learning and of Art and Science. Among much other work of the same kind David founded the Abbacy of Melros and brought thence monks of the Cistercian order from Rievale in Yorkshire, trained under the saintly Abbot of Clairvaux. The Abbey of Melros gradually reared its stately form by the winding Tweed, under the superintendence, and by the hard manual labour, of those earnest-browed men. Had David I. Initiated nothing else in matters ecclesiastical, had we been indebted to him only for the Abbey of Melros, even then our gratitude must have been great, for even in ruins it is the pride of our country and one of the finest existing specimens of early Gothic architecture. What a wealth of culture it displays-its pointed arch, and oriels and delicate tracery! David I. Reigned for twenty-nine years, and throughout all that time the foundation of religious houses was constant care. He died in 1153 and was succeeded by his grandson, Malcolm, who reigned twelve years, and afterwards by another grandson, William. In the reign of William I. The Lord High Stewart of Scotland was Walter Fitz-Alan, who also might have been called by his descendants a sore saint to his family. It is thought that it was he who built the fortress at Dundonald, the castle which stands upon the hill top and frowns upon the peaceful plains beneath. Walter was Lord of Kyle, and for the salvation of his soul, and, let us hope, for the good of his people, he bestowed much of his land upon the Church. The mantle of David I. Seemed to have fallen upon this man, whose power was not so great, but who undoubtedly gave nobly of that which he had. Monkton, Riccarton, and other places were bestowed by him on various religious institutions, and casting his eye further afield he fixed it on Mauchline. To the Abbey of Melros he gave the lands of Mauchline and right of pasturage on the forest on the upper reaches of the river Ayr, said forest

extending into Clydesdale. The Stewart further bestowed upon the Abbey a carracute of land to improve in places most convenient, all of which was confirmed by William I. at Walter's request.

The parish of Mauchline at that time was inhabited by a wild race of men, the Scoto-Irish. The land was barren and boggy and unfruitful, and there is no mention of any town whatever. We can picture the monks journeying from far-off and lovely Melros, their eyes full of the beauty of the church they had left behind them, their hearts full of zeal in the good cause and thankful for the new favour, for Mauchline had become a cell of Melros. Whatever we may think now of the monastic institution there is no doubt at the time of which we write, it was considered the true outcome of holy character, and the men who formed the brotherhoods were actuated by the highest zeal and the purest motives. Our forefathers recognised this, as they could not fail to do, and when they could no longer conscientiously give the roman Church their support, it fell, in this country, as was only meet.

The name of Mauchline (Magh linne (Celtic) the meadow in a pool) was not inviting, and the hearts of those long-gone priests and monks may have sunk within them when they saw how descriptive the name was of the boggy land they had come so far to claim. Doubtless they began by building small, temporary houses, houses of wattle and mud and roofed with thatch like the homes of the people, but they were not long content with such mean habitations. By and bye a church, built of the abundant stone of the district, rose above the huts, and as years went on a monastery was added with cells for the monks, a chapter-house where all the business was done, a refectory where they dined, a pantry, a kitchen, a storehouse, a schoolroom, and cloisters around the quadrangle where the reverend seniors walked and talked and meditated, and overtopping all was the tower or castle for the residence of the prior. Only the castle now remains, but there are marks upon the walls as if houses of less height had been built against it and traces of a wall or walls are found forty or fifty yards on one side. They built their tower for safety, those old monks, with thick, impenetrable walls, but their right hands had not forgotten their cunning, for they made it a thing of beauty with machiculated summit, and in the great hall they groined the roof so wondrously that men come still from far and near to admire their handiwork. Did they think of Melros as they worked, and the lovely church which they had reared as a monument to God and to themselves? Did they long for such a building as they regarded their little church, and did they groin the roof of the tower so exquisitely as a memento and a remembrance of the beautiful church which they had left like a little bit of home, a loving thought embodied in stone. What carving and beauty they bestowed upon the other buildings we cannot tell, but the eyes that looked upon and loved the Abbey of Melros, and the hands that added its stone to stone would not be content with an utterly unlovely place. Bare and grim stand the walls of the castle or priory, but the great groined ceiling shows that the love of beauty and the art to create it were there. Besides the priory there was a chapel erected near to the present village of Catrine dedicated to St. Cuthbert and another on the water of Greenock. By-and-bye the desolate landscape was changed. Orchards sprang up around the monastery, fair gardens and smiling woods, fields of grain and pasturages, and mills to grind the corn. The monks enlarged their borders and acquired more land, and the quaint old charters of Melros Abbey are characterised by singular minuteness of detail regarding their priory of Mauchline. Some of the names, as representing boundaries, are still known in the district, such as DERNCONNER, AUCHENBRANE, etc, but others are quite obsolete. When the cowled agriculturists could not find a convenient brook or wood to act as a boundary to their estate, they put a mark of their holy calling, a cross, upon an oak (*quercus ubi crux facta est.*)

We can picture the monastic life in those old times. Labour in the fields, in the gardens, in the church, the monks with slow steps and tonsured heads in their leisure moments pacing the cloisters; we can hear the bell which rang seven times a day for prayer; there are the little cells which were the dormitories and closets for secret prayer, there too the common hall in which the monks dined. All their days were passed by rule in work and prayer and praise. The monks were men of learning, but they did with all their might whatever their hands found to do. The wild Scoto-Irish who sparsely populated the district came and built themselves huts under the shadow of the church, and many of those wretched men offered themselves as servants or serfs to the prior, to work for him in return for food and clothing and shelter, and many more came as freemen, but desiring nothing better than to live under the shelter of a monastic institution. hat is no fanciful picture. Abbots and Priors were better landlords than the Barons of those days, who were often little more than freebooters, and life was easier and pleasanter spent under the shadow of the church than in the unsettled service of such lawless men. Gradually a little Kirkcoun was formed around the church and the arts of peace began to be cultivated. Then the estates of Mauchline, Kylesmure, and Barnmure, which two latter the monks had also acquired, were formed into a regality, the courts of which

were held in Mauchline. Was it in the hall with the groined roof that the court met, or was it in the open air on some high hill they held their burgh moot? Was there a wall around the little kirktoon, and did the burghers take their turns by night to watch? Did lepers congregate about the gates and long to enter, or did they hie them to the "spital" on the hill between Craigie and Kilmarnock, or to King Case where Robert the Bruce in the fourteenth century was cured by drinking of the waters? And the thralls would walk through the little town with brass collars about their necks, bondmen even of the Priory, and the men living upon the ground of the Monastery would be bought and sold like goods and chattels, and freemen would give their services for permission to squat upon the land. Those were evils of the times, not though of as evils but as a necessary state of matters. The religious houses were the first to recognise the brotherhood of man and to free their slaves, and the monks of Fail, not so very far away, had the redemption of such captives for their special mission. We can see the little church with its choir and nave and transept like the arms of the cross on which the God-Man died, and seven times a day as the bell was rung the monks entered the sacred edifice for prayer, turning their faces to the east, and they taught the people of One who was strong to save and of whom they were the ministers.

Years came and went, and centuries rolled by, and the days of the monks and priests came to an end. The good they had done did not die with them, neither was the evil only fruitful. For their religious teaching, their fostering care of agriculture and of arts and letters we owe them much. If they fell from their high ideal when riches increased it was only natural - Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked! But none the less natural that men should throw off a class which had become a burden to them-an old man of the sea who clung around their necks and cramped their lives. However good and true individual churchmen may have been in the latter days, the church as a whole had fallen from its high estate -the time of Romanism had drawn to a close and a new era dawned upon the land.

ii.

POST REFORMATION ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY

The people of Mauchline, town and parish, were favourable to the Reformation. There may have been a little self-seeking at the bottom of it for the church was rich and owned much land, and no sooner was the Reformation an accomplished fact than greedy and needy nobles and commoners grabbed at that land in all parts of the country, and Mauchline magnates may have been possessed with something of the same spirit as their neighbours. So early as in 1521 Hugh Campbell of Loudoun was appointed Bailie of the regality of Mauchline, and the wording of the deed seems to point to the inference that the wily and far-seeing Hugh had his eye to the fee-simple of the whole district at such a time as monastic institutions might be broken up. There were signs, even then, of the decay of Romanism, and shrewd, worldly men acted ever with an eye to possible contingencies. But Rome was not built in a day, neither was the Church of Rome destined to be destroyed in a like short period of time.

Another reason, and a more honourable one, may have influenced the worthy inhabitants of Mauchline. The Lollards of Kyle had leavened the whole of the district with their doctrine. They were really the first Reformers and paved the way for the Reformation. Their doctrines were the same as those afterwards promulgated, and the Lollards did a good work in their day. When the great upheaval did occur the new doctrines were not new in many an Ayrshire village, and had been discussed all over the country side by farmers and cottars, and by shepherds in lonely huts on the hills. Not only were the new doctrines discussed, but they were implicitly believed by many and made the rule and inspiration of their lives. That Mauchline was not outside the radius of such influence we can gather from the fact that in 1544 George Wishart was invited to preach in the parish church. We cannot think from his subsequent conduct that the invitation came from the Prior, nor was it likely that the head of the Convent would desire the services of one who thirsted for the overthrow of his power. Probably Hew Campbell, of Kingeancleuch, may have initiated the movement, for his sympathies were entirely with the Reformers. Hew of Kingeancleuch was related to Hugh of Loudoun, who had such a long eye to the future, and who had sworn to defend the "Rev. Fader and Convent in ye said lands against all quhatsoever, *ye sovereign alane excepted*."

On the Sunday in question, Wishart appeared before the parish church, but only to find the doors locked. The Prior had communicated with the Sheriff of Ayr, and the Sheriff came with an armed force at his back to emphasize the refusal to allow Wishart to preach in the Church. Kingeancleuch and others were amazed at what they considered the impiety of the soldiery who had taken possession of the church, and they thought of entering the building by force, but Wishart answered their invectives with words beautiful in spirit and admirable in moderation. "Brethren," said Wishart, "it is the word of peace which I preach unto you; the blood of no man shall be shed for it this day. Jesus Christ is as mighty in the fields as in the church; and He Himself, while he lived in the flesh, preached oftener in the desert and upon the seaside than in the Temple of Jerusalem." The people were appeased and went with Wishart to Mauchline Moor, and there he preached to them with much acceptance for three hours. Wishart remained for a month at that time in the neighbourhood. In 1556 no less a personage than John Knox visited Mauchline, and preached in Kingeancleuch Castle during his tour of the western shires. We thus see that in Kyle the people were familiar with the doctrines of the Reformers, and in Mauchline they were ready in a body to embrace them whenever they became the recognised teaching of a Reformed Church. It is also possible that even in a quiet country town the priesthood had degenerated so much that the people looked on it no longer with reverence, but longed for a purer exposition of religion.

With the Reformation a change came over the appearance of the place. The monks disappeared; their familiar figures were seen no more in street or lane gliding about from house to house, or walking through the fields. Their chants were heard no longer in the little church whose open door had been like a constant invitation to enter. The bell which rang so frequently inviting the faithful to prayer was silent, except upon the Sabbath day or when a weary soul went home. Then the passing bell rang out, and it may be the fierce fanatics, from long-term use and won't, crossed themselves as they listened, or with difficulty refrained from the simple gesture. The little church was dismantled, the altar was torn down, the images broken in pieces. Were there pictures in that little church? If so, they were burned. The screen which divided the nave from the choir was destroyed, and the pulpit was placed to face the north. The choir was converted into a schoolroom, and the little churchyard, where for hundreds of years the holy dead had been laid to rest, was used as a playground. Of all the monastic buildings, only the castle and

the church were spared. The Reformers averred that the monks stole away all the books and registers of the parish, while others say that the men who saw iniquity in stone and lime could not fail to see it also in the written memorials of a discarded priesthood, and those memorials perished by their hands. In any case the memorials are gone, and but for the Liber de Melros the doings of the monks of Mauchline are unrecorded. A little of the land had been sold before the Reformation, but the bulk of it was annexed by the Crown and gifted at the pleasure of the Sovereign.

A new order of things dawned upon the little church. A reader read to the people from an English Bible. They must listen well, for by-and-by they will be catechised. The former services had consisted principally of praise and prayer. Now there was a long sermon. How interesting even in their novelty those first sermons must have been to the villagers, who listened to the utterances of the minister as if he were inspired! There can be but little doubt that the people were in love with their new religion, for by-and-by when persecution came they were willing to endure all things rather than forswear the faith that was in them.

Not many years passed before trouble fell upon the Church, this time from a new enemy - not Romanism but Episcopacy. We wonder if the brave men who went to their death at that time rather than desert the form of religion that seemed to them the true one, did so solely for the sake of their consciences, or if a rankling sense of the injustice of the thing did not do much to inspire their courage. What did it really matter to them whether a minister read a devout prayer or composed one as he prayed? Was Presbyterianism so much dearer to them than Episcopacy? But to have it dinned in their ears, "You *must* go to hear certain men, you *must* pray after a certain fashion, you *must* worship as the King commands you," was sufficient to call up all the latent strength of will or obstinacy, or dourness (call it what you may), of the Scottish character. Those men felt that their consciences were not under control of the King, that it was the birthright of a man to worship his God in the manner which he chose. It was not so long since their necks had been freed from another yoke; they would fight to the bitter end before they submitted to this. The intelligence of the country was insulted also by the ordination of a set of ignorant men as curates - lads taken from the plough in many cases, set, in all the arrogance of unwonted power and uncultured minds, over a whole parish. It was more than Scottish men and women could stand, and when they discovered that the fight must be to death or victory, they chose the alternative and were not afraid to die in their cause. It showed the grit of the men of the times, and of the women also, who were every whit as heroic.

Mauchline was in the very centre of the Covenanting district, and came in for its quota of martyrs. In 1647 a battle between the King's troops and the Covenanters was fought at Mauchline Moor, and the Covenanters on that occasion, according to some chroniclers, were victorious; but according to others there was really little victory on either side to boast about. Nearly twenty years afterwards, in 1666, Mauchline Moor again beheld a warlike sight when the Nonconformists of the west country were reviewed there before the battle of Pentland Hill. In 1685, during the reign of the unhappy James VII of Scotland, five men were apprehended in Mauchline and put to death on the Town's Green, or Loan, without even the pretence of a trial. The names of the men were: - Peter Gillies, John Bryce, Thomas Young, William Fiddison, and John Bruning. On the spot where they were executed a monument was raised with the following inscription: -

Blood Dumbarton, Douglas and Dundee,
 Moved by the Devil and the Laird of Lee,
 Dragged these five men to death with gun and sword:
 Not suffering them to pray nor read God's word,
 Owing the work of God was all their crime,
 The eighty-five was a saint-killing time.

In 1830 a new monument was erected in honour of the martyrs and the above inscription was carefully copied upon it. The second stone was an exact replica of the first. In 1885 a handsome obelisk, of Ballochmyle freestone, was erected on the spot.

John Ross, another Mauchline man, suffered martyrdom and a stone is erected to his memory in the Laigh Kirkyard of Kilmarnock. In the churchyard of Mauchline there is a memorial stone to James Smith, another martyr, who was shot or otherwise wounded, by Captain Inglis at the Bank of Burnane. A little story is

told of Guthrie, the minister of Fenwick, and Captain Paton, an illustrious martyr who sleeps in Greyfriars Churchyard, Edinburgh, and to whom a beautiful memorial stone is erected in the churchyard of Fenwick. Mr Guthrie and Captain Paton visited Mauchline for the purpose of celebrating the Lord's Supper with a party of Covenanters. They met in a quiet, secluded spot in the fields where they thought there was but little fear of interruption, but in the midst of their devotions they were surprised by General Middleton and a party of soldiers. Fortunately, the Earl of Loudoun, who knew Guthrie well (for Guthrie had lived in his house as tutor to this son, Lord Mauchline), was with the General, and he begged of him to allow the Covenanters to disperse. It was agreed to, but next day there were again surprised and a skirmish ensued.

After the Persecution there is nothing outstanding in the history of the Church of Mauchline. Its pulpit was filled by a succession of men, of whom some had much talent and business capacity and served the Church in Church Courts and Presbyteries; others were of quiet nature, and performed the work of the parish and were little heard of outside. A lurid light is thrown on the later ecclesiastical work in Mauchline by the lashing satires of Burns. That the clergy and sessions of the Kirk of Scotland had become irksome in the extreme in their inquisitiveness and in their continual penalties is not to be denied, but it surely may be conceded that these men sought to do their duty according to their lights. The "Holy Fair" is a truly repulsive picture of a great spiritual occasion. The picture is highly coloured, doubtless for artistic effect, but if it even approaches the truth, it was high time that such a style of celebrating a hallowed institution was done away with. We must remember, however, that the eye sees only what is given by the personality of the individual to see, and Burns, for the moment, saw only the abuses of the institution. That there was a total absence of the spirituelle on such an occasion no one will be ready to believe. "Daddy Auld" whom Burns satirises was a faithful, hard-working and conscientious man, though perhaps a little censorious and unyielding. Had Burns not come under the discipline of the church his pictures of the church life in his time might not have been quite so bitter.

We copy a fragment of one of Mr Auld's sermons which was preserved in manuscript and introduced into Dr Edgar's book on church life. It gives an idea of the style of preaching in the kirk of Mauchline a hundred years ago. The text is: "His servants shall serve Him and they shall see his face." Under one of the heads of application Mr Auld remarks: - "What has been said will suffice to reprove those who do not serve God on earth, yet hope to serve Him in heaven. This is inconsistent with common sense and reason, and the more unaccountable in rational creatures that no man is so foolish and unreasonable with respect to the affairs of his life. None hope to reap where they did not sow, none of us will pretend to be fit to speak in a language which we never learned, and if we hope to be fit to be employed in any valuable art or calling, we know we must serve an apprenticeship and pass through a proper course of education in order thereunto. Know, then, that this life is a sort of seed time or apprenticeship, for eternity; and believe that the plenty of the harvest does not more depend upon the right improvement of the seed-time, nor the dexterity and success of the artist upon his application and diligence when an apprentice, than does our happiness hereafter upon our good behaviour now, or our fitness for serving God in heaven upon our care to serve Him on earth. Let none, then, who habitually neglect to serve God on earth, and have no delight in the exercises and places of his worship here below delude themselves with the vain hope of ever entering into the heavenly sanctuary and of serving God there, for we have shewn that both the constitution of nature and the constitution of God forbid this."

III.

CIVIL HISTORY - POST-REFORMATION

In the year 1631 the parish of Mauchline was diminished in size. The large extent of land now known as the parish of Muirkirk originally belonged to Mauchline, but was disjoined at that date. Five years later it was still further lessened by the disjunction of another portion which now forms the parish of Sorn. The diminished parish of Mauchline is about eight miles in length and from four to ten miles in breadth, containing about twenty-four square miles. It is surrounded by the parishes of Craigie, Galston, Sorn, Auchinleck, Ochiltree, Stair, and Tarbolton. In general appearance it is undulating, well-wooded, and picturesque. The range of hills, called the Longridge of Kyle, runs through the parish. Mauchline Hill, part of the range, terminates in the still higher hill of Skeoch in Tarbolton parish. From Mauchline Hill the view is one of the finest and most extensive in the West of Scotland. From the ridge, a thousand feet above sea level, the sloping, undulating, and flat landscape can be seen in all its beauty. In the south the prospect terminates only with a range of hills - Cairnsmuir and others of Galloway - and Arran like a peerless princess rises stately in the west. The coast of Cantyre is seen on a clear day, and to the north and north-west glimpses can be had of the giants Jura and Ben Lomond, and other mountains of the western Highlands, when their high Majesties have not gone to sleep and covered their heads with caps of mist. In Spring the fresh greens and yellows of trees and hedges and grass, and the dull red of ploughed fields are a continual feast of beauty. In Summer the colouring has changed to a deeper, more uniform green, and the white farmhouses are set like pearls in the verdure. In Autumn the yellow and browns and golden tints again transform the scene and a grey haze dims the distance. But in Winter, when snow has fallen and an infrequent, white mist fills the valleys, when farmhouses with tall evergreen firs planted about them stand out from the white background or seem to rest on fleecy clouds, it is then that the most striking, most beautiful view is had from Mauchline Hill. It is like a picture from a dream, a mirage that must fly as we approach.

In 1606 the town of Mauchline was made a burgh of barony; formerly it held the rank of burgh of regality. Unfortunately, at the burning of the Register House in Edinburgh, about a hundred and fifty years ago, the charter was destroyed and has not been renewed. Mr Auld, then minister of the parish, laments in the statistical account which he wrote about a hundred years ago, the loss of the burghal charter and hence of the resident magistrate, for there was much disorderly conduct which ought to have been repressed. However, more than two hundred years ago, when Mauchline had a resident baron-bailie it did not seem as if it were much the better of the possession. There is an instance in the Session-records of a quarrel which arose between two brothers called Mershall, and, as is often the case when members of the same family disagree, the quarrel was a very bitter one. From words they proceeded to blows, and despite their position in the little town, the one being a "hottar" and the other a merchant, they did not hesitate to make a public exhibition of themselves by a stand-up fight. A small crowd gathered, among its numbers being John Richmond, the bailie of the burgh. No attempt seems to have been made to separate the combatants, even the burgh-bailie looking on complacently at a fight which was not a sham, but a conflict only ended with the utter discomfiture of one of the brothers, bruised and bleeding, and unable to raise himself from the ground. John Richmond calmly looked on the while and made no movement in any way, but seems to have occupied himself in taking mental notes as a possible witness before the Session. It happened in the days of the Covenanters, in the midst of a Covenanting district, when different conduct could reasonably have been expected from all parties. But such a squabble, even then, was not at all uncommon, as the Session-records abundantly testify.

It is almost impossible to separate civil and ecclesiastical history of two hundred years ago. Ministers were looked upon as moral policemen, and the state of the parish was given as proof of the efficacy, or otherwise, of the minister and Kirk-session. The elders were really like amateur detectives, and saw that the parishoners kept timely hours (hence the phrase "elders' hours"), did not drink unduly, and refrained from swearing, fighting, and brawling; they also ferretted out cases of scandal. That the branks and the jugs were frequently placed at the door of the kirk shows the power of civil punishment which the Kirk-sessions possessed. But their civil power went even further, for the fines they imposed were numerous, and were used for the upkeep of the church. After the Reformation excommunication from the Church meant confiscation of goods and chattels, but by an Act of Parliament passed soon after the Revolution "No civil penalty such as escheat of movables or caption, doth now follow on the sentence, so that the liberty and estate of Church members are not endangered by it, nor do they depend upon Churchmen."

Baillie says that "even when excommunication inferred civil penalties very few excommunicated persons fell into the State's hands to be troubled with civil inconvenience." Theoretically sessions had no civil powers, but the imposition of fines was of constant occurrence. By electing civil magistrates as elders a kind of legal countenance was sometimes put upon the usage.

The most extraordinary stretching of the powers of the Church on record is in the case of a murder in the parish of Mauchline in the year 1642. Mungo Campbell of Netherplace was summoned to appear before the Presbytery of Ayr for the unnatural murder of his cousin, John Campbell of Mossdavil (Mossgeil?). Nearly a year elapsed before Mungo expressed his willingness to give satisfaction to the Presbytery, and even then only on the understanding that his life should not be endangered. It was not until three years afterwards that he received the sessional sentence, when "*compeired Mungo Campbell of Netherplace in the habit of sack-cloth and in all humilitie confessed the unnatural murther and killing of John Campbell, his cousin-german.*" Mungo seems to have been a thorough reprobate, for he took the opportunity of confessing at the same time various other sins of which he was accused. For all his shortcomings he was commanded to "*compeir in the habit of sack-cloth in the kirk of Mauchline in the place of public repentance two Lord's days.*" After giving such token of penitence he was further ordained by the Presbytery to give the same signs of repentance in the kirks of Ochiltree, Galston, and Tarbolton, and again to appear before the Presbytery in the like habit of sack-cloth. When Mungo had obeyed all these orders he once more presented himself before the minister and Kirk-session of Mauchline, and no further notice seems to have been taken of the matter.

The only plea which the Kirk-session and Presbytery could possibly advance for such a stretch of its functions was the unsettled state of the civil government at the time. But even that is only an excuse, not a justification, and although family feuds were common and often resulted in bloodshed, such a palliation even as that may have been then considered, was not brought forward.

The Session-records give many curious peeps at the life of those times: -

Oct. 13th, 1672 - *The qlk day compeiring Jean Edward, and partly by her own confession, and partly by witnesses yat were sworn, was convict of frequent scolding, cursing, swearing, and fighting with her husband, Hew Smyth, and beating of him; grupon she was ordained to be rebuked publickly and suspended from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.*

One wonders if Jean's husband, Hew Smyth, who spells his name in such an aristocratic way, did not retaliate or if he submitted tamely to the tender attentions of his Amazonian wife! The Session had no rebuke for him, so he seemed at least to have the sympathy of the court on his side.

Women then were surely stronger than now or men weaker or more cowardly. Records of women chasing men and toning them to the effusion of blood, or "flyting," which they seemed to have considered as bad, are quite common. Perhaps the women were so much down-trodden that when their passions were aroused they were really half-mad and men were frightened for them. But life was much coarser then than now in every particular. Sunday was strictly observed.

"May 13th, 1673 - *There is intimation to be made "the next Saboth that people ly not in yairds, nor in the field, or wander on the Saboths."*

August 15th 1680 - *Scandalous carriage on the Sabbath-day, such as flocks of children playing on the streets and in the churchyard, bearing of water, and the like, ordained to be reprov'd and forbidden after this by the minister.*

March 8th, 1785 - *It was decided that Jas. Miller and Margaret Tailer in Haughead, having entertained several people during service with meat and drink, should be "rebukit before the congregation."*

The third extract is a hundred years later than the two preceding but shows that the same strict observance of Sabbath ordinances was then enforced.

To call anyone a witch was a grave matter, two hundred years ago. One, John Reid, called the gudewife of Drumfork, a witch, as they quarrelled together and she belaboured him with her fists. The matter went

before the Session and John, who seems to have been a cautious man, said in his defence that he did not so accuse the gudewife but he had merely remarked that she lied *like* a witch! John should have been a lawyer.

A hundred years ago Aiton visited Mauchline, among other Ayrshire towns, and remarked upon it very unflatteringly. "The towns of Beith, Saltcoats and Mauchline," says Aiton, "are all extremely irregular, the streets narrow, very crooked, ill-paved, often dirty, and their general aspect mean." Of the churches, Aiton writes, naming Mauchline along with those of Stewarton, Dunlop and Largs, "they are so extremely contemptible that I trust the heritors will soon get them replaced with buildings better suited to a diving worship and their own opulence." At that time there were no less than twelve fairs in Mauchline every year. "All of them" (the Ayrshire fairs), says Aiton, "were held at some church, or where a church formerly stood." In Mauchline they were held at one time in the churchyard. The inhabitants of Mauchline a hundred years ago were characterised by Mr Auld, minister of the parish, as "sober, industrious people, charitably disposed, careful, and even punctual in attendance at church and on sacramental occasions." The reverend gentleman, however, goes on to say that in such a number there must be exceptions. We wonder if the minister thought of a young farmer among the exceptions, a "lad o' pairts" who had even then with stinging pen written of the sacramental gathering upon which Mr Auld looked with such favour, and held them up to a world-wide ridicule.

The golden age seems ever to lie in the past, Mr Auld writes: -

"The manner of living and dress is much altered from what it was fifty years ago. At that period, and for some time afterward, there were only two or three families in this parish who made use of tea daily. Now it is done by at least one-half of the parish, and almost the whole use it occasionally. At that period good two-penny strong ale and home spirits were in vogue, but now even people in the middling and lower stations of life deal much in foreign spirits, rum-punch, and wine. In former times the gentlemen of the county entered into a resolution to encourage the consumption of their own grain, and for that purpose to drink no foreign spirits. But in consequence of the prevalence of smuggling and the heavy tax laid on home made liquors, this patriotic resolution was either forgotten or abandoned. As to dress, about fifty years ago there were few females who wore scarlet or silks. But now nothing is more common than silk caps or silk cloaks, and women in a middling station are as fine as ladies of quality were formerly. The like change may be observed in the dress of the male sex, though perhaps not in the same degree."

Fifty years ago there were seven fairs during the year in Mauchline, and a horse race at the end of April. The people were well educated and intelligent and prospering in worldly matters. Spinning, weaving, tambouring, and sewing were among the sources of employment. There was also an extensive manufactory of wooden snuff-boxes, in which the better class of skilled workmen were well paid. The hinges of the oaken snuff-boxes of Mauchline manufacture were of a special intricacy and beautifully made.

The population is now about fifteen hundred. The box work still brings trade to the place, and the Ballochmyle quarries give employment to between two and three hundred men. A margarine factory has been established in the Haugh; and there is also manufacture of curling stones. The town is clean, with fairly wide streets, but far from picturesque in appearance. The country in the vicinity is beautiful.

iv.

THE CHURCH

Over the porch of the present handsome Parish Church of Mauchline there is the following inscription : -

This edifice,
Opened for the public worship 2nd August,
1829,
stands on the site of the old church,
which was built in the 12th century,
and, after having been in use for about
650 years,
was taken down in 1827.
A house of prayer for all people.
Built upon the Foundation
Of the Apostles and Prophets,
Jesus Christ Himself
Being the
Chief Corner Stone

The old church had served a long day, being built it is supposed, by the Monks of Melrose, to whom Walter Fitz Alan granted the lands of Mauchline in 1165. It seems almost a pity that such an ancient building should have been destroyed. Its day of usefulness was over, but as a relic of the long past it must have been full of interest to the antiquarian; and even of veneration, because of its age and associations, to the most unthinking. The site was the best possible for a parish church, being in the centre of the town and the centre of the parish, but probably few would have grudging a short walk to a new place of worship had it been considered proper to leave the old untouched. We cannot tell if such a proposal was even mooted. The building was old and inconvenient and small. When a new church was about to be built, the old site was considered the best, and so the little edifice was doomed. It was not a beautiful object. It had weathered the storm for hundreds of years. Generation after generation came and went within its walls, and the marks of time were heavy upon it. From a possession of monks and priests it became the church of the Reformers and the different classes of religionists adapted it to suit themselves. No record remains of its original appearance, but there are prints still in existence showing the church as it was shortly before its demolition. Dr Edgar in his admirable book on "Church Life in Scotland," gives a word picture of the old building: -

"The church was a long, narrow low-walled building, with a high, steep roof. For many a day previous to its demolition the ground outside the wall was in some places several feet above the level of the floor inside, and at the door on the south wall there was a flight of descending steps that led down into the area of the church. It was buttressed all round too with unsightly stair-cases, one in the centre of each gable and two against the north wall all leading to separate galleries within...."

Yet in its day, the day of its prime, three hundred and fifty years ago, it was considered as goodly and elegant a structure as the present church was considered to be in 1837. The historian Calderwood, in his account of Wishart's visit to Kingencleugh calls the church of Mauchline, "A tabernacle that was beautiful to the eye."

"Beautiful to the eye" the old church may have been three or four hundred years ago in the days of its original owners, but with the outside stairs, added after the Reformation, and shorn of its transepts and any interior decoration it may have possessed, it must have been far from picturesque, either externally or internally. The old prints of the church shew the trace of a large arch on the south wall as if a wing or transept had formerly been built at that place. But, although not picturesque, strictly speaking, the church was exceedingly quaint and old-world in its style. It was overshadowed by a gigantic ash whose growth must have been of centuries. Its "knock," as old session records call its clock, had a wooden face and hands, which were now and again a source of expense for repairing, but were rather unreliable in the matter of telling the time. The bell hung in a little belfrey on the steep roof, and was rung by means of a rope, fastened most probably to the tongue of the bell. A ladder was fixed against the wall from the top of one of the many stairs to the belfrey. The east end, or chancel, of pre-Reformation days was a

schoolroom whose door opened straight into the churchyard. Over the second room was the common loft of the church which was entered by the door at the top of one of the outside stairs. The loft at the west end of the church belonged to Auchinleck, and the minister's pulpit and the precentor's desk were set against the south wall, probably in opposition to pre-Reformation ideas also. Against the north wall were two small lofts separated by a window, one belonging to the patron, the Earl of Loudoun, the other to Ballochmyle. A tiny loft, an afterthought evidently, was built against the south wall in the little space left by the pulpit and precentor's desk and there in an erection, like a tent-bed, the Barskimming family sat in state. The area of the church was but small and the communion tables ran from east to west with pews along the passages on either side. But the tables and pews were not fixed there until 1775. Up till that time people who were not at the trouble of bringing their own stools, stood throughout the entire service.

Such was the old church of St. Michael of Mauchline. So it was in the days of Burns, of Gavin Hamilton, whose windows looked into the churchyard, of Bonnie Jean, of the lass o' Ballochmyle, and many others whom Burns immortalised and whose dust lies in the old churchyard. The grey mists of time have settled over the early history of the church; we see it as through a glass darkly. The search light of genius was turned upon the church life of Mauchline a hundred years ago; the notes in the fierce glare dance before our eyes and we can hardly see past them to the grandeur of the whole. But church life of those days was grand in its simplicity, and though marred by many human errors, and the old church of Mauchline was to many for hundreds of years, a centre of hallowed association.

The present parish church of Mauchline, as the inscription over the porch indicates, was opened in 1829. The old church was destroyed two years previously, and the interval must have been filled by the building of the present edifice. The church is a handsome building, in the Gothic style and built of Ballochmyle red sandstone. It is lighted by a double row of windows with pointed arches, and has a tower ninety feet in height. It is surrounded by an extensive churchyard, now closed by order of the Queen in Council, said churchyard being enclosed by high walls. The church is situated in the centre of the town and as it is large and substantial, and imposing in appearance with its high tower, it lends quite an air to the quiet little place. Behind the church stands a handsome mission or lecture hall, which was built within the last year or two. It is rather unfortunate that the new mission hall has hidden the old castle or priory from view, and to obtain a good look of it one has now to enter the garden of a private house.

Sometimes we are surprised by the good opinions that strangers form and express of our institutions or public buildings, but the people of Mauchline some time ago were startled in another way. Mrs Hawthorne, wife of the novelist, who visited the church in question, recorded her impression of it in "Notes on England" on her return to America. "Mauchline Kirk is as plain and homely as a house can be made," she wrote. We think the illustrious lady must have been a little confused in her mind when she wrote so of Mauchline Church, for it is one of the finest parish churches in the district. In the Statistical Account of 1837 it is called "the most elegant church" in this part of Ayrshire. The interior perhaps offended the notions of the American lady. It was bare, there is no doubt, but surely not unsightly. Its very simplicity might have appeared to her. The woodwork was unpainted, but beautifully white and clean. The pulpit was of the old three decker description, approached by a double flight of steps; there was no organ, and table-seats covered the area of the church.

Some years ago the interior of the church was entirely renovated. The old table seats were done away with, and ordinary pews took their place. An organ was built behind the pulpit, the canopy over the pulpit was taken down and the precentor's desk became a thing of the past. Gas was also introduced. The seats are still unpainted, but are far from unsightly; the pulpit, as formerly, is approached by a double flight of steps. In the porch stands the ornament which adorned the top of the canopy - the "burning bush" carved in oak. It is a fine piece of work, and has been adapted for use as the pedestal of the "plate" or offertory. In the corners of the galleries are little triangular pews with small three cornered benches or book boards in front, much affected by boys and girls at evening sermons. These are called the cock lofts. Why such a name has been given to them it is difficult to conjecture, unless it is because of their height - like roosting places. The front pews in the galleries belong to the principal heritors of the parish - Netherplace, Barskimming, Ballochmyle, Cairnhill, Catrine House, Rodinghead, and Auchinleck. The farmers on the various estates lay claim to the side seats of the area, but the pews in the centre are let to ordinary members. The organ has rather a curious history. It was made by an amateur, Mr Andrew of Barskimming Mill, for his own household. Mr Andrew was very musical and quite a mechanical genius. He took a long time to build the organ, as he only worked at it in the intervals of leisure from his regular trade. When he

went from home on business, he almost invariably brought back something towards the completion of his organ. His mill was situated on the Ayr, and the miller utilised the waters of the classic stream as the motive power for his organ. When it was completed he often joked about it and said "Burns sang o' the water o' Ayr, but I have made the water o' Ayr sing to me." Miller Andrew was a fervid Free Churchman but by the irony which Fate takes a delight in displaying, his organ found a resting place after his death within the walls of the Established Kirk.

The vestry of the church is in the tower and is approached by a narrow stair. Under the latticed window of the vestry there is an old form or stool insignificant to look at and almost black with age. Yet what a tale that simple piece of furniture could unfold! In the olden days every kind of fault was made a matter of public rebuke. If an unlucky wight tried to pass off a button as a collection, or a sixpence as a communion token, he was taken before the session and made to eat humble pie. On the following Sunday he might be seen on the stool of repentance bearing his punishment as best he might. If a man was convicted of stealing he appeared before the kirk session, the enormity of his sin was pointed out to him, and on Sunday he stood on the stool of repentance before all the congregation and expressed his penitence for his sins. If he were found cursing or swearing he had the same procedure to go through. If a woman of the Amazonian type had beaten her husband with too much zeal, she had to make a public display of repentance. For breaches of chastity the repentant sinners had to mount the stool clad in sackcloth. Even for irregular marriages the session imposed a fine and sometimes a public admonition, before the irregularly married were "received into society" again - not only apparently the society of the church, but to a respectable social standing. For all these purposes the stool under the window of the vestry of the modern parish church of Mauchline has been used. The publicity of former rebukes and tokens of penitence are long ago done away with, and well that it should be so. They were not conducive to a softened state of mind in the sinner nor yet in the interests of public morality. In a chest in the vestry are an old clock-face, and minute and hour hands. It is said they belong to the clock of the old church.

From the top of the tower a magnificent view is had over the undulating country which lies to the north and the wooded slopes which lead to the lovely banks of the Ayr.

The two churches of which Mauchline can boast, besides the Established, are the Free and the United Presbyterian. Both buildings have some pretensions to architectural beauty, but are much hidden from view by adjacent buildings.

The centenary of the U.P. congregation was celebrated in December last. It has a memorable history, which formed the subject of an interesting discourse by the pastor, the Rev. Wilson Baird. A striking incident told by him deserves to be here quoted. Speaking of the building of the old church, he said: - *"Shortly after the congregation commenced to build, the only quarry near the place was closed against them. Stones were then brought from the river, but that source was barred against them also. When taking down the old church, several of these boulder stones were come across, showing clear river origin. Stones were also brought from farms around - some of these were even carried on the backs of men to the building. I had the pleasure of conversing with one man who was present at the building of the old church in 1796. I refer to old Hugh Marr of Auchmillan Hill. He died the year I came to Mauchline, in 1875, and was the first member I lost by death. He was in his 96th year when I spoke to him and was a big lad of 16 in 1796. He remembered well the building of the church, the great enthusiasm, and the carrying of the stones. In the early days many of the members belonged to Catrine, there being no Secession church there until 1825. A Catrine woman hearing of the difficulties in securing stones for the church, received a very beautiful inspiration. She said she had no money, but she would give her hearth stone, and the stone was lifted from the hearth of this humble home and carted to Mauchline. Many of you remember the circular stone in front of the old church; that was the Catrine hearth stone. When the old church was taken down in 1884 this stone was found to be in such a fine state of preservation that it was re-hewn, and now occupies a prominent position as an ornamental stone in the front elevation of the church, almost beneath the cross."*

V.

THE CHURCHYARD

"Death is the crown of life.
Were death denied, poor man would live in vain.
Were death denied, to live would not be life.
Were death denied, even fools would wish to die.
Death wounds to cure. We fall, we rise, we reign."

The churchyard of Mauchline surrounds the church. Since the far days when the Cistercian monks erected the first church of the parish, the dead have been brought reverently and buried around the walls of their most holy place. The burying-place in pre-Reformation times was consecrated ground. Under the shadow of the church, where peace broods like a dove, the dead were laid with prayers and tears. Morning and evening, as chants and psalms of praise arose, the sound was wafted through the open doors, and fell closed in a long, long sleep, of pain stilled, of hungry hearts satisfied, of weary feet that had reached their bourne at last. For hundreds of years, while dynasties came and went, while one form of religion fell and another arose, when generation after generation lived out their brief day, and each in turn was mown down by the relentless reaper Death, there was no other burying place for this quiet little town. Gentle and simple mingled their dust under the shadow of the old church.

In 1883 a new cemetery was opened in Mauchline Moor, the moor in which the dragoons of Middleton and the yeomen of Clydesdale measured their strength two hundred and fifty years ago, the moor in which Wishart the Reformer, preached to a great concourse of people (three thousand, say contemporary historians) when he found the doors of the old church closed against him. The new burying place is therefore not without associations, but the old churchyard is a centre of classic ground and in-wrought with the history of the people for hundreds of years.

The oldest stone in the churchyard, whose lettering is still legible, bears the date 1644. In Dr Edgar's *Church Life*, it is called the oldest stone in the churchyard. But another stone has a prior claim to that distinction, although the lettering is now completely worn away. It is flat and imbedded in the earth. The care-taker - whose venerable appearance and lively manner are well known to every one in Mauchline and to many who have visited this little town, because of its associations with our national bard - took a note of the date before the letters had quite crumbled away. The date is 1549. In proof of this he shows his note and with it a fragment of the stone which he wrapped up with the note and placed carefully away together. Though that is far from proof positive there is little likelihood of any mistake on the old man's part or as little likelihood of any intentional wish to mislead.

It is often a matter of comment that there are so few very old stones in our churchyards, and especially so few bearing a pre-Reformation date. The reason is not far to seek. There were few stones raised as memorials before the era of the Reformation, and even for many years afterwards it was illegal, without a special permit, to do so. At first, little stones were erected by some people, one at the head and another at the feet, in the burying-place; others again raised a stone, but placed no inscription upon it - the stone marked the place, and that was all. But there is another stone in Mauchline churchyard whose history goes still further into the past if conjecture has hit upon the truth. It is a large, heavy, narrow stone, shaped not unlike a coffin, lying flat upon the sod, or partly imbedded in the earth. It has no inscription, but at one time there has been a little carving which even yet bears a strong resemblance to a sword or swords. If that is really so the inference is that it is the resting place of one of the Knights Templar, who were not only monks, but soldiers as well, and whose graves are marked in that fashion. In the old churchyard of Prestwick there are several stones of the same description marking the graves of those war like monks. Their order originated at the time of the Crusades and continued for about two hundred years, being suppressed in the fourteenth century. They have left their mark in various places in our country. They had a settlement at Temple in Midlothian, and another at Kirkliston; so near as Prestwick there is a tradition of a settlement which local names seem to bear out. One of those men may have died at the priory of Mauchline and have been buried in the old churchyard. Mr Marshall the care-taker says that an antiquarian assured him that the gravestone in question belonged to the thirteenth century. The probability is that it marks the grave of one of the Knights of the Holy Temple of Jerusalem.

The churchyard of the present day is kept in fairly good order but without any superabundance of beauty. Many old stones are sinking into the ground and many others are crumbling away piecemeal, but that may be the fault of the families to whom they belong. The grass is kept short and the walks which intersect the place are free from weeds. There are few flowers or shrubs and the few which one may see are planted by private individuals. At one time an immense ash stood in the centre of the churchyard. It was quite a feature of the town, and it is a matter of wonder that Burns had nothing to say about it in his Holy Fair. It must have been the growth of many centuries. It was blown down by a terrific gale on the 27th of February, 1860. Six feet from the ground it measured fifteen feet in girth. After its fall it was cut up and yielded 200 cubic feet of timber. It was photographed as it lay and there are still a few copies of the photo to be seen in the town or district. A wall surrounds the churchyard except where a dwelling-house has formed the boundary and has not been removed. Such a house is that belonging at one time to Gavin Hamilton, the friend of Burns. The back windows of the house still look into this God's acre. Another was Nance Tannock's public-house, with a flight of steps leading from the second storey, behind, into the churchyard. A railed wall has been built in front of the steps.

Although Mauchline churchyard is carefully kept now-a-days it was not always so, and in that particular it was far from singular. The reaction from consecrated burying-grounds probably came at the time of the Reformation, but the pendulum of public opinion surely swung too far in the opposite direction when churchyards became places of utter neglect or worse. It was a custom to build houses to the edge of the churchyard, the back doors of the houses opening into it, and all the outhouses, without any protecting wall, being fully exposed to view. As if that were not sufficient, cattle were turned loose into the churchyard to pasture there, and in Mauchline the climax seemed to have been reached when part of the old church was used as a school, and the boys made the ancient burying place their playground. In Mauchline the churchyard being thus open to all, was made a shortcut between one part of the town and another. Fairs were often held in churchyards long ago, and Mauchline, with its twelve fairs every year, was not a whit better in that respect than its neighbours. Many of the people have found coins in the churchyard, and an old gentleman of the neighbourhood had a small collection, which had been found at various times and by various people in that spot.

Mr Auld, the minister of the parish, who died more than a hundred years ago, the "Daddy Auld" of Burns, was the first to institute a reform in that disgraceful state of matters. The kirkyard grass was an old time perquisite of the minister, but successive clergymen in Mauchline had allowed their claim to fall into abeyance. Mr Auld enforced his claim, and turned out the cattle. The reverend gentleman was careful to explain that it was not for the worth of the grass, but that the burying place should be kept in better order. The money obtained each year for the grass was only a trifle, but as it was Mr Auld gave it for the behoof of the poor of the parish. In 1774 *"a complaint was formally given in by the session to the heritors against certain feuars for encroaching on the churchyard with new buildings and middensteads."* Five years later it was decreed that every person with doors opening into the churchyard must shut them up or a wall would be built before them, the power to do such being given by an Act of Parliament of about that date. The last decree had not been enforced evidently, for Nance Tannock's stair still led into the churchyard, and the present care taker's wife, in her younger days, descended the steps every washing day and bleached her clothes among the tombstones. In 1789 the schoolhouse was removed. Up till the days of Mr Auld, and indeed till after his time, the holy Communion was held in the churchyard. Tents were erected for the occasion as a protection from the weather. It was the custom for people to come from far and wide to such services, and sometimes thousands of people assembled. As many as six, or seven, or even more ministers took part, and the service lasted the whole day. It was such a Communion service that Burns held up to everlasting ridicule by his "Holy Fair." In Galt's "Annals of the Parish" there is a quaint little picture of the same custom; "Now, this is all that happened in that year (1760) worthy of being mentioned, except that at the Sacrament, when old Mr Kilfuddy was preaching in the tent, it came on such a thunder plump that there was not single one stayed in the kirkyard to hear him; for the which he was greatly mortified and never came after to our preachings."

Mr Auld certainly did a good work for the churchyard. Public opinion all over the country was being educated to a higher standard in the matter, and the worthy minister of Mauchline, to say the least of it, in that particular certainly kept up with the times. Even yet in many country churchyards there is great room for improvement.

As has already been mentioned, the churchyard of Mauchline is classic ground. Not only was it the scene of the "Holy Fair," but many other places intimately associated with the life of the poet are within a stone's throw, and many of his friends lie beneath its sod. The young farmer of Mossgiel who was such a familiar figure towards the end of last century in the narrow streets of this little country town, has turned the eyes of the world upon it, and made its churchyard a centre of pilgrimage. Here are the windows of Gavin Hamilton's house overlooking the graves of many of his contemporaries. It was in that house that Burns passed many of his happiest hours with his friend, the young lawyer, and it was in one of these rooms that he and Bonnie Jean were married. There is the little window of the tiny kitchen but a few yards from the churchyard gate, where Burns and Jean Armour took up house together. Nance Tannock's public house is still a boundary of the churchyard, and the steps which Burns doubtless descended many a time are still there. The little room facing the street, in which he wrote the poetical epistle to Mr Adam of Craigengillan is now filled with relics of the poet and occupied by his enthusiastic admirer, Sandy Marshall. Opposite another gate of the churchyard is "Poosie Nancy's" public house, the scene of the cantata of the Jolly Beggars. All around are places familiar as household words from the writings of the poet. From the church tower Mossgiel can be seen, and Ballochmyle is not far off, whose "bonny lass" the poet immortalised. Here in the churchyard is the burying-place of the Armour family. Although Jean, the poet's wife, is not laid to rest here, four of her children and of Burns are laid beside her father. Only one of the children has an epitaph; it is printed on a flat stone which covers the remains:

Elizath Riddell
 Daughter of Robert Burns and
 Jean Armour. Born at Dumfries
 2nd Nov. 1793
 Died at Mauchline in the autumn
 1795

Outside of the enclosure belonging to the Armours there is a nameless grave, where James Humphrey lies. Some old people of Mauchline still remember him. He used to haunt the Loudoun Arms in the old stage coaching days and amused the passengers as they waited with playing upon his fiddle. He was a clever man in his day and often crossed swords in intellectual matters with the poet. Burns wrote his epitaph, and poor Humphrey carried the opprobrium of the nickname to the grave with him. It is perhaps as well that his name is unrecorded in stone. Someone would not have inscribed upon it the satirical lines of his one time friend. Another unmarked grave of a contemporary of Burns is that of Noble, the schoolmaster. Under a flat stone lies John Richmond, a writer in Mauchline, a great friend of the poet and whom some Mauchline people still remember. He died in 1846, aged 81 years. In his younger days he was very fond of practical joking, a form of amusement now happily much gone out of fashion.

An ancient burying place belongs to the Gibson family. Two members who did not add to the lustre of the name are buried there, but without a record on the stone. These are Agnes Ronald, wife of George Gibson, and their daughter, Jessie, known to all the world as "Poosie Nancy" and "Racer Jess."

In a quiet corner of the churchyard, under the scrutiny of Gavin Hamilton's windows lies the Rev. Wm. Auld, a faithful, upright minister and a truly good man, although his fame has not been embellished by the author of the Holy Fair. The inscription in beautiful lettering on the table stone which covers his resting place is as follows: -

The Reverend
 William Auld
 Minister of the Gospel at
 Mauchline
 Died 12th December 1791
 In the fiftieth year of his ministry
 And 81st of his age.
 His Mother Margaret Campbell
 Died June 1759
 And Jean, his only sister
 Died March 1782
 Who are all buried here.

The opposite angle of the churchyard might almost be designed the "ministers' corner" so many of the former incumbents lie there - Rev. John Tod, who was married to a daughter of Gavin Hamilton, Rev. Wm. Maitland Wodrow, a son of the minister of Tarbolton and grandson of the historian, and the Rev. Archibald Reid.

The poet's "bonny Mary Morrison" lies not far from where Gavin Hamilton fills a nameless grave. "Holy Willie" lies beside his father and mother, Andrew and Jean Fisher of Montgarswood, but his name is unrecorded on the family stone. The son of Holy Willie inherited his father's nickname, and Sandy Marshall (care taker) was in his Sunday School class.

The old stone already referred to, with date 1644, has lettering placed around it - Annable Reid 1644. memento mori. James Gibsonne. Janet Primrose 1677 - and the following Latin inscription which was renewed in 1883:

Monstrat hic lapis
Mortem sibi omnes
Homines adsistere
Nec interesse
Quod iis commoder
Abundant mundana
Felicitatesque.

Freely translated-"This stone shows that death claims all men, nor doth it avail them that earthly good and happiness abound."

An old lady of ninety five lies near the ministers' corner - Miss Kennedy of Dalgarnock. It was her sister who inspired "Ye Banks and Braes." When Miss Kennedy was ninety one she had the misfortune to fall down a stair and break her arm. "It was a blessing it was not my ankle," she said, "or it might have lamed me for life."

On a quaint old stone-

This is the Burial place
Of John Wilson of Hol-
lows who died June 9th
1740, Age 60 years.

A stone with the date 1750 has the somewhat cynical Latin motto - "Hodie mihi, cras tibi. (Today for me, tomorrow for you).

A simple inscription on a modern tombstone is to the memory of a worthy man-

John Strathdee,
Banker, Mauchline,
Who died 20th Oct. 1865,
Aged 67 years.

The Ballochmyle burying place was formerly a vault, but the roof and sides have been taken away and now it is simply a railed enclosure with a wall forming one side of the square. On the wall there are many tablets, surmounted by the Ballochmyle coat of arms, indicating the various members of the family who lie beneath. Another memorial headed by a coat of arms is

Sacred
To the memory of
Lieutenant General
Sir Jeremiah Dickson,

Knight Commander of the Bath
And Colonel
Of her Majesty's 61st Regiment.
Died 17th March 1848
Aged 73

The Campbells of Netherplace have a railed enclosure, and also the Campbells of Auchmanoch, who have for a motto - "Byde my tyme."

The most common names in the churchyard are Hamilton, Ronald, Young, Gibson, and Lambie. The following pretty conceit is on a stone not otherwise remarkable:

Ere sin could blight, or sorrow fade,
Death came with friendly care,
The opening buds to heaven conveyed
And bade them blossom there.

On another is the following summary of things seen and unseen:

My friends in Christ that are above,
Them will I go and see;
And those, my friends, in Christ below
Will soon come after me.

Over a mother's grave there is a tribute:

As a friend she was steady and sincere:
As a wife and mother, tender and affectionate.

A sorrowing husband writes of his wife:

One of Nature's gentlewomen.
As wife, daughter, sympathiser with the unhappy,
She did outstrip all praise
And made it halt behind her.

The last two lines are evidently a quotation; but from what?

There are really, without figure of speech, "sermons in stone," and Mauchline churchyard supplies one of them. It is an address inscribed on the back of a memorial stone, the front bearing a long list of names of those who lie beneath: -

These, if they are now among the redeemed family, and it is consoling to hope that they are, then they have happily escaped from the troubles of our world. A world which as yet sorely suffers under the curse inflicted wholly by the deep depravity of its own population - a depravity incurable except by the forgiveness of sins flowing to the race through the revealed method of mercy. A forgiveness to the benefit of which all are cordially invited, all are made heartily welcome. Unto you first, God having raised up His Son, Jesus, sent Him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

There is an absence of old stones carved in high relief with symbols of death and trades of the departed. Probably they existed at one time but the mere fact of the churchyard being a playground for school children, in an age when such things were not revered, would imply their destruction.

What a democrat is death! Here together lie the great and the low, the noble and the ignoble, the old and the young, the rich and poor, priests and people, and the world's outcasts, and even one who with unholy hand took from him the life which was the greatest gift of God.

VI.

ROBERT BURNS

Though he was bred to kintra wark,
And counted was baith wight and stark
Yet that was never Robin's mark.

When William Burness, with his wife and family, moved from Mount Oliphant to Lochlea, in the parish of Tarbolton, Robert, his eldest son, was but a mere lad with character practically unformed, although at a critical stage, and his great poetical gifts still undeveloped and unsuspected. True, he had written a set of verses when he was but fifteen, to a young girl who had wrought beside him through the long harvest time, but that had attracted no attention, nor was it likely that it should. Rhyming is no unusual accomplishment for young people, and there is little or nothing in this first effusion of the poet to distinguish it in any way from the production of any other tyro in literature.

Near all the birds will sing at dawn,
And yet we do not take the chaffering sparrow
For the holy lark.

But in this instance it was the "holy lark," making his first effort to sing, preening his wings for his first flight into the blue!

William Burness died at Lochlea, and was buried in the little Kirkyard of Alloway, and with his death began a new era in the life of his family. Robert was then twenty five, a strapping young fellow, well educated for his position, ambitious, a great reader, prone to argument, rather a dandy as regards dress, fond of society and well fitted to shine there. His spirits were very variable, now in the heights of poetic ardour, and again in the depths of despair. The seven years had not been uneventful to him. He had had many ups and downs, hours and days of gladness and sadness. In literature he had progressed a little, had written a few of his songs and some of his shorter poems, these latter full of despair at his own short comings and sins, or of a dim, vague, hungry yearning after truth - a reflex of his mind which, to his young ardent nature, made life for the time a veritable Gehenna. The farm of Lochlea had not proved a paying speculation. The whole family toiled and moiled, and instead of increasing the store of worldly goods, the little they had almost melted away. At the father's death Robert and Gilbert paid off all debts, left the ill fated Lochlea, and began farming again but a short distance off, at Mossgiel, in Mauchline parish. This farm must have held out better prospects for the family, but it is difficult to see where the improvement lay. The farm was fully rented, undrained, with cold, bare land, and a very small house, and the capital of the young farmers was almost nil. But hope dies hard, and at five-and-twenty, although the sky may be overcast for a little while, the roseate dawn is not far behind and the light has not yet faded into that of common day. So Robert and Gilbert manfully set to work, and the mother and the daughters were not a whit less hard-working, and a new start was made.

The farm-house of Mossgiel was a little cottage, well built of stone, although Burns in his "Vision," with poetic license, calls it "the auld clay biggin." It belonged to Gavin Hamilton, the Mauchline writer, and he sub-let it to the Burns family. It had a but and ben, or room and kitchen, on the ground floor and three attics above, two of them approached by a wooden stair or trap ladder from the passage between the two lower rooms. The third room was reached from the kitchen, and was used as a lumber closet. The two others were bedrooms, and one of them was shared by Robert and Gilbert. It was a little room, barely furnished, with a skylight in the sloping roof, and under it a table with a drawer. That table and drawer were the study of the poet. The kitchen was the family living room and had built-in beds, as is still too commonly the custom, and the spence or parlour had fixed in beds also. The roof was very low, and could easily be touched while standing. The door of the spence was opened in a very primitive fashion. A piece of string was hung through a hole in the wood, and when that was pulled it lifted the sneck inside. Such was the new home of the Burns family: the mother, "a wee, boo'd body," sitting often down to rest by the kitchen fire, and Isobel, the youngest daughter, taking the leading part in the housework.

The old farm house has long ago disappeared and only part of a wall, built into the commodious two-storey building which has taken its place, remains as a relic of this dwelling-place of the poet. A high

hawthorn hedge in front of the house is said to have been planted by Robert Burns, and it is at least certain that it was planted in his day. It is carefully treated, and has reached the great height of twelve feet. When the old house was taken down, hero-worshippers carried away much of the rotten timber and even of the stones, and little keepsakes were manufactured from part of the wood at Mauchline Boxwork.

Robert set himself to work at Mossgiel with many good resolutions, but on Gilbert, the more silent and thoughtful but less brilliant of the brothers, the heavy end of the burden fell. Robert was too fond of society to spend long quiet evenings in the little farm-house, and Mauchline soon knew full well the figure of the handsome young farmer of Mossgiel. Mauchline had a weekly market in those days and twelve fairs in the year, and was a rendezvous for farmers from far and wide. Robert, as the elder of the brother farms, and as the one to whom the task would be the more congenial, attended the many fairs and market days in the interest of the farm and to his own pleasure. On the whole Robert enjoyed his life intensely. There were many dark places in his life at this time, episodes which, if we face them fairly, fill us with more than pity, and the "heart-bowed down" was no exceptional condition with Robert Burns. But to the highly strung nature of the poet there were compensations - every woman was beautiful, every jest was a joy, every detail of life was a study, every beauty of Nature a prize, there was a pathos in the most common events. As he ploughed the stiff land with his four horses and his gaudsman, or boy, to drive and goad them on, he had still an eye for the "tim'rous beastie," and he could hardly bear to crush the "wee, modest crimson tipped floo'er."

The four years that Robert Burns spent at Mossgiel were the most intellectually alive of his life. Under the little attic window the table drawer gradually filled with the work of the poet, and Isobel, his young sister, used to creep up many a time, when no one saw her, to read the accumulating manuscripts of her gifted brother. It was during those years he wrote *The Cottar's Saturday Night*, *The Vision*, *The Mare*, *The Daisy*, *The Epistle to a Young Friend*, *The Twa Dogs*, *The Holy Fair*, *The Ordination*, *The Unco Guid*, *Holy Willie*, *Man was Made to Mourn*, *Despondency*, *Ruin*, *A Winter Night*, and many others. From grave to gay his muse wandered, reflecting the man for the moment. From Mossgiel Burns went to Edinburgh and returned famous.

Mossgiel is beautifully situated. It stands on a ridge of hills between the valleys of the Ayr and the Cessnock and overlooks both. High hills in the distance form the boundary on every side. It is an ideal spot for a poet's home, and Burns must often have felt the beauty of it all, although in his day the love of beauty in scenery was practically undeveloped. Mossgiel was only a mile from Mauchline, and every step of the way and almost every street and house in the little town is associated with the poet. A little way from Mossgiel on the Mauchline Road "the lousy thorn" is still pointed out, and also "the drucken steps." At the triangle formed by the meeting of the Kilmarnock and Tarbolton roads the Cottage Homes are now well nigh toward completion, the tower forming a landmark for many miles. Little did Robert Burns think as he rode his faithful mare, Jenny Geddes, to and from the fairs and merry makings in Mauchline or Kilmarnock that one day such a monument to his name and fame should be raised on that well known spot!

The church has gone, the church in which Burns worshipped and was censured, and whose minister and session he caricatured and satirised. The churchyard is the same, the scene of the Holy Fair, though now surrounded by a wall. We can almost see the preaching tent, the lanches of scone and cheese carefully spread out on red handkerchiefs upon the tombstones, the stampede to the public houses near, the sly fun and flirtation, the mockery of it all! We can see the poet with cynical eyes noting everything and finding a fierce pleasure and self gratulation in hating and despising it. There is Gavin Hamilton's house, which had an entrance into the churchyard, and whose windows overlooked the strange scenes. Gavin was a friend of the poet, a man in good circumstances and well educated, a lawyer by profession. He had broken away from the "Auld Licht" party, and for the sin of "howkin' tatties" on the Lord's Day he was censured by the session. He carried the case to the Presbytery and the session's decision was over ruled, but the affair left a sting. The windows still look down upon the churchyard, but never again upon such scenes; and Daddy Auld, whose voice rang so loud in Burns's ear, is sleeping quietly under Gavin's windows, and Gavin himself, his wrongs righted and his passions stilled, lies not far away. It was in Gavin's house that Burns was married to Jean Armour after his long, miserable courtship. The room is still shown. A picture of the Cowgate as it was in Burns's day hangs upon the wall, and the portrait of Willie Patrick, a herd-boy at Mossgiel when Burns was farmer there, grandfather of the present tenant of the castle cottage, is set upon the mantelpiece. It is said to be the room in which Burns recited "The Calf," an

extempore piece upon a text from which he had just listened to a sermon. It is a piece altogether unworthy of Burns. From the window we can see the corner house in the Back Causeway where Burns and Jean began housekeeping. It was a longish, narrow room, with fixed in bed, with rather shaky floor now-a-days, but still a comfortable room. It was in Gavin's house that Burns first saw Highland Mary, then nurse to one of the writer's sons, and Burns, with true democratic spirit courted the maid while he visited the master. "Johnny Doo's" was almost opposite the church, now "built anew," as an inscription testifies. The Armour's house was at right angles with Johnny Doo's in the Cowgate. Burns talked with Jean from Johnny Doo's back windows, which overlooked her father's house. Poosie Nancie's house is quite near-the scene of the famous cantata. It is a two storey thatched building. The ancient kitchen is much altered. The roof is as low as in Burns's time, but the built in beds with doors in front have gone. The stone floor was worn into heights and hollows, and has been replaced by wood. The wide fireplace, with its great ribs, has become a thing of the past, but the "swee" of other days is still hanging. A quaigh is shown, a wooden drinking cup of the time of Burns, and a print of the Jolly Beggars, dedicated to the noblemen and gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt, and from which the study of one of the panels of the Burns Monument in Ayr was taken. The house where Bonny Mary Morrison lived is pointed out, the room in which the famous haggis was made and eaten, Nance Tannock's public house, and other places. Ballochmyle is not far off, embosomed in green trees, whose bonny, bonny lass Burns immortalised. We wonder if any modern "bonny lass" would have received such a song from an unknown poet (for so was Burns then) with any more favour than the young lady of a hundred years ago! We rather think not! And if the "bonny lass" has chanced to hear of Burns, it is a hundred chances to one if she had heard any good of him. The evil we do not only lives after us, but is far more talked of in our lifetime than any good deeds we may chance to perform.

Burns identified himself with the life at Mauchline. He enjoyed the society, and he mixed in every grade of it from the cultured home of the Hamilton's to the howff of the Jolly Beggars. It has been seldom that four years of a man's life have held so much. During the days of Burns's connection with Mauchline he had sounded the depths of human experience, and had been lifted to social heights and attained a fame which can only be described as phenomenal.

A hundred years have passed away, and Burns has made Mauchline a shrine of pilgrimage from all parts of the world.

If we may be permitted to analyse the work of the poet in however small and unpretentious a manner, we would say that it was because of his thorough knowledge of his subjects that he wrote so well. He did not go far a field; he stayed at home. He was the mouthpiece of the people. The griefs and joys of ordinary folks over ordinary events are what he wrote about in his Mauchline days, that which lay to his hand, subjects which filled his mind and dominated his heart. The homely life of the homely peasant is full of a rugged beauty and pathos when we have the eyes to see it, and Burns had the vision and the power to express his sightseeing. The legends of the countryside, the homely pleasures, the Hallowe'en, the rockin', are shown as in a vignette. What he loved he presented to us and covered with a new beauty and picturesqueness in the presentation; what he hated he held up to execration without biting words of scorn, and shams and hypocrisies fled before him as night-birds and unholy things fly before the clear eye of day.

Painter, take this lesson to thy heart,
That is best which liest nearest;
Trace from that thy work of art.

VII

VILLAGE CUSTOMS, STORES, & c.

The centre of the town of Mauchline may be said to be occupied by its church, and the buildings in the immediate vicinity are those the most historically attractive. The old castle or priory, with its lovely groined ceiling, and the castle cottage with its thick walls and Burns associations, are among the most interesting memorials of former days. On the lawn in front of the cottage there is a most magnificent tree, high and wide spreading - perhaps a contemporary of the famous ash which flourished for centuries in the churchyard. The castle and cottage and grounds by which they are surrounded belonged to the family of Hastings of Loudoun, and the title of Lord Mauchline was borne for many generations by younger sons. By the death of the late Marquis, the title of Marquis of Hastings became extinct. The eldest sister of the Marquis, Lady Edith, succeeded to the other titles, among them being Countess of Loudoun. Her husband, Charles Frederick Clifton, third son of Thomas Clifton, of Clifton, was afterwards created Lord Donington. Their eldest son, Charles Edward, succeeded his mother as Lord Loudoun. He is married, but has no family. His eldest son would take the title of Lord Mauchline. It is curious to note that the family has no possessions in Mauchline parish but the small piece of ground and buildings already mentioned. The famous minister, Guthrie of Fenwick, was tutor in his long past day to one of the Earl of Loudoun's sons, Lord Mauchline. His former pupil interceded for him with Middleton on one occasion when the General surprised a little conventicle near Mauchline which Guthrie was conducting.

But a little way off, at the Cross of Mauchline, stands a two-storey house of some small pretensions to architectural beauty. It was built by the Montgomeries of Eglinton and occupied by two ladies, members of the family. The house bears the date 1756. There is a large courtyard behind, reached by a wide, arched doorway and beyond that there was a large garden at one time, with a quaint little summer house at the end. The summer house still exists but is utilized as a workshop. In the days of stage coaching the tout of the driver's horn might have been heard twice a day from the front of the old family mansion. Its character had then changed and a more stirring life went on within its walls. Jamie Humphrey, a mason by trade, a clever tongued man and an intimate of Burns, haunted the house in the stage coaching days. The uncomplimentary epitaph written for him by Burns gave him a little notoriety, and strangers were often very liberal with him when he told them of his association with the poet. He was then a poor old man, living at Blackhill, and attracting attention to himself, first of all, by scraping upon a fiddle which he made no pretensions to play.

Mauchline jail stood behind the old church, a most unassuming little building which went the way of all things earthly long ago. An old man, still living, remembers being lodged in it for some trifling boyish misdemeanour. He managed to pick the lock and walked out, and no further notice was taken of the affair.

Some of the feu duties in Mauchline are very small; a shilling, or nine pence, is not uncommon, and some are even so low as to be only a penny, if called for. There is a legend in Mauchline to the effect that certain feu duties could not be exacted unless the superior came for them in all the glory of a carriage and *six!*

One of Daddy Auld's chairs is preserved in a house near the Cross of Mauchline. It is strong and substantial and in daily use. It is of oak, with three cornered seat and rounded back, the kind now so much sought after by antiquarians.

The feeling against dissent ran very high in Mauchline parish a hundred years ago, and the dissenters had quite as strong a feeling against the Established Kirk. Many of the farmers and country people thought nothing of walking a dozen miles to and from the place of worship of their choice. On the Rig at Auchlinleck there was a little church belonging to the Original Secession, called the Whig Kirk. Country people from about Mossgiel, Skeoch Hill in Tarbolton parish, and other paces in the neighbourhood walked to the Whig Kirk regularly every Sunday. They crossed the Lugar by a ford called Dijore ford. As the ford was sometimes pretty deep, one of the farmers made a point of taking there a horse and cart and giving a lift over to the women folks and children, and as many of the men as cared to accept of the help. Sometimes there was only a horse in waiting and the worthy farmer's wife would mount behind her husband and grasp him firmly round the waist until they had crossed the river. But that was not an

unusual style, for the farmer's wife of those days often accompanied her husband to market, seated behind him, on the rough farm horse, on a pillion. One time a young lass called Mally was sent to the ford with a horse for the church goers. A bonnet laird came riding by, and knowing the girl, stopped for a moment to talk to her.

"Hoo lang hae ye been here, Mally?", said the laird, thinking that the kirk folks were keeping her waiting. Mally had been away visiting for some time previously, and misunderstanding the question, replied "Sin' sax weeks afore Whitsunday, sir!"
Rather a long wait for poor Mally!

The women folks often walked barefoot through the country roads and lanes to church and only stopped before they reached the village to don their shoes and stockings. Children went to church constantly in Trilby fashion. One time a stalwart young farmer was trudging along to church, covering the ground in grand style. By-and-bye he came upon a little group of women folks carrying a baby, in long white christening robes. Now, even a young baby becomes a burden to weary arms, when mile after mile has to be traversed. Where the father of the child was, tradition says not, but the bright faced young farmer offered to carry the little tender piece of humanity for some distance along the road. His offer was gladly accepted and we can picture the little group in the bright spring sunshine, the young fellow altering his gait to suit the tired steps of the women folk and the little white rosebud of humanity tenderly and awkwardly held in his great, strong arms. He had to endure a little good natured chaff, as was only to be expected, and his retort was that the little lass might be his wife yet. Time passed on and the baby had become a tall lissome girl of seventeen. The farmer was still unmarried, but seemed to think he had waited long enough, and the words spoken in jest became true, for the dainty child he had carried to be christened became his life partner.

There were no hedges then, nor for long afterwards, and the country was thickly dotted over with cot-houses. In these lived the farm servants with their wives and families, or farmers in a very small way, who tilled only a comparatively few acres. Their houses were very small and very insanitary, with thatched roofs and white washed walls and the most primitive accommodation for man and beast. And yet they were picturesque in a kind of way and seemed as indigenous to the soil as the trees and flowers. These have been gradually done away with and the small holdings added to the larger farms as the leases ran out. The plough has passed over many such a lowly cottage home in Mauchline parish, and only a few garden flowers struggle hard for existence in the hedge roots to mark the spot, or an ash has been suffered to remain, the one tree which every cottar planted at his gable end for its wondrous power of keeping off the witches! As there were no hedges long ago, herd boys were in great request to look after the cattle and prevent them straying or mixing with the neighbours', and so it comes about that we read that at Mossgiel in the days of Robert Burns, when it was so hard to wring a living from the cold soil, they had no less than three herd boys in their already large household. The servants at the farms lived almost on an equality with their masters and mistresses, and indeed many of them, except for the fact that they were for the time servants, had as good a position as the farmer they worked for. In all likelihood they were sons and daughters of farmers in a small way, and at any time they might step again to their former position. Burns is constantly called the ploughman poet. In our day we think of a ploughman as a hired man servant at a farm. Burns only worked on his father's farm and at Mossgiel, which was taken in his own name and that of his brother Gilbert. To call him a farmer would be more correct than to speak of him as a ploughman.

The country life, though lacking many of the amenities which those who lived in towns constantly enjoyed, had many compensations. The amusements, though sometimes a little rough, were very hearty, and the cheerful, unaffected mirth of country people is still to be envied. They were much more interested in each other too, than was ever the case in any town, and family joys and sorrows formed the theme of the countryside. One of the old time forms of entertainment was the "rockin'," or the evenings spent at a farmhouse when the lasses brought their distaffs with them and span their lint or their yarn as they gossiped gaily. The farm kitchen was a cheerful place in the long winter evening. The great fire of peat glowed like a furnace, the youngsters sat about it with ruddy faces and bare legs, and the older members of the family perhaps wasted their eyesight in trying to sew by the light of a miserable candle. By and bye a neighbour drops in, then another, and another. Places are made for all around the great fire, and sometimes a score would be gathered together. The rockin' was then a rockin' only in name, for no work was done, and the fun became fast and furious. Songs and recitations and dances made the evening pass merrily, and if no one had brought a fiddle, someone in the company was sure to be musical enough to

"doodle" to the dancers. Then came the informal supper. A great pot of potatoes was boiled over the fire, and one after another of the company showed his skill in beating the potatoes, when they had come to that stage of cooking. Milk was poured into the pot. Two pot sticks were given to the ambitious swains, and the way they were manipulated was not so easy as it looked. Then with spoons the whole company supped out of the pot set upon the hearth. If there were many present those in the background did not fare so festively as those near the great dish. "It tak's a lang spune to sup wi' the deil," is an old Scottish proverb, and may have originated in the difficulty experienced by a novice getting near to the good things. Sometimes one in the background would pass his spoon to a more fortunate guest in front to have it replenished. Another proverb has it - "It is ill to sup sorrow wi' a lang spune," to reach forward as it were to a sorrow in the distance. The rockin's were often informal little meetings like that described; sometimes they were planned beforehand and a fiddler engaged who went round the farm-houses giving a "fiddler's bidding." Country parties are different now-a-days, but the rockin's and kirns and hallowe'ens and hogmanays were dates in the existence of the long gone time.

Of social life in Mauchline we have many pictures from the life and writings of Burns. It was at such a little free and easy dance that Burns first met Jean Armour. Burns's collie followed him into the room and through the mazes of the dance was ever at his heels. Jean made some remark about his dog and Burns replied he would be content if he got any lass to lo'e him as weel. A few days afterwards Jean was laying out her washing to bleach on the public green when Burns passed. "Hae ye got onybody yet tae tak' the collie's place?" she asked, laughing. The "Jolly Beggars" gives a picture of the lowest tavern life. In Gavin Hamilton's house Burns met with cultured and refined people and with many in good social position, and it was there he got his first lift into society.

The influence of the Church was more felt long ago than now, and Church ordinances regarded more strictly. The service was bare and uninviting, but it seemed to suit the people. Mrs Hawthorne, wife of the author of "The Scarlet Letter," visited Mauchline many years ago. It was Sunday and she went to church. The service was inexpressibly dreary to her, except the singing, which she characterised as beautiful. It was led by a precentor without a choir. He began alone, and then one after another of the congregation joined in, until a full chorus of songs sounded throughout the building. Mrs Hawthorne described it as like a dawn, when the sun slowly rises and one after another of the birds awaken and begin to sing, sleepily at first, and then their little notes ascend in a full concert of praise. Her description is a little like that of the famous recitation piece of Rubenstein's playing, and is a great compliment to the precentor of the occasion. The old man, with the characteristic name of Mucklewind, is still alive, and most probably does not know till this day the impression he made on the wife of the novelist, or how that he himself has been written about in a book.