

The Land of Burns.

Alex. Cairns of Mt. Hope Writes Interestingly of his Visit to Bonnie Scotland, the Land of the Great Poet.

(Written for the TIMES.)

A number of years ago we visited Scotland, our fatherland, and among many other places of note in that interesting country, we visited the "Land of Burns." Two years ago we wrote a short paper on the character of Burns, but said nothing of our visit to the fatherland. But our good friend, J. G. White of Fenimore, took us to task for not speaking of our visit to the poet's birthplace. We promised our friend that at some anniversary of the poet's birth we might carry out his suggestions. We now assume that task with considerable trepidation lest we fail to interest our readers.

We arrived in the city of Ayr on the evening of July 11th. Early next morning we were up and out for a stroll before breakfast. Passing down a street toward the river and turning a corner, there stood before us the two bridges made famous by Burns in his poem, "The Brigs of Ayr." The new bridge is a fine modern structure and quite ornamental. A hundred yards up the stream is the old bridge. It is higher than the new one but much narrower; only twelve feet wide. It is utterly without ornament, in keeping with the rude age in which it was built. After standing the storms and floods of six and a half centuries, it still wears the old look of sturdy independence it bore to the poet's eye. This hoary old structure, feeling the superiority of the past over the present, as many old people do, and looking down with contempt or pity on the new, upstart of a neighbor, with its modern ornaments and geegaws, very complacently addressed it:

I doubt na' frien, ye'll think ye're nae sheep-shank.

Ance ye were streekit o'er frae bank to bank,
But gin ye be a brig as auld as me,

Tho', faith, that day I doubt ye'll never see,
There'll be, if that date come, I'll wad a bod-
dle,

Some fewer Whigmeleeries in your noddle.

The new bridge, offended at this depreciatory speech, retorted:

Auld Vandal, ye but show your little mense,
Just much about it wi' your scanty sense;
Will your poor narrow foot-path of a street,
Where twa wheelbarrows tremble when they
meet.

Your ruined formless bulk o' stone and lime,
Compared wi' bonnie brigs of modern time,
There's men o' taste wad take the Ducat-
stream,

Tho' they should cast the vera sark and swim,
Ere they would grate their feelings wi' the
view

Of sic an ugly Gothic hulk as you.

As we returned to hotel for breakfast we met several companies in uniform with bands and banners. At the hotel we learned that it was Orangemen's day, the 12th of July, the anniversary of the victory of William of Orange over the adherents of the nearly defunct dynasty of the Stuarts. By nine o'clock the town was full and the parade was fine. About ten o'clock they marched to the railroad station, where several trains were waiting, and went off to a neighboring town to picnic.

When the crowd had dispersed, we started for Alloway Kirk, two or three miles away, the scene of the witches' dance in Tam O'Shanter. It stands on the banks of the Doon. It was never a very imposing structure, about 25x50 feet, with rather low walls and high steep gables. The eastern gable is surmounted by a rough stone belfry, in which hangs the original old bell that called "the rude forefathers of the hamlet" to worship 230 years ago. In the lintel over the door is cut 1653, supposed to be the date of its erection. Through a small window in the south wall Tam saw the witches dancing. They reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleek-
it,

Till lika carlin swat and reekit,
And coost her duddies to the wark,
And linkit at it in her sark.

The window seat of an east window
is the

Winnock bunker in the east
Where sat Auld Nick in shape o' beast,
He screwed his pipes and gart them skirl
Till roof and rafters a' did dirle.