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STUDIES IN SCOTTISH LITERATURE

Of course Burns was not the only contemporary writer whose songs were printed by Johnson; others include Dr. Thomas Blacklock, Rev. John Skinner, Andrew Shirefes, and Hector MacNeill. Also included were works by both William Hamiltons, Robert Fergusson and several by Allan Ramsay.

To any but the bibliophile the most valuable edition of this work is that of 1853, with its 512 pages of "Illustrations of the lyric poetry and music of Scotland" originally prepared by William Stenhouse. When Stenhouse died in 1827 the edition lay dormant until David Laing, Librarian of the Signet Library, took over the task of readying it for the publishers William Blackwood. With help from other qualified persons he added 228 pages of "Additional illustrations," as well as 134 pages of Preface and Introduction. Fortunately there are four indexes to this mass of editorial material (there is even one for the Introduction) and these make it relatively easy to locate any information which may be required.

The present two-volume set is a photo-facsimile of the four volumes of 1853. Henry George Farmer, Keeper of Music at Glasgow University Library, has added a short Foreword which does much to fill in the background on the variants of the Musical Museum to be found and on those who have been associated with it editorially. Some annoying errors in Mr. Farmer's essay: the date of Burns's Kilmarnock edition is not 1787 (p. xv); Yale's 1723 edition of Vol. I of the Tea-Table Miscellany (p.xi) has been known for some years; Yale also possesses the 1727 Vol. III of this collection which Mr. Farmer claims is not extant. For the record, this first edition of Vol. III contains the words "A Collection of Celebrated Songs."

The earlier editions of the Scots Musical Museum have long since become difficult to find and expensive. This new set will be welcomed alike by libraries and individuals.

G. R. R.


Courage of conviction should be sharply distinguished, in maturity, from courage of condescension: when another scholar takes a crack at me, I wish he would quote me entire. In my book on James Hogg I call The Confessions of a Justified Sinner "as greatly superior to his other prose works as Kilmeny is to his other longer poems . . . Badly constructed as
the story is, it is sufficient to justify Hogg's boast that he had several witches among his ancestresses—a piece that ranks with Frankenstein or Eugene Aram or even perhaps The Turn of the Screw.” Three pages later I note that the public ignored Queen Hynde “as, with far less excuse, they ignored the macabre and brilliant Confessions of a Justified Sinner.”

In earlier footnotes Professor Simpson dismisses H. T. Stephenson, whose “major judgements are absolutely wide of the mark,” and though he praises Professor Edith Batho’s “Bibliography,” considers her criticism “inferior.” Whereas Miss Batho frequently comments on a tale of Hogg in a sentence, Professor Simpson in his study slogs steadily through his subject’s prose pieces in pages that make heavy reading until he comes to the Justified Sinner, which he treats with illuminating enthusiasm. (I have always felt that T. Earle Welby’s “discovery” of this piece in 1924 should be remembered along with André Gide’s in 1947.) “Miss Batho’s criticism is often mixed with biography,” he laments, “and it is evident that she has no high opinion of Hogg himself.” Professor Simpson’s criticism is (happily) mixed with biography, and it is evident that he has no high opinion of Hogg himself: at least on p. 152 he refers to the poet’s “most pig-headed opinion” in defending his Bride of Lammermoor; and on p. 200 to his being “apt to sound like a bragging ignoramus” when attempting to define his talent. The truth is that one cannot help descending to the Ettrick Shepherd because with his genius went three faults: 1) wishful thinking and sloppy accounting and bad judgment in financial matters; 2) conscious or unconscious self-complacency; and 3) a gritty streak of obtuseness or insensibility combined with his otherwise lovable, generous, and sunny character. The first point may be illustrated by William Blackwood’s tart retort to Hogg quoted in Mrs. Oliphant’s Annals of a Publishing House, I, 345: “It is the first time I have been under the necessity of bringing forward a printer’s account to substantiate any of my statements, either with authors or with any of my correspondents.” The second point may be illustrated by Hogg’s naive remark in the last of his four Autobiographies (“I like to write about myself;” he admits) that the Justified Sinner did not sell because it came out anonymously. The third point may be illustrated by his broad intimation in his Domestic Manners... of Scott that Lady Scott was illegitimate. Professor Simpson on p. 47 seems to me quite unfair to Lockhart, who, stung by Hogg’s indiscretion, yet treats him sympathetically in his own great biography.

Professor Simpson is mistaken about the “Chaldee Manuscript”: “there is no doubt that he wrote most of the articles” [sic], p. 33. In “James Hogg’s ‘Chaldee Manuscript’,” PMLA, September, 1950, I compute
that Hogg wrote 46 of the 180 printed verses. (Whether Hogg's later satire on Constable, *John Paterson's Mare*, discussed by me in *PMLA* of June, 1937, is worth mention or not is a matter of opinion.) On p. 33 also Professor Simpson writes, "Constable set up a magazine of his own, which soon collapsed." Does he refer to *The Scots Magazine*, which was going strong before Constable was born? Such quibbles in no way detract from Professor Simpson's sound scholarship. For a time I feared that he would prove himself to belong to what may be called the Procrustean School of Critics, but on page 107 he catches himself in time: "But this is to want Hogg to have been someone else." I like Professor Simpson's warm enthusiasm for *The Witch of Fife* and I dislike his quoting the first six lines of *The Skylark* as an illustration that Hogg's "lyrical flights are aimless." Just where a skylark should aim I don't know, but in this lovely poem a Scotsman writes on a subject that he knows. Professor Simpson's thesis on his last page that Hogg, "uncertain of his beliefs...retires into a public role, playing the buffoon to civilized man," strikes me as a very imperfect summary: I wish he had gone whole Hogg. But his stimulating—or, to give him full credit, his provocative—book offers new slants on a man who shares with Scott the distinction of being, next to Burns, Scotland's best lyric poet though so far behind Burns as to make any comparison ridiculous. Some years ago I called Miss Edith Batho's *The Eitrick Shepherd* of 1927 "the only good critical biography of James Hogg." Thirty-five years later it is pleasant to welcome Professor Simpson's "Critical Study" as the second best book on James Hogg.

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