



SMITH INSTITUTE, STIRLING.

THE SMITH INSTITUTE.

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UNDER the imposing height on which Stirling Castle stands, and at the west end of Albert Place, is situated the Smith Institute. Stirling is indebted for the building, and for a considerable portion of its contents, to a bequest by the late Thomas Stuart Smith, Esq., of Glassingall, Perthshire, who died at Avignon, France, in 1869.

Mr. Smith was an artist by nature. Under the fostering care and help of his uncle—the laird of Glassingall—he had abundant opportunities of developing his gifts especially under the sunny skies, and among the art treasures of Italy.

Mr. Smith's bequest has provided, according to his intention, a Picture Gallery, a Museum, and a Reading Room.

THE PICTURE GALLERY is divided into two portions, one for the display of works in oils, and the smaller one for the exhibition of water-colours. In the great gallery are to be found numerous examples from the brush of Mr. Smith himself, many of them glowing with warm southern sunlight, and all distinguished by the artist's passion for colour. Besides these, and also the gift of the founder, there are examples of such artists as John Philip, R.A., Sir George Harvey, P.R.S.A., Danby, Sam Bough, Maris, Danbigny; while in the water-colour collection J. D. Harding, William Hunt, David Cox, Elijah Walton, and many others are well represented. From the date of the opening of the Institute by the late Sir William Stirling Maxwell, Bart., in 1874, exhibitions (generally at intervals of three years) have been held under the auspices of the Stirling Fine Art Association. These have been eminently successful in carrying out Mr. Smith's intention of fostering the love of art in the midlands of Scotland. Kind donors have this year (1897) made a beginning in adding works by such artists as John Linnell, senr., Smart, R.S.A., Campbell Noble, R.S.A., and Rattray, A.R.S.A., to the permanent collection. It is hoped that in the future such a lead will be followed up, so that the spacious galleries may contain in time a large, representative, and interesting collection of art-work. Meantime, the catalogue contains between three and four hundred entries.

THE MUSEUM, which is entered from the right-hand side of the vestibule, contains an excellent gathering illustrative of various departments of natural history. It is specially strong on

the side of ornithology and fossil botany. Not to dwell on such interesting exhibits as the Stirling Jug; the portrait and chair of James Guthrie, the martyr (1661); the old joughs and stocks, which are of special local importance—the accomplished Curator has got together and arranged methodically many articles illustrative of the life and social customs of former days. Lighting, baking, spinning, weaving, curling, etc., are thus graphically set forth, instructing us about the past and making us thankful for the present. The exhibit of church tokens is very noteworthy. Nearly all the Parish Churches of Scotland are represented, and the specimens in use in other denominations are numerous and well selected. The Museum will amply repay a visit by the varied interest and instruction it affords.

THE READING ROOM, which is free to the public, is entered by the door to the immediate left of the entrance. It contains some thousands of volumes, which formerly belonged to the Macfarlane and Stirling Libraries, with some additions. The books are not lent out; they can only be consulted on the premises. So well to the front in other respects, Stirling still waits the appearance of some munificent donor, or the rise of such public spirit, as will provide the "City of the Rock" with a Free Library. Newspapers and magazines are to be found on the tables. This department is well taken advantage of. Had it been nearer the town, the Institute would doubtless have been a greater benefit to all classes than it has proved. But it has its place and its influence. Many here appreciate it, and visitors should see it.

