

MISS SUSANNA BLAMIRE.

1747—1794.

THE manor farm of Thackwood is situated in a district of Cumberland which is rich in many ways. The landscape is that of hill and dale, yellow corn-field, purple moor, and masses of magnificent green oaks and sycamores growing by the river Caldew. Helvellyn towers over all in uncorruptible majesty. From a height in a neighbouring parish, the Solway Frith and the Scotch hills are seen, as well as Crossfell, Patterdale, Skiddaw, and Carnack. It is a landscape literally studded with massive grey manor farm-houses, with rugged and lordly Border castles, and with the rich relics of abbeys, priories, and nunneries. The whole is crowned by the bishop's palace of Rose Castle, and the cathedral of the merry town of Carlisle.

The ground abounds in the foot-marks of different races, the brands of old struggles between rival nations long united, and half-forgotten feudal factions. Rude British forts are here, and Druidical circles, and rings which look like circles. Here, too, are Roman camps, with their tokens of disciplined skill and the imperial patience and labour of Roman walls. At Rose Castle, Edward the Hammer of the Scots held a Parliament. At Thorsby, which was a Danish colony named after their Thunder God, David, the sore saint for the crown of Scotland, strove, by building a Christian church, to bury out of sight Thorsby's heathen foundation. Howards, Grahams, Dacres, and Musgraves rode in this quarter red-handed. They toppled down each other's battlemented towers, or lit the faggots beneath the oaken beams. The character of the people was wont to be as marked and varied, as bold and wild, as hard and tender, as their country. Nowhere else in "canny auld Cumberlând" were there men of more original temper, more stubborn will, or shrewder sagacity and thought. But it was all welded with rough

bounty and hospitality. There was blue blood in yeomen's veins in these dales. Ancient lineage was not less proudly and jealously preserved that its holders were plain men who guided their ploughs with their own hands, and mingled freely with their hinds, not only at church and market, at sales and burials, but at more private feasts. Manners were deeply rutted in, and the tracks were long of being worn out in these remote and isolated fields. Order and law waxed grim in their integrity, or independence became license, and license brutality.

Not much of the license and brutality crossed the innocent maiden path of the robust dalesmen's pet, Miss Blamire. But the cordial freedom, the hearty kindness, the humorous "thrawnness," the deep tenderness often hid under the unhewn rock of the outer man, like the moss in the rough channels of their becks, entered into her very soul.

Susanna Blamire was a daughter of an ancient yeoman family of Cumberland, not the least distinguished or the least worthy of that stout

class. She was born at Cardew Hall (one of those square, absolutely hoary old farmsteads) in January, 1747, exactly twenty-three years before William Wordsworth. As yet the associations which have so intimately linked Cumberland and Westmoreland and their lakes with Wordsworth, Southey, Coleridge, Wilson, and De Quincey, had all to be formed. On the loss of her mother in early childhood, Susanna Blamire was adopted by an aunt. This was Aunt Simpson,—all the dale's Aunt Simpson,—a middle-aged widow with lands in her own right. She was a splendid specimen of the practical, sharp-witted, yet open-handed and loving-hearted daleswoman. By her Susanna was reared to womanhood. A tradition remains of her, that on her parlour table she kept three bowls standing with her ready money,—gold, silver, and copper,—to let her know how much she had to spend, and to enable her to relieve on the spot any daleswoman seeking her help. One may add that it was a remarkable proof of the honesty of her household, and of the discretion even of its youngest

people, when they could be deputed to meet the claims of Aunt Simpson's household, and trusted to supply their own wants in dress and pocket-money, out of these ever-ready bowls.

Little Sukey of Cumberland was also fortunate in another respect. She was not left alone with a childless and dogmatic aunt. Two brothers and a sister bore her company, having been transferred with herself to Thackwood on the occasion of her father's second marriage, and in deference to Aunt Simpson's plain-spoken prejudice against stepmothers.

The old house of Thackwood Nook is minutely described by Dr. Lonsdale in connection with William Blamire, Susanna's nephew, who, long after her death, flourished as one of the "worthies" of Cumberland. It is still a characteristic house, with its irregular out-buildings and its forest trees close at hand. It is low-browed in its two stories, with heavy mullioned windows, and a rough-cast, whitewashed front. The carriage-drive and lawn end in a weather-stained, flagged walk, which is edged with sweet musk, and bordered by grizzly yews and

gaunt thorns. Rising high above the rest, and shading the house far and wide, are one or two gnarled, lichen-grown oaks. Except the everlasting hills, not another material object save these oaks would have served to make the hoary farm-house of Thackwood look by comparison a modern dwelling.

Susanna and her brothers and sister walked in mud and mire a mile's distance to Raughton Head, where at a village school they were taught, with the rest of the dale, at the small fee of a shilling a quarter from each scholar.

If this was the school of which Susanna Blamire afterwards drew a picture at the dinner hour, when the children from a distance were unfolding their wooden trenchers, with their Cumberland pies, oaten cakes, and tin flasks of milk, then it was a dame school, and the old scholar adds a pretty sketch of the learned school-dame :—

“ And now the dame in neat white mob is seen,
Her russet gown, silk kerchief, apron clean ;
At the school door her tremulous voice is heard,
And the blythe game's unwillingly deferred.”

If the way from Thackwood to the school was rough for the children, it had enough of living interest in bank and beck to feed young hearts and brains. What with humble bees, dragon-flies, and trout, coral berries of the mountain ash, ruby haws, and blood-stones of brambles, there were treasures enough to tempt the truant. There was a bridge across the brawling stream, half hidden among woodbine and sweet-brier, where little feet loved to tarry, in order that their owners might swing on its railing and watch the foaming water. There was a mill which possessed inexhaustible attractions, with its friendly "clack," its dusty miller resting against one leaf of its wide door, its white sacks nearly toppling over, its chicks in the road, and its ducklings in the pond. There were lovely bits of romantic woodland, and hill-country scenes of beauty never to be forgotten, but to be remembered faithfully in night-watches on board ship, at a town desk, in a Highland home, or on a sick-bed; and songs of missel-thrush and ring-dove fit to tune the throat of incipient songstresses like themselves.

The studies at the village school were exceedingly circumscribed; but Susanna Blamire made the most of them—more, indeed, than is often made of a college curriculum. She was a diligent reader, wrote a fair round hand, and to these branches added painting and music. For the last she had such love and such taste, that she taught herself to play passing well on the guitar, which was then the sweet tinkling instrument of rustic belles, before the rattle of harpsichord and spinet was common in country places. She could charm herself and her neighbours by her music, an end not always attained by the elaborate and noisy musicians of the present day. But it was in the sister art of dancing that she most excelled. Miss Sukey was the ravishing dancer of the country-side. With her dancing was a passion, an inspiration, and it was engaged in, in the open air, among the warping grass and ling, by the dusty highway, and to the accompaniment of a travelling piper blowing on his pipes. She was as much filled and fired with the necessity of contributing to the general joy of the natural world as ever was gipsy

maiden in a Spanish market-place. And this is no fancy picture. It is told of her that on one occasion she leaped from the pony on which she was riding ; and, letting it wander at will among the harebells, bade the chance piper play "a spring," and encouraged him by dancing in pure blitheness because the world was fair and she was young, and her sensitive ear and supple limbs had to offer their own donation to the beauty and excellence of existence. Happily for Miss Sukey, there was no excited crowd, no malicious gossip, no deadly hostile Prior to punish her in the deed. There was only the poor gratified piper, the phlegmatic shaggy pony, and perhaps a motherly cow raising her head while she continued to chew her cud in a neighbouring field, or a curious lambkin, accustomed also to dance, in season and out of season, peering over the ridge of the first boulder. Even had any of Sukey's countrymen and countrywomen chanced to spy her at that rash moment, there would have been no proud princess's degradation ; it would only have been spoken of as a freak of the "bonnie

and varra lish lass" who was so much one of themselves.

Of the printed books which Susanna Blamire read, few could have lent help to her particular genius. Ballads were out of fashion; Dr. Percy and young Walter Scott had not yet revived them. But the retentive memories and unchanging habits of old Cumberland preserved traditions and legends manifold. Dwelling in the very places, and surrounded by the very people among whom the lively incidents of the old tales had happened, Susanna must have grown up in familiarity with "Hughie the Græme," "Kinmont Willie," and especially with "Carlisle Yetts." Only two years before she was born, the flames of the last unhappy rebellion were quenched in blood. Many persons in Cumberland must still have remembered the passage to and fro, under such widely different auspices, of Prince Charles's army of wild Highlanders and disaffected Lowlanders. Old women would tell the sympathetic girl the marvellous story of the traitor's head with long, soiled, yellow locks raised on a cruel pike, and of the

fond, miserable woman who came a great distance to gaze on it, at sunrise and at sunset. Such stories could not but have had their influence on the girl's plastic mind, notwithstanding that the true men and women of the dales were too canny and sagacious to go in largely for the Jacobites. Nor was that what we call a romantic age. There is, after all, little trace of the fascination of old romance on Susanna Blamire's mind, though romance was latent there. Her mind was simply receptive, crystal clear in its shallows, and calculated to reflect its own age truthfully and tenderly. The songs for which Cumberland is famous, and to which Susanna Blamire was to contribute her quota, were then beginning to be heard, and it may be credited that Susanna took more to the songs than to the ballads.

These songs in the vernacular are very peculiar and very graphic. They are shrewd, waggish, or woeful. They are full of strong individual character and high local colouring, and abound with allusions to rites, sports, and sayings which flourish in Cumberland, and in

Cumberland alone. They dwell emphatically on qualities which hardly reveal themselves in the natives of other districts of England. In these Cumberland songs there are to be found a vigorous independence on the part of the men and an arch coyness on the part of the women—above all, a *paawkiness* and a *gauciness*, to borrow two untranslatable Scotch words, which are generally held to abide on the Scotch side of the Border, and to be out of keeping with frank, dutiful English human nature. Withal, there are in these songs deep glistening wells of tenderness; and enduring rocks of constancy. The very titles of some of them convey a world of meaning. How expressive are these: “I trudged up to Lon’on through thick and through thin,” “The Bridewain,” “The Diel gae wi’ them that fashes wi’ me,” “This love sae breaks a body’s rest,” “Croghie Watty,” “Lal Dinah Greyson,” “A Lockerbye Lick,” and “The Village Gang!” In two lights these songs are like Mr. Barnes’s Dorsetshire songs, but in two only. Their simplicity is so entire that it is very quaint, and the piteousness of the lamentation put into

the mouths of the one-idea'd sufferers is unsurpassable. There is no doubt that Susanna Blamire dearly loved that earlier strata of Cumberland songs, and learned much from them. But when she lived in the centre of Cumberland human nature, rich and characteristic to an extent that is difficult for her successors, even understanding the freedom of manners of the past century, to measure, she scarcely needed the songs.

The primitive yeoman gentry of Cumberland fearlessly visited high and low, ate at the tables of peasants as well as of nobles, and sat down at the lowliest hearth as well as in the lordliest chimney corner.

It is recorded of Miss Sukey, whose gaiety of heart was exuberant, that in all the dales there was not such a lass for attending "merry meets" and "upshots." At these entertainments the company were divided, by the rule of three, into drinkers (without apology), carders, and dancers. The dancers danced under the bare joists of the long loft which formed the upper story of many of the farm-

houses; the drinkers drank across the deal boards of the clay-floored kitchen; while the carders played cards in the bower, or principal sleeping-room of the family that gave the entertainment. Miss Sukey Blamire most enjoyed taking her part in the dance, whether it were "Cross the Buckle" or "Bonny Bell," choosing her partner from among the farm labourers and country servants, most of whom had been her school companions. She ate and drank of the bread and cheese and ale, which, with the "towering pies" and huge apple-tarts, were the potent heavy refreshments of the "merry meets." She strolled into the bower, and looked on at "Popps and Pairs," "Showart Trump," "Whisk," or "Auld ane-and-thirty." She raised her clear voice with the rest of the company in the chorus of the roaring ditties of "Tom Linton" and "Dick Waters." Cumberland ladies did so without losing a grain of their prestige, without contracting the shadow of a stain on their womanliness, and at a time when their backs were no sooner turned than the mirth was apt to grow riot, and the feasting

debauchery. Cumberland clownishness sometimes became irreverent barbarism, as when, in later days, Susanna Blamire's nephew William went to hear a sermon from a curate who was in disgrace with his bishop for intemperance, he found the priest officiating in clogs, and without stockings.

Susanna Blamire won golden opinions from a country-side for the restraining presence of her gracious geniality—so genial that when she died the impulsive protest burst from the lips of an old farmer of her acquaintance, "The merry meets will not be worth going to now, since she is no more."

In such company Susanna Blamire might well gather the substance of the stiff argument embodied in her political song, "Why, Ned, man, thou look'st so down-hearted;" and quick ears might catch the first vixenish mutterings of the storm which she and her friend, Miss Gilpin, afterwards heard in its full fury, and worked up jointly in their grotesque "Cumberland Scold."

Susanna Blamire reached by keen observation what Lady Nairne arrived at instinctively.

As a result which might be looked for from the two processes, Lady Nairne's studies of ploughmen, fish-wives, and gude-wives have more of the large framework of common humanity, are more delicate and idealised; while Susanna Blamire's are narrower, and more literal.

It is a puzzle to decide when Susanna Blamire began to write. It is said, indeed, that her first effort dates as early as her nineteenth year. But at what times her different songs were written we have no proper means of judging, since none were published either during her own life or during the lives of her near relations. She did not put her name to any of those which did get into print through the columns of newspapers and in collections of songs, nor did she have any craving to win literary reputation, though neither had she Lady Nairne's morbid and excessive shrinking from being recognised as an authoress. But certainly Susanna Blamire's essays in writing were not the forced growth of her friends' favourable opinion and encouragement. Her elder brother,

the naval surgeon, was the hard-working member of a hard-working profession, which he practised for science and for charity's sake from the day that he left the navy, yet to such good purpose that Lord Vernon came down from London to Cumberland in order to avail himself of Dr. Blamire's skill. Dr. Blamire, thus brought into constant contact with the stern realities of life, had a good-humoured, but short-sighted, contempt for a poetess's visions, and for the frittering away of time in stringing together rhymes which appeared equally idle, whether bombastic or nonsensical. Yet this matter-of-fact surgeon and yeoman squire of the Hollows could be so inconsistent as to marry one of the most accomplished Cumberland spinsters, for whose gifts and superior cultivation his sister Sukey entertained a generously ardent admiration. In his bachelor days the doctor had patient indulgence with Susanna's irrepressible spirit and blitheness. He was wont to declare that all the young officers, his messmates of the quarter-deck and cockpit, were dull and phlegmatic compared with his sister

Sukey. Perhaps one reason for his forbearance was simply that he had no wish that the gay young sister should run off at a tangent as an erratic authoress. Nor did active Aunt Simpson give her niece any countenance in her favourite pursuit. Doubtless the old lady held that too much brains in a woman would spoil her prospects in marriage. But these were spoilt betimes in another way. In the recklessly indiscriminate visiting of Cumberland, Susanna, with her unique fascination, was so unfortunate as to take the fancy of the son of a noble house, whether while at Chillingham, where she resided for a short space with the family of the Earl of Tankerville and was made a pet of by the Earl, or in some other equally ineligible quarter, is not precisely known. But at all events, her fancy was taken in turn by the young nobleman who, with becoming surroundings, had enough manliness to value her as she deserved. It need not be said that the lover's family did not approve of his choice, and that he was induced by their representations to break off the connection.

Poor Sukey! After singing so modestly, so winningly,

“What ails this heart o’ mine?”

to be compelled to sing and dance on in another and more bitter experience, a personal application of Grisell Baillie’s plaintive, restive cry,—

“Werena my heart licht I wad dee!”

Poorer young nobleman! Having loved a woman neither very fair, nor rich, nor high-born, nor the fashion, he was tempted to give her up, remain a bachelor or become a Benedict to another Beatrice, with the consciousness that Susanna Blamire’s qualities were simply such as he could never meet with again, and his passion what he could not hope to transfer to another by any spell of obedience or expediency. For Susanna Blamire might have written of herself, and of him who, in spite of his accidental advantages, ought to have been her bridegroom, what she wrote in her “Auld Robin Forbes,” which Mary Russell Mitford, no mean judge of poetry, called “eminently successful:”—

"The lasses a' wondered what Willy could see
 In yen that was dark and hard-featured like me;
And they wondered aye mair when they talk'd o' my wit,
 And sliely tell't Willy *that* couldna be it.
 But Willy he laugh'd, and he made me his weyfe,
 And wha was mair happy thio' a' his lang leyfe?
 It's e'en my great comfort now Willy is gane,
 That he often said nae place was leyke his ain heame.

* * * *

"He would fling me a daisy to put in my breast,
 And I hammered my noddle to mak out a jest;
 But merry or grave, Willy often would tell
There was neane o' the lave was leyke my ain sel'.
 And he spak what he thought, for I'd hardly a plack
 When we married, and nobbet ae gown to my back"

Judging from her portrait, and from descriptions which are extant of the person of Sukey Blamire (whose sister Sarah was one of the greatest beauties in Cumberland), we gather that she was slightly marked with small-pox, but not so much as to disfigure her features or mar her complexion. She had berry-brown hair, of which she professed to be very vain. She wore it thrown back from her high forehead, and hanging down on her shoulders in a long roll, formed of one thick curl, disposed with studied negligence somewhat in the style of the present

day. Her nose was large, and too *prononcé*, but her mouth was very sweet in its firmness, and her eyes and brows were fine. She was tall and slender, with a shapely neck, bust, and shoulders. Her dress (in the portrait) is a marvel of simple elegance. The body of the gown is cut square and low, with a full white edging round the bosom. A single rose is worn at one side.

Susanna Blamire's much-loved sister Sarah married, while yet young, a Scotch laird, Colonel Graham of Duchray and Ardoch; and Susanna went with the couple to stay in their house in Scotland. In her change of home she found only a change of friends and of beautiful landscape; for Colonel Graham's property was situated on Loch Ard, near Monteith and Aberfoyle, in that district of the middle Highlands of Stirling and Perthshire which is only second to the Trosachs in mingled wildness and softness. What Susanna knew of the gills, pikes, meres, and forces of her own lake-land was reproduced to her still more charmingly in Scotland; and Susanna loved Scotland. Like a

true woman of the North countrie, she had always had leanings to the land beyond the Border. She knew by heart Allan Ramsay's "Gentle Shepherd," and had put "Auld Robin Gray" into the mouth of a Cumberland milk-maid while it was yet fresh from Lady Anne Lindsay's closet at Balcarres. Susanna adopted Scotland and the Scotch with enthusiasm, and thenceforth wrote Scotch songs like a Scotchwoman. She was inspired to make the trial by the songs of Burns, then in his zenith, and of Tannahill in his weaver's home in Paisley. None could have relished these songs more than Susanna Blamire, with her Cumberland *furor* wherever song was concerned, and her own genius as a lyrist. The effect of these songs on her style is evident. But owing to her indifference to literary interests in themselves, and her remaining outside of every literary coterie in Edinburgh and elsewhere, she does not in any of her letters and poetical epistles even mention the name of Burns.

With the Grahams, Susanna took trips to Ireland and to London; and these trips were

pleasant interludes in her quiet, but bright life. Wherever she travelled, it was in the happy obscurity and irresponsibility which belonged to the part of Mrs. Graham's sister, the young lady in the little family party. Most likely her great objects of curiosity and enjoyment in London were those of any other country woman—St. Paul's, the parks, the palaces, Vauxhall, and the theatres. Her vivid apprehension of character, and her sympathy with dramatic truth, she has herself chronicled in her whimsical account of the wonders worked by a strolling company in her own village of Stockleworth:—

“ Then down-the-brow Wully tuck up his coat lappet,
And held't till his een, for he's given to jeer ;
But I had it frae yen that was even fornent him,
'Twas weel for his sel' that his coat lappet was near.
Oh ! *Venus Preserved* was the name o' the actin',
And Jaffer was him had the beautiful wife ;
Tho' I gowl'd a' the tyme, it's a worry to tell on't,
I never was hawf sae well pleased in my life.”

Mrs. Graham's husband died six years after their marriage. She had no family, and she seems to have returned with Susanna to Cumberland, where the two lived again with Aunt

Simpson at Thackwood until Aunt Simpson's death, twelve years later. The sisters then continued to reside at Thackwood in summer, and in Carlisle in winter.

Susanna, in her writings, gives occasional glimpses of the pleasantly monotonous life at Thackwood. In her lively doggerel she makes record for the benefit of absent friends :—

“ At eight I rise—a decent time,
But aunt would say 'tis oftener nine.
I come down-stairs, the cocoa's ready,
For you must know I've turned fine lady.

“ When breakfast's done I take a walk,
Where English girls their secrets talk ;
Often my circuit's round the garden,
In which there's no flower worth a farthing.

“ I sit me down and work * awhile,
But here I think I see you smile :
• At work,' quoth you,—' but little's done,
' Thou lik'st too well a bit of fun.'

“ At twelve I dress my head † so smart,
Were there a man he'd lose his heart ;
My hair has turned the loveliest brown,
There's no such hair in London Town.

* The work was often spinning

† Miss Sukey from her childhood would figure in a mob-cap of a morning

“ At one the cloth is constant laid
By little Fan, our pretty maid;
She’s prettier much than her young lady,
But that you know full easily may be.

“ After I’ve dined maybe I read,
Or write to favourites ’cross the Tweed,
Then work till tea, then walk again,
If it does neither snow nor rain.

“ If e’er my spirits want a flow,
Up-stairs I run to my bureau,
And get your letters—read them over,
With all the fondness of a lover.

“ But stop ! my journal’s nearly done,
Through the whole day ’tis almost run ;
I think I’d sipped my tea nigh up—
O yes ! I’m sure I drank my cup

“ I work till supper, after that
I play or sing, maybe we chat ;
At ten we always go to bed,
And thus my life I’ve calmly led.

“ Since my return, as Prior says,
In some of his satiric lays,
I eat and drink and sleep—what then ?
I eat and drink and sleep again.
Thus idly lolls my time away,
And just does nothing all the day ”

Aunt Simpson’s housekeeping was very much
that of Susanna’s nephew William, who was

a Cobbett among the country gentry, when he kept house at Thackwood Nook thirty or forty years later. He could plough, sow, and mow with his own hands. He rose and breakfasted early, dined with his men at noon on farmers' fare (he was especially fond of potato-pot, or a slice of boiled bacon), had his favourite dish of tea (out of a blue basin) at five in the afternoon, no supper, and early to bed.

There was one task which ladies in the country were in these days fain to set themselves, partly from natural vocation, partly to serve as an occupation and amusement when life threatened to grow too tedious. And this was a task which Susanna Blamire entered upon and sported, braving the derision of her brother, the doctor. Ladies Bountiful who now content themselves with distributing flannel, soup-tickets, and Tract Society volumes, did not hesitate then to take upon themselves the cure of bodies, and to prescribe for all the ills that flesh is heir to, drugging patients right and left. Miss Sukey shared the hankering after the practice of her brother's profession which is so strong in

many women. She was in the habit of recounting with great glee these medical exploits, while all the time she was not too proud to fall back upon her college-bred brother's learning and experience when her wonderful performances did not compass their end.

“For you must know I'm famed for skill
In the nice compound of a pill,”

she boasts on one occasion. On another she details with more prudent reserve :—

“And now the sisters take their evening walk—
One famed for goodness and one famed for joke,
For physic too some little is renowned,
With every salve that loves to heal the wound.
The pulse she feels with true mysterious air,
While Mrs Graham of strengthening broths takes care ;
That sickness must be hopeless of all end
Which her good home-made wine no way can mend.
The brother then his skill of medicine tries,
And rarely in his hands the patient dies ”

This charming quack, who is a little inclined to flourish in the eyes of the world the fact that “she likes too well a bit of fun,” and that she is “famed for joke,” scorns to dwell on failing health and flagging spirits, unless when the

pressure is irresistible. Even then she does not make an unalloyed lamentation. Yet, apart from any special cause, there was a great strain of pensiveness in that merry soul. She would carry out her guitar to play plaintive airs, and compose verses in keeping with them, in the shaws dropping yellow in the fall, when the Caldew was sobbing and moaning over its stones. And with such a temperament she must often have started off of an evening in that finished toilette of "a dressed head," and with the other finishing touches to her dress of snowy clear muslin neckerchief and apron, to pace the flagged walk in the dusk of the oak-trees, and scent the faint, dying musk. When old Aunt Simpson was taking her nap, and Mrs. Graham was studying the recipe-book and the linen-press, sister Sukey must have snatched a moment's truce—

"To hear the wind blow, and to look at the moon "

These winter months in Carlisle, where the best society in the town was open to them, proved a cheerful change to the sisters. There Susanna Blamire met and entered into an affec-

tionate alliance with a kindred spirit, Miss Gilpin of Scaleby Castle, who belonged to another ancient Cumberland family, as fresh in its type, and with sons and daughters as gifted, as those in the family of the Blamires. These Gilpins claimed descent from Bernard Gilpin, the Apostle of the North, the gallant, homely country parson who, in the sixteenth century, wandered over hill and dale with his Bible in his hand, confronted his own time-serving bishop, and dealt an uncompromising rebuke to a fierce Borderer who had hung up a glove in a church, Border fashion, as a challenge to any man who dared to take it down. "I hear," thundered this Gilpin from his pulpit, "that one of you hath hanged up a glove even in this sacred place. See! I have taken it down, and who dare meddle with me?" In Susanna Blamire's generation, a Gilpin of Scaleby Castle had written "Forest Scenery," the best book on the subject in that day; whilst his brother, more than a fair artist, had etched the cattle figures for the book. A third brother, a doctor in the army, was knighted for his services, and was

in favour both with General Washington and with George III. Catherine Gilpin, their sister, and a daughter of the commandant who was compelled to surrender Carlisle Castle to Prince Charlie, was a lively and intelligent woman. She was herself a song-writer of decided talent. Witness her Trafalgar sea-fight, with its exulting beginning:—

“ O lads ! I’se fit to burst wi’ news,
There’s letters frae the fleet,
We’ve banged the French—ay, out and out,
And done the thing complete

“ There was sic shower o’ shell grenades,
Bunched out wi’ shot like grapes,
And bullets big as beath our heads,
Chained twa and twa wi’ reapes ”

Not less natural is the tender truth of the sailors’ sorrow for Nelson :—

“ ‘ O wae’s in me ! ’ our Johnny says,
‘ That I suld hae to tell,
For not a man aboard the fleet
But wish’d t’ had been his-sel’ ’ ”

Still more admirable is Miss Gilpin’s photograph of the village club and its hero :—

“ O lozes o’ me ! we are merry,
I nobbet but wish ye could hear,
Dick Spriggins he acts sae like players,
Ye niver heard naething sae queer.

“ And first he comes in for King Richard,
And stamps wid his fit on the ground ;
He wad part with his kingdom for horses,
O lozes o’ me ! what a sound.

“ And then he comes in for young Roma,
And spreads out his beetle black fist,
I’se jist fit to drop whilst he’s talking,
Ye niver seed yen sae distrest.

“ O lozes o’ me ! it is moving,
I hates for to hear a man cry ;
And then he luiks up at a window,
To see if lal Juliet be by.

“ And then he lets wi’t she’s talking,
And speaks that ye hardly can hear,
But I think she cries out on Squire Roma,
And owther says Hinnie or Dear.

“ Then up wi’ Dick Spriggins for ever !
May he leeve a’ the days o’ his life ;
May his hairns be as honest as he’s been,
And may he aye maister his wife ”

The Blamires and Miss Gilpin lodged in the

same house in Carlisle, at 14, Finkle Street, near where the Caldew falls into the Eden.

The association of the two ladies was a source of great satisfaction to both. The cordial women worked, chatted, and wrote together—writing more than once conjointly their comic and pathetic songs. Together they visited Gilsland Spa, walking and riding in the picturesque dale where young Walter Scott, in after years, met and wooed Charlotte Carpenter. In the assembly-room at Gilsland, and at the hunt-ball in Carlisle, Susanna Blamire looked on with her friend at the dancing, in which Miss Súkey, in her own day, had been matchless.

Susanna's spirit through all her life was a flickering light in a fragile lamp. She had inherited from her mother a delicate constitution. Before she reached thirty she had been driven to perpetrate jests on her rheumatism and asthma. Several of her poetic pieces—really fugitive—have a passing reference to sickness, or to recovery from sickness, and are invocations to the health which would not come at her call,

although with a wistful remonstrance she reminds the unpropitious goddess Hygeia—

“’Tis not because I have not been
Amidst the nymphs and shepherds seen,
For as they frolick’d on the mead,
Gay bounding to the oaken reed,
This foot I ween as light could pass
As any yet that trod the grass.”

Yet she is forced to write:—

“Nature’s the same, the spring returns,
The leaf again adorns the tree;
How tasteless this to her who mourns,
To her who droops and fades like me !
No emblem for myself I find,
Save what some dying plant bestows,
Save where its drooping head I bind,
And mark how strong the likeness grows ”

At the age of forty-seven Susanna Blamire’s little vigour was spent, her day done. The dancer by the road-side, and during the holiday hours of “the merry meets,” danced no more. The physician could not heal her own deadly wound. Miss Sukey, “the bonnie and varra lish” young lass of so many kindly memories, lay down resignedly on her bed in the house in

Finkle Street, and died in the faith of a Christian, and with a Christian's peace.

In her will Susanna had written an earnest request that, as she humbly trusted in the mercies of Almighty God that she should be received into everlasting happiness, so she trusted that her dear sister Graham would not suffer her grief to become excessive for the loss of one whose every hour she had been the means of rendering "easy, happy, and delightful."

At Miss Blamire's funeral between eighty and ninety country-people voluntarily presented themselves. In many cases they walked the distance of seven miles twice over, to carry Miss Sukey home from the house in Carlisle where she died to the Blamire burial-ground in the little churchyard at the village of Raughton Head, where she had tripped to school. This was not a small mark of respect paid to a single woman who had lived among them, though it represented but a tithe of the gallant attendance of hundreds of yeomen, who rode like an old Border following, to do honour to the triumph of Miss Sukey's popular nephew, "Willy Blamire."

He was first elected sheriff, and then one of the members for Cumberland. On the last occasion, during the ceremony of chairing him, he boasted that there was one thing that he could do better than his fellow-member, Sir James Graham of Netherby. This was to rise and bow many times in the course of his distinguished, but vibrating progress, since he had been to the manner born,—early accustomed to stand while driving his swaying corn-carts.

Susanna Blamire had no call to write for bread; neither was she induced to write by the representations of her neighbours. Nor was she a woman full of passionate life demanding utterance, though what she did write she wrote for her own satisfaction. Her few longer poems are pleasing trifles, never rising above mediocrity. They are most of them founded on domestic subjects, with purely personal, family, or friendly interests. There are elegies, marriage odes, individual remonstrances, and private reflections. But Susanna Blamire's songs are much more.

The joint songs of Susanna Blamire and

Catherine Gilpin which have been preserved are "The Cumberland Scold" and "The Sailor-lad's Return."

There is a song which has been attributed at different times to Susanna Blamire and to Lady Anne Lindsay. It appeared in more than one old-world magazine, but neither of the ladies to whom it was ascribed thought fit to claim it. The song is that of the "Carrier Pigeon," beginning—

"Why tarries my love,
Oh where does he rove?
My love is long absent from me.
Come hither, my dove,
I'll write to my love,
And send him a letter by thee."

It has an elegant airiness, and is tenderly lackadaisical in tone. From internal evidence it may be attributed to Lady Anne Lindsay.

Miss Blamire's songs can be arranged in two classes, whether they are English or in the Cumbrian or the Scotch dialect. There are those which are little spurts of raillery, or half-droll, half-serious narratives of every-day inci-

dents. Sometimes they are tales with morals. They have much of the quiet humour and the gentle wisdom breathed into similar songs by Lady Nairne, only Susanna Blamire's songs are unequal, her humour sparkles rather less, her wisdom is not so ripe and mellow, and her diction has not, in general, the exquisite suitability of the words of Lady Nairne's best songs. Here are good specimens of those songs which are neither comic nor tragic, but form in a sliding scale the genteel comedy of song. Besides the quotations already given from "Auld Robin Forbes," the first and the last verses have very happy touches.

"And auld Robin Forbes has gien tem a dance,
 I put on my speckets to see them aw prance ;
 I thought o' the days when I was but fifteen,
 And skipp'd wi' the best upon Forbes's Green.
 Of aw things that is, I think thought is meast queer,
 It brings that that's by-past and sets it down here ;
 I see Willy as plain as I do this bit leace,
 When he teuk his coat lappet and dieghted his feace.

* * * * *

"When the clock had struck eight I expected him hame,
 And whiles went to meet him as far as Dumbain ;
 Of aw hours it tell't, eight was dearest to me,
 But now when it strykes there's a tear in my e'e

Oh Willy, dear Willy! it never can be
That age, time, or death can divide thee and me;
For the yen spot o' earth that's aye dearest to me
Is the turf that has covered my Willie from me "

In "Barley Broth" the violent dispute as to whether the house-dame has put barley or rice into the pot reads like the argument of a song in a French *vaudeville*:—

" 'I mek nae faut,' our Jwhonny says,
'The broth is gude and varra neyce,
I only say—it's barley broth '
'You says what's wrong,' says I, 'it's reyce.'"

The summing up is highly characteristic:—

"Thus tryfles vex and tryfles please,
And tryfles mek the sum o' leyfe,
And tryfles mek a bonny lass
A wretched or a happy weyfe."

"Old Harry's Return" abounds in loving manliness and womanliness:—

"My Harry he smiles and he wipes aff the tear,
An' I'm doubtful again gin it can be he's here,
Till he taks wee bit Janet to sit on his knee,
And ca's her his dawty, for oh! she's like me.
Then the neighbours come in and they welcome him hame,
And I fa' a-greeting tho' muckle I think shame,
Then I steal ben the house while they talk o' the war,
For I turn could as death when he shows them a scar.

They tell o' ane Elliot, an' brave he maun be,
 But I ken a poor soldier as brave yet as he,
 For when that the Spaniards were wrecked on the tide,
 'They are soldiers, my lads, let us save them,' he cried.

"The neighbours being gane, and the bairns on his knee,
 He fetched a long sigh and he look'd sair at me :
 'Poor woman,' quo' he, 'ye'd hae muckle to do
 To get bread to yoursel' and thir wee bit things too.'
 'It is true, my dear Harry, I toiled very hard,
 Sent Elspie to service and Jockey to herd,
 For I kent verra weel t'was an auld soldier's pride,
 Aye to tak frae his king, but frae nae ane beside.'"

The mercenary wooers of "Tibbie Fowler o' the Glen" (the traditional heiress of Scotch song) are hit off almost as artistically as the suitors for "Jenny's Bawbee :"—

"There's Nabob Jock comes strutting ben,
 He thinks the day's his ain,
 But were he a' hung round wi' gowd,
 He'd find himsel' mista'en.

* * * * *

"There's grinning Pate laughs a' day through,
 The blythest lad you'll see ;
 But troth he laughs sae out o' place,
 He'd laugh gin I did dee.

"There's Sandy he's sae fu' o' lees,
 To talk wi' him is vain,
 For gin we a' should say 'twas fair,
 He'd prove that it did raine.

* * * * *

“The priests and lawyers ding me dead,
 But Gude kens wha’s the best,
 And then comes in the soldier brave,
 And drums out a’ the rest.

“The country squire and city beau,
 I have had them on their knee ;
 But weel I ken to gowd they bow,
 And no downright to me.”

In the same vein of maidenly satire are the verses—

“O Donald ! ye are just the man
 Who, when he’s got a wife,
 Begins to fratch—nae notice tain,
 They’re strangers a’ their life

“The fan may drop—she takes it up,
 The husband keeps his chair,
 She hands the kettle—gives his cup,
 Without even ‘ Thank you, dear.’

* * * * *

“But wedlock^{*} tears away the veil,
 The goddess is nae mair,
 He thinks his wife a silly thing,
 She thinks her man a bear.”

With the sound Addisonian advice in conclusion :—

“Let then the lover be the friend,
 The loving friend for life ;
 Think but thyself the happiest spouse,
 She’ll be the happiest wife.”

Few songs have the dizzy delight, the strong tide of fondness in which all personal pride is swept away, of the following :—

“ I’ll hae a new coatie when Willy comes hame,
 I’ll hae a new plaidie and a’ o’ the same,
 An’ I’ll hae some pearlins to make myself fine,
 For it’s a’ to delight this dear laddie o’ mine.
*Bessy Bell is admired by a’ sorts o’ men,
 I’ll mind a’ her fashions and how she comes ben ;
 I’ll mind her at kirk and I’ll mind her at fair,
 An’ never ance try to look myself mair.*
 * * * * *
For I maun be happy when Willy comes hame ”

There are assurances in the volunteered consolation administered by a departing lover, which have the delicious practicability and matter-of-factness of that scoured silk with the stain on it, obligingly worn by the apparition of Mrs. Veal for her better identification.

“ I’ll nobbut gae to yonder burn, and then I’ll come and see thee.”

* * * * *

“ I’ll tak a staff into my hand, and come and see my dearie O.”

* * * * *

“ I’ll meet thee at the kirkgate, my ain kind dearie O.”

In tribute to the two fine old ladies and their fast friendship, there is a song which Susanna

Blamire called "Miss Gilpin's Song," writing below the title, "A song for Miss Gilpin's ain singing when set at her wheel."

"Let lords and fine ladies look round them and see,
If e'er ane among them be blyther than me ;
I sit at my wheely and sing through the day,
An' ca' 't my ain warld that runs rolling away.

"Sae twirl thee round, wheely, I'll sing while I may,
I'll try to be happy the whole o' the day ;
If we wadna mak griefs o' bit trifles sae sma',
The warld would run smoothly roun', roun' wi' us a'.

"There's ups and downs in it, I see very plain,
For the spoke that's at bottom gets topmost again.
Sae whirl thee round, wheely, I see how things turn,
And I see too 'tis folly for mortals to mourn.

"That life is a spinster I often have read,
And too fine she draws out her spider-like thread ;
A breath can destroy what's so slenderly made,
And life for her trouble has seldom been paid.

"Sae twirl thee round, wheely, I'll sing while I may,
I'll try to be happy the whole o' the day ;
If we wadna mak griefs o' bit trifles sae sma',
The warld would run smoothly roun', roun' wi' us a' "

But Susanna Blamire's "What ails this heart o' mine?" is written with her life-blood. In proof

of it one has but to appeal to the wondering passionateness, the woefulness, rather implied than uttered, in the first and second verses, together with the unapproachable artlessness of their fancies—sick of love.

“ What ails this heart o’ mine ?
 What fills this watery e’e ?
 What gars me a’ turn cauld as death
 When I tak leave o’ thee ?
 When thou art far awa’
 Thou’lt dearer grow to me,
 But change o’ place and change o’ folk
 May gar thy fancy gee.

“ When I gae out at e’en,
 Or walk at morning ear’,
Ilk rustling bush will seem to say,
‘ I used to meet thee there.’
 There I’ll sit down and cry,
 And live aneath the tree,
And when a leaf fa’s in my lap,
I’ll ca’ ’t a word frae thee ”

After the first and second the third verse is slightly forced, and repeats what has gone before; but the last verse returns to the yearning simplicity of the first:—

“ Wi’ sic thoughts in my mind,
 Time through the world may gae,

And find my heart in twenty years
 The same as 'tis to-day.
 'Tis thoughts that bind the soul
 An' keep friends in the e'e,
*An' gin I think I see thee aye,
 What can part thee and me ?*"

This is one of the few of Susanna Blamire's songs on which she herself seems to have set store. Several copies of it were found among her papers.

The nearest to "What ails this heart o' mine?" though not equal to it, are—"Ye sall walk in silk attire," and "The Waeful Heart." In the last, the eager response of the speaker to the imagined summons of her dead, records a still more beautiful and perfect trust than that in Burns's lines,—

"A thocht ungentle ne'er could be
 The thocht o' Mary Morrison "

Susanna Blamire writes,—

"I follow wheresoe'er ye lead,
 Ye canna lead to ill "

Susanna Blamire's song of "The Traveller's Return," said to have been written in her forty-

second year, stands quite apart in the list of her songs. It is a delicate and subtle reproduction of the feelings of a lonely old man on his return to the native country from which he has been too long absent. There are the throb and thrill of alternating expectation, doubt, and bewilderment. We are made to feel the prick of each drawback in the attainment of the cherished wish, the piteous recalling of what is lost, the keen disappointment which is half mortification and shame. Yet this at first relieves itself in wrathful petulance at the affectation and the self-conceit of "the pensy chields" and "the nymph," who cannot understand the old man, softening a little with the thought of their "fathers' names" and "her mother's face," and melting at last into manly resignation and a touching claim on their forbearance. All is as nearly as possible perfect.

Where so much is good it is not easy to make distinctions. The very first line of the song has a peculiar, tender grace that is not often found in Susanna Blamire's lines :—

“ When silent time, wi’ lightly foot,
Had trod on thirty years.”

There is a wistful, sorrowful recognition of something which has slipped by for ever, and yet, perhaps, has never been so missed before, in the long-drawn-out repetition :—

“ Those days that followed me afar,
Those happy days o’ mine.”

The unlooked-for desolation of the arrival is rendered complete by the late appearance of the old servant, sorely altered, like everything else, and in the same doleful humour as his master :—

“ Till Donald tottered to the door,
Whom I left in his prime,
And grat to see the lad return
He bore about lang syne.”

After the utter mournfulness of the climax,—

“ I closed the door and sobbed aloud,
To think on auld lang syne,”

the graphic introduction of the “pensy chields” is a reaction with an under-current of humour :—

“ Some pensy chields—a new-sprung race,”

(there speaks the scorn of the old Scotch-

man, with his long pedigree and his rampant Toryism,)

“Wad next their welcome pay,
Wha shuddered at my Gothic wa’s,”

(after the fashion of arrogant, effeminate fop-
lings,)

“And wished my groves away.
‘Cut, cut!’ they cried, ‘those aged elms,’”

(in the spirit of the trim Vandalism and the toy
wildernesses of the eighteenth century,)

“‘Lay low yon mournfu’ pine.’
‘Na, Na!’”

(there is sacrilege in the thought to the old
man, for—)

‘Our fathers’ names grow there,
‘Memorials o’ lang syne’”

After all, they were not unkindly, these young kinsmen, though they were inconsiderate, and they tried to divert the listlessness of their ancient relation — “the old fogie” of present slang. But how can he enter the old town without confronting more changes there, and what should he miss most on each face that he meets and knows, but the ineffable “youthfu’

bloom ?” As he revenges himself upon his young companions by undervaluing their extravagantly vaunted ball-room belle, it is with a fine shade at once of fault-finding and praise :—

“ Her mother’s blushing cheeks
Were fairer far lang syne ”

But the crabbed critic relies, after all, on the young men’s generosity, and falls back on a fellow-feeling which must exist beneath every freak of fashion :—

“ Ye sons to comrades o’ my youth,
Forge an auld man’s spleen,
Wha midst your gayest scenes still mourns
The days he ance has seen.

“ When time has passed and seasons fled
Your hearts will feel like mine,
And aye the sang will maist delight
That minds ye o’ lang syne.”

Contrast the traveller’s return and his reception after his thirty years’ absence with the short absence of Colin from his voyage, in Jean Adam’s song of “There’s nae luck about the house.” It was only the impatience of love that could speak of Colin as having been “lang awa’.”

WHAT AILS THIS HEART O' MINE ?

WHAT ails this heart o' mine ?
What fills this watery e'e ?
What gars me a' turn cauld as death
When I tak leave o' thee ?
When thou art far awa',
Thou'lt dearer grow to me ;
But change o' place and change o' folk
May gar thy fancy gee.

When I gae out at e'en,
Or walk at morning ear',
Ilk rustling bush will seem to say,
' I used to meet thee there.'
There I'll sit down and cry,
And live aneath the tree,
And when a leaf fa's in my lap,
I'll ca' 't a word frae thee.

I'll hie me to the bower
That thou wi' roses tied,
And where, wi' mony a blushing bud,
I strove myself to hide.
I'll doat on ilka spot
Where I hae been wi' thee ;
And ca' to mind some kindly word
By ilka burn and tree.

Wi' sic thoughts i' my mind,
Time through the world may gae,
And find my heart in twenty years
The same as 'tis to-day.
'Tis thoughts that bind the soul,
And keep friends i' the e'e ;
And gin I think I see thee aye,
What can part thee and me ?

THE TRAVELLER'S RETURN.

When silent time, wi' lightly foot,
Had trod on thirty years,
I sought again my native land
Wi' mony hopes and fears :
Wha kens gin the dear friends I left
May still continue mine ?
Or gin I e'er again shall taste
The joys I left langsyne ?

As I drew near my ancient pile,
My heart beat a' the way ;
Ilk place I pass'd seem'd yet to speak
O' some dear former day ;

Those days that follow'd me afar,
Those happy days o' mine,
Whilk made one think the present joys
A' naething to langsyne !

The ivied tower now met my eye,
Where minstrels used to blaw ;
Nae friend stepp'd forth wi' open hand,
Nae weel-kenn'd face I saw ;
Till Donald totter'd to the door,
Whom I left in his prime,
And grat to see the lad return
He bore about langsyne.

I ran to ilka dear friend's room,
As if to find them there,
I knew where ilk ane used to sit,
And hung o'er mony a chair ;
Till soft remembrance threw a veil
Across these e'en o' mine,
I closed the door, and sobb'd aloud,
To think on auld langsyne !

Some pency chiels, a new-sprung race,
Wad next their welcome pay,
Wha shudder'd at my Gothic wa's,
And wish'd my groves away :

“Cut, cut,” they cried, “those aged elms,
Lay low yon mournfu’ pine :”
“Na ! na ! our fathers’ names grow there,
Memorials o’ langsyne.”

To wean me frae these waefu’ thoughts,
They took me to the town ;
But sair on ilka weel-kenn’d face
I miss’d the youthfu’ bloom.
At balls they pointed to a nymph
Whom a’ declared divine ;
But sure her mother’s blushing cheeks
Were fairer far langsyne !

In vain I sought in music’s sound
To find that magic art,
Which oft in Scotland’s ancient lays
Has thrill’d through a’ my heart :
One song had mony an artfu’ turn,
My ear confess’d ’twas fine,
But miss’d the simple melody
I listen’d to langsyne.

Ye sons to comrades o’ my youth,
Forgie an auld man’s spleen,
Wha ’midst your gayest scenes still mourns
The days he ance has seen :

When time has pass'd and seasons fled,
Your hearts will feel like mine ;
And aye the song will maist delight
That minds ye o' langsyne !

AND YE SHALL WALK IN SILK ATTIRE.

And ye shall walk in silk attire,
And siller hae to spare,
Gin ye'll consent to be his bride,
Nor think o' Donald mair.

O wha wad buy a silken gown
Wi' a puir broken heart ;
Or what's to me a siller crown,
Gin frae my love I part ?

The mind wha's every wish is pure,
Far dearer is to me ;
And ere I'm forced to break my faith
I'll lay me down an' dee !

For I hae pledged my virgin troth
Brave Donald's fate to share ;
And he has gi'en to me his heart,
Wi' a' its virtues rare.

His gentle manner won my heart,
He gratefu' took the gift ;
Could I but think to tak' it back—
It would be waur than theft !

For langest life can ne'er repay
The love he bears to me ;
And ere I'm forced to break my troth
I'll lay me down an' dee.

BARLEY BROTH.

If tempers were put up to seal,
Our Jwohn's wad bear a deuced preyce ;
He vowed 'twas barley i' the broth,
“ Upon my word,” says I, “ it's reyce.”

“ I mek nea faut,” our Jwohnnny says,
“ The broth is gude and varra neyce ;
I only say—it's barley broth—”
“ Tou says what's wrang,” says I, “ it's reyce.”

“ Did ever mortal hear the like !
As if I hadn't sense to tell !
Tou may think reyce the better thing,
But barley broth dis just as well.”

“ And sae it mud, if it was there,
The deil a grain is i' the pot ;
But tou mun ayways thrup yen down—
I've drawn the deevil of a lot.”

“ And what's the lot that I have drawn ?
Pervarsion is a woman's neam !
Sae fares-t'e-weel, I'll serve my king,
And never, never more come heam.”

Now Jenny frets frae mworn to neet,
The Sunday cap's nae langer neyce,
She aye puts barley i' the broth,
And hates the varra neame o' reyce.

Thus tryfles vex, and tryfles please,
And tryfles mek the sum o' leyfe ;
And tryfles mek a bonny lass
A wretched or a happy weyfe !