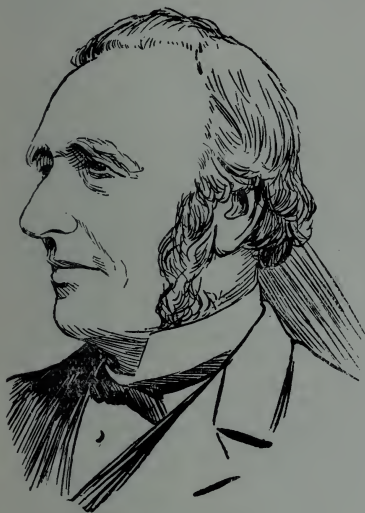


**BAILIE STEVEN,
BLAIRGOWRIE.**



**POET
AND
POLITICIAN.**

II.

BAILIE STEVEN,

BLAIRGOWRIE.

Who battled for the true, the just.—TENNYSON.
Whose words all ears took captive.—SHAKESPEARE.

The subject of our present sketch is so intimately connected with the life of the district—municipal, political, commercial, social, and educational—that to give anything like an adequate idea of his career would involve the history of Blairgowrie and Rattray, with some considerable reference to the county itself, for the past half-century—and that is not exactly our immediate purpose. In all forward movements during that long period Bailie Steven has ever been the apostle of progress. Now, with the gleaming track of the strenuous years stretching away behind him, and the red glow of the western sun on his homeward-set face, Blairgowrie's grand old man is the centre of such affectionate regard from all classes of the community as should compensate to some extent for the labours of the past and add additional sweetness to the long leisure which every one trusts is in store for him in the future.

EARLY DAYS.

He was born near Arbroath in the year 1826, his father, George Steven, being the youngest of three brothers, who were all country wrights. He came to Gourdie, near Blairgowrie, when 16 years of age, to learn his trade with his uncle,

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

David Steven, estate joiner there; removed into Blairgowrie in 1843, to assist in the erection of the first Free Church, and started business on his own account in 1849. His first contract was the Congregational manse in William Street, Blairgowrie, for the Rev. Mr Tait, about which time he had also the new F.C. Manse at Lethendy on hand for the Rev. Andrew Kesson, who, with the Rev. Thomas Clark, as every one knows, was largely responsible for the Disruption. The Bailie has some lively reminiscences of Lethendy U.P. Church and its minister, the Rev. Mr Balfour. The latter was of the old school. He once preached a rousing sermon from Jeremiah v. and 8. On Sacrament days he would announce an hour's interval for refreshments; thereupon ensued a regular stampede by everybody in the congregation for the whisky tents, which were ranged up outside, and soon Burns's "Holy Fair" was in full swing. One of the tent-keepers was asked

WHAT SORT OF SACRAMENT

he had had. "Naething ava!" was the disgusted reply; "only ten gallons o' whisky and 15 barrels o' ale!" The Bailie's work as joiner is among the very best to be seen in the county, or, indeed, anywhere. His most important contract was for the palatial mansion of Blair-Drummond, erected in 1870, at a cost of about £40,000, the joiner work amounting to £11,500. Other important undertakings were Gilroy Castle, Broughty Ferry, costing about £30,000—joiner work between £5000 and £6000; St Mary's Tower, Birnam; Hallyburton House, Coupar Angus; Ericmore, Birnam; Druids' Mere, Blairgowrie; Druimuan House, Killiecrankie; Ashmore House, Blairgowrie; Kinloch House, Strathbraan; Inverhadden House, Loch

Bailie Steven, Blairgowrie.

Rannoch; Allean House, Strathtummel; &c. Of recent years, in conjunction with his son William, a number of large mansions have been erected in Ireland and elsewhere, among the latest being Glenstal Castle, near Limerick, belonging to Sir Charles Barrington. One of the Bailie's first attachments in public life was the Mechanics' Institute, of which he was one of the founders (in 1853)—all gone but himself. He has never ceased to take the liveliest interest in its welfare, and much of its present prosperity is due to his fostering care. He is still Vice-President. He entered the old Town Council in 1859, became Baron Bailie, and, with one or two breaks, ceased his connection with that body only with its demise the other day.

SOME AMUSING STORIES

are told of his predecessors in office. One of these had been on a jury for a murder trial at Perth, and returned home greatly impressed by the Judge's style. Soon after, he had to sentence a culprit, and this is how he did it—"You are condemned to be taken to Perth, there to be confined in the jail for thirty days—and the Lord have mercy on your soul!" Another fined an innocent man 5s. On the Fiscal pointing out the error the reply was, "Weel, juist mak' it half a croon!" Bailie Steven was on the first Police Commission in 1876; became Chief Magistrate two years later, and retired in 1888; on the first School Board in 1873, retiring as Chairman in 1889; served on the old Parochial Board and Road Trust for many years, and is still J.P. for the county.

AS A POLITICIAN.

Politics have always claimed a large share of his attention, and as Chairman of the Liberal

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

Association he is a power to be reckoned with by both political parties in East Perthshire. But long before the division of the county was thought of the Bailie was in the field doing yeoman service for the Liberal cause. His first great fight was in 1868, for Mr Stuart Parker (L.) against Sir William Stirling-Maxwell (C.), who had represented the county undisputedly for 16 years. The result was Mr Parker's return with a majority of 279. In every other election since he took a leading part; in 1874, when Sir William recovered his seat with a majority of 495; in 1878, when, on the death of Sir William, Colonel Home-Drummond (C.) and Captain Greville (L.) contested the seat, the former getting in with a small majority; in 1880, when Mr (now Sir) Donald Currie, then Liberal, stood against Colonel Home-Drummond, and was returned with a majority of 292; in 1885 (first election after the division of the county, East and West), when Mr Stuart Menzies of Hallyburton (L.) opposed Mr Graham Murray (C.), present Lord-Advocate for East Perthshire, securing a majority of 1801; in 1886, when Mr Menzies had Mr Holland (L.U.) for an opponent, but was returned with a majority of 1309; in 1889, on the death of Mr Menzies, when Sir John Kinloch (L.) was returned with a majority of 1716 against Mr William Lindsay Boase and has retained his seat ever since, notwithstanding several contests. The Bailie has twice had the honour of presenting addresses to Mr Gladstone, of whom he is a great admirer. He first presided as Chairman at a dinner in honour of the marriage of the Prince of Wales in 1863; and when Earl Russell was the same year entertained to a banquet in Blairgowrie, Chief Magistrate Steven precluded that event by presenting an address. The Earl's speech at

Bailie Steven, Blairgowrie.

the banquet was a world-famous one, and has shed a reflected glory upon Blairgowrie ever since. It is when in the chair that the Bailie is to be seen at his best. Blair folks are proud of their one Chairman, and go so far as to assert a better could not be got anywhere.

“GET THE BAILIE FOR THE CHAIR!”

is the watchword for all doubtful ventures; that settled, success is assured. Great reader, as he is, with true literary taste, devoted student of Shakespeare, Browning, Tennyson, Wordsworth, Matthew Arnold, Ruskin; clear thinker, possessed of a warm, rich imagination and expressive vocabulary, and aided by a deep sonorous voice—he never speaks but he commands attention, justifies and rewards it, his slow, deliberate utterance adding greatly to the import of what he has to say. He never fails to impress the stranger. Great has been the amusement on occasions to observe the look of blank astonishment, then dismay, which has crept over the faces of those individuals fortunate enough to be introduced by him to their audiences, as they listened to the rounded periods rolling forth, every one an aphorism or pregnant suggestion; a scathing criticism, a stirring appeal, glowing optimism—all in perfect harmony with the time and occasion. When all is said, however, the Bailie is

POET FIRST,

and everything else in a subordinate degree. His mind, “of imagination all compact,” illumines and transfigures all he does and says: not merely a poet *de jure*, either, but *de facto* as well: for he has written much, and many a heart-easing and heart-inspiring poem

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

of his is hidden away in the columns of newspapers and magazines, mostly over pseudonyms, while many more rest in the obscurity of his notebooks. A wide circle of friends and admirers live in hopes of seeing yet a worthy selection, in oorporate form, not only of his poetry, but his essays and addresses—a great gratification to the present generation, and an acceptable legacy to that to come of one who, in the words of a favourite of his—

Never turned his back, but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would
triumph,
Held, we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.