

A POET'S TESTAMENT.

Robert Fergusson was a Scots instance of the band of pitiful geniuses who just missed making a mark in the world—Chatterton was an English example; Poe (more questionably as to "just missing") an American. Fergusson died at the age of 24, and spent his short life in Edinburgh in that vital generation that was sandwiched in between the "Forty-five" and the age of Burns and Scott.

Fergusson was trained first for the ministry, and then for law: but poverty did something to interfere, and the instability of temper that marks so many types of genius did more. Fergusson was framed on convivial lines; quick, generous, high-spirited, full of fellowship: too early indulgence thinned his resistance both in character and in health. But before the lad died he had produced some worthy poems in English letters, and a larger collection in that "braid Scots" used so winningly in his home town then and long after.

Only a second-rate poet, if even that, Fergusson in the best of his work shows a power and poignancy that hint at what the man of 44, had he lived till then, might have given his generation. Here is his Will, although it does not appear as if made *in contemplatione mortis*.

While sober folks, in humble prose,
Estate, and goods, and gear dispose,
A poet surely may disperse
His moveables in doggerel verse;
And fearing death my blood will fast chill,
I hereby constitute my last will:

He shows no more humility than is usual with artistic persons, for his first bequest is of his poetic lore to Dame Nature—

To her I give and grant the freedom
Of paying to the bards who need 'em
As many talents as she gave,
When I became the Muses' slave.

Such legacies were almost all the seedy law-clerk had to leave; so he bequeathes to cronies smaller intimacies, his snuff-box to Jamie Rae; his Shakespeare to Woods, the actor; and his unpublished poems to Oliphant. To a bookseller went an even less useful benefit:

To Hamilton I give the task
Outstanding debts to crave and ask;
And that my muse he may not dub ill,
For loading him with so much trouble,
My debts I leave him *singulatim*,
As they are mostly *desperatim*.

Then comes what was perhaps a very real compliment. Who knows now? The poet meant to show, perchance, to the widish company that did read his effusions, solemn and jocular, the big heart that was in Landlord Hutchison. That tavern-keeper was left the privilege to guide the funeral ceremonies, and to furnish, free, the usual generous refreshments.

The Will ends:

And I consent to registration
Of this my will for preservation,
That patent it may be and seen
In Walter's Weekly Magazine.
Witness whereof these presents wrote are
By William Blair, the public notar,
And, for the tremor of my hand,
Are signed by him at my command.

R. F. his
 X
 mark.

But a little later Fergusson bethought him of others worthy of a courteous remembrance, friends who would welcome

Some token of a pure regard
From one who lived and died a Bard;

and a lengthy Codicil was penned, not by mark this time, but holograph. The testator's intention was complete enough:

If poverty has any crime in
Teaching mankind the art of rhyming,
Then by these presents know all mortals
Who come within the Muses' portals
That I approve my will aforesaid
But think that something might be more said,
And only now would humbly seek
The liberty to add and eke
To test'ment which already made is,
And duly register'd, as said is.

The first bequest was to a confiding wine-merchant:

To Tulloch, who, in kind compassion,
Departed from the common fashion,
And gave to me who never paid it
Two flasks of port upon my credit,
I leave the flasks as full of air
As his of ruddy moisture were.

And after sundry other mentions, the Codicil winds up—

Reserving to myself the power
To alter this at latest hour,
Cum privilegio revocare
Without assigning ratio quare:
And I (as in the will before did)
Consent this deed shall be recorded
In testimonium cujus rei
These presents are delivered by

R. FERGUSSON.

No attempt seems to have been made to probate the testament!
But to Scotsmen even beyond Edinburgh some of the poems of the
gifted boy are still legacy enough.

G. C. THOMSON.

Swift Current.

LABOUR UNIONS AND STRIKES.—The proposals of the British Government to introduce legislation restricting the freedom of the Labour Unions to hold up national industries by strikes which create loss for which the unions are not responsible in damages, is being debated in a very stormy way in the British House of Commons. The principle implicit in the Government's proposals is to compel the unions to abide by the rules of a constitutional democracy. Our readers will remember that Sir Henry Slesser disagreed with Sir John Simon's speech in the House last May when he argued with great force that a General Strike was illegal under the existing law. Sir Henry Slesser returned to the debate in the House recently and reaffirmed the position he assumed in formerly discussing Sir John Simon's view. In the course of the debate it became evident from much that was said that the employers of labour would also have to submit to certain legal restrictions. Sir Douglas Hogg declared that what he called "Employers' Trade Unions" would not be left to do as they liked. We have confidence in the sober common sense of the House evolving a measure that will do substantial justice to both sides of the question, and that a law will be placed on the statute-book which will prevent a repetition of the disastrous situation that crippled the national industries of Great Britain during the greater part of last year.