

The Edinburgh Sir Walter Scott Club

Subsidiary Toasts

12th Annual Dinner: *Saturday 16th December 1905 in the Royal Hotel, Edinburgh*

The loyal toasts were proposed by the **Chairman**, and cordially pledged.

Bailie **Clark** gave "The Services," to which Commander **Thompson** replied.

The **Chairman** (Lord Lytton) then proposed the toast of the evening, and said—My Lord Provost and Gentlemen, I give you now the toast which we are met here to-night to honour—"The Memory of Sir Walter Scott." -- [this text can be found on the main page]

Professor W. P. Paterson, in proposing the toast of "Literature," said that at the present time our literary craftsmen were very numerous and very industrious, and he did not think that on the whole we had much reason to complain of the quality of their work. Britain, he believed, would continue to produce great literature so long as Britain continued to be itself great. In his judgment, literature was not one of the original and moulding forces so much as the beautiful after expression of the thinking and the action of the moral ideals that had already got themselves established and recognised in the world as living facts. The only question that need concern them about the future of literature was whether Britain was a land in which thoughts were being thought and deeds were being done which were worthy to be celebrated in song. And without a doubt they were living in one of the most interesting ages in the whole history of the globe. Brilliant scientific discoveries had opened up new vistas of time and space. Practical applications of science had given men a command over nature which passed the dreams of witchcraft. In the political sphere the centre of gravity had shifted into the moral realm. They found it was teeming with all manner of moral ideas and enthusiasms that personified every shade of conviction between the French Revolution and the Sermon on the Mount. He should indeed be surprised if an age that had so much in it to make it truly great would not find worthy expression in a new great literature—an expression worthy at once of the greatness of the theme and of the splendid literary traditions of the Anglo-Saxon race.

Professor Lodge, in replying, maintained that history was a distinct branch of literature, and alluded to the part historical novels played in conveying, at least, with accuracy the atmosphere of the times they depicted. Two of the greatest of these were Scott's *Old Mortality*, with its marvellous depiction of the times of the Covenanters, and Thackeray's "*Esmond*," which breathed the very spirit of the age of Queen Anne. He confessed to some pessimism with regard to the literary taste of the younger generation. He did not know if that taste was entirely due to the ephemeral productions of the present day. The association of literature with school lessons might have the effect of causing abstention later on from true literature. There was, however, also ground for optimism. With the extension of education there had been an extension of the love of literature and the taste for literature, and he based his conclusion upon the obvious demand that existed for the numerous admirable, well-printed, and beautifully produced reprints of the masterpieces of literature. The records of lending libraries might show a demand for a lower class, but they also showed what was very encouraging, a demand for a large proportion of higher literature, and the latter demand was spreading to the classes hitherto, owing to the expense, deprived of the opportunity of perusing great works.

Lord Provost Sir Robert Cranston, in acknowledging the toast of "The City of Edinburgh," proposed by **Sheriff M'Lennan**, said he would give them a thought as to how they might do a great service to the city. At the present moment they had an opportunity that had never occurred for Scotland before—the opportunity of establishing an Art School for Scotland in Edinburgh. He did not know whether that appealed to them. He was a tradesman and it appealed to him. There was a very large

surplus fund which might be—he almost might go the length of saying which would be—put to their credit towards the building of a magnificent Art School, and that opportunity might be had by their paying a farthing per £ for twenty-five years, and providing a fund of £40,000 or £50,000. Were that provided, the Government had a fund which at least would add £100,000, perhaps £120,000 or £150,000 to it, for the establishment of the school. If Edinburgh could not be the first commercial city, they in Edinburgh had held the reputation of being first in Science and Art and Literature. Surely it was worth their while for a farthing per £ for the next twenty-five years to do what would be of such great service in educating Scotsmen in Art.

Lord Dunedin proposed the health of “The Chairman.” He said he could only assure his friend Cranston—Don’t make any mistake; he lets me call him that—that so far as he (Lord Dunedin) was concerned, he should be very glad to take up with the present Secretary for Scotland—who, he was sure, from his point of view, was quite the most satisfactory man that could have been appointed—to take up the appeal the Lord Provost had made. He thought he had—if he might for one moment recur to his former life—the right to say so, because, although he might not have told the Lord Provost, he (Lord Dunedin) saved the money. Lord Dunedin went on to say that often the toast of the Chairman’s health was a formal toast, but on the present occasion the Chairman was their guest and the speaker of the evening. Lord Lytton had told them that he had perused the list of the distinguished names of those who had addressed that company in years past, and that he wondered why he—young, and an Englishman—should have been asked to speak to them. He told them that he accepted the task in the name of the English admirers of Sir Walter Scott. He (Lord Dunedin) thought he might in name of the company tell Lord Lytton that he was selected because of the Scottish admirers of the name of Lytton.

The **Chairman** briefly acknowledged, and the proceedings terminated.

Musical selections were given during the dinner by Mr Dambrmann’s band, and in the course of the evening Mr Alfred C. Young rendered a number of songs. The menu card was very tastefully designed by Mr James Hay, Artist. It has on the front a portrait of Lord Lytton, and on the back a reproduction of a sketch by Mr T. Marjoribanks Hay, of Kirkwall, showing the Cathedral.

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