

Honorary members of 1868

**Theodore Martin, Lord Ardmillan, Sir Arthur Helps,
Prof. J S Blackie, David Masson, Lord Stanley**

1868 Theodore Martin (1816-1909)

There are two possible reasons why Theodore Martin, later knighted (in 1880), a prolific author, was nominated as an honorary member, and a third reason for his later fame.

His later fame arose from his close friendship with Queen Victoria. After the death of Prince Albert in 1861, the Queen asked his private secretary Col. Grey (who had in 1867 compiled for her 'The Early Days of the Prince Consort') to write a biography of the Prince, but Col. Grey died in 1870. Theodore Martin had been introduced to the Queen by Arthur Helps (another hon. member of 1868) and his acceptance letter to us came from Osborne House. His reputation as an author prompted Her Majesty to ask that he undertake the biography - the result was 'The Life and Letters of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort', published in five volumes between 1874 and 1880, the reason for his knighthood.

One possible prompt for his nomination was his 'Memoir of Prof. W E Aytoun' (his friend, an 1854 hon. member, who had died in 1865), published in 1867. However, the main reason would be the 'Bon Gaultier Ballads'. These had appeared in magazines and journals, under the nom de plume Bon Gaultier, over several years - humorous verse, often parodying famous poets of the time, in a style somewhere between Robert Service and Pam Ayres. Co-authored with Prof. Aytoun, a volume, each poem accompanied by a charming line-drawing, was published in 1845, and was into a Seventh Edition (available on Google Books) by 1861. The volume has been described as "famous and delightful". So, whether the prompt was the popularity of the pair's verse, or the 'Memoir of Aytoun', is of little relevance

Martin was born and educated in Edinburgh. He practised there as a solicitor, then went to London to head the firm of Martin & Leslie, parliamentary agents. His many other publications included translations of Goethe, Dante, Schiller, Horace and Catullus - these were mostly published in the 1860s before his work on the Prince Consort, but he was still publishing in 1905 and 1906 (at the age of 90).

Letter of acceptance, written from Osborne (Isle of Wight) on 31 Jan. 1868, is addressed to James Dickie, the Hon. Secy.

Sir

Your letter of the 28th has been forwarded to me here, where I have been for the last three weeks laid up by a bad accident.

I am deeply sensible of the honour done me by my Election as an Honorary Member of the Irvine Burns Club, and I beg that you will convey this feeling to the Members at the earliest convenient opportunity.

The facsimilie [*sic*] which the Club has been so kind as to present to me will be not the least valued of my little collection of books & papers relating to our great poet.

Some day I hope I may have an opportunity of inspecting the Club's Collection of Autographs. Such things have a special interest for me. I am fortunate enough to possess an autograph of the lines to the Earl of Glencairn; Believe me

Sir

Your very obedt servt

Theodore Martin

P.S. My address is 31 Onslow Square, London

Notes:

Osborne House was a residence of Queen Victoria.

1868 James Crawford, Lord Ardmillan (1805-1876)

James Crawford was appointed a Lord of Session in 1855 and, later that year, a judge of the high court of justiciary. The seat of Ardmillan is about three miles from Girvan.

Born at Havant, Hants, and educated at Ayr Academy, he studied for the bar at Glasgow College and at the University of Edinburgh. By 1868, he was towards the end of a distinguished legal career, being appointed sheriff of Perthshire in 1849, and Solicitor-General for Scotland in 1853.

Letter of acceptance, written from Edinburgh on January 30, 1868

Dear Sir

I feel honoured & gratified by your electing me a member of the Irvine Burns Club & I thank you for the Photographic Fac Simile of the Poet's M.S.S. of "The Cottar's Saturday Night". I rejoice in every indication of the high Estimation in which my Countrymen hold the Genius of Burns & of the appreciation & discriminating sympathy with which all that is noble and genial in him is cherished, without overlooking or excusing his faults.

I am

Yours faithfully

Jas. Crawford

Ardmillan

Notes:

Lord Ardmillan lived at Charlotte Square, Edinburgh

1868 Sir Arthur Helps (1800-1859)

Arthur Helps (later knighted, in 1872) was an English essayist and historian, but there seems no particular reason for his nomination as an honorary member. After university, he became private secretary to the Chancellor of the Exchequer (till 1839), then private secretary to the Secretary for Ireland till 1841. In 1859/60, he was appointed clerk of the Privy Council in 1859/60, holding the position until his death.

His works have been described as "for the most part of a pleasant moralizing type" - several volumes had appeared before his 1868 nomination, and his popularity was established in

1847-59 by his 'Friends in Council', dialogues on ethical and aesthetic questions, including slavery. His historical work centred on the Spanish conquest in America (1857-61). In 1862, he published (at Queen Victoria's request) a volume of the late Prince Consort's speeches with an introduction by himself.

He was a friend of Theodore Martin (another 1868 honorary member) and introduced him to the Queen, as a result of which Martin wrote the biography of Prince Consort. Helps himself edited the Queen's 'Leaves from a Journal of our Life in the Highlands', published later in 1868.

Queen Victoria's comment "We are not amused" was occasioned by this honorary member. The Fitchburg, Massachusetts, 'Daily Sentinel' reported in January 1887 that: 'Sir Arthur Helps, who was her private secretary, used to tell an amusing anecdote of being snubbed by her for telling a rather funny story down the table, among the ladies-in-waiting, to relieve the monotony of a dreary dinner, when the queen remarked: "What is it? We are not amused."'

His letter, written from the Privy Council Office on 1st February, 1868

Sir,

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 28th ulto, and to request that you will convey to the members of the Irvine Burns Club my sense of the high honour which they have conferred upon me by electing me an honorary member of their body.

I have also to acknowledge with many thanks the fac-simile of the original manuscript of 'The Cotter's Saturday Night', which you have been so good as to send me.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

Arthur Helps

1868 Prof. J S Blackie (1809-1895)

Thomas Carlyle (an 1863 honorary member) once described Professor John Stuart Blackie as "a man of lively intellectual faculties, of ardent friendly character, and of wide speculation and acquirement". From his home in Edinburgh, Blackie corresponded with the great and famous throughout Britain and Europe, from Goethe and Carlyle to Ruskin and Gladstone, and filled the pages of newspapers and journals with writings on the major issues of the day.

Blackie was a scholar, patriot, and poet. Born in Glasgow, educated in Aberedeen, where he studied theology, he spent three years at Gottingen, Berlin and Rome, before studying law at Edinburgh. He was appointed Professor of Latin Literature at Aberdeen in 1841, became interested in university reform (including the admission of women students), and in 1852 became Professor of Greek at Edinburgh. His books included volumes on the history of Scottish, German and student song, a metrical translation of Goethe's 'Faust' (1834) and a translation of the works of Aeschylus (1850). His lectures were popular, and his enthusiasm for all things Greek included launching the Hellenic Society and encouraging the study of modern Greek.

Scottish nationality (and nationalism) was another enthusiasm. He championed the Gaelic language, almost single-handedly raising the funds for the Chair of Celtic at Edinburgh. His

often-quoted comment on Robert Burns is: "'When Scotland forgets Burns, then history will forget Scotland"; his 'Life of Robert Burns' was published in 1888. In 1891, he and his nephew published the first edition of 'The Scottish Students' Song Book'. His death was marked by a national day of mourning and his funeral stopped the city in its tracks.

The National Gallery of Scotland commentary on his portrait (bequeathed by him) describes him as "a renowned classical scholar, well known for his wit and kindly manner, as well as his flamboyance and characteristic dress" (a plaid worn shepherd-style, a broad-brimmed hat, and a big stick). There is probably no one reason for his nomination - all aspects of his life and works would have made him a worthy recipient.

Letter of acceptance, written from 24 Hill Street, Edinburgh on January 30, 1868

Dear Sir

I have to return the Irvine Burns Club my most sincere thanks for the honor they have done me in making me a member of their association. I consider sympathy with Burns, and with the Covenanters the true tests of a genuine Scotsman; and shall always be proud to think that in respect of either or both I am not considered unworthy of my position. I have also received the facsimile of the Cotters Saturday Night, which I value highly.

and am

Sincerely

Yours

John Blackie

Notes:

This letter, more than some of the others in the collection, reflects the writer's enthusiasms.

1868 David Masson (1822-1907)

David Masson had recently (1865) become Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature at Edinburgh, succeeding Prof. W E Aytoun (hon. member 1854); Masson held this chair for thirty years, until 1895. After studying theology under Thomas Chalmers (with whom he maintained a friendship until Chalmers' death), he abandoned aspirations to the ministry and turned to literature. He was a native of Aberdeen.

In the 1840s he contributed to several magazines and went to London, to find wider scope for his energy and knowledge, in 1847. There he was secretary (1851-52) of the "Society of Friends of Italy". He interviewed Elizabeth Barrett Browning. He had known Thomas de Quincey and wrote a biography of him. He was an enthusiastic friend and admirer of Thomas Carlyle (hon. member 1863). In 1852 he was appointed Professor of English Literature at University College, London, and from 1858 to 1865 he edited the newly-established 'Macmillan's Magazine' - he mentions his friendship with the publisher in his letter of acceptance. His most important published work began in this period - the six volume 'Life of Milton' (1859-80).

Once back in Edinburgh, he actively promoted the movement for the university education of women. His other roles included Historiographer Royal of Scotland (1893), President of the Edinburgh Sir Walter Scott Club (1896) and Chairman of the Scottish History Society (1900).

His son David became the first Professor of Chemistry at the University of Melbourne and his daughter Rosaline became known as a writer and novelist.

Letter of acceptance, written from 3 Rosebery Crescent, Edinburgh, on Feb 22, 1868

Dear Sir,

The temporary disappearance of your letter among papers of a different kind has been the cause of my delay in acknowledging it, & the receipt of the Fac-Simile which accompanied it.

Permit me now to tender to the members of the Irvine Burns Club, through you, my most grateful thanks for the honour they have done me in associating me with them in the manner announced in your letter, & for the gift of the fac-simile. It is very gratifying to me to be an Honorary Member of a club so long-established & so interesting as the Irvine Burns Club; and it is a peculiar addition to the pleasure to remember that Irvine is the native place of my dear & good friend Mr Alexander Macmillan. Should I ever be in Irvine, I shall not fail to pay my respects to you, & to ask for a sight of the Burns relics belonging to the Club.

Believe me, Dear Sir,

Yours very truly

David Masson

Notes:

Alexander Macmillan, born in Irvine, had, with his late elder brother Daniel, set up Macmillan & Co., the London publishing house.

1868 Lord Stanley (1826-1893)

Lord Stanley, in 1868, was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; during his Commons years (1848-69), he represented Kings Lynn. [To avoid confusion, we should note that he was not one of the two most famous Earls of Derby - one, his father, the 14th Earl, had ended slavery in the West Indies and was Prime Minister on three occasions, and the other, his nephew, the 17th Earl, was known as the 'King of Lancashire' and headed recruitment for World War I.]

Edward Henry Stanley was known as a most liberal Conservative. In his father's first administration (1852), Lord Stanley was under-secretary for foreign affairs (and his father appointed the 13th Earl of Eglinton as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland). In his father's second administration (1858-59), Lord Stanley was at first Secretary of State for the Colonies (most efficiently supervising the India Bill, and becoming the first Secretary of State for India), then President of the Board of Control (and his father for a second time appointed the 13th Earl of Eglinton as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland). In his father's third administration (1866-68), Lord Stanley was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, a post he took up again, as the 15th Earl of Derby, in Disraeli's government of 1874. Becoming a Liberal in 1880, he served as Gladstone's Colonial Secretary in 1882-85. Afterwards, he led the Liberal Unionist party in the Lords until 1891.

He married fairly late, in 1870, Lady Mary Catherine Sackville-West, the daughter of the 5th Earl de la Warr and the widow of the 2nd Marquess of Salisbury. Having no issue, the Earldom passed to his younger brother in 1893.

The only clear connection to Irvine is an apparent friendship between the Derbys and the Eglintons, so we cannot say what prompted his nomination as an honorary member. His links to the West of Scotland were about to be strengthened - in 1868 he started a three-year term of office as Lord Rector of the University of Glasgow.

His acceptance - written on his behalf at the Foreign Office on February 6, 1868

Lord Stanley presents his compliments to Mr Vickie [sic] & begs that he will express to members of the Irvine Burns Club Lord Stanley's best thanks for the compliment which they have paid him on electing him as an Honorary Member of the Club, and which Lord Stanley has much pleasure in accepting.

Lord Stanley is also much obliged for the interesting facsimile of the original MS of one of Burns' Poems which accompanied Mr Vickie's letter.

Notes:

'Mr Vickie' is in fact James Dickie, of Irvine, the Hon. Secy of the Club.